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Underrepresentation of Black Males in Gifted Education: A Phenomenology Study of the Underrepresentation of Black Males in Gifted Education

James A. Holemon Jr.
Old Dominion University, jhole001@odu.edu

UNDERREPRESENTATION OF BLACK MALES IN GIFTED EDUCATION: A

PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY OF THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF BLACK MALES

IN GIFTED EDUCATION

by

James A. Holemon Jr.
Business Administration, May 2002, Carson-Newman University
Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, May 2015, Regent University
Master's in Educational Leadership, December 2015, Hampton University

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Approved by:

Steve Myran (Director)

Melva Grant (Member)

Jori Beck (Member)

ABSTRACT

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James A. Holemon Jr.
Old Dominion University, 2022
Director: Dr. Steve Myran

The underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education is an issue that all educators

acknowledge and understand. What we are less clear on is the influential factors that contribute

to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. Therefore, this research will focus

on the phenomenology of gifted coordinators and administrators and their subjective experiences

as students and educational leaders and how those perceptions and experiences impact systemic

educational processes in the identification and selection process of gifted students. A

phenomenological approach is utilized to highlight the voices and personal experiences of the

practitioners who are on the ground as street level bureaucrats that directly impact the

identification and selection process of gifted students and how their involvement influences the

representation of Black males in gifted education programs.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, my wife, and kids. For my mother, who as a single Black mother without a high school diploma made sure that her children valued education and understood the impact it would have on our lives. My mother who always demonstrated a positive outlook on life and all circumstances and implored that the obstacles and disadvantages that we may experience shall not hold us back. That approach influenced my daily motto to constantly make improvements and try to be a little better each day. To my wife, who has always encouraged me to chase my dreams and continuously supported. The constant reassurance and unwavering belief that no matter what we faced as a family, she consistently believed in me, and that we will find a way to get the job done. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I doubted myself. To my kids, thank you for being my motivation, the reason why I pursue this valuable work. I hope this work will ensure that you have an equitable opportunity to maximize your academic ability, experience opportunities that my parents could not dream. You all impress me every day with how much you learn and how you believe that you can do anything that you set your mind to. Continue to be the lights that shine a room, and I cannot wait to see the impact that you make on the world

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Systemic inequities in education and educational opportunities influence economic immobility in marginalized populations (Apple, 2009; Brown, 2004; Crabtree et al., 2019). This practice or embodiment of obstacles systematically implemented in education undermines the argument that education is the great societal equalizer (Crabtree et al., 2019; Rector-Aranda, 2016). For example, a prominent systemic inequity in education is the millions of Black males whose giftedness goes unnoticed because of their socioeconomic status and/or racial identity (Bonner, 2001; Crabtree et al., 2019; Flowers & Banda, 2018). Consequently, Black students who were not afforded an opportunity to participate in gifted programs, typically do not enroll in Advanced Placement courses (Johnson & Larwin, 2020). Black Americans make up roughly 13.4% of the nation's population and only 6.4% of Black students in schools have taken at least one AP exam (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The disproportionality of Black American students taking Advanced Placement courses compared to their white and Asian peers are a result of the systemic injustices that are embedded in the foundations of American public education. The disproportionality in advanced placement courses begins before students reaches high school. Disproportionate educational opportunities for underrepresented populations such as Black males begin as early as elementary school and, in some cases, earlier than that. Black males experience discriminatory practices, overrepresentation in special education, and underrepresentation in gifted education programs (Crabtree et al., 2019).

Consequently, Black males are at a higher risk to experience systemic injustices in public education compared to their more affluent peers (Apple, 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2019). The Black male experience in schools has garnered attention from researchers, educators, and other stakeholders to address injustices such as a lack of sense of belonging,

teacher mistreatment, racial profiling and low academic expectations (Henderson et al., 2019; Hodges & Gentry, 2021a). Teacher mistreatment, racial profiling, low academic expectations are key contributors that influence the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Consequently, Black males who are selected to participate in gifted educational programs tend to leave the program or perform poorly because they do not sense they belong in gifted programs. Black males' lack of sense of belonging in gifted programs is attributed to few peers who look like them or have similar cultural backgrounds (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008).

Background of the Problem

Societal norms, public education practices, policies and procedures display parallel similarities throughout this country's proud yet tainted history (Lugg & Shoho, 2006; Johnson & Larwin, 2020; Tate & Page, 2018). When public schools were initiated, American society expressed values that were oppressive and deprived poor people, people of color, and women the same humanistic liberties that were afforded to white middle class men (Brown, 2004; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The oppressive views specifically for Blacks citizens originated when enslaved Africans were brought to this country and viewed as a commodity instead of as a person worthy of basic humanistic rights (Bell, 2008; Duncan, 2000, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Wronka, 1994). As time has progressed the preservation of property rights and its association with skin color continued to impact the societal norms of this country which contributes to an unequal distribution of economic and political resources (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Duncan, 2005; Lofton & Davis, 2015). In addition, the view was that it took whites over 2000 years to become civilized and it would take more than 200 years to reach civility, therefore, deeming Black citizens unworthy of civil and humanistic rights in the eyes of white decision

makers in America (Arneback & Quennerstedt, 2016; Duncan, 2005; Lofton & Davis, 2015).

Consequently, those same societal views of Black Americans were imprinted in the historical

foundations of the American education system. White citizens controlling the education of Black

citizens led to inferior curriculum and instruction for Black students compared to their white

peers (Chapman, 2007; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Schools that were

majority Black, or Black students in predominantly white schools had limitations placed on their

abilities and educational opportunities. For instance, Black students were offered educational

opportunities that prepared them to take jobs that were earmarked for Black citizens, such as

skilled labor jobs. White education decision makers did not view Black citizens capable of

mastering more rigorous educational content or applying for and performing well as a lawyer,

doctor or any professional role (Anderson, 1988; Duncan, 2005; X, 1992). As a result,

oppressive policies, procedures, and practices that were implemented in society adversely

effected Black males in schools. The oppressive policies and practices in public schools have had

a direct negative impact on Black males and contributed to the societal misperceptions, negative

assumptions and labels bestowed upon Black males by their non-minority peers (Ladson-Billings

& Tate, 2016; Liviatan & Jost, 2011; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Taken together, a pattern of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust

societal practices that constrain the quality of education for Black Americans. More narrowly,

this presents a notable problem for underrepresented populations such as Black males who are

systemically denied access to gifted and advanced academic opportunities. Black males tend to

have their "giftedness" ignored, devalued, or unnoticed in public schools (Bonner, 2003; Bonner

& Goings, 2019; Crabtree et al., 2019; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Denying Black males, the

opportunity to be identified and participate in gifted programs minimizes their opportunity to receive more rigorous instruction, which has an adverse effect on Black males' academic journeys as they transition through school. Academic ability tracking is no longer as commonly practiced, but the remnants of ability tracking remain evident in daily instructional practices. Black male students who are not in gifted education programs in elementary school are less likely to take Advanced Placement courses when they get to high school (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Black male students who take Advanced Placement courses in high school have a higher success rate in college and are less likely to be required to take remedial courses in college (Flowers & Banda, 2018). The identification and selection of Black males in gifted education programs is imperative to ensure the academic success of Black males and increase the possibility to improve their socioeconomic status.

Central to this observation is that at the core of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education are the perceptions of educators who are responsible for identifying, screening, supporting, and mentoring gifted students. This is critical because the social justice literature invites caution about espoused commitments to equity and social justice present in mission statements, strategic plans, and other aspirational documents, and the reality of the daily practices that impact students directly (Merchant & Shoho, 2006). This idea is further supported within the conceptual change theory literature which emphasizes that changes in an individual's deeper conceptual understandings are influenced by their personal, motivational, social and historical processes (Posner & Strike, 1992). In this way, there may be built in tensions between the underlying perceptions about education and giftedness held by individuals and the goals of equity focused identification of gifted students. Many studies have shown that such folk-

assumptions about education are highly resistant to change (Aspin, 1996; Osborne & Freyberg, 1985; West, 1985).

In this way, the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education may be understood by what some have referred to as *conceptual ecologies* (Strike & Posner, 1992), that is the context, environment, and conditions in which one learns and interprets new ideas. The conceptual ecology model theorizes that change involves many diverse kinds of knowledge that are organized and re-organized into complex systems (Disessa, 2002). In the case of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education, educators' perceptions and conceptions are rooted in their underlying epistemological beliefs (Posner & Strike, 1992) and are interdependent within the normative structures of the ecological setting (Özdemir & Clark, 2007; Posner & Strike, 1992). Because prior conceptions are highly resistant to change and are not independent from the larger ecological setting, reducing the instances of underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education would call for a deeper understanding of the role that educators' perceptions play in either perpetuating the epistemic injustice of underrepresentation or advancing equity driven practices. Epistemic injustice is the negative of epistemic justice and typically represents itself as testimonial and or hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2013). Testimonial injustice is when a speaker is discredited because of the prejudices or discrimination of the listener. For instance, Black males experience in public education and specifically the gifted identification process may be ignored based on the color of their skin and or the location of where they live by white educators. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when marginalized populations such as Black males, are given less opportunities than their white peers to enter gifted education programs and advanced academic educational opportunities (Fricker, 2013) due to systemic practices in public schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programing with a particular focus on the perceptions held by educators within a system that has demonstrably perpetuated the systemic epistemic educational injustices that thwart Black males from being identified and selected to participate in gifted programs in elementary and middle school. The identification and selection process for gifted Black males in elementary and middle schools is important because a student's academic track is determined as early as elementary school (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Black males are underrepresented in gifted programs and even though they may test high enough to receive gifted services, they are still systemically left out of these programs (Crabtree et al., 2019). There is also minimal research that addresses the gifted gap with a focus on Black males and the systemic injustices that impeded the identification and selection of those students in gifted programs, particularly as it is related educators' perceptions. This study highlights and distinguishes the systemic injustices embedded in educators' perceptions that minimizes Black male's participation and selection into gifted programs in elementary and middle school.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of educators who are engaged in the various aspects of gifted identification and how these perceptions are situated within the embedded epistemic injustices that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs. To center this study, I focused on one central research question with four subsequent questions to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon:

1. What are the perceptions, as captured through the lived experiences of educators, about the organizational norms, habits, and practices involved in the selection of students into gifted programs and how do these impact the epistemic justice for Black males?

    a. How are school districts training gifted student selection committee members to select gifted students?

    b. How are school districts addressing the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs in elementary school?

    c. What are district guidelines to provide equitable opportunities for Black males to be identified and selected into gifted educational programs?

    d. What other organizational norms, habits, and practices that may impact the selection of Black male students in gifted programs?

Significance of the Study

Closing the gifted gap and increasing the number of Black males in gifted education will immediately increase Black males' economic mobility (Crabtree et al., 2019). Equitable educational practices for underrepresented populations such as Black males are essential to fulfill education's promise of leveling academic opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Black males are labeled as underachievers based on negative perceptions, misconceptions and stereotypes from their non-Black peers (Flowers & Banda, 2018). As a result, these negative perceptions accuse Black males of self-inflicting their own poverty, a failed educational system, over policing, and police brutality (Lofton & Davis, 2015). Due to these implicit or unconscious biases, education decision makers deny or prevent Black males from equitable educational opportunities such as gifted education (Tate & Page, 2018).

Education stakeholder biases tend to lead to taste based discrimination and or statistical discrimination. Taste based discrimination is generated from an individual's personal views and preferences, and statistical discrimination refers to utilizing a group's overall average to determine an individual's sense of belonging (Fox, 2016). To effectively identify biases and systemic injustices that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education in elementary and middle school will be a vital step in decreasing the gifted gap. Minimal research identifies inequitable educational opportunities for Black males beginning as early as birth due to limited information and resources for Black families (Orfield, 2014). Throughout this study, I explored and gained understanding embedded epistemic injustices that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs. For instance, explored the identification and selection process of Black males in gifted education. This new information could be utilized to improve instructional practices and minimize systemic barriers that are embedded in education that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL, EMPIRICAL, AND HISTORIC FOUNDATIONS

Education is viewed in America as the great equalizer of the conditions of men but the inequities that Black students face in American schools contradict that notion. For instance, a vast majority of Black students' brilliance goes unnoticed and thus Black students are often denied gifted educational opportunities because of their racial identity and or socioeconomic status (Crabtree et al., 2019). Racial inequities in education dates to the historical foundations of public education. Public education was created to educate and advance white middle class men but access to an education was denied to women, minorities, and poor white men (Fowler, 2013). The instructional design to advance white property-owning men while maintaining the economic immobility of everyone else is still evident in modern education and in society. One example of systemic inequities in education are the organization's practices and norms that target and select specific groups of students to share pertinent information about academic opportunities (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). The embedded systemic injustice of selectively sharing pertinent information to advance an individual or a race of people is a research proven fact that America is founded upon. Consequently, as societal norms and practices changed, political agendas shifted which ignited the argument for equitable practices for marginalized populations. The shift in societal norms created a shift in education philosophy and education became accessible to poor white men, women, non-Black minorities and eventually Black Americans (Fowler, 2013). Education became accessible to everyone but in a limited capacity to Black Americans compared to their more affluent peers.

The limitations that Black Americans experience in education present themselves as limited access to resources as early as birth, unjust biases formed by peers and teachers, and

cultural differences that often leave them alienated and disconnected (Fowler, 2013). Fowler argued that to ensure academic success, teachers should teach Black students the cultural codes and behaviors of white middle class students. Schools were never designed to accept change or to embrace cultural differences, but rather teach conformity to the image that was prevalent during its creation (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). For a vast majority of Black males, education has not been the great equalizer, it has alienated, failed, limited opportunities, and immobilized them economically (Downey et al., 2004). The biggest contributor to limited educational opportunities and economic immobility is the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. Throughout this paper, I explain gifted education and discuss its benefits to Black male students. Next, I will expound on the social justice outlook in education and how societal norms and the Black experience impact learning for Black males. Then I will identify the gifted gap in American education and the major contributors to those gaps. I will conclude this literature review with opposing views on why Black males are underrepresented in gifted education.

Gifted Education

Gifted Education's Purpose

A school environment should provide a student an equitable education and simulate the modern work place because of a constantly changing diverse student population (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that school districts provide ample opportunities for students to collaborate, meet deadlines, resolve conflict and receive equitable academic opportunities because school districts provide the largest cultural exchange in a young person's life (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Yet, underrepresented populations including Black males were denied educational experiences that challenged them academically and or prepared them to

successfully transition into the workforce (Duncan, 2005). White domination over Black schooling contributed to inferior curriculum, instruction, resources and minimal real world preparation for Black students (Duncan, 2005). White domination of the instructional curriculum for Black students contributed to economic immobility for Black students' transition into society (Lofton & Davis, 2015). In addition, academic tracking as early as elementary school prevented Black males from taking gifted and advanced academic opportunities that severely impacted their educational trajectory through school (Henderson et al., 2019). To combat systemic injustices in education that include white domination over Black students' curriculum, the College Board released national reports that identified these systemic inequities which encouraged school leaders and decision makers to promote and advocate academic achievement in underrepresented populations (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Therefore, school districts were tasked with identifying and generating ways to expose underrepresented populations to gifted and advanced academic courses (Crabtree et al., 2019).

In education, the term *gifted education* is often used interchangeably with advanced academic programs, Advanced Placement (AP) and Intercollegiate Bachelorette (IB) courses (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Consequently, AP and IB courses are accepted and recommended as appropriate courses for students who have been identified as gifted (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Black males are also less likely to be recommended for AP and IB courses compared to their white and non-Black peers (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). In many situations, Black males attend schools that do not offer gifted programs, or AP and IB courses which contributes to their underrepresentation in advanced academic programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016). To provide more equitable access to gifted education, AP and IB courses, the United States government offered educational grants to fund those under resourced schools and to increase gifted and

advanced academic opportunities for underrepresented populations (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). The

school districts that already offered gifted programs, AP, and IB courses took a systemic

approach to address the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education by focusing on

systemic bias, equity and excellence, deficit thinking, hiring practices, training, professional

development, and parent-community networks (Mun et al., 2020).

Benefits of Gifted Education

Student Experience

Gifted education provides student access to a more rigorous curriculum, better exposure

to societal opportunities and increases academic and societal success after school (Henderson et

al., 2019). The benefits of gifted education can be traced as early as elementary school for Black

males. For instance, gifted education programs in elementary school have a positive impact on

Black male students' academic performance, motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and self-

concept (Crabtree et al., 2019; Grissom & Redding, 2016). The benefits of gifted education

exposure increase academic opportunities as students transition through school. Students who are

in gifted education programs take AP and IB courses in high school which are normally staffed

with more highly qualified teachers that deliver more student led quality instruction compared to

general education teachers and courses (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). A College Board survey

indicated that approximately 76% of AP, IB and gifted education teachers held a master's degree

or higher. These staggering statistics have led to policymakers' push for more equitable gifted

and advanced academic opportunities for underrepresented populations (Mun et al., 2020). Yet,

as student populations continue to become more diverse, gifted education programs continue to

fall short of the policy changes and expectations as Black males continue to be underrepresented

in gifted and advanced academic programs. Policy changes and increased funding to improve the

underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education has not and will not decrease the Gifted Gap between Black males and their peers (Whiting, 2009). Policy changes and increased funding do not always equate to an increase of Black males in gifted programs because scholars have failed to analyze and evaluate what it truly means to be a gifted Black male in American schools (Whiting, 2009).

Gifted Black males often do not feel comfortable in gifted classes and have a difficult time adjusting to the cultural differences in those classes so they are willing to forfeit academic excellence (Whiting, 2009). Black males are uncomfortable in gifted classes because of the cultural differences with their peers and typically their friends are enrolled in general education courses. As a result, gifted Black males tend to hide and deny their academic accomplishments and giftedness to avoid alienation and fit in with their desired social groups (Whiting, 2009). Ironically gifted Black males receive criticism from their Black and white peers alike. Gifted Black male students tend to avoid displaying their "giftedness" to avoid being accused of "acting white" and other negative peer pressure tactics from their peers when they perform well in school (Whiting, 2009). Consequently, gifted Black males face an internal battle that they have to choose between displaying a positive ethnic identity or a strong academic identity (Bonner & Goings, 2019). Black males may have to navigate this internal battle alone because of the cultural differences between Black males and their gifted education teachers, which makes the situation even more challenging (Bonner & Goings, 2019). Gifted Black males who are able to surpass the negative perceptions of their peers still struggle to develop a sense of belonging within the gifted education program (Henderson et al., 2019). Gifted Black males have a difficult time making friends, connecting with their culturally different teachers, and adjusting to the instructional style and experiences (Bonner & Goings, 2019). People have an innate

responsibility to build relationships and connect with other likeminded people, and when gifted

Black males are unable to build positive relationships in gifted education courses, it negatively

impacts them emotionally (Henderson et al., 2019). The negative stereotypes and academic

challenges that gifted Black males experience have a negative impact on their academic

motivation and desire to maximize their ability (Duncan, 2005). Black male students understand

the challenges that are associated with "giftedness", but they still pursue gifted and advanced

academic opportunities because of how beneficial the program could be to their educational and

societal success.

Preparation for College

Gifted education programs in elementary school prepare students for success in advanced

academic courses in high schools that impact college enrollment and completion, and a student's

future income (Crabtree et al., 2019). Gifted and advanced academic opportunities can boost a

student's GPA and class rank which increases the probability of college acceptance and an

academic scholarship (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). The rigor in gifted education programs is more

challenging than general education courses and better prepares students for their academic

success as they progress through school. The rigor of a student's curriculum in high school is a

strong predictors of his ability to attain a bachelor's degree in college (Kettler & Hurst, 2017).

Gifted education and advanced academic programs can decrease the increasing financial burden

of college. Students who take gifted and advanced courses could obtain college credits in high

school, decrease their chances of taking remedial college courses, and increase the probability of

graduating from college in a four to five year timeframe (Crabtree et al., 2019). Students who

successfully complete gifted and advanced academic courses demonstrate college aptitude,

increased college acceptance, and a better understanding of college curriculum which decreases their dropout probability (Henderson et al., 2019)

Academic Challenges without Gifted Courses

Students who do not have access or have limited access to gifted and advanced academic opportunities minimize their chances of reaching their full academic potential (Crabtree et al., 2019). Limiting Black males from gifted and advanced academic opportunities generates systemic educational inequities in mathematics, vocabulary, test preparation and outside evaluators (Crabtree et al., 2019). A lack of exposure to gifted and advanced academic opportunities will decrease a student's preparedness for college, college acceptance, and possibly increase their financial burden (Henderson et al., 2019). Black males students who do not take gifted or advanced academic courses will be less prepared for college courses because of a less rigorous curriculum in general education courses (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Black male students who are not identified for gifted education and or advanced academic opportunities obtain lower grade point averages which decreases their college acceptance (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Lastly, Black males who do not take gifted and advanced courses are more likely to take remedial courses that will decrease their ability to graduate in four years if at all which increases the financial burden of college and generates economic immobility (Lofton & Davis, 2015).

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Social Justice Outlook

Critical Race Theory

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Critical Race Theory is appropriate in this study because it highlights the voice of underrepresented populations such as Black males and examines how oppression and racial inequality are normalized in schools and society (Duncan, 2005). The stories of Black males and the teachers or decision makers who influence the identification and selection process for gifted

education can be more impactful to understanding the issues than litigation or law reform.

Critical Race Theory takes a concentrated effort in determining the effects of labeling or defining

people by their association, skin color, and/or actions because it creates assumptions and beliefs

about the group (Ford, 1995). In addition, critical researchers can assist schools and school

districts in identifying teacher biases and enabling teachers to be able to identify giftedness in

diverse learners which will increase the number of Black males in gifted education. This is

appropriate in the identification and selection of Black males for gifted education because

teachers and their biases towards Black males influence the underrepresentation of Black males

in gifted education (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b). Yet, other theorists believe that exploring the

voices of the oppressed and underrepresented draws warranted criticism because of the

researcher's willingness to believe the voice of the underrepresented over the dominant

culture/race (Duncan, 2005).

Critical Race Theory has garnered criticism lately because it is argued that it will invoke

stereotypes and ignore the diversity of opinions when only viewing the perspective of

underrepresented populations (Duncan, 2005). This argument is counterproductive and, in some

instances, hypocritical because most stories or opinions lack the voice or perspective of

underrepresented populations, and now that their voices are highlighted, it creates societal

concern. An additional challenge that Critical Race Theorists may experience is being able to

determine which stories to portray and the effect it has on the stories that are not told or withheld

from the general population. Critical Race Theory has recently created an uproar in public

schools, schools boards, and political agendas (Lopez et al., 2021). Advocates who oppose

Critical Race Theory argue that highlighting underrepresented populations' perceptions and

views on society discusses and provides information on racism, which they argue is divisive and

racist in itself. American society has shunned the voices of marginalized populations for so long, that the fear of hearing the American experience from the vantage points of the oppressed is frightening and it challenges the lie that America portrays to the rest of the world.

Black Experience

Black people in America were and in some cases still are viewed by some non-Black individuals and societal groups as primitive and therefore undeserving of full citizenship and equal opportunities (Duncan, 2005). Societal norms may have shifted, and a fight for equitable rights for all individuals has pursued, yet some deeply embedded beliefs and antiquated practices still plague Black families. These antiquated practices include the idea that property includes skin color which fueled the unequal distribution of economic, social, and political resources for Black Americans compared to their non-Black neighbors (Duncan, 2005). Understanding the prejudice and inequitable history of this country is essential in gaining perspective of the systemic injustices that are embedded in American public schools. As a result, these systemic injustices impact the identification and selection of Black males into gifted education. Consequently, Black males in their schools, homes, and communities experience systemic injustices that are embedded in American society that created inequities in power, opportunities, and resources (Lofton & Davis, 2015).

The phrase "young Black gifted male" does not exist to the majority of the academic community (Bonner, 2003). Questioning the existence of a young gifted Black male is a direct influencer to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. For instance, it influences teacher perception and decreases the probability of non-Black teachers referring Black males for gifted education (Whiting, 2009). Non-Black teachers are more likely to recommend Black males for classes with mentally delayed, learning disabled students instead of gifted

classes with gifted students (Whiting, 2009). Non-Black teachers are also more prone to recommend Black males for vocational classes to work with their hands instead of placing them on an advanced academic track with gifted, AP, and IB courses (Whiting, 2009). Consequently, Black males develop an attitude that they have to be ten times as smart as their white peers to even be considered for advanced educational opportunities (Bonner, 2003). Teachers' low expectations, limited advanced educational opportunities, and a lack of voice effect Black males self-perception and how they view education (Flowers & Banda, 2018).

Lack of Voice

Research indicates that Black males who perceive themselves as high achievers often will perform as high achievers (Flowers & Banda, 2018). Black males who have a high perception of their academic self-worth will have a positive and productive educational experience (Whiting, 2009). Yet, the voice of Black males and their perception of their educational experience is lost in translation due to the attention that is placed on academic and social experiences. As a result, Black male educational experience is homogenously viewed and there has been little research to delve into the phenomenon (Flowers & Banda, 2018). Without a true understanding of how Black males perceive their educational journey, the additional measures established to provide equitable educational experiences for Black males are deemed ineffective. For instance, school leaders need to understand how Black males view giftedness and why being considered gifted can have positive and negative effects on their academic journey. The lack of understanding of how Black males view education and advanced academic opportunities fuels misconceptions, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of behaviors which can lead to increased discipline infractions (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Higher Suspension Rate

The overrepresentation of Black males in school suspensions and disciplinary actions is systematically unjust. Educational stakeholders are aware of the overrepresentation of Black males facing discipline actions but there is minimal research on the influential factors that contribute to the issue (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Discipline issues that lead to out of school suspensions translate into student attendance concerns, minimal academic success, increased placement in special education, school failure, and school dropout. One factor that contributes to the overrepresentation of Black males in out of school suspensions is differing cultural backgrounds between the majority of educators (white educators) and Black male students. White teachers who have different cultural backgrounds compared to their Black male students could lead to racialized profiling based on unwarranted rumors, expectations, and stereotypes (Grissom & Redding, 2016). For instance, a white teacher could contribute a white child's behavior as typical and a Black student doing the exact same thing may be considered as displaying disruptive behavior. Teachers who work in schools that have mainstreamed values may identify Black males' culturally relevant behaviors as disrespectful, combative and argumentative (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Due to these cultural differences and misconceptions, Black students are suspended from school three to seven times more than their white peers. Cultural differences that generate stereotypes and misconceptions of Black males contribute to the high suspension rate and under identification of Black males in gifted education (Whiting, 2009).

The student discipline referral process relies heavily on a teacher's subjective perception of a situation which allows personal and cultural biases to intervene (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Personal biases, unjust stereotypes, and perceptions of Black males reduce opportunities for

advanced learning, and increase truancy, suspensions, and academic failures. Black males are suspended from schools at a higher rate than their white counterparts and serve longer suspensions, which effect their relationship with school and their self-image (Whiting, 2009). Whiting argued that increased suspension rates decrease Black males' willingness to participate in class but increase their dropout rates. High school dropout rates for low income Black males are the highest in education (Tate & Page, 2018). Consequently, Black male students who drop out from school are up to twenty times more likely to be incarcerated compared to their more affluent peers who attend college (Tate & Page, 2018). In addition, if the perception is that Black males are more likely to end up in prison, they are less likely to be given the benefit of the doubt and/or considered for advanced academic opportunities such as gifted education programs (Tate & Page, 2018). Yet, instead of providing educational supports and advanced academic opportunities, Black males are more likely to be referred for special education (Whiting, 2009).

Overrepresentation in Special Education

The societal perceptions of Black males are absorbed and manifested in education as an underrepresentation in gifted education, increased discipline actions, and an overrepresentation in special education (Whiting, 2009). One reason that Black students are overrepresented in special education is because educators typically have lower expectations for Black males compared to their more affluent peers. Stereotypes that are associated with Black males are the main catalyst that thwart educators from being able to identify the giftedness and strengths of Black males. The negative stereotypes and the perception of inferiority of Black males originates from the subjugation of Black bodies being subhuman, inferior, deficient, primitive, lazy, and unintelligent (Lofton & Davis, 2015). The negative perceptions of Black males within American

society systematically thwarts the academic advancement and economic mobility of Black males (Crabtree et al., 2019).

Black males face systemic inequalities in predominantly white and Black schools. The systemic inequalities in predominantly white and Black schools are different, but they all contribute to educational inequities that impact underrepresented populations (Lofton & Davis, 2015). In predominately Black schools, Black males face systematic inequalities in per-pupil spending, highly qualified teachers, discipline, and access to AP courses (Lofton & Davis, 2015). In predominantly white schools, Black males are subject to racialized tracking which denies them access to advanced academic opportunities but exposes them to lower track and special education courses (Lofton & Davis, 2015). Racialized tracking coupled with negative teacher perceptions of Black males' academic performance and behavior, leads to Black males being viewed negatively by white teachers in comparison to their white and Asian peers (Fox, 2016). White teachers are less likely to believe that Black students display gifted traits, and are pessimistic about Black males' abilities to complete college (Fox, 2016). Consequently, teachers are more likely to recommend Black students for special education services because of behavior whereas teachers refer white students for special education services based on their academic ability (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Unethically referring Black students for special education services because of negative perceptions and biases and limiting pertinent parental information on the special education process for parents propel the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

Gifted Gap – Underrepresentation of Black Males in Gifted Education

Gifted gap is a term used in education that defines the race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status differences by percentages in gifted education (Crabtree et al., 2019). This breakdown is

important because gifted educational opportunities ensure students' exposure to rigorous

instruction that prepares them to maximize their academic potential. The inequities in gifted

education, specifically the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education, generate

systemic barriers that reduce enrollment in advanced placement courses, college completion and

STEM participation (Crabtree et al., 2019). Educational leaders understand the importance of

gifted education for all students, yet the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education

continues to be a recurring issue in education (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b). Black students are

grossly underrepresented in gifted programs compared to their white counterparts (Grissom et

al., 2017). Research indicates that Black students are less likely to receive gifted services in math

and or reading due to their race and cultural background more than their socioeconomic status,

geographic location, and overall health (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Black students represent

about 16.7% of the student population in American and only 9.8% of those students are enrolled

in gifted programs. Black students represent the lowest percentage of minority students in gifted

education compared to their white counterparts. Black students are 66% less likely to be assigned

to gifted programs compared to their white peers. Education scholars are aware of the

underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education but have not clearly defined a reason that

contributes to their underrepresentation.

Giftedness exists throughout the various places in society, but may go unnoticed because

it does not align with the traditional school identifiers of giftedness and schools may fail to

identify and accept giftedness from different social and cultural norms (Mun et al., 2020). The

inability to understand and recognized gifted traits that do not align with traditional school gifted

behaviors has created false narratives and misconceptions that educational leaders attribute to the

underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. The most glaring misconception or false

narrative is that Black students are historically lower achievers compared to their white and non-Black minority peers which contributes to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016). This type of thinking influences school and teacher biases that unfairly minimize the number of qualified Black male students of receiving gifted education opportunities (Mun et al., 2020). Equitable practices in gifted education are essential for leveling the playing field, and it is imperative that educational leaders are able to address teacher biases and inequitable policies and practices that influence the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education (Mun et al., 2020). To effectively work towards addressing systemic inequalities in the identification process of Black males in gifted education we have to examine teacher deficit views and how they impact teacher referrals, additional gifted identification practices and how the dissemination of information impacts the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education (Mun et al., 2020).

Teacher Referrals

An important factor that impacts or impedes the success of Black male students is a positive and productive teacher student relationship (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The support or lack of support of teachers towards Black males academically can dramatically influence Black male students' academic motivation and achievement (Henderson et al., 2019). When Black male students feel supported, they are maximizing their academic ability and producing their best work, and when they do not feel supported they become disinterested and disconnected with school (Henderson et al., 2019). Research has not identified the quantifiable impact teacher relationships have on Black males' academic performance, but do argue that culturally responsive teaching and learning could foster trust, confidence and comfort for Black males in their educational journeys (Collins & Jones Roberson, 2020). Teachers demonstrate

positive and productive student relationships for Black males by developing and maintaining high expectations to continuously motivate Black males to maximize their academic potential (Henderson et al., 2019). Establishing high expectations for Black male students will encourage them to produce their best academic work which proves that they are qualified to experience gifted educational opportunities. Teachers who demonstrate low academic expectations for Black male students, will create negative implications for Black male students in their classes which will destroy Black males' academic motivation and potential (Henderson et al., 2019). Researchers will need to continue to examine how lower teacher expectations for Black males impact the argument that Black males historically score lower than their white peers and how Black males' academic underperformance correlates to their underrepresentation in gifted educational opportunities (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Research is clear that teacher low expectations for Black male students are a reflection of unfair biases and misconceptions that adversely affect gifted education opportunities for Black males (Henderson et al., 2019). Teacher expectations can become self-fulfilling for Black male students and the lack of recommendations for gifted and advanced courses negatively impact Black males academically (Fox, 2016).

Teachers develop low expectations for Black males consciously and unconsciously based on biases that teachers have developed based on their personal backgrounds, cultural environments, and personal experiences (Tate & Page, 2018). In addition, teachers' perception of Black males is centered on their personal experiences which are influenced by television, religious, and or societal groups that create an unconscious bias towards Black male students. Unconscious bias is a result of our brains making quick judgement of people due to their race, ethnicity, sex, and or situation without realizing. Another term for teacher developed unconscious bias is taste based discrimination when teachers develop personal views and

preferences on certain social groups (Fox, 2016). As a result, teachers take their unconscious biases and taste-based discrimination into the classroom and create adverse educational experiences for Black male students such as limiting or denying their recommendation for gifted educational services. To further explain, teachers will take their unconscious biases towards Black males as a group and place those same biases on individual students even if they do demonstrate characteristics and academic qualities of a gifted student which is called statistical discrimination (Fox, 2016). Therefore, teacher discretion in the gifted assignment process is declared an important contributor in the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education services (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

School districts that rely solely or mostly on the teacher referral process to identify and offer gifted educational services provide too much power over the gifted identification process to teachers (Ford, 1995). Providing too much power in the identification process to teachers is a major contributor to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teacher referrals can put Black males at a disadvantage if the majority of the teachers in a school or school district have negative or low perceptions for Black males, they will refrain from recommending Black males for gifted services (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Street level bureaucrats such as teachers with that much influence over the gifted identification process can serve as gatekeepers and dictate the type of students who gains access to gifted services (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Consequently, relying on teacher referrals can disservice Black male students if their teachers have low expectations for them and are unable to recognize their giftedness (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teachers have difficulty identifying gifted qualities in other students that do not align with their cultural background or the school's interpretation of gifted because of their personal biases (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative

that teachers can identify giftedness in all cultures and that the school's teaching staff is diversified.

Student demographics in public schools have drastically changed over time and minority students are becoming the majority student population and the majority of teachers are still predominantly white (Ford, 1995). Some white teachers have a more difficult time identifying giftedness of Black male students because of the differing cultural background and behaviors that may not necessarily align with the school standards of giftedness (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teacher perceptions and biases are fueled by race or ethnicity, and it leads to inequitable treatment of Black male students. The combination of white teachers' limited ability to identify Black male giftedness and their unjust biases lead to inequitable practices that are reflective in the referral process for gifted educational services. A diverse teaching staff could combat the inequitable treatment towards Black males in the gifted identification process. Students may positively respond to attending class with teachers who look like them by improving their attitudes, working harder and raising their own expectations (Fox, 2016). In addition, Black teachers are more likely to be able to identify Black males' giftedness due to similar cultural background and having higher expectations (Grissom & Redding, 2016). According to Grissom and Redding (2016) Black students who are in classes with Black teachers have a 6.2% chance of being referred for gifted services, compared to 2.1% of Black male students with non-Black teachers. A diversified teaching staff can improve the academic performance of Black male students and increase teacher recommendations for Black male students' participation in gifted education services which will minimize the gifted gap (Grissom & Redding, 2016). It is imperative that educational leaders and policy makers develop multiple avenues to identify gifted education students to provide a more equitable practice that does not alienate Black male

students. It would be unwise and detrimental to the academic success of Black male students to wait until the teacher workforce is more diversified and represents the student population in public schools instead of acting with a sense of urgency (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Education decision makers and policy makers need to take the same approach that they did with special education and create equitable practices that provide multiple opportunities for Black male students to be identified for gifted education services (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Gifted Identification Measures

Gifted identification measures utilize a combination of teacher checklists, rating scales, recommendations, and cognitive assessments to determine a student's academic capability and potential (Grissom & Redding, 2016). The teacher checklists, rating scales, cognitive assessments and referral process was generated with a specific student in mind and unconsciously alienated underrepresented populations such as Black males (Crabtree et al., 2019). The identification measures for gifted education programs are biased and socially unjust because of the narrow identification criteria and decision-makers' lack of knowledge of giftedness in underrepresented populations (Crabtree et al., 2019). The narrow identification criteria alienates underrepresented populations such as Black males because Black male "giftedness" does not resemble public school's depiction of what gifted should resemble (Crabtree et al., 2019). A teacher's lack of knowledge regarding how to identify the giftedness of students who are culturally different will leave qualified Black male students unreferred for gifted educational services (Crabtree et al., 2019). Another factor that impacts the narrow criteria used to identify Black males for gifted education are the inequities in opportunities to learn (Crabtree et al., 2019). For instance, Black males' limited access to advanced mathematics, extensive vocabulary usage, test preparation programs, and outside evaluators limits Black

males' opportunity to receive gifted educational services (Crabtree et al., 2019). Consequently, researchers argue that the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education is a result of a lack of educational resources and or academic achievement issues instead of race issues (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b). Yet, Black male students who are not recommended to take honors or more rigorous math and English courses have limited or no access to extensive educational resources are less likely to perform well on standardized gifted assessments (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b).

American public education relies too heavily on standardized testing which includes assessments for the gifted education identification process. Norm-referenced mental ability and achievement tests are the two types of assessments that are associated with the gifted identification process (Ford, 1995). Achievement tests can include intelligence based tests, and educational benchmarks that are administered in core classes such as math and English. Achievement and ability assessments are prominent factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. Standardized achievement and ability tests negatively impact the gifted gap because research indicate that those tests are biased and Black male students are at a disadvantage when taking those assessments (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b). A student who has average to below average testing data, is less likely to receive a referral for gifted education. Ford continues that even if a student displays gifted traits and performs well in the classroom but has low test scores, their chances of being referenced for gifted education are unlikely. School districts rely heavily on the standardized assessments and schools use those scores to determine student academic ability and teacher performance (Ford, 1995). Consequently, teachers focus on assessment scores without considering outside influences that contribute to those scores and they focus too little on student traits. For instance, Black male students may produce low test scores due to the inherent biases embedded in the language of the

test, test question, and overall format of the test (Hodges & Gentry, 2021b). To combat systemic inequities in the gifted identification process for Black males and to not rely heavily on standardized testing, requires an increase in collaboration amongst educators, students, and parents (Ford, 1995). Yet, Black families' involvement in school decision-making that impacts their children is limited (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008).

Dissemination of Information

Parental involvement is defined as a parent's involvement in school and at home with equal weight attributed to both locales (Henderson et al., 2019). This definition is important because school systems view parental involvement as what can be seen at the school or with school work and ignore parent's impact at home (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Schools devalue parental involvement at home because schools cannot measure that version of parental involvement because they cannot identify how it impacts schools. On the other hand, Black families value their impact at home and do not feel they have a place in the school systems which alludes to the disconnect between public school culture and Black family culture (Henderson et al., 2019). Consequently, since schools view Black parents as not being involved based on public school culture, schools develop unjust biases and criticisms that alienate Black families. Black males and families who feel alienated have difficulty developing their sense of belonging in the school system, which adversely effects their academic performance (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Also, if the cultural standards of the school differs from Black family culture, it can create conflict with Black families' cultural identity and isolate them (Collins & Jones Roberson, 2020). To understand the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of students, school districts need to improve their efforts to create a sense of belonging in schools for Black males and their families (Henderson et al., 2019).

Black American parents are involved in their children's education but they demonstrate their support at home and not at school which is contrary to what the school encourages and view as positive parental support (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Therefore, Black American parents are viewed as not being as involved in their children's education compared to their white and non-Black minority peers (Henderson et al., 2019). As a result, educators develop unjust biases and assumptions that Black parents do not care about their children's education. Due to this unjustly biased assumption about Black families, educators and school districts tend not to inform Black parents about the problems, issues, and educational opportunities such as gifted education. The information gap between Black Americans and their white and non-Black minority peers is an additional contributor to the systemic inequalities embedded in education (Glazerman et al., 2018). Black American parents who did not excel in school are usually not associated in social circles with highly educated parents and that lack of affiliation to those social groups contribute to the information gap. Black parents' limited access to information thwarts them from being involved in their children's educational outcomes and minimizes their parental involvement at school.

Researchers have examined the importance of parental involvement in the academic achievement in students but still fail to disseminate pertinent educational information to Black families (Henderson et al., 2019). Unjust biases and perceptions of Black parents' involvement in their children's education is the driving factor that schools utilize to limit or not value disseminating information to Black families about their child's education (Henderson et al., 2019). White students and their parents are perceived to receive vital educational information that impacts their academic future such as exposure to college campuses, out of country travel, advanced placement courses and gifted education opportunities. White parents are more

informed and receive more information from schools because they are viewed as being more involved in their children's academic success because they are more present in the schools compared to Black families (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). White families are also connected to those highly educated social groups that receive pertinent educational information which increases the information gap between white and Black families (Glazerman et al., 2018). Consequently, the more informed families are about educational opportunities the better they can advocate for their children's academic exposure and success. Black parents are typically uninformed about their children's education opportunities such as gifted education and are unable to appropriately advocate or refer their students for gifted services (Henderson et al., 2019). If the information gap continues to grow, the gifted gap will continue to balloon as well between Black male students and non-Black minority students. Therefore, there has been an increase in attention to eliminate or minimize the Information Gap (Castleman & Page, 2015). Researchers are also exploring how parents and students respond to educational information and processes that contribute to the systemic inequalities in educational access and achievement (Castleman & Page, 2015).

Educational leaders have to create and utilize methods of communication that are equitable and allow underrepresented parents an opportunity to receive vital information about their children's school and educational opportunities (Glazerman et al., 2018). The ability to decipher more educational information will provide an opportunity for Black families to determine if their parental desire for their children align with public schools' desire and expectations for underrepresented populations (Glazerman et al., 2018). Therefore, school districts are utilizing personalized text messages as a direct means of communication to inform parents about educational processes and procedures that contribute to the systemic inequalities in

education (Castleman & Page, 2015). Parents who can receive and decipher this information will afford an opportunity to better support and advocate for their students' educational opportunities such as gifted education services. Informed Black parents can explore more equitable educational outcomes in schools, leveling the playing field and decreasing the gifted gap (Billingham & Hunt, 2016). It is imperative that these communication efforts begin as early as elementary school because positive and productive educational experiences in elementary school can increase the probability of Black males obtaining academic success. Black male students' personal view toward their own identity is influenced by their earliest educational experiences (Collins & Jones Roberson, 2020). Improving communication with Black parents will create a sense of belonging for both Black parents and students which will allow Black parents an opportunity to advocate for their children and encourage Black males to maximize their academic ability (Collins & Jones Roberson, 2020).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programing with a particular focus on the perceptions held by educators within a system that has demonstrably perpetuated the systemic epistemic educational injustices that thwart Black males from being identified and selected to participate in gifted programs in elementary and middle school. The focus of the study is to identify any systemic educational inequities that consciously or subconsciously influence the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. Therefore, this study provides insight into educators' personal experiences in their educational settings, and how those personal experiences impact their perceptions and processes that impact the identification and selection process of gifted students

Research Design

Given the nature of the identified problem, I utilize a qualitative phenomenological research design to see a pattern of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust societal practices that constrain the quality of education for Black Americans. Qualitative inquiry encourages a reflective process that distinguishes the positives in taking a qualitative research approach (Agee, 2009). Phenomenological research is focused on with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of those who live it. The goal is to unearth the essential meaning and essence of the human experience being explored (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). It is both a philosophy of science and specific research methodology (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

A phenomenological research design is appropriate for this study because it focused on the firsthand experiences of individuals who are working directly within the phenomenon that is being studied (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). This practice gives the participants a voice and tells their side of the story to provide an accurate picture of what is transpiring within the phenomenon. A phenomenological research design differs from a quantitative research design because it does not have to be validated by numbers and measurements, it is measured by human experiences in their daily lives. By recognizing our own experiences, phenomenologists understand that perceptions are formed based on the individuals' experiences of their world, therefore, making those experiences their reality. To effectively see a pattern of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust societal practices that constrain the quality of education for Black Americans, I must explore insight into the phenomenon from the individuals who are living it.

A study that effectively utilizes a phenomenological approach will contain a description, reduction, imaginative variation, and a composite description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). A description of the phenomenon will include how the research participant experienced the phenomenon, placing more value on their voice and experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015), and phenomenological reduction which allows the researcher to review participant responses and identify any common themes, patterns, and relationships which will minimize the amount of data that was developed throughout the research (Moustakas, 1994). During the reduction process, the researcher will be able to identify any researcher biases and preconceived ideas before he started the process (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation will offer guidance to the researcher to discover any foundational patterns to themes that were observed during the phenomenological reduction phase. Lastly, the composite description phase will allow the researcher to combine the participants' lived experiences with the obtained data to gain a better understanding of the

phenomenon being researched (Patton, 2002). Effectively utilizing these four phases of

phenomenological design will permit the researcher to declare rigor and verification while I

utilized a qualitative inquiry (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Groenwald, 2004).

Given the nature of the research question, phenomenology is well suited for the goal of

seeing a pattern of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust societal practices

that constrain the quality of education for Black Americans. The following research questions

guide this study:

1) What are the perceptions, as captured through the lived experiences of educators, about the

   organizational norms, habits, and practices involved in the selection of students into gifted

   programs and how do these impact the epistemic justice for Black males?

   a) How are school districts training gifted student selection committee members to

      unbiasedly select gifted students?

   b) How are school districts addressing the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted

      education programs in elementary school?

   c) What are district guidelines to provide equitable opportunities for Black males to be

      identified and selected into gifted educational programs?

   d) What other organizational norms, habits, and practices are identified that may impact the

      selection of Black male students in gifted programs?

A qualitative phenomenological research design will allow the participants to reveal their

thought processes, values, and biases that have the potential to impact the gifted identification

and selection process for Black males (Groenewald, 2004).

Selection and Recruitment of Participants

A phenomenological research study does not have a set number or require a large number of participants to achieve validity or meet saturation (Englander, 2012). The goal of a phenomenologist is to identify worthy participants who have the lived experiences that relate to the phenomenon being studied (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Throughout the process of identifying qualified participants, I interviewed participants until the data reached saturation at eight participants and then I interviewed two more participants to verify. Research indicated saturation could be reached anywhere between three to fifteen participants (Patton, 2002).

To acquire research participants, I initiated a snowball sampling method to ensure that I gained access and interviewed stakeholders who are contributors in the gifted identification and selection decision-making process. Snowball sampling allows the interviewee to provide the interviewer the next person to interview and who could provide more detailed insight into the gifted identification process (Groenewald, 2004). I started the interview process with building level administrators in elementary school and then allowed them to suggest additional stakeholders who I should interview. I conducted he majority of the interviews at the elementary level because research indicates that systemic injustices in the gifted identification process of Black males in elementary school effects the rest of a student's educational journey (Crabtree et al., 2019). Black males who are not selected for gifted education opportunities in elementary school are less likely to take advanced placement courses in middle and high school which limits their opportunity to attend or gradate college and that impacts the economic mobility of Black families (Crabtree et al., 2019).

Once the participants were identified, they were emailed a research participant consent form that informed them about the purpose of the study, the participants we were a seeking and

an opportunity to participate or decline participation. In addition, the consent form also included my usage of pseudonyms throughout the data collection process to conceal the identity of the participant. Including the pseudonyms clause is vital to the success of the study because it allows participants the comfort and security to answer questions openly and honestly. The information included in the informed consent form was designed to afford the participants an opportunity to make an informed decision on their willingness to participate in the study.

Sample and Demographic Description

Through this phenomenological qualitative research, I interviewed participants on an ongoing basis and engaged in concurrent analysis, monitoring for indications of saturation. My goal was to seek ten street level bureaucrats, preferably two from each of five school districts – however, this was simply a benchmark designed for planning purposes and a rough estimate of how many interviews it might take to reach saturation. I scheduled interviews with elementary principals and sought out recommendations for any additional stakeholders whom I should interview to see a pattern of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust societal practices that constrain the quality of education for Black males. Elementary school is the focal point of this study because student exposure to more rigorous course work in elementary school propels them to prerequisite middle school courses for advanced placement courses in high school. If Black males do not get exposure to gifted education opportunities in elementary school they are less likely to be recommended for honors and advanced placement courses in middle and high school (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). After interviewing eight administrators, my concurrent analysis revealed a solid set of unifying perspectives and themes, and the divergent perspectives were held on a set of common areas, revealing identifiable patterns there as well. I conducted two more interviews to confirm that the interviews had reached saturation.

The school districts that are represented in this study vary in total number of students, percentage of Black students and percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The opportunity to interview a variety of participants that worked in differing school districts increased the validity of the study by not isolating the results or findings to schools of similar student counts, percentage of Black students or percentage of economically disadvantaged students. One of the most important factors is the variation of socioeconomic status within each school and school district because it provides insight to future research and the impact parental or community resources has on the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. The diverse demographics, and economic resources of these school districts enrich this study and lead to future studies that explore systemic inequalities in the gifted education selection and identification process based on locality and socioeconomic status.

Table 1

School Population of Research Participants

Research Participant Name	School Name	Total number of Students	% of Black Students	% Economically Disadvantaged Students
Principal Spivey AP Bryant Gifted Coordinator Smith	School District A	975	71%	51.7%
AP White	School District B	14,048	55.2%	36.5%

Principal James	School District C	4,179	88%	75.6%
Principal Wright	School District D	992	77.9%	76.7%
Principal Barfield Principal Jenkins Gifted Coordinator Brown	School District E	2,610	39.3%	40.4%
Principal Wright*	School District F	26,677	53.3%	57.6%

*First year at a new school so was able to deliver perspectives and comparison from two

different school divisions*

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, my personal experiences with the identification and selection of gifted

students played a factor in the gathering and interpretation of the data. I have personal

experiences with gifted education as a student, parent, and an administrator. Through those

experiences I have developed my own ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions.

My ontological position is that my experiences should be a part of the study. As a K12 student

myself, even though I made all As, received exceptional scores on all aptitude tests, I was not

identified or selected to participate in gifted programs until middle school. From my

understanding, one of my middle school teachers advocated for me to be tested as a gifted

student and then selected to participate in the program. Without that teacher advocating for me, I would have never been identified or selected to participate in the gifted education program, nor the opportunity to take advanced academic courses in high school. My parents were unaware of the policies or procedures in the school district to refer me for gifted educational opportunities. The lack of parental information for underrepresented populations, the limitations and lack of teacher referrals for Black males, and the under identification of Black males for gifted educational opportunities continued to be areas of concern that I identified as a teacher and administrator.

Throughout this study, my epistemological stance is to facilitate each participant to voice their experiences with the gifted education selection and identification process. I attempted to view their personal experiences objectively, and I carefully monitored my personal experiences and biases that may have shaped my engagement with the interview participants and interpretation of the data. I carefully revisited the interview recordings and compared my notes to utilize these insights as a mean to improve my analytic lens. By owning my own positionality and being transparent about the inevitability of bias, I created a reflective mechanism to explore and address bias as it emerged. I used my heightened self-awareness to be disciplined in my approach, avoiding asking leading questions and facilitating participants to share their experiences with minimal influences from my own perspectives.

Data Collection

School climate and culture is impacted by the educational leader's instructional knowledge, ability to motivate, and their intent for the students and school (Scribner et al., 1999). I utilized a semi-structured interview process to create a relaxing environment that encouraged administrators and gifted coordinators to confidently express their educational views, and to

analyze their views to determine if there are any patterns of historically rooted misconceptions and systematically unjust societal practices that constrain the quality of education for Black males. A phenomenological study requires the researcher to ask an ample number of questions that produce rich data that allow the researcher to identify common themes and patterns (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). The semi-structured interviews also permitted me to explore and unearth the detailed experience of the phenomena by the participant in their daily lives (Creswell, 2013). Throughout this interview process, I exercised a flexible scheduling approach to schedule interview times based on the availability of the participants.

Interview Measures

In a phenomenological study, it is important that the interview questions encourage the participants to participate openly and willingly express their feelings, explain their answers, and allow the researcher into their personal experiences that influence their perception of the phenomenon (Welman & Kruger, 1999). The goal of the study was to identify educators' personal experiences that influence their perceptions that demonstrably perpetuated systemic epistemic educational injustices that thwart Black males from being identified and selected to participate in gifted programs in elementary and middle school. The questions should also be open ended questions that allow the participant and researcher to engage in open dialogue (Groenwald, 2004). I created a semi-structured interview protocol with open ended questions designed to encourage the participants to shed light on topics that were identified in the literature as influences to the underrepresentation of Black males for gifted education. I included prompts or follow up questions for the participants if they provided unclear or ambiguous responses to generate a clearer understanding of the participant's perspectives. I strived to be flexible and adaptive in scheduling interviews to meet the scheduling demands of the principals and school

leaders. At the end of each interview, I provided an opportunity to perform a second interview to gain clarity on participant responses or to ask follow-up questions based on a review of the data from the interview. The purpose of the semi-structured interview process was to simulate a non-pressured situation and create a sense of comfort so that participants could provide honest, straightforward answers to the interview questions. Finally, I utilized member checks to provide opportunities for participants to share feedback on the interview and ensure that both the participant and researcher were clear on responses (Moustakas, 1994). Effective member checking provided a platform for the participants to add additional information to their interview or provide clarity to any of their answers (Moustakas, 1994).

Throughout the semi-structured interview process, I recorded the in-person interviews on my iPhone and recorded the virtual interviews on Zoom. I stored the in-person and virtual recordings in One-Drive, a password encrypted cloud storage service, to revisit later so I could identify any inflections of the participants' voice tone and hesitation and to better understand participants' responses. I also relistened to each interview to identify any moments where my biases had emerged throughout the interview process. I then utilized an Otter.ai, an online transcription program that transcribes audio files. I also, relistened to each interview and compared it to the transcription to check for accuracy and clarity on participants' responses. In addition, I took copious field notes based on how the participants responded to the questions and verbal prompts, their inflections, tone of voice, hesitations, and other factors that provided a sharper understanding of their lived experiences, as well as my own reflections and insights about refinements and improvements that could be made during the data collection process (Hays & Singh, 2012). Similarly, throughout all phases of the data collection and the Explication of data, I memoed to scaffold my personal thoughts and biases to increase the validity and

reliability of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012), and as a way of capturing insights as they came to me. I built on these memos in the more formal stages of data Explication.

Explication of the Data

Within the phenomenological tradition, the concept of data analysis is often replaced with the exploitation *of data*, which is a conceptualization specifically designed to overcome concerns about the connotation that analysis can become breaking holistic meaning into discrete and decontextualized parts (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999). In this way, I use the concept of explication in place of analysis as a conscious effort to avoid the often unexplored and unexamined assumptions of the traditional positivist research paradigms that educational leadership scholars can rely on. Here, explication offers a purposeful means of systematically balancing the insights gained from data reduction with clustering units of meanings and developing contextualized composite findings. In my exploration of this conceptualization, my dissertation chair and I talked about the explication of the data as a way of seeing the forest *because* of the trees – that is, holding context, collective meaning, and individual meaning in balance and seeking to honor the voices of individual participants while also seeking to understand these experiences as a collective part of understanding the phenomenon. In this way, explication is a set of "systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships" (Hycner, 1999).

Loosely speaking, this approach has some common features of grounded theory's open, axial, and selective coding (see Table 2). However, the explication of data offers a reciprocal means of coding that moves back and forth between the individual research subjects, the units of meaning, and the overarching themes and patterns that are revealed through the data analysis process. Without this purposeful means of returning to the foundation of meaning, that is the

voices of the individual research participants, there is a risk of losing the uniqueness of

individual voices and assuring that one is able to see the individual clearly within the larger

explication of the phenomenon. In this way, to effectively explicate the data, I engaged in 1)

phenomenological reduction, 2) delineating units of meaning, 3) clustering of units to form

themes, 4) summarizing each interview to stay connected to the authentic voices of the

participants, and 5) creating a composite summary that describes the forest with the benefit of an

understanding of the trees. Table 2 below highlights those relationships between the widely

understood phases of open, axial, and selective coding and what I argue is a more thorough and

reciprocal process that avoids some of the potential pitfalls of "analysis" (Myran, 2022).

Table 2

Understanding the Explication of Data

Phenomenological reduction: An analytic process designed to explicate underlying units of meaning framed within the ecological and lived context of that phenomenon under investigation (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999). The "conscious, effortful, opening of ourselves to the phenomenon as a phenomenon" (Keen, 1975, p. 38). Listening to and identifying meaning from the voices of the participants in its most rudimentary and unstructured form.	**Open coding**: An open discovery process of reading, re-reading, and combing over transcripts and/or other data, sentence by sentence in search of the answer to the repeated question "what is this about?
Delineating units of meaning: Extracting and defining those statements that are seen as illuminating the phenomenon being explored (Hycner, 1999). These units of meaning are carefully	**Axial coding**: With the discovery that takes place through several rounds of

examined, and refined, and redundant units of meaning are collapsed or eliminated (Moustakas, 1994).

Clustering of units of meaning to form themes: The researcher examines or "interrogates" (Hycner, 1999, p. 153) the units of meaning, carefully to allow the voices and lived experiences of the participants to be fully heard and to avoid any presuppositions, seeking the essence of meaning within the larger ecological context (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Summarizing each interview: Recognizes that each research participant experiences the phenomenon in their own way, but that each of these unique experiences can be understood with reference to the other participants and the larger ecological context that the phenomenon takes place in. In this way, there is a healthy tension between the unique individual and their interactions with others and social context.

Creating composite summaries: Here the researcher seeks to strike a balance between the unique voices of the individual and the features of the larger ecological context that give shape to those individual's experiences. Through this process, these are given equal weight in the analytic process and allowed to maintain their importance in the findings. The composite summary then serves as the final step in balancing these different perspectives. Themes that don't resonate across

open coding, the researchers begin looking for patterns, relationships, and ways that the open codes are structured – seeking to find order and meaning to the otherwise individual and independent open codes.

Selective coding: Building from the axial codes as a creative and adaptive interim step, selective coding seeks to develop and clarify a comprehensive organizational coding structure that captures the overarching meaning discovered in the data.

participants are noted and framed as important counterpoints for

the unique or minority voices.

Note. Adapted from Myran's 2022 notes on *Notes on Phenomenological Research Methods*

I used the process outlined above to guide the detailed explication of the data and in generating the substantive findings presented in chapter four. Specifically, phenomenological reduction allowed me to view the phenomenon in its own space with its specific meaning and structure drawn from the phenomenon itself (Keen, 1975). Throughout the data reduction process, I reflected on my own positionality, which supported me in listening to participant responses with a transparent understanding of any potential biasing outlooks, which in turn supported the goal of not passing judgement or determining if the responses were right or wrong (Lauer, 1958).

Trustworthiness

A study has to garner the interest of the reader and address a real concern in society. In addition, to add validity and increase the likelihood of attracting readers and other scholars, a study has to exhibit trustworthiness. To ensure a study has a proficient level of trustworthiness, the researcher has to demonstrate credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility is displayed by accurately describing and representing the lived experiences of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That includes checking participants, auditing transcripts, and clarifying any ambiguous responses. Transferability is achieved by thoroughly describing the phenomenon so the reader can make connections with the themes that the researcher identified in similar populations in other studies (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Effectively representing the participants' points of view and their experiences, the researcher has to ensure that he delivers detailed descriptions and direct quotes and utilize multiple sources to support the data and

development of themes (Patton, 2002). Dependability is a result of the consistency of the data and vetting such data through triangulation, writing memos, and the use of an auditor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is achieved by connecting the themes to the testimonies of the participants while minimizing the researcher's bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

In this chapter I weave my journey of explication of data into presenting the findings of

the study as it is not possible to parse out these closely integrated elements. Throughout the

explication of data, I analyzed each transcript line by line separately and in its entirety and

engaged in a reciprocal process of deriving individual meanings at the participant level,

identifying themes, organizing, and reorganizing those themes, summarizing individual

interviews, and finally seeking synthesis insights about the collective stories. As discussed

above, in order to achieve this balance between individual and collective meanings, I employed

Hycner's five phases of explication: (1) phenomenological reduction, (2) delineating units of

meaning, (3) clustering of units of meaning to form themes, (4) summarizing each interview, and

(5) creating composite summaries.

Phenomenological Reduction

I began with the phenomenological reduction of the data that is a process for examining

the research participant's experiential statements through an analytic process designed to

explicate underlying units of meaning framed within the ecological and lived context of the

phenomenon under investigation (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999). Through this "conscious,

effortful, opening of ourselves to the phenomenon as a phenomenon" (Keen, 1975, p. 38), I

listened, read, and memoed to draw meaning from the voices of the participants in their most

rudimentary and unstructured form. Transcript by transcript, I identified salient experiential

statements and made exploratory notes to put the emergent data into a form that I could begin to

identify and solidify emergent patterns, and in-turn explore them in greater detail in subsequent

phases of the analysis. Sample exploratory notes and experiential statements are offered below as

an illustration of this process of phenomenological reduction.

Table 3

Sample of Exploratory Notes and Experiential Statements

Experiential Statement	Original Transcript	Exploratory Notes
Negative Teacher Perceptions impact on Black students and their learning process.	So, we actually have a program where three schools that are in Southside have the opportunity to complete out of zone waivers to come to our building. So, on average, we get about 70 to 95 African American students that decide to join our school um, so with that, I just say whatever. With that there was some notion for some of the educators that it was going to be a difficulty teaching some of these students because they kind of thought that they would be behaving in a way and thought that they would not know as much they would have, they would automatically be a part of your remediation groups, you would	Were these students afforded an equitable opportunity to be successful? What triggered the thought process of these teachers? Was it their socioeconomic status, prior school, or the color of their skin?

	need to care to do all of these things to get them where they are	
Misconceptions of the gifted student can lead to an underrepresentation of specific groups in gifted education	Oh, um, definitely a negative effect. I mean, because, and only because I have seen this, yeah, where, like a parent or another teacher or a staff member, or somebody will bring up, and they'll say, you know, I was watching James the other day in the cafeteria, and they were doing this thing. And he was like, well was he referred to gifted? And the classroom teachers' answer is well he's SPED. You can be both, you can be twice exceptional. And I don't think that most of the most teachers, I don't think even realized that's possible. So that tells me that they're not well trained to recognize giftedness if it is an exclusionary kind of situation.	Did you speak up and educate the teacher on the various forms of gifted? How often is this witnessed? How do you know that you can be "twice exceptional", where did you gain that information?
Building relationships with students and students with the	And I do think they want to do well. It's just a matter of figuring out how to use our experiences and what resources we	To know where students are, the teacher/educator needs to know the student. Therefore,

| school creates an atmosphere that allows each to teach each other. | have and meet the students where they are. | build a productive relationship with the student. |

Delineating Units of Meaning

Building on the more "open" form of coding during the phenomenological reduction phase, guided by these unstructured observations, I returned to the individual transcripts and further explicated each line of each participant's transcript, seeking units of meaning that influenced or impacted the identification and selection of gifted students. I thoroughly re-read each experiential statement and went through the participants' respective transcript again to analyze any context clues that could bring further clarity to these statements. Through this process of identifying and better understanding each experiential statement, thematic patterns emerged. In this way, I incrementally extracted and defined those statements that illuminated the phenomenon being explored (Hycner, 1999). I carefully examined these units of meaning, refining, clarifying, collapsing, or eliminating redundant units of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). I captured these units of meaning on charts in order to document the emergent process and as a means of balancing meaning at the individual participant level with collective synthesis, meaning, and restraint from coming to conclusions too quickly (see Table 4 below for examples of these delineated units of meaning)

Table 4

Sample of Emergent Units of Meaning – Early Themes

Experiential Statement	Emergent Units of Meaning/Early Themes
Some teachers will not recommend students that display gifted characteristics because they can be challenging in class and do not have a good relationship with the teacher.	Teacher perceptions impact student outcomes
Each student has a unique story and cultural experiences that pique their interest and motivate them to achieve academic success	Positive teacher student relationships are essential to maximizing student outcomes.
Parental views and experiences on education are advertently or inadvertently passed down to their children	Parent school relationships has a direct impact on student's academic outcomes.

Clustering Units of Meaning to Form Themes

Once I had developed these emergent thematic patterns for each participant individually, through a structured process, I compared each participant's individual thematic patterns, or clustering of meanings, to determine if any collective, or cross-cutting themes emerged. Here I interrogated (Hycner, 1999, p. 153) these units of meaning, careful to assure that the voices and lived experiences of the participants are fully heard and to avoid any of my own presuppositions and drawing out the essence of meaning within the larger ecological context (Creswell, 1998;

Moustakas, 1994). Here I organized those clustering of themes into a more advanced table than seen above in Table 4, which afforded me a structured way to organize and re-organize the emergent hierarchies of meaning (see Table 5)

Table 5

Clustering Themes and Identifying Hierarchies of Meaning of Individual Experiential Statements

Theme 1: Parental Perception on education
Sub-theme A: Parental perception on virtual instruction
Sub-theme B: Parental perception on in-person instruction
Sub-theme C: Personal perceptions influenced by personal experiences
Theme 2: Bias
Sub-theme A: Teacher's bias towards marginalized parents
Sub-theme B: Teacher bias toward marginalized students
Sub-theme C: Teacher bias on the gifted student

Summarizing Each Interview

Recognizing the importance of not missing the forest for the trees, as the various units of meaning began to solidify and patterns of these units emerged more clearly, the processes of explication pauses to return to the individual interviews to re-center on the individual. This step is critical as it emphasizes that each research participant experiences the phenomenon in their own way, and that each of these unique experiences can be understood with reference to the other participants and the larger ecological context that the phenomenon takes place in. As such the next phase of this process was to dissect each emergent theme and decide if any subthemes were present that impacted the overarching theme from that question. Identifying sub-themes

allowed me to encompass other angles, and or viewpoints of the participants, leveraging the healthy tension between the uniqueness of the individual and their interactions with others and the social context. I repeated this process for each research participant and five or more overarching themes emerged with a variety of subthemes that stemmed from their identified experiential statements. To effectively track and validate these themes and sub-themes I created a chart (see Table 6) that afforded me an opportunity to store the experiential statements, overarching themes and more accurately identified the location of the subthemes within the sections of the participant's transcript that led to these discoveries.

Table 6

Sample Table of Individual Personal Experiential Themes: Participant #1

Exemplar Quotes

Theme 1: Systemic educational Bias	
Sub-theme 1a: Biased Gifted testing	But then also at the same time making sure that that tool is balanced and equitable, because as you know, there's some things that's going back to culture where you and I weren't exposed to in our coming up. They (non-Black males) may have been exposed to (the information that's asked on the assessment) but making sure there is a fair and equitable test to meet the needs of all students.
Sub-theme 1b: Teacher favorites	We form our biases as teachers and therefore, we know that we like this kid, or we're going to work with that kid more than we work with another kid. And so, the favored kid gets a little bit more exposure and so forth. And so, I think that kind of hinder it (the gifted identification and selection process)

Theme 2: Trust

Sub-theme 2a Parental trust in the educational system	And so, I think my parents understand that once you show you believe in them, and you believe in their child they will give that support.
Sub-theme 2b Educator's trust in receiving parental support	And so, when things became challenging, I call parents so we can establish that relationship. And what I'm trying to do here is to rebuild the trust. Therefore, I'll follow up and call the parent and say, Hey, I just want to let you know that your child did a great job this week.

Creating Composite Summaries

Here the researcher seeks to strike a balance between the unique voices of the individual and the features of the larger ecological context that give shape to those individual's experiences. Through this process, these are given equal weight in the analytic process and allowed to maintain their importance in the findings. The composite summary then serves as the final step in balancing these different perspectives. Themes that don't resonate across participants are noted and framed as important counterpoints for the unique or minority voices

After I had broken down themes and sub-themes for each participant, the next phase was to compare the various themes from all of the research participants and determine if there were any commonalities. The comparative process allowed me to identify 9 overarching themes with a variety of subthemes that credited the research participants' voice, perception, and experiences. Of those nine collective themes, I continued to review them and the sub-themes to see if there

were any commonalities in those. This part of the explication of data allowed me to simplify the

nine themes to four cumulative themes that represented the group.

Table 7

Table of Group Experiential Themes

Themes and Sub-Themes	Exemplar Quotes
Theme 1: Name of Theme Building relationships are essential to producing positive academic results	
Sub-theme 1a Educators relationships and its impact on student outcomes	Participant #1: And I think we need to, to make more of an emphasis on building relationships with children, getting to know the children, so that we can apply their interests, their lives to things that make them go into the daily instruction to make him more real, and to make it more meaningful for them. Participant #2: Okay, I feel like if you're just going to have a better outcome when you're relevant, okay, with being relevant, that means building relationships with students, so you can meet their meet them where they are. We are going to do some self-inventory lists, and we're also doing some goal setting, every single child in our building is going to do an academic and a personal goal. So, I can't say what's going to motivate you, if I don't really know what motivates you, right?

Participant #3: And I do think they want to do well. It's just a matter of figuring out how to, I guess use what we use our experiences and what we have and kind of meet them where they are.

Sub-theme 1b Educators relationships with parents and how they view parental involvement	Participant #1: But I think we need to meet them where they are. We always say we are going to meet the kids where they are, but we need to meet the parents where they are. For example, if I have a father and a mother, who hypothetically is having a hard time with finances or drugs, I don't need to tell them this is what I want. Maybe I need to meet them where they are and say, Okay, I'm going to help you as best I can, so we can help your child. The parents may not get to school, or every PTA meeting, so I need to find a way to get resources to them.

Participant #2: Providing any support that the kid might need, willingness to work with the teacher, to, you know, maybe come in if they can, and give a presentation on Career Day, or, you know, field trips or whatever. And then again, also willingness to, I guess, work together if there is a problem that arises.

Participant #3: Okay, as an educator, if you really want parents are involved, you have to build relationships with their parents. You can't wait to call a parent when the child's failing, and tell them some negative, build positive relationships with the child from the beginning, excuse me with the parent from the beginning, right? And let them know your procedures, your class setup, have things that are operating. As far as administrator, let them know how things are going

to be done. And then work together with the parents and get them on

board with you. Because if you get them on board, and you can get

them in, you probably going to experience a whole lot more success.

After this thorough, iterative, and reciprocal process, I identified three primary themes and a number of supporting themes. These are, 1) participants' perceptions of a changing educational landscape, 2) how educators' personal experiences influence their outlooks and professional practices, and 3) perceptions about gifted education identification. These three themes represent an overall model that captures the interrelationships among the themes and sub-themes where perceptions of a changing educational landscape, how their personal experiences shape these perceptions, and how, in turn, these factors shape their perceptions about Black male gifted identification work in consort to form a collective understanding of the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of gifted Black males (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

A Model of Educators Perceptions about the Identification of Gifted Black Males
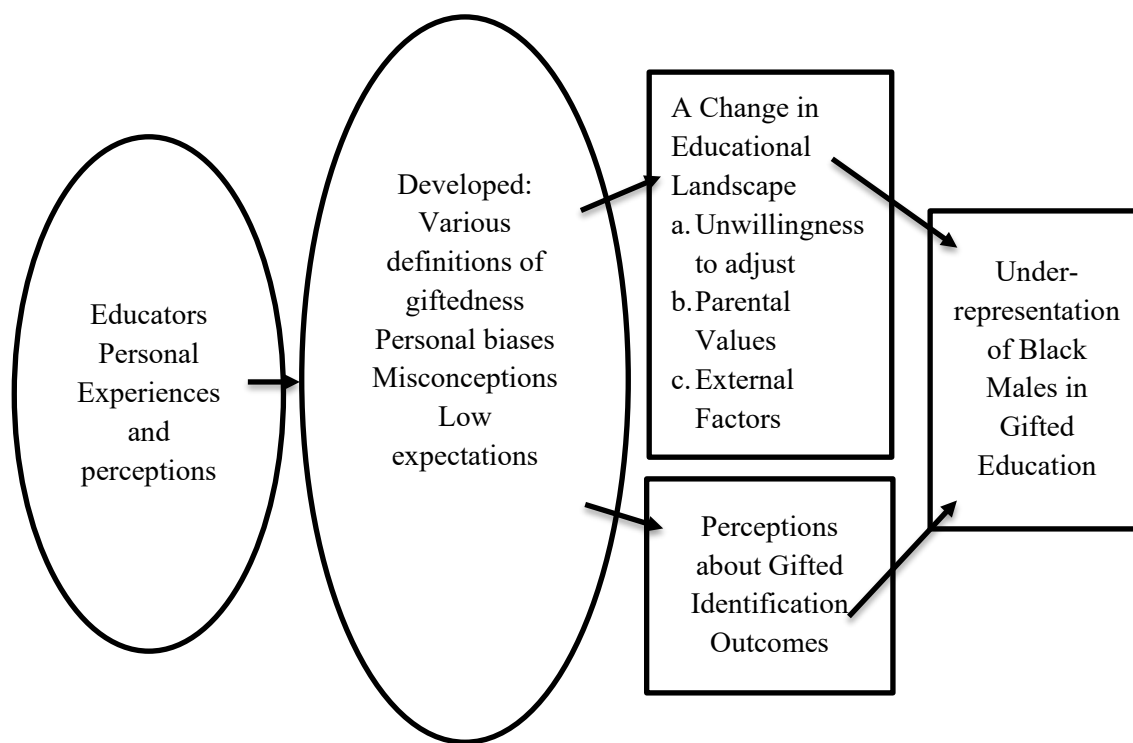
A Change in the Educational Landscape

A common and consistent theme from most of the participants was that the education

landscape has changed. The educational landscape has change in student demographics as

minorities are becoming the majority, societal norms have shifted, and the overall responsibility

of the educational system has changed due to legislative changes and initiatives. Due to these

changes, the research participants believe that the educational landscape has changed drastically

from the educational landscape that they experienced as children. Most of the participants

referenced this change and comparison several times throughout the interview process. A change

in the educational landscape has a direct impact on Black males and the gifted identification

process. For instance, a change or lack of change in instructional practices, culturally

representative activities, and schools' ability to attract minority parents to school functions has a

direct impact on Black males in gifted education. The changes in education that the participants identified are an educator's willingness or lack thereof to adjust to new instructional practices and processes, parental values, home and community supports, and education accountability measures. The participants argued that these shifts in education started before the Covid-19 pandemic but were exacerbated in the last four to five years. The participants argued that from an administrator and supervisor's perspective, these changes have made the education profession harder, and it contributes to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education

Educator's Unwillingness to Adjust to New Instructional Practices

The majority of teachers in America are white while minority students are becoming the majority student population (Fox, 2016). This dynamic has a negative effect on Black males because white teachers are more likely to see minority students such as Asian students in a positive nature, but Black students more negatively. Therefore, as public schools' student demographics change throughout the country and trend towards a majority minority student population, "traditional instructional" practices that are aligned to teach white middle class students are not as effective to ensure Black students' academic success (Bradshaw et al., 2010). To provide an equitable educational opportunity for Black students, educators must adopt culturally responsive instructional practices that improve the academic outcomes of Black students. Most teachers who work in public schools resonated with mainstream cultural values which is a form of white supremacy and are less likely to adopt or acknowledge the cultural values of marginalized populations such as Black males. White teacher cultural differences and their unwillingness to adjust to the cultural values of Black students effects how white teachers view Black students' academic capabilities and negatively impact Black students' opportunities to explore advanced academic programs such as gifted education (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Grounded in this overarching observation, six of the research participants acknowledged that there has been an adjustment in teacher attitudes and how they receive new instructional practices and ideas. Experienced teachers are less likely to adjust to their instructional practices to meet the instructional needs of their students. This unwillingness to adjust could center on their lack of understanding or acceptance of underrepresented students such as Black male's respective experiences and the importance to create a sense of belonging in schools for Black students. Principal Thompson provided insight to this phenomenon and shared his observations from experienced teachers in the classroom:

> From what I've observed, within the last four or five years, teachers are stuck in that tradition, they want it to be like when they were in school, and they want students to be able to be just like that. So, teachers want you to come in and be that perfect kid, and they are not willing to bend.

Principal Thompson highlights how educators hang on to a connection or faint memory of their educational experience and how they project those expectations on their students. Principal Thompson also acknowledged that often the educators' memory of how they were in school is a far-fetched reality that they cling to and do not embrace reality at times. What is unclear is the race of the educators that hold on to this far-fetched ideal and the specifics of this previous form of education that they cling to. This false expectation of school and the modern student limits the educator's ability to implement culturally relevant instructional practices to maximize student outcomes of underrepresented populations such as Black males. Principal Jenkins echoed this sentiment when she added:

> I think that education is disconnected or disjointed. Because there are so many so many best practices, you know, on how things should be done. But to me that doesn't suffice,

teachers have not bought into what all those best practices are. And then marrying all of those, best practices to what's really best for kids. I feel like today's kids have so many holes that need to be filled. Therefore, I think education as a whole is just disjointed. We don't know how to put it all together, I guess their best practices, fill in the holes for kids, and then get the teacher buy in to make you know, one good collaboration.

Principal Jenkins expanded on how she perceived educators' inability or unwillingness to utilize updated research proven instructional practices has a negative impact on the academic success of underrepresented students. Gifted Coordinator Smith argued that educators and education in general are failing our students. For instance, Gifted Coordinator Smith stated:

I feel like we are slowly spiraling. I don't want to say out of control, but we're slowly spiraling in the wrong direction. In my opinion. I think that we are, and this is how it has been done and no one wants to change. We are teaching children the basics when the world needs so much more.

The sole responsibility of a school or an educator is to prepare students to be successful and productive citizens when they enter society. Principal Thompson believes that education is and should be the great equalizer in societal and financial opportunities. Yet, all participants acknowledged that if educators are unwilling to utilize best practices to instruct students, they questioned how schools provide an equitable educational opportunity for all students. To try and make sense of this change in teachers' willingness to adjust and adapt to student and societal changes, some research participants shifted their concern to the parents. Four research participants argued that parents and educators alike have accepted this change in teacher attitudes, because the parental values have shifted, and more parents are disconnected from education and schools than before.

Parental Values

More specifically related to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted educational programs, these perceptions set the tone for parents' lack of participation in school related activities, visiting the school, and a sense of belonging to the school for them as parents and for their children. This perceived disconnection from school dissuades parents from advocating for their children to receive the best academic opportunity that their academic abilities would warrant. Consequently, parents of Black males are less likely to refer their students, or advocate for their students to be tested, selected, or identified as gifted and ultimately participate in gifted education programs. Black males have 66% less chance compared to their white peers to be assigned to gifted programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teacher referrals are one of the main gifted identification/recommendation tools and coincidentally one of the biggest contributors to the inequities in the gifted education selection and identification process due to the subjectivity of teacher referrals. In order to combat the research proven inequities in teacher referrals for Black students to immerse in the gifted identification process, parents need to increase their school involvement and refer their own children. Yet, parents of marginalized populations are less likely to be involved in their children's education in the school setting due to a variety of reasons. As a result, minority parents who are not highly educated or wealthy receive minimal investment from school systems which increases the inequitable gifted practices (Mun et al., 2020). The minimal school investment for low income and non-highly educated minority parents stems from how educators perceive the value that the parents put on education. These low parental expectations of minority parents stemmed from misconceptions and historical societal injustices that have plagued and effected the progress of Black families in America. An effective school and parent collaboration would invest in those marginalized parents and provide

education and support to support them in effectively referring their children and increasing the number of Black males in gifted education.

Five participants expressed those parental educational values and their home life has a direct impact on the academic success of students. They attest that one of the changes in education in comparison to when they were in school is the shift in how parents value education. They argued that when they were growing up, their parents were more vested in their student's education and bestowed the importance of receiving a quality education on their children. They believe that the lack of parental value placed on education has translated into students being disrespectful to educators and lack of admiration for the profession. When asked where we go from here, how educators will change how parents value education, Principal Spivey suggested that schools need to assume the responsibility and help instill family values back into the households. Principal Spivey stated:

> So, I think a lot of times, I believe, is that we need to get back to the old way, we need to put back those family values. Not only the family values, but we also need to teach those parents that we have today those values. And a lot of kids that we're teaching since I've come along have kids now, and their kids are just like them. So somewhere we're dropping the ball, and we're not instilling those family values, those traditions, so we need to get back to that and get away from everything is electronic, but we still need to go back to those traditional ways.

Principal Spivey advocated to instill those family values to increase parental participation in schools. It is unclear if Principal Spivey's idea of traditional family values align with the cultural values of Black families or if she expected families to adopt mainstream or white family values. Principal Spivey mentioned that parents are quick to throw up their hands and declare that it is

nothing they can do with the child when the school asks them for support. Principal Thompson reiterated a similar experience as he explained:

> And it's unfortunate that sometimes parents have given up on the children and that they want you to just go ahead and suspend them or kick them out of school, I don't care what you have in that kid. That's kind of disheartening for me, because to think that a parent would give up on their child at school is heartbreaking.

Therefore, when a parent is not willing to support their child in school, the responsibility to support the student in a parent role falls on the school and teachers. Yet, teachers who currently feel they are overworked and underpaid have a difficult time assuming the parental role to those students according to Principal James. To put her stance on educator responsibility into perspective, Principal James stated:

> And I think that it puts it so much more on a teacher role within the education institution, because of the fact that we, our children may not come to learn and a lot of them do, but a good amount don't come to learn. So, we have to first set the tone and expectation that they are smart young people, and let them know why, why it's so important for them to prioritize education.

The collective argument from the research participants who took this stance is that if parents were not instilling the importance of education to their children, then they were less likely to demonstrate their educationally gifted talents. Some of the research participants attributed the shift in parental values to societal, community and home factors that could be generational, caused by the pandemic or based on their own personal experiences in school. Only one of the research participants acknowledged that Black parents are more likely to support their students academically in their homes instead of showing up to school for scheduled events.

More specifically related to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted educational programs, these perceptions set the tone for the lack of communication, support and resources for Black students and parents. These misconceived perceptions generate systemic inequitable educational injustices that continue to disconnect the parents from school and contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education due to limited or non-existent parental referrals.

External Factors

Finally, the research participants' perceptions about the changing educational landscape and its impact on the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education revealed the sub-theme of external factors that shape student opportunities. The pandemic has had an adverse effect on teacher retention and teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Schools that are predominately Black and low income are experiencing the greatest shortage in highly qualified teachers. Unfortunately, the students who need the most support and the most qualified teachers have the least access to highly qualified teachers in their schools. The lack of access to highly qualified teachers and an increase in long-term substitutes, novice teachers and teachers that are not equipped to offer culturally responsive instruction negatively impacts the academic success of Black males. Highly qualified teachers have a better understanding of instructional methods and cultural differences, and are more capable of providing the social emotional, academic, and behavioral supports to improve student outcomes in marginalized populations such as Black males (Blazar, 2021). The ability to maximize the student academic outcomes of marginalized communities can combat the external factors that they may experience such as home and class environment, parental education, and school focus on meeting accreditation measures. Highly qualified teachers who can maximize academic outcomes of marginalized

student populations such as Black males will ensure Black males are positioned to explore all educational opportunities that align with their intellectual ability which includes gifted education programs. The reason that predominately Black and low income schools are experienced the greatest decline in highly qualified teachers were not specified in this study. Yet, one could attest that since the majority of teachers in public education are white, they may want to work in school systems that align more with their cultural values which represents itself in predominately white and higher income schools.

The participants viewed external factors as factors that impacted student academic achievement outside of the individual students. Four participants cited home environment, class environment, parental education, and the focus on meeting state accountability measures as external factors that have altered the educational landscape. For instance, AP Bryant believes that to get a clear understanding of the shift in the educational landscape and the modern student, educators need to look at a student's home life, surroundings, and their environment. Principal Bryant continues to explain his perspective on how and why the educational landscape has shifted as he stated:

I look at their home life, their surroundings, and their environment. And if you look at the   kids, parents who put more of an emphasis on education and who are more educated

themselves, it's probably a stronger correlation of them excelling compared to a home

that education may not be valued as much and with the parents not being as educated.

The participants did not distinguish which external factor had the most influence on students and their academic performance but viewed each factor as instrumental in shaping education. They also did not address that limited advanced academic opportunities has a direct impact on the

economic immobility of Black families and this process could be connected to a systemic injustice within America.

Principal Wright expounded on the dynamics that have shifted since the Covid-19 pandemic and the quickly growing teacher shortage, job losses, and families' inabilities to cover expenses. She encompasses those concerns as she declares:

> When you're in a classroom that has a long-term sub that for as much as they're trying doesn't know how to motivate the kids or doesn't know how to provide access to the curriculum, or you don't have a community where education is at the forefront of what we do and who we are. Then I think you do see more of the kids not valuing education. And we had an incredibly high absentee rate last year. It was absurd. We were probably close to 50% chronically absent. Oh, yeah, we were like 47 or 48. We probably and we had kids that missed at least 90 to 100 days.

In Principal Wright's school, she noted that the importance of students attending in-person classes had deteriorated so much that 50% of her students were chronically absent. The rationale for parents keeping their students at home at the elementary level was never determined throughout this study but one could assume that the parents viewed the school as not taking their child's education serious, due to the lack of highly qualified instruction and teachers. One could assume that an increase in chronically absent students in one school district could be influenced by environmental factors that include parents having to pick up additional jobs to make up for lost wages and older siblings staying home to babysit. Principal James believes that the environmental factors that are plaguing today's students make it difficult for them to achieve academic success. Principal James alludes to this concern when she stated:

And then when you talk about all the environmental factors that are out there, that our young people are having to deal with, right? That's like for an adult to deal with. Right now, we're expecting our young people to deal with everything they're dealing with in the home, in the community and then transition right into the classroom, as a student and be ready to learn. Okay, I think it's totally impacted our educational institution. And it will continue to if we don't put things in place.

Principal James strongly suggests that schools assume the responsibility and support students and parents through any environmental factors that are impeding their students' academic success. Gifted Coordinator Brown disagreed with Principal James and did not see schools providing those additional supports a reality based on the educational landscape of today. Gifted Coordinator Brown argued that schools are not able to apply that additional support that families and students may need because they are too concerned with meeting state and federal accountability measures. Gifted Coordinator Brown's argument is in alignment with the creation of public schools because public schools were not created to improve the socioeconomic status of underrepresented populations but to advance the progress of white middle class men. Due to this demand to meet those state and federal benchmarks, Gifted Coordinator Brown feels that gifted education and the gifted student is shorted as well.

To meet accountability benchmarks, Gifted Coordinator Brown expressed that gifted students are not a priority, and more emphasis is placed on students passing their standards of learning (SOL) assessments. For instance, Gifted Coordinator Brown explained

Um, I think in general, we, the administrators are glad to see when students are found eligible for gifted. Um, I don't know that it is necessarily the priority. I feel like at this

time in history, testing and passing test scores and SOLs definitely trump the

identification and selection of gifted students.

I followed up and asked her to provide clarity on how she arrived at the conclusion that gifted

students are not the focus of administrators or school districts. She responded with:

I know that to be true. I mean, speaking, you know, as an educator, and as a parent, I

know that it whether it's with the best intentions, but they feel that the gifted kid is going

to be okay. You know, you don't have to meet with them every week at a reading table,

and they are still going to be okay, but is that what we want for them?

Gifted Coordinator Brown did not stand alone in this accusation, as Gifted Coordinator Smith

argued the same sentiment throughout her interview. Gifted Coach Smith blamed the

accountability measures as a hindrance in providing additional supports for students and the lack

of involvement in the gifted education process. Yet, Gifted Coordinator Smith is more specific

on who to blame for the accountability challenges that have altered the educational landscape:

Well, it's that accountability piece. It's the DOE, it's the superintendents that have their

feet on the schools' necks. And that's why a lot of my friends are getting out of public

schools, and they're getting into consulting, and charter school, and things like that.

Accountability measures set forth by the state and federal government determine school and

school district accreditation status. Gifted Coordinator Brown and Gifted Coordinator Smith

were adamant that since this is the measure that determines administrator and school success the

focus of instructional practices, resources and supports are geared towards meeting the standards

of learning assessment. Standards of learning were not applicable when most of the research

participants were in school, and they argue that schools were more able to provide those supports

when the focus was not on "passing the test."

The research participants' personal experiences during their time in school and their own educational journeys is the comparative measure that is utilized to determine that the educational landscape has changed. The reader can gather that educator's perceptions are their reality and it is what drives their educational stance, viewpoint and expectations of students, parents, and community stakeholders. Consequently, their viewpoints, expectations and educational stances could contain biases that inadvertently negatively impact Black males in gifted education programs.

Educators' Personal Experiences

An individual's perspective is their reality, and this holds true for educators. Educators utilize their personal educational experiences to develop their educational values, and perspectives which influence their decision making. These perspectives that influence decision-making can both positively and negatively impact students, but it more often has a negative effect on Black males. For instance, some educators' developed perceptions that Black students are the main reason the educational system is not working for them, and that they create environments that lead to police brutality (Lofton & Davis, 2015). As I explicated the data, I was able to surmise that an educator's personal experiences also impacted their decision to enter education as a profession, influence their views on education, how they communicate with students and peers, and influenced biases that impacted their willingness to refer students for gifted education. Educators deliver the memorable catchy phrases that "each day is a new day," and "each student gets a fresh start," but through this study the research participants have demonstrated that their experiences dictate how they view and interact with a particular student and any student with similar characteristics.

An interesting revelation throughout this study is that six participants in this study remembered a teacher who inspired them and led them to education as a career. AP White glowed when I asked her what led her to get into education, as she responded:

Well, what led me to this journey really was a teacher that I had when I was in high school. In the 11th, grade, she watched how I helped other students, specifically with math, and she asked me what I thought about doing as a career and I was like, I really don't know, I haven't really thought about, I mean, I've thought about it, but I'm not quite sure. She says, well, watching how you are with your peers, I think you should really think about education. And so, she kind of planted that seed for me, not knowing that I would love it right away, but I just said, okay, I'm going to pick that.

AP White did not hesitate when her teacher implored her to get into education because the teacher felt AP White displayed those teacher characteristics as a student. She remembered her teacher believing in her before she even believed in herself, and she dedicated her educational journey to that belief system as she poured into students whom she has had the opportunity to serve. AP White expressed her mission to replicate the belief and encouragement that her teacher bestowed on her to the students who she is permitted to serve when she stated:

Now, let me say this, let's say I have a class. And there was somebody that I could tell had gifted tendencies, but did not do well on their standardized test, I could, and I would vouch for that kid and say, hey, look, I know that they did not do good on that test, maybe they're having a bad day, I really think you need to take a deeper look at them. And they would if they were qualified.

AP White's experience with her teacher is a positive one that drove her to advocate for students as her teacher advocated for her. On the other hand, Principal James' experiences with her

teachers were negative and those negative experiences inspired her to do more for the students that she had the opportunity to serve. Principal James explained how she felt her teachers failed her by stating:

> I felt like my teacher didn't take the time with me in school. I didn't have the support in school, and nobody motivated me to go to school, right? And when hearing that repeatedly, I decided to go back and get my certification to teach. And when I transitioned back into education, I started in the elementary sector.

As Principal James clearly demonstrates, an educator's personal experience in education whether positive or negative remains with them and influences their career, instructional, social, and emotional decisions. All of the research participants discussed how they utilized their educational experiences as an embodiment of how they ran or helped run their schools or specific programs. Principal Spivey proclaimed that she based her educational values as a principal on "what she has seen and her own educational experiences when she was growing up." Therefore, the experiences that educators encounter will highlight an educator's commitment to their students but also ignite personal biases that may stem from cultural differences.

More specifically related to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted educational programs, these perceptions set the tone for personal experiences and biases that teachers knowingly or unknowingly obtain impacts their perception of the gifted student. This perception of what the gifted student looks like has a direct impact on how they score and refer students for gifted education that do not align with their perception of the gifted student. Their experiences throughout their educational journey that shaped their educational views and personal biases has a direct impact on the selection and identification process of Black males for gifted education programs. As proven throughout this study, educators' personal biases and perceptions can have

both a positive and negative effect on the gifted identification and selection process for Black males. Yet, the data indicate from the administrators and gifted coordinators perspective an overwhelmingly negative impact that educators' perception and personal bias has on the selection and identification process of students for gifted identification which directly influences the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education.

Systemic Practices that Impact the Gifted Identification and Selection Process

All the research participants discussed the importance of providing an equitable educational experience for all of their students who are in their schools or programs. Yet, they all also agreed that either consciously or subconsciously they have witnessed firsthand teacher practices that have impeded the academic success of students. In particular, they noted that cultural differences, biases, and misconceptions by teachers towards minority, particularly Black male students, have limited those students' educational opportunities. These subconscious misconceptions and low expectations for Black students manifested themselves in AP White's school as they initiated a program to diversify the school:

> So, we actually have a program where three schools that are in northern *Southside* have the opportunity to complete out of zone waivers to come to our building. So, on average, we get about 70 to 95 African American students that decide to join our school, so with there was some notion for some of the educators that it was going to be difficult teaching some of these students because they kind of thought that they would be behaving a certain way and thought that they would not know as much as the other students. They assumed that these students would automatically be a part of their remediation groups, and they would be responsible to implementing all of these things to get them where the rest of the students are.

AP White was conscious enough to share that when those students did transition to their school, they were actually some of the higher performing students. Yet, teachers developed a negative perception and lowered their expectations for those students based on the area that they lived and the color of their skin. This practice to inequitably label, limit and develop low expectations has proven to exist in educational settings throughout the country. Principal Wright also identified that some teachers develop negative preconceived perceptions of students with disabilities as well:

> Oh, um, definitely a negative effect. I mean, because, and only because I have seen this, yeah, where, like a parent or another teacher or a staff member, or somebody will bring up, and they'll say, you know, I was watching James the other day in the cafeteria, and they were doing this thing. And he was like, was he referred to gifted. And the classroom teachers' answer is well he's SPED. They need to understand that you can be both, you can be twice exceptional. And I don't think that most of the most teachers even realized that that is possible. So that tells me that they're not well trained to recognize giftedness if it is an exclusionary kind of situation.

Consequently, teacher personal experiences and biases limit educational opportunities for students who do not align with their personal views of a gifted student and how they view gifted education. In addition, administrators and schools are not adequately addressing these concerns and providing the proper training to improve teachers' ability to identify and select Black males to enter gifted education programs. As a result, those biases have a direct negative impact on the gifted identification measures that are used to identify and ultimately select students for the gifted program.

Teacher Perceptions' Impact on Gifted Identification Measures

As I shifted the interview process to focus specifically on gifted students, gifted education, and the identification and selection process of gifted students, I discovered that there is not a clear description that describes the gifted student. Therefore, educators rely on their personal experiences and perceptions to define and associate giftedness and the gifted. Education's inability to define or successfully identify a definition of a gifted student that encompasses all variations of giftedness contributes to the underrepresentation of marginalized populations such as Black males. This revelation is exemplified in the many variations by the research participants of what a gifted student resembles. Yet, the many variations of a gifted student did not resemble the characteristics of Black males. There were some similarities in their description of a gifted student but there were fundamental differences as well which encourages a subjective approach to identifying and selecting gifted students. For instance, Gifted Coordinator Smith defines the gifted student as:

> I would describe the gifted student as a high ability learner. Not necessarily a high ability performer. Make sense? But a high ability learner, someone who is constantly curious, got it precocious desire to always want to know something, always wants to question something, and they always want to have a conversation with an adult or with someone who has information to share. They may not be higher achievers in your core content areas, right? They may not be high achievers in your reading, math, science, history. But when you look at the 21st century skills, and you look at things that require them to require them to use reasoning, logic, spatial reasoning, visuals, when you put that in front of them, that's when they soar.

The way Gifted Coordinator Smith describes the gifted student it would almost be impossible to identify that student without knowing the students and identifying what motivates and drives

them. In addition, the interpretation by an educator of a student's demonstration of being curious, willingness to ask questions, and eagerness to learn is subjective to the educator's view of those characteristics. Gifted Coordinator Brown took a different approach as she described what a gifted student resembles in her view:

> And this is what a gifted student is, well, these are the indicators, but there are all these caveats. While this is what a white middle class gifted student might look like, but this is what someone from Hispanic culture might look like. And this is, you know, how a gifted student in a different culture may look. I think that's a big issue, and I might be getting ahead here but I think that's a big issue with the lack of representation. Teachers do not understand what the different variations of gifted may look like according to their culture. Or they think that it just looks like a student sitting there and being quiet and getting a 100 on everything. And that's just not how it is.

Gifted Coordinator Brown acknowledges that a display of giftedness may vary based on the student's culture, but she omits that exemplars of giftedness will vary based on the student's gift as well.

A common agreeable theme that emerged amongst the participants is that all variations of a student's giftedness are not captured with the current means utilized to identify and select gifted students. Principal Wright provided insight to the missed opportunity of educators identifying students who display gifted traits other than academically:

> I think of whatever gifted is that they have, you know, because some of them are artistically gifted, some are musically gifted, some are mathematically gifted, some, you know, can tell a story that just blows you out of the water. There are some that really that,

like, spatial kid looks at a problem and figure it out kind of thing. And so, I think that's

something that is maybe not always accepted.

Consequently, the variations of giftedness that may differ by culture, ability, and interests

coupled with educator bias, misconceptions and negative perceptions increases the challenge to

successfully identify marginalized populations for gifted education opportunities.

The gifted identification measures vary from school/school district and from one principal,

assistant principal, or gifted coordinator to the next. Three common gifted identification and

selection tools that the research participants referenced in the teacher referral process were

teacher questionnaire, standardized gifted identification assessments, and review of the student's

academic performance.

Gifted Identification Referral Process

The referral process is mostly teacher referrals but could include parent, student, and

administrator referrals. The referral process in the gifted identification and selection process is

the most utilized gifted measurement and the most controversial and biased method. All research

participants believe that teachers are not properly trained to identify gifted students and school

districts are not doing anything to train teachers. When asked if she thinks teachers are equipped

to accurately identify gifted students, Principal Jenkins quickly replied "No, teachers are not

properly trained to identify gifted students." Principal Jenkins continued:

My thought is most people assume giftedness has to do with academics. And I think that

gifted is more than academics. Like I said, it could be problem solving and creativity,

because we know you could be gifted in the arts. So, I feel like that presents itself

differently, then, you know, your core subjects in school. How do we identify? Well, you

know, how do we pinpoint those students who need to be in gifted, but they just are your

run of the mill student? To me, those students aren't identified properly.

AP White voiced the same concerns as Principal Jenkins that teachers are not properly trained to

identify gifted students and it results in deserving students being denied access and other students

who do not meet the criteria being recommended:

> I think that teachers think that gifted means bright, like smart. But in my experience, as
>
> an educator, I've had students that were failing and that were in were gifted because the
>
> information that they were being taught or being accounted for they had no interest. But
>
> if you gave them some Legos or I say, hey, look, I want you to create a catapult or
>
> something and I wanted it to drop 50 feet from something. 20 minutes tops, they got
>
> rubber band and sticks, and they've already created it. And so again, it's kind of building
>
> those relationships and know where your children are displaying interest. So, I don't
>
> know that. I think that's that is definitely a misconception that straight as means gifted
>
> because you can make straight As and not be gifted. You're just smart. That doesn't
>
> necessarily mean that you're gifted.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are teachers who do not recommend or score a student

accurately because the student does not align with the teacher's perception of a gifted student.

Gifted Coordinator Smith recalls an encounter that she had with a teacher:

> I have seen where a teacher referred, well not referred but completed the checklist in the
>
> referral process. The teacher does not know what number we're looking for. So, the
>
> student scored in that range where we were looking for on the checklist and scored into
>
> the program. Well, when I went there, she said that I don't usually refer gifted students
>
> like that they have to be really gifted. And I said, well, they fell within the range. And if

you don't want to refer them, then I'll get the counselor or someone else to refer. But we

do have teachers in the district that are reluctant to refer based on their old perception of

gifted or the notion a student has to be off the charts and things like that.

In the example provided by Gifted Coordinator Smith the checklist works in the student's favor

because the teacher does not know what the checklist totals or cut score is. It does generate the

question that if the teacher was aware of what the cut off score was, would she have altered the

scoring of the checklist? To get the perspective of another gifted coordinator, I asked Gifted

Coordinator Brown how teachers' lack of understanding or inability to effectively identify the

gifted students impacts the teacher referral process. Gifted Coordinator Brown answered:

Teachers just don't recommend the students that they have a poor relationship with,

some teachers, I mean. I've worked with teachers who see gifted as a reward. And so, if

they don't have a good relationship with the student because of behavioral conflicts,

they're not necessarily going to score them highly.

I followed up and asked if she saw this inequitable practice in the gifted teacher referral process

frequently and Gifted Coordinator Brown answered:

Well, I don't know if it's something that happens frequently. I don't think it's something

that happens consciously. Because I'd like to believe that nobody that's in education

would ever have it out for a kid. But I just think sometimes that their personal bias, and,

you know, their beliefs that what they mean, basically their lack of understanding.

Gifted Coordinator Brown declared that the inequitable teacher referral process is one of the

main causes that effects the number of students in the gifted program and the demographics in

the gifted program. Gifted Coordinator Smith believed that an inequitable teacher referral

process is the number one contributor to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted

education. 100% of the research participants did acknowledge that the teacher referral process is a major contributor to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education.

Gifted Identifier Standardized Assessment

A standardized assessment is the other tool that is utilized at the various schools and school districts represented in this study. Standardized assessments are generally created to represent mainstream or white culture; therefore, Black students are instantly at a disadvantage on standardized assessments. There are variations of the assessment that each school or school district utilizes. Some school districts assign the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT-3), and/or the Otis-Lennon School Ability test (OLSAT). Some schools utilize all three. The majority of the represented school districts administer one form of this gifted identification screener in second grade and again in fifth grade. The cut scores vary from one school district to the next. For instance, Gifted Coordinator Smith stated that small school district utilizes a cut score of 111 on the NNAT3 assessment as a qualifying measurement to get students to the next phase of the gifted identification process. On the other hand, Gifted Coordinator Brown's school district administers the CogAT assessment and students have to score at least a 115 for further consideration. School districts utilize the gifted identification standardized assessment that they believe is more beneficial and aligned to their school district.

Standardized gifted assessment identifiers received mixed reviews that aligned based on the participants' titles. The gifted coordinators believed that a variety of standardized gifted identification assessments were beneficial to identifying students who are not typically referred by the teacher. Both gifted coordinators from their respective school districts shared elaborate stories that highlighted the importance of gifted identification standardized assessments. Gifted Coordinator Smith and Gifted Coordinator Brown both acknowledged that students who are not

normally considered gifted by their teachers because of their behaviors or classroom grades, may get into the gifted program because of their assessment scores. Gifted Coordinator Smith's statement embodies how both gifted coordinators viewed the gifted identification standardized assessments:

> And you know, it identifies those students who are least likely to be referred. Have you not taken the screener? You know, that's what I like about the screener. And maybe we're going to talk about, we're gonna get to that but that is what I like about the screener. It really pulls out those kids who are least likely to be referred. And I see kids and they're like, they're in there? I'm like, Yeah, you want to see their scores?

It was interesting to see how the gifted coordinators processed the importance of the standardized assessments because they believed it took the onus or responsibility away from biased teacher referrals rooted in subjective perceptions.

The other eight research participants were either assistant principals or principals and their viewpoint on standardized gifted identification assessments was vastly different than the gifted coordinators. All of the administrators argued that a standardized gifted identification assessment failed the students because the assessment cannot identify the various forms of giftedness in students. AP White provided her take on the gifted identification standardized assessment:

> You know, I just think that, you know, when we're talking about standardized testing, I think we got to be careful with it. Because I think a lot of it has to do with exposure and if some of our students are not exposed to some of the things that are talked about on the standardized testing, we're gonna probably miss a lot of our students. That could and

should be considered when administering standardized assessments to identify gifted students.

AP White acknowledged that standardized assessments are tailored to non-minority students and marginalized populations such as Black males may not be able to identify or receive an equitable opportunity to score well enough to enter the gifted program. To follow-up, I asked Principal Jenkins if she thought standardized gifted identification assessments identified the various forms of student giftedness. Principal Jenkins replied:

No, I don't. I guess I feel like when we're assessing, the tests need to accommodate those skills. I don't think you can assess musicality on paper. Um, you know, I don't think you can assess problem solving to a degree on paper, we can give a kid a puzzle, the riddles, or the rhymes or whatever, you know the brain teasers. But, again, this is just me, maybe I just said the coding and the building of blocks may access another part of the brain, which is different from brain teasers. And we know some kids just think different. And so, the assessment may not identify that and may not provide an opportunity for that alternative thinking.

When asked a similar question, Principal Wright responded in a similar fashion:

In a standardized test? I mean, you can't, unless you're really gifted at filling in the bubbles. I mean if that was a category, yeah, sure. Like, no, because it needs to be something like what we were doing, where it's a prompt and a verbal response. And then one of the ones was like she gives them a grid. And it was they get three different colored crayons, and she says, create your own pattern, where the colors don't touch each other. You can't assess that on a standardized test. So, I think a lot of times you don't see the imagination that you see in gifted students, you can't see imagination on bubbles.

Principals and APs view instructional and school practice from a different lens because they have

to ensure that all students receive an equitable education and educational opportunities. Yet,

when asked how involved they are in the identification and selection of gifted students, they all

stated that they are minimally involved throughout the process.

Principals and assistant principals view gifted education as an extension of their educational

institution. Their lack of involvement in the program is unclear from their perspectives but they

all agree that they have little to no involvement in the gifted identification and selection process.

Seven out of eight of the administrators who participated in the research stated that they receive a

list of the students who have qualified to enter the gifted program but have no idea who referred

the students or how they qualified. Principal Spivey attempted to provide clarity to the lack of

administrator involvement in the identification and selection process of gifted students:

> Honestly, I can say that I really must look at it. I would say I have 0% involvement in
>
> the gifted student process. And the reason why I say that, is if your school, any school,
>
> have a coordinator or a person that oversees the gifted and talented program, they're
>
> tasked with giving these students these tests, the bar and the scores are already set. As far
>
> as nominating the student, really, you're not. It's based on data.

Therefore, Principal Spivey declares her contribution to the gifted program is limited because of

the systemic practices that are established to gain acceptance into the program. The lack of

involvement or awareness of student demographics in the gifted program is more prominent in

Principal Jenkins' school:

> You know, being honest. I'm only aware of one gifted student in the building I currently
>
> serve. But she tested in in another school within this school district. That's a concern, but

neither here nor there. I don't even know what the gifted population looks like in the

building that I'm in now.

The administrators are also unaware of the activities that the gifted students are working on, and

some are unsure on how the gifted program is affecting student achievement in their respective

schools. The lack of involvement in the gifted programs in their respective schools have

contributed to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs as well.

Gifted Education Programs' Student Results

100% of the research participants acknowledge that there is a systematic issue with the

identification and selection process of gifted students. All participants concurred that there is a

severe underrepresentation of Black males in their respective gifted education programs. Most

students that are in each gifted program in each school and school district varies between White

females and White males. Then, in most of the school districts that participated, the next

subgroup of students are Black females and then Black males. Black male gifted program

participation is scarce in both predominately white and Black schools alike. In School district A,

the student population was 71% Black and Gifted Coordinator Smith described the student

population in that school and school district's gifted program as follows:

Um, it's definitely majority white. It's majority white girls. I'm looking at it all. I just

looked at the numbers the other day, it's definitely majority white. Our Black students are not far

behind. I would say maybe if I'm looking at percentages, I would say maybe 70 or 60% white,

maybe 30% Black and the rest are mixed races. It is not so bad when I look at it and it varies by

school. But my number one subgroup that is lacking is Black boys, Black boys are definitely

lacking everywhere.

In the participating predominately white school districts, Black males make up a smaller percentage of students in gifted programs. For instance, Gifted Coordinator Brown breaks down the demographics of students who are in the gifted program in school district E:

Um, right now, my most prominent group is white males. Definitely. And then followed by white females. I probably have about 48 from first grade to fifth grade. Um, and   I want to say maybe seven or eight are black, and I have that I think maybe four or five   black males.

According to Gifted Coordinator Brown, Black males make up roughly 8% of the gifted student population in her school district.

A common thread in the majority of the participating school districts is that there is only one gifted coordinator who oversees the gifted program. As established earlier, administrators are not as involved in the identification and selection process of gifted students and gifted education in general, so the majority of the responsibility falls on the coordinators. Therefore, limited resources are one of the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. The other influences that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education are the systematic practices embedded in the process such as teacher referrals, checklists, and standardized identification assessments. The research participants argue that personal biases either consciously or subconsciously adversely affect teacher referrals and checklists that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. In addition, the standardized gifted identification assessments are biased because those assessments are built for white males or females and experiences that appeal to their culture. One eye opening influencer to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education is the continuous variations of a gifted student and what the gifted student looks like. The understanding is that each description by the participants is reflective of the personal

experiences of the educator. It is clear that the ten variations of a gifted student, and the characteristics that define a gifted student do not fit the description of Black male students.

Additional Factors that Impact the Selection of Black Male Students in Gifted Programs

Some research participants believe that parental involvement is important to the overall academic success of students. This understanding stands true for gifted students as well. Nine research participants were able to distinguish a connection between parental involvement and students who make As and Bs compared to students who make Ds and Fs. Gifted Coordinator (Gifted Coordinator) Brown discussed the correlation of parental involvement and academic achievement from her perspective:

> I would say that there is a huge correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. And I think that also, your low socioeconomic status is going to play a part in parental involvement because by necessity, a lot of times parents aren't there in the evenings they have to be working. There, there may be a grandparent or a babysitter that isn't as invested in making sure that the child is doing what they need to do to be the best that they can be.

Principal Jenkins was able to identify a connection of parental involvement and grades in her school as well:

> I'm trying to get a picture in my head of the groups of students. Um I want to say the students who make Ds and Fs tend to have some home and environmental issues at like lack of support, you know, broken homes. Or multi-generational homes. You know, like, they got an aunt, uncle, all of their cousins, and they're all in this one house. So, to me, that tends to be homelessness, you know, that tends to be like the D F students. And then your A B student, I don't want to say their traditional mom and dad homes, but they're a

little bit more stable. So, it could be single parent, but they still have more stability at

home than other students.

AP Bryant echoed the sentiment that the level of parental involvement exemplifies the home

environment:

More so for me, I feel like it goes hand in hand, the more parent involvement you have,

the more likely you are to be successful in school. Not to say that you can have had

parents whose home environment may have a child struggling in school that the

likelihood of success is going to be higher with parents that are involved. So, to answer

your question, I think the kid your A B students are more likely to have more parents or

support than your D and F students. Especially for children that do not have learning

disabilities.

Most of the research participants shared similar stories where they have seen instances where

parental involvement or the lack thereof correlates to student academic performance. What I

discovered through this breakdown of data is that each research participant has their rationale for

why parents are not involved. Some of the assumptions that educators place on parents are based

on where they live, their educational background or the grades their students make is unfair and

alienates the parents. Educators' accusatory behavior and low expectations of parents contribute

to the parental disconnect from the school system. The research participants noted on several

occasions that parental disconnect from the school system has negatively impacted the

educational landscape. Educators push and implore that parents need to change their mindset but,

through this study, I have determined that it is the educators who need to shift their perceptions

and expectations of parents or caretakers that do not fit their ideal mainstream white family

model.

Educators' experiences dictate their perceptions and manifest in their daily routines, and interactions with students and parents. Educators continue to contend that each day is a new day, and no past transgression will be held over a student's head. The reality is that our experiences that influence our perceptions of people, places, or things manifest consistently either consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, it is fair to explicate through this study that some parents are disconnected from the school based on their personal experiences as a student and or their interactions with their child's teacher, administrator and or school. Consequently, a parent or guardian's ability to support their children becomes unclear and uncomfortable. The schools rarely provide clarity to simplify parental involvement or generate parent friendly opportunities to increase school involvement.

Various cultures demonstrate different versions of what they consider parental involvement. Therefore, how the school defines and expects parental involvement does not culturally align with how some parents demonstrate parental involvement in their children's education. For instance, schools identify parental involvement as interactions with the student and his education at the school, whereas Black parents demonstrate more parental involvement with their child's education in the home than school (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The ambiguity of parental involvement also varies based on the teacher, the school and community that they serve. Throughout the study, only two research participants gave a direct explanation on what parental involvement looks like to them and to their school district. This theory manifested itself in the research participants as Principal Thompson shared his definition of parental involvement:

> And the parents are going to be supportive, whether they are supportive physically or financially, that they are going to be there to have a conversation with their students. So,

the parents can be there and support them, and even it is as simple as phone call, they're going to say, hey, I am going to correct this behavior, even yet there's something with that child that they are doing wrong.

Principal Thompson views parental support as a parent who is readily available to answer the phone, trust the school system with their concerns, and provides reinforcement for the school's expectations of their children. Principal Thompson did not acknowledge that parents may feel this way but still demonstrate hesitation based on previous experiences with their children's school and educators. Gifted Coordinator Brown's expectations for parental involvement are slightly more detailed:

Providing any support that the kid might need, willingness to work with the teacher, to, you know, maybe come in if they can, and give a presentation on Career Day, or, you know, field trips or whatever. And then again, also willingness to, I guess, work together if there is a problem that arises.

Gifted Coordinator Brown's expectations for her parents are more encompassing and identify a parent who is comfortable speaking in front of students, highly educated, and has a sense of belonging at the school. Gifted Coordinator Brown's parental expectation are in direct contrast with the typical parental involvement of Black students. According to the responses throughout this study, the research participants believe this type of parent is rare.

The majority of the research participants acknowledged how beneficial it is to have parents who are positively involved in their children's education when that involvement produces promising academic results. Yet, there are two participants who even though they acknowledge the role of parents in education, they do not put much stock in parental impact on

student grades. Principal Wright based her opinion on parental involvement around her personal experiences as a child and as a principal. Principal Wright explained:

> I think it's, it's still almost a, like a 50/50 for both groups, because the AB group you have half those kids are doing it because mom's at home going, you make lower than A or B you're in trouble, you know, and then then you have the other half of the kids that like "Macy," who I could have told her whatever, she was going to make As, just because she's a people pleaser, and she wanted to make As. And then I think the same thing for the lower end because you're going to have some who parents aren't involved. Kids don't care. Just not doing the work, going to refuse whatever, and they're not doing the work. And then you have the other half of the parents that are in there, you know, down their kid's throat about why are you failing and calling the school and calling the teacher. I'm just not sure that parental involvement has a lot of impact on their grades, I guess.

It also should be noted that Principal Wright was also one of those kids who did not need her parents involved in her educational process or in her future career choice. Principal Wright always knew she was going to be a teacher and worked diligently to make the best grades with minimal encouragement from her parents. Gifted Coordinator Brown had a similar experience but on the other end of the spectrum. Gifted Coordinator Brown's parents did not graduate high school and no one in her family had gone to college. Even though her parents wanted her to have a good education, it was never the center of their conversations. She explained her parents' involvement in her educational journey as:

> I went through. I wasn't a great student and education really wasn't at the forefront of our household. It wasn't that my parents didn't think it was important, but it wasn't a push

necessarily. I was passing everything, so everything was okay. So, they were fine with

that.

Gifted Coordinator Brown equates her parents' involvement in her education and subconsciously applies those similar expectations to her students. Gifted Coordinator Brown expects her students to rise above and produce their best work in education with or without the involvement of their parents because that is relatable to her personal experience. The one thing that may be overlooked throughout this study is the race and gender of the research participants and how that influences their perceptions and educational experiences.

The consensus is that parents do impact the academic success of their students either positively or negatively based on their level of involvement, education, and ability to provide resources. When it comes to the reason that parental values have shifted or why they are disconnected from schools, it becomes a little more unclear. Based on the data provided through this study, a shift in parental values and an increased level of disconnection from school could be associated with poor relationships between parents and schools. To combat this concern, the research participants agree that schools need to focus on generating positive relationships between parents and schools. Through those relationships, common interests and expectations can be identified and explained. The school can provide a clear description of the kind of parental involvement it seeks, and the parents can share what they are doing to support the school and their students. Those conversations or plans of action cannot and will not be developed if the relationship between school and parent, school and student and school and community are not forged.

The Importance of Building Relationships

There is minimal investment in students of parents who have limited resources, and are not highly educated which contributes to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs (Mun et al., 2020). An investment in marginalized parents and students is not necessarily a monetary investment, but an investment that provides them with a voice to express their concerns, and reservations. The act of genuinely listening to the concerns of marginalized populations or establishing a pathway to communicate effectively will be a positive step in generating a sense of belonging for parents. Once the relationship and level of trust is built with parents, the expectation is that an improved value towards education will positively impact their students. Educators must not and should not take the relationship with parents for granted and should work as diligently to build and connect relationships with parents and students.

Relationships with Parents

Parents want to believe in the school system and that the school system has their child's best interest at heart. Principal Thompson expressed this thought as he stated:

> And so, I think once parents understand that you believe in their child, they will give that support. And so, when things become challenging, you can rely on that establish relationship. And what I'm trying to do here is to rebuild the trust, because the level of trust here has decreased. And so, I'm trying to rebuild that trust in parents. And so, I make calls when those students have discipline concerns, and if they have done something the following week, that was not as serious, I'll follow up and call the parent and say, hey, I just want to let you know that your child did a great job this week. So not all calls home is negative, I want to make positive calls as well.

Principal Thompson alludes to one of the ways to build trust between the schools and parents: creating a consistent mean of communication. Throughout that means of communication, it is important to make sure that all the calls are not negative. Parents want to hear positive feedback about their students as well. This practice allows the educator to simulate positive parental interactions and build the level of trust and the relationship with the parent. AP Bryant agreed:

> Okay, as an educator, if you really want parents involved, you have to build relationships with them. You can't wait to call a parent when the child's failing, and tell them something negative, but build positive relationships with the parent from the beginning. And let them know your daily classroom procedures, class setup, and how things are operating. As far as an administrator perspective, let them know how things are going to be done. And then work together with the parents and get them on board with you. Because if you get them on board, and you can get them to buy in, you will probably have a whole lot more success.

Principal Spivey provided insight on how those conversations and approach should go when you interact with parents:

> But I think we need to meet them where they are. We always say we need to meet the kids where they are, but we need to meet the parents where they are too. If I for example, have a father and a mother, who hypothetically is having a hard time with finances or drugs, I don't need to kind of tell them, this is what I want. Maybe I need to meet them where they are and say, Okay, I'm going to help you as best I can so we can help your child. If they can't get to school, or every PTA meeting, then I need to find a way to get resources to them.

As proven throughout this study, educators understand the importance of parental involvement and the importance of building relationships with parents. A lot of the communication from the school to Black families about their students is more likely to be negative or to bring attention of their students not meeting school expectations. Yet, schools expect the parents to conform or find a way to transition to school and be present in school but as Principal Spivey stated, for some families that is not feasible for a variety of reasons. Only one school district in this study is adjusting their parent teacher conference times and location of events to better suit the needs of the parents and to increase parental engagement. AP White's school is one of the few school districts that adjust their meeting times and locations to better serve their parents. AP White shed light on their school initiative to mend the relationship and increase parental involvement with their school:

> Most of our families that are African American lives on the other side of town so it's hard getting here. Often, they're working all day, or all night, and the amount of time you have is minimal, which is why we decided to do family engagement activities there on the other side of town closer to them. This year, we are embedding a few calendar activities where we're going to that side of the town to be at one of the local churches or community centers because we realize it's a hike. And it may not be that they don't want to come, they just don't have access to you.

AP White and her school staff acknowledged that Black parents may want to come to the school, but they might not have access or the necessary resources to make it to school and participate. Extending additional opportunities for marginalized populations to participate and improve the school to family relationship will have a positive impact on the school parent relationship.

Some of the research participants varied on the level of impact parental involvement has on student academic performance, but they all agreed that having positive parental relationships is important. Throughout this study, I have determined that schools do not put stock in the building of relationships if they can meet their academic expectations of students without a focus on building parental relationships. This approach has more to do with the administrators focusing on the accountability measures that they have to answer for and placing everything else on the backburner. School districts could combat this approach by placing district wide non-negotiables on family engagement and hold individual schools accountable on their level of parental engagement. Adding parental involvement as an accountability measure can be viewed as punitive and add more stress to educators, but the data indicate that schools and school districts do not prioritize initiatives that do not present accountability measures or expectations. The more positive relationships that underrepresented parents have with schools will provide more opportunities for them to advocate for their children so their children can receive equitable educational opportunities such as gifted education opportunities.

Educator-School Relationships

The consensus from the research participants is that the modern student is different compared to students when they were in school. The participants attribute this change of student mindset to family values, environmental changes, and a nationwide depreciation of education. The participants also attested that one of the methods to overcome their concerns is building positive productive relationships with the students. Educators taking the time to get to know students for who they are, and their interests will minimize educators' personal biases and increase the educator's chances of recommending underrepresented students for equitable educational opportunities. Throughout the study, I was able to identify how teachers'

misconceptions and preconceived low student expectations impacted the teacher referral and checklist process for recommending Black males for gifted education. It is imperative to build those relationships with students to disarm the misconception and low expectations for Black males. Conscious and aware educators are more likely to generate a sense of belonging for underrepresented populations in their instructional activities, culturally responsive dialogue, and relative activities to generate a sense of belonging. Ultimately, providing culturally responsive instruction can have a direct impact on improving the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education.

Building positive, productive relationships with students affords the educator an opportunity to discover the interests in the students and to generate relevant activities that can captivate students and get them excited about learning. Principal James shared her insight on the impact a positive educator-student relationship has on academic success:

And I think if we were to find the right way to reach our children to teach our children, they can excel capabilities, and there is just the fact that we're building to reach your child to get their interests. And once we can get their interest there is no question our children can excel. Once we are simulating their interests in instructional activities, they may want to learn, and I think they will learn. This is important because our young people just want to really think about our technology usage, so they can utilize technology, create things and they just have so much more access than previously. So, if we were able to reach them, I believe they can go so far.

Principal James shed light on the overarching theme that all participants echoed that students have changed and actually put that thought into better context. Principal James is not necessarily referring to students but the tools and resources that students have access to have changed and

therefore their interests have changed. To be productive and effective, schools and educators have to make adjustments to school and instructional activities that mirror societal changes. AP White continued to add to this discovery:

> Okay, I feel like if you're just going to have a better student academic outcome when you're relevant. Being relevant means building relationships with students, so you can meet them where they are. I think that that sometimes is the gap. And while we are seeing such, like a discrepancy in what some of our students are able to do is because there is no true connection of trying to figure out how, what motivates students or what captures their interest and kind of maneuvering or transforming our lesson plans and activities to kind of fit their needs.

AP White continued to share what her school and school district were doing to gain student interests and adjust instructional plans:

> Something that we are trying to do, well I don't want to say mandating, but we are requesting our team to well, we are, utilize self-inventory lists, and we're also doing some goal setting. Every single child in our building is going to do an academic and a personal goal. So, I think that that, you know, I can't say what's going to motivate you, if I don't really know what motivates you. So, I can buy all of these things. But if you want to McDonald's five-dollar card, then what I bought doesn't amount to anything, because it doesn't capture, you know, so I think that the best way to do that is to really kind of get into the matter the students do a self a self-survey, survey and get the information.

AP White continued to provide examples of how and why gaining students' interests are important and that schools need to adjust to societal changes to ensure that students are better

prepared to tackle society when they exit high schools. Principal Thomas reiterated the importance of schools preparing students to be productive and responsible citizens:

> And you probably hear me say later that I share with my students wherever I go, that I believe that they should be able to leave school with the four Es. The four Es are that they should be able to enroll in institutions, enlist in armed services, if that's what they desire, to have those employability skills, as well as now we are in a time where they can become their own entrepreneur as they step out to provide for themselves. So that's my motivation to every level, elementary, middle, or high school is to instill in students that they need to prepare and begin with the end in mind.

Principal Thomas echoed that the responsibility is on the school system to maximize all of our students' academic abilities which includes our high performing and gifted students, so they are prepared to make a positive impact on society.

The misconception is that building relationships with students to garner their interests and replicate those interests in schools is practice improving academic outcomes for low performing students. That statement has some truth to it, but the main purpose is to have students gain a sense of belonging and produce their best work. The data indicate that many students from marginalized populations never reach their full potential because they do not have a sense of belonging in schools (Henderson et al., 2019). The majority of students who enter school are willing to put in the work, to demonstrate mastery but those opportunities seldom present themselves for marginalized populations. Principal Jenkins explained her position on students' willingness to master taught instructional content:

> Kids are willing, I think we've just got to create an environment, that kind of sort of I don't want to say sparks that willingness, but like, encourages it. I think they are willing, we just got to create the environment.

Gifted Coordinator Smith added:

> Um, students are willing to master things that they're interested in. They are willing to master things that are taught to them in a way that's interesting to them. Because you kind of get to help get creative with your instructional strategies, and things like that. But then you have students who are, let's say they have the exposure, they have the parents who have the background, the expectation, they are self-motivated, those students are willing, but you must be creative. They want to master things that are of interest to them.

Therefore, to maximize all students' academic ability, schools need to shift their focus to building relationships and gain an understanding of their students' interests. Schools and more specifically classroom teachers need to ensure that each student is represented in the instructional activities and culture that is in the school and classrooms. If this small sample size of research participants can represent education, then building productive relationships with students will increase student academic success and opportunities while improving the disproportionality of Black males in gifted education programs.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Gifted education and gifted students are not at the educational forefront of institutions because they are expected to do well academically. Gifted students are expected to meet state and federal benchmarks that demonstrate they achieved mastery of taught instructional content for each core subject. In addition, every academic measurement such as grades, Standards of Learning (SOL) scores, and other assessments demonstrate that they are on or above grade level. Consequently, these measurements provide a false sense of accomplishment that educators are meeting the gifted student's needs, challenging them, and encouraging them to maximize their academic ability. Yet this issue falls to the back burner because students are not taught how to advocate for themselves to ensure they are receiving the best education.

Another concern is that without the proper encouragement, gifted students are more encouraged to produce good grades than challenge themselves academically. They view grades as an indicator of how bright they are, so they rarely sign themselves up for classes or opportunities that will make them feel or appear less than what they think they are. Do gifted students think this way because of schools? Or is this a self-inflicted concern that plagues their opportunities to take risks? As a result, gifted and unidentified gifted students continue to move seamlessly through the American educational system, not creating any disruptions or distractions and possibly not meeting or fulfilling their academic potential. This is specifically true for unidentified minority gifted students.

The Impact Epistemic Justice has on Black Males in Gifted Education Programs

Testimonial injustice and Hermeneutical injustice consistently appeared throughout this study in research participants' responses as it highlighted their perception, values, and beliefs. For instance, testimonial injustice is evident in the participants' collective theme to the change of

the educational landscape. The research participants accredited the change in educational landscape to the educator's unwillingness to adjust to new instructional practices and processes, parental values, home, and community supports and education accountability measures. Throughout this study the participants expressed their perception on why these issues has impacted the education landscape, but they did not mention their interaction with Black parents and students and or the responses or concerns they received from the parents or students.

One could implicate that value on the experiences of Black students and parents were not sought because they were undervalued and or discredited because of the color of their skin, the places they live and or their level of education. This practice is an example of testimonial injustice. Testimonial injustice centers on the voice of marginalized populations being discredited or undervalued due to the prejudices displayed by the listener (Fricker, 2013). Considering conscious or subconscious biases displayed by the educators, one could question if the schools represented in this study provides an opportunity for underrepresented parents and students to express their concerns on why and how they feel disconnected from the school systems? When the participants' respective schools contacted marginalized parents, were they receptive to the feedback from those parents, or were their concerns diminished because of the listener's biases? Not accurately acknowledging Black parents and students concerns with instructional practices, teacher relationships and school relationships, the disproportionality in Black males in gifted education will continue to increase.

Hermeneutical injustice occurs when marginalized populations are put at an unfair disadvantage based on the qualification or expectations of that situation. Gathered throughout this study, Black males are put at a disadvantage by the gifted identification measures used to identify and select gifted students. The participants argued that the gifted identification tools

such as standardized assessments, teacher referrals and teacher checklists put marginalized populations such as Black males at a disadvantage. For instance, standardized assessments were biased because the questions on the assessment were more geared toward the lived experiences of white middle class students. Therefore, Black males are less likely to perform well on those assignments because they are less likely to make connections with the expectations of those assignments. In addition, standardized assessments cannot identify other forms of giftedness in music or the arts that Black males may possess. Teacher referrals and checklists are subjective gifted identification tools that centers on the teacher's perception of a gifted student and what the gifted program should be. Throughout this study, I was able to suggest that the subjective ideals of the gifted student characteristics rarely if at all resembled the characteristics or skills of Black males.

To ensure epistemic justice for Black males in gifted education programs, schools must generate opportunities that allow marginalized populations an opportunity to connect with schools and develop a sense of belonging. Black families need to feel as if their voices are valued and their contributions to their children's education is needed and respected. Therefore, educators need to be more receptive of Black parents and students concerns while demonstrating that they heard and value their insight by putting into action credible solutions to the Black parents and students' concerns.

The Apprenticeship of Observation and its Impact on Black Males in Gifted Education

As discussed throughout this study, educators rely on their personal experiences in school as a student and educator to develop their values, processes and practices that impact their educational decision making. Therefore, the research participants developed many of their educational values and beliefs as they transitioned through school on their own educational

journeys. Lortie (2020) called this the *apprenticeship of observation,* which highlights the countless hours children spend observing and interacting with the normative structures of school. Tyack and Tobin (1994) refer to these normative structures as the grammar of schooling that focuses on the organizational structures, and rules that define how schools are ran. Consequently, education is a unique field where novice, or first year educators have at least sixteen years of first-hand experience on norms and standards in an educational setting (Myran, 2023). Myran (2018) considers these learned intersubjective assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowing found in the grammar of schooling and the apprenticeship of observation as folk-epistemologies. In most cases, entering a profession with over sixteen years of experience, would be positive, but as this study highlights, the learned organizational and normative structures of educators have contributed to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education.

The learned norms and assumptions that we gain in the apprenticeship of observation, the grammar of schooling, and folk-epistemologies can create a closed, self-referential and self-replicating system that can impact educational values and outcomes. For instance, educators that have experienced or witnessed first-hand systemic educational practices and processes that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education, will continue to enforce those same practices and processes because they believe that is the actual essence of schools. As a result, educators enter the field of education with expectations of what school looks like, which includes institutional racism and systematic oppressive practices that influence how they interact with students, parents, colleagues, and community stakeholders. Marginalized populations such as Black males are the most effected by the systematic oppressive practices and institutional racism that is developed through educators' apprenticeship of observation because public education at its roots was not designed to promote and advance Black males.

The Apprenticeship of Observation and Critical Race Theory

Racial inequality, systemic inequitable educational practices and oppressive educational practices are normalized in schools and society (Duncan, 2005) and reinforced daily through the apprenticeship of observation. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is vital to combating inequitable and oppressive educational practices because it focuses on equity based research and practices that identifies the impact that labelling and stereotypes based on skin color, actions and association has on the beliefs of a group (Ford, 1995). An apprenticeship of observation lens could help frame the belief systems that educators develop, and a CRT lens can investigate those belief systems and effectively work to improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations.

Opportunities for Future Research

My research on the identification and selection process of gifted students and its impact on the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education made positive contributions to the research. Yet, as I navigated through the interview process and the explication of data, a few questions, or gaps in my research emerged. A few of the more prominent opportunities for future research to determine influences that impact the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education is a study that explores the level of experience of school administrators and how those experiences shaped their instructional practice, culture, processes, and procedures. The next important position or question was since gifted education falls under the same umbrella as special education, why aren't gifted students protected by law as SPED students are, and what kind of impact would that make on the identification and selection process? Lastly, future researchers could conduct a comparative analysis that compares gifted education opportunities in rural schools to inner city schools, low socioeconomic status (SES) schools to more affluent schools, and predominately white schools compared to predominately black schools. Additional

insight into the aforementioned areas could provide a more detailed understanding of the influential factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. In addition, this future research could provide meaningful suggestions and strategies that could increase the number of Black males in gifted education in the American educational system.

School Administrator Experience and its Impact on the Gifted Gap

One of the common themes throughout this research was how the educational landscape has shifted and so much attention is focused on meeting state and federal accountability measures. The research participants relied heavily on their own experiences as students and remembered a time where education was different, and more time could be focused on developing the whole child. As I reflected on this phenomenon, I realized that the majority of research participants had over 17 years of experience in education. In addition, the majority of the research participants did not have Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments when they were in school. Whereas the remaining two research participants did experience standardized assessments as students and their responses to the current educational landscape differed in that area. As I have stated and proven throughout this study, educators' individual experiences are what creates their values, influences their perceptions, and exposes itself in their educational practices and beliefs. To explore this phenomenon further, I would suggest a comparative data analysis between educational leaders who experienced an age in education when standardized assessments did not exist, compared to those who took SOL tests when they were in school. I am curious to explore how their individual educational experiences as a student, and experiences as an educator impacts their educational views as they pertain to gifted education and the gifted student.

Federal Laws that Protect Student Rights

Gifted education is categorized under the special education umbrella, but gifted students do not receive the same student protections as special education students. IDEA ensures that a student's individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan is followed to the exact letter, and if school districts do not meet the expectations that are written in those plans, federal and state sanctions are possible. In addition to the state and federally mandated laws to protect special education students, the state and federal governments also hold schools accountable for their special education students' academic performance. For instance, in Virginia, subgroups that categorize special education students, display results of SPED students' standardized assessments in core subjects. The SPED students' subgroups have the established state and federal benchmarks to earn school accreditation. The research participants were more prone to act and ensure that student needs are met when there is an accountability measure outside of the school and school district. Therefore, a possible study that explores student rights that are specified by IDEA and gain insight from the state and federal level on why those same rights are not provided to gifted education students could shed light on state and federal priorities that impact the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. Taking this approach to research will demonstrate the state and federal legislators' mindset on advancing gifted education and gifted students.

One research participant was opposed to governmental involvement in the advancement of gifted education and to decrease the disproportionality of underrepresented populations in gifted education. She agreed that inclusion is appropriate but the process to ensure legitimate inclusion is more important. She expressed her concern as:

I'm starting to see it to decline, in my opinion, with everything being so inclusive. And

we should, yeah, we should look at inclusion, but I'm starting to see that it's look like

discrimination. You know, you have these kids who are bright. And they're separate, they

think they're smarter, or they they're better. And then you have these kids who can't get

into this little club that you have over here. And they're starting to dismantle GATE or

gifted across the world, across the US. That's where I am with GATE. And I don't know

how long it's going to be. I don't know how it's going to evolve in the world. And I think

it's going to evolve into something. I don't know if it's going to be erased, but it's got to

be something. Because we now have to start letting not everybody in, but we really have

to watch our selection process to make sure that we're getting kids in who belong and not

putting kids in just because of this parent voices concern.

This participant realizes that changes need to be made to the identification and selection process
but is against government intervention to weary about implement those changes. Therefore, to
gain an understanding on why the protections that are afforded to special education are not
afforded to gifted students or the gifted selection process could provide insight on how to combat
those concerns displayed by one of the research participants. The goal should be to ensure an
equitable implementation process to decrease the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted
education programs while maintaining it as a credible program.

Comparative Resources for Gifted Programs by Location

My study also revealed that gifted education resources varied between school districts
and schools within the same district. For instance, in one of the predominantly Black, small, rural
low SES school districts, they are embarking on their second year with a gifted education
program. Within that program, there is only one gifted coordinator/coach who serves the entire

school district. Another rural school district that participated in the study is more affluent, and predominantly white, it has had their gifted program for an extended period of time, but they only have one gifted coordinator who serves all of the elementary schools. Both Gifted Coordinators that service their entire school districts both voiced concerns throughout the research that the task can be overwhelming, and they are sure that if they had more resources, they could effectively combat some of those underrepresentation concerns. In comparison to two of the larger, more affluent school districts, they have a team of individuals who oversee the gifted education programs. It would be insightful to see how resources, location, and school demographics influence and or impact the disproportionality in their respective gifted education programs.

To take an even more centered approach, a study that explored the differences in resources, demographics, and locations in schools within the same school district. Data gathered from this study suggested that more gifted students were identified from a particular school compared to other schools that had more than one elementary school in their district. Since my study was not focused on the comparative analysis between schools, I did not delve on the various influences who could manipulate the number of students who are recommended from each school. This approach could identify additional systemic educational inequities that may be rooted within the school districts' framework, that effect students' alignment (redlining), instructional pedigree of the teachers, and even the experience of the administrators. Gathering invaluable data that provide insight to the inner workings of a school and or school district could propel productive initiatives that could increase the number of Black males in gifted education while providing a sense of belonging to all students who attend their schools.

Perspectives of the Teachers on Gifted Identification Process

Throughout this study, I interviewed solely administrators and gifted coordinators bout their perceptions on the factors that impacted Black males in gifted education. The administrators and gifted coordinators consistently cited the involvement of teachers throughout the identification and selection of gifted students and their lack of training to properly identify the various forms of giftedness in students and how that inability has a direct impact on the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. I did not interview any teachers to get their understanding and perceptions on the identification and selection process of gifted students.

A study that focuses on teacher perceptions of the identification and selection process of gifted students may provide a more robust understanding the school level procedures that impact the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. This study could either confirm or contest the findings in this study as the teachers' perceptions may align or dispute the claims of the research participants in this study. A study centered on teachers will give a voice to direct influences in the identification and selection process of gifted students and may unveil additional information that could improve the number of Black males in gifted education programs.

Apprenticeship of Observation Influence on Black Males in Gifted Education

As suggested in this study, educator biases have a direct impact on the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. Implementing the theoretical framework of the apprenticeship of observation, the researcher could study the self-replicating systems at the central office level that create systemic patterns that impact the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education. This study could also unearth additional inequitable educational practices and processes that are embedded in the American educational system.

More specifically, a study on the apprenticeship of observation in teacher mentorship could be appropriate to identify patterns, interactions and relationships that shape educational norms that impact Black males in gifted education. Understanding these patterns, relationships and interactions could provide insight to the researcher on how to disrupt traditional practices and work towards more equitable practices and processes that increases the number of Black males in gifted education. This study could also provide insight on how teachers could effectively identify giftedness in diverse student populations. Consequently, if educational leaders are unable to disrupt this self-replicating system, Black males will continue to be underrepresented in gifted education programs and equitable identification and selection practices for Black males will continue to be non-existent.

Conclusion

This research has confirmed that there is a systemic issue within the identification and selection processes of gifted education students according to the perceptions of the gifted coordinators and administrators that participated. These systemic issues have generated an underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education programs. The contributing factors that influence the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education are the personal experiences of the educators, which impact their values and educational practices that impede the identification and selection of Black males for gifted education. In addition, the ambiguity surrounding the definition of what a gifted student looks like has generated a variety of definitions or look fors in gifted student that resemble the personal experiences of each educator. Consequently, the identification tools that are used to identify and select gifted students are outdated and unrealistic according to the research participants. Teacher checklists and referral processes are too subjective and prone to identify a specific type of student which clearly do not

align with Black male student characteristics. The standardized gifted identification assessments are also biased and tailored for students who have had exposure to the level of questioning and experiences that are on the test. Those exposures and experiences align more with the cultural background and experiences of White males and females. Systematically, school is established to promote the cultural differences of marginalized populations, and the only way marginalized populations are able to succeed in school is if they adopt the norms of their White middle class peers.

Educators, legislators, and all decision makers are aware of the disproportionality that plagues the gifted education programs around the country. Yet, the focus is on meeting the accountability measures that are issued by the state and federal government. Understandably so, school accreditation has an impact on the careers of the administrators and teachers, the community resources, and housing prices. Therefore, the instructional focus is on the bubble students and students who lack necessary skills to pass the standardized assessments that impact school accreditation. If educators are not concerned with the growth of the gifted students and the gifted program, then the parents should advocate for their students and increase awareness of this concern. Most parents are unable to successfully advocate for their children because they do not know how and are not comfortable enough to approach the school with those concerns. School and school districts need to improve the relationship between parents and school to improve student academic performance and school to family relations. Yet, as previously proven, educators' focus is on meeting the accountability measures and being fully accredited. How amazing it would be when we realize that the two go hand in hand.

The underrepresentation of Black males in gifted education will not change until schools and school districts are able to accept the fact that the systemic practices to identify gifted

students are the cause of the disproportionality. The next step would be to put a plan in motion to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students, especially marginalized populations. A few strategies to attack first are to work on rebuilding the relationship between parents and schools. All of the participants attested that the relationship between parents and school have changed, and the trust between parents and schools is almost non-existent. School districts need to take more of an initiative such as AP Lee's school and school district and take school-related events to the neighborhoods and homes of marginalized populations. Providing alternative opportunities for parental engagement will demonstrate that school districts are willing to mend that relationship, because it is needed to cement the future of our children. Once the parental relationship is restored, the parents will begin to instill the importance of education in their children and provide support to the school as we work to provide a sense of belonging to our students. Next, we should get to know our students, and find out what their interests are so our instructional activities represent them and encourage them to produce their best work.

When students are connected to schools and educators are aware of their personal biases and misconceptions, the opportunities to provide an equitable education to all students increase. As Principal Thompson stated when discussing his four Es, "education is the key that opens all doors for students." It is our responsibility to develop a way to maximize all students' academic ability and that includes our gifted students.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

The following section will describe the street-level participants that can ensure the validity of this study and the semi-structured interview questions that will be asked during this study. The requirements for the participants are:

1. Educational Leader must serve an elementary in the one of the elected surrounding elementary schools

2. Have some familiarity with the gifted program in their elementary school

3. Could be a principal, assistant principal or key educator in the gifted identification and selection process.

To effectively provide an opportunity for selected participants to provide insight about issues, concerns and opportunities for growth during the selection and identification process of Black males in gifted education, I will ask open ended questions. The questions are:

1. What position do you have at the school?

2. How long have you worked at the school and help this title?

    - All in this school?

3. How would you describe your educational experience in this school? School District?

    - How does this make you feel about education?

    - Do you think there is a need for additional…?

4. What is your opinion on student's ability to learn?

    - How many students do you think are like that?

5. What are two to three essential things that can be utilized in a classroom/school to maximize a student's academic potential?

6. How would you describe gifted education?

7. What are your thoughts on the offering and or student participation in gifted courses?

8. Do you believe gifted education is beneficial or not beneficial in academia?

9. How would you describe the advanced and gifted programs here in the District that you currently work?

    -   Do you see those concerns with staff in all courses? Is this a school/school District concern?

10. What makes a student gifted or advanced?

11. In your current academic institution, how do you think students are prepared for academic success?

12. Are teachers properly trained and prepared to effectively select gifted or advanced students? Please explain your answer

    -   How are they trained?

13. What are some look-fors when you are selecting or identifying gifted students?

    -   What is an average student?

14. What are your thoughts on the parental involvement of your A grade students?

    -   B and C students?

    -   D & F students?

15. What race and sex are most students who would be considered an A student in your school/class?

    -   B and C students?

    -   D and F students?

16. What is the best method of communication to parents to share how their student is performing academically?

17. How are parents made aware of the gifted and advanced course opportunities for their students?

18. What does the school/you do to ensure each student has access and an opportunity to more resources and academically engaging/challenging educational opportunities?

19. What is your school or District's process to provide parental access to the necessary information to ensure their students are on a higher learning trajectory?

20. Please explain the level of parental involvement in your school for educational activities /sessions?

        Sporting events?

21. How involved are you/ your administrators in the selection and identification process for gifted and advanced courses?

22. Do you think administrative involvement could influence the selection and identification process of gifted academic opportunities?

23. How are you informed about the students who are identified and selected for gifted education services?

24. How many of the gifted students are Black males?

    - What is the most prominent group in gifted education?

    - Are there more males or females?

25. What is the process of identifying students to participate in gifted education services?

26. If you could make any changes to your school and District's approach to advanced and gifted courses, what would it be?

Interview Protocol

Today I am going to ask you a series of questions that I have broken up into three different categories that may reveal the factors involved with the Underrepresentation of Black males in Gifted Education.

The three areas are Educator's Beliefs, School Processes and Your interpretation of these processes.

1. ***Could you please describe or share your motivation to pursue education as a career and your educational journey that has led you to this point in your career?***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

- What position do you have at the school?

- How long have you held this particular title?

- How long have you worked at the school and?

- Have you worked in a different school division?

Educator's Beliefs

1. ***How do you feel about education today and a student's ability or willingness to master taught instructional content? (If a participant spirals into Covid, ask about pre-Covid since it was two years ago)***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

- How would you describe your educational experience in this school? School Division?

- How does this make you feel about education?

- o Do you think there is a need for additional support, fund or anything to improve student academic success…?

- o What is your opinion on student's ability to learn?

- o How many students do you think are like that?

- o In your current academic institution, how do you think students are prepared for academic success?

2. ***Could you describe the demographics and commonalities of your students that make grades A-F and the level of parental involvement for each group of students? (For instance, is there a specific gender/race of students that make certain grades in your school/grade and how involved are those parents that make the specific grade)***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

- o What are your thoughts on the parental involvement of your A grade students?

- o B and C students?

- o D & F students?

- o What race and sex are most students who would be considered an A student in your school/class?

- o B and C students?

- o D and F students?

3. ***What are the most efficient methods do you utilize to communicate with parents and how do you interpret parental involvement in your school?***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

    a. Please explain the level of parental involvement in your school for educational activities

        sessions? Sporting events

    b. What is the best method of communication to parents to share how their student is

        performing academically?

    c. How are parents made aware of the gifted and advanced course opportunities for their

        students?

Educator's Processes and Practices

    4. ***How would you describe gifted education and the gifted student?***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

    o What makes a student gifted or advanced?

    o Do you believe gifted education is beneficial or not beneficial in academia?

    o How would you describe gifted education?

*5. **Can you help me understand the selection and identification process of gifted students in***

your school?

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

    o What is the process of identifying students to participate in gifted education services

    o How are you informed about the students who are identified and selected for gifted

        education services?

    o How involved are you/ your administrators in the selection and identification process for

        gifted and advanced courses?

    o What is some look-fors when you are selecting or identifying gifted students?

    o   Are teachers properly trained and prepared to effectively select gifted or advanced students? Please explain your answer! How are they trained?

6. How would you describe the stock that is put in administrative input and involvement in the selection and identification process for students to experience gifted academic opportunities?

*7. **How would you categorize or describe the types of students that are currently enrolled in your gifted program?***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

    o   How many of the gifted students are Black males?

    o   What is the most prominent group in gifted education?

    o   Are there more males or females?

*8. **In closing, could you share your overall thoughts on the gifted and talented program as it pertains to your building and the school division as whole?***

Talking points that need to be covered in this section

    o   What are your thoughts on the offering and or student participation in gifted courses?

    o   How would you describe the advanced and gifted programs here in the division that you currently work?

    o   Do you see those concerns with staff in all courses? Is this a school/school division concern?

*9. **Is there anything else you would like to add about the identification of gifted students?***

James Anthony Holemon Jr.
32435 Sandy Creek Dr.
Franklin, VA 23851
jaholemon@gmail.com
757.332.0343 (cell)

EDUCATION

Old Dominion University
Educational Leadership Ph.D. .... December 2022

Hampton University, Hampton, VA
Master of Art in Educational Leadership k-12 .... December 2015

Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA
Curriculum of Instruction-Teacher Leader, Master of Education .... May 2015

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Principal
Sussex Central Middle School, Stony Creek, VA.. July 2020- Present
- Implemented Virtual Instruction curriculum, pacing, scheduling to provide adequate educational opportunities to SCMS students during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Provided monthly professional development opportunities to SCMS staff that focused on teacher collaboration, social-emotional learning, instructional technology, and Learning Management Systems (Canvas)
- Conducted formal and informal observations of educational and non-educational employees
- Oversaw SCMS school budget and managed it appropriately throughout the school year
- Implemented a Leadership Team to help with decision-making, sense of belonging, and improving school culture
- Disaggregated Data with Core teachers, Educational Specialists, Exceptional Education teachers, and Leadership Team members to drive instruction
- Provided immediate feedback to staff to improve overall performance and maximize student success

Assistant Principal
Sussex Central Middle School, Stony Creek, VA .... July 2017- June 2020
S.P. Morton Elementary School, Franklin, VA .... August 2015- June 2017
- Conducted formal and informal observations for all educational and non-educational areas
- Represented Sussex Central Public Schools in the Rural School Coalition
- Disaggregated Data with Core teacher, Educational Specialists, Exceptional Ed teacher and Principal to drive instruction
- SCMS school testing coordinator, responsible for organizing and administering SOL testing
- Ran the Summer School program at SCMS
- Assisted with planning and implementation of remediation schedule, Race to the Test initiative, and Tutorial opportunities
- Instituted Visionaries of Excellence, a mentoring group for males in grades 6-8
- Provided immediate feedback to staff to improve overall performance and maximize student success
- Managed Saturday SOL Academy and Targeted Instruction remediation programs
- Implemented and Managed Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies school-wide
- Supported and Monitored AVID strategies school-wide

AWARDS AND HONORS
- SURN Principal Academy Graduate- 2021
-Old Dominion University's Educational Leadership Program Graduate Spotlight- 2021
-Elected to the Franklin Community Wall of Excellence (2021)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
- Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- National Association of School Principals (NASSP)
-William & Mary SURN Principal Academy
-Institute for School Leadership-Center for Creative Leadership

PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS
- Proficient in managing PowerSchool
- Proficient in Pearson Access
-Trained and experienced in implementing Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS)
-Trained and proficient in implementing AVID