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Using Professional Development As A Tool To Build Teacher Capacity For Recognizing Giftedness In African American Students

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USING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A TOOL TO BUILD TEACHER
CAPACITY FOR RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Education

By

Jacqueline D. Drye

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CAPACITY FOR RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mrs. Bettie R. Drye—a woman of few words, but when she spoke, you’d better listen. She used to tell me, “If you’re going to do something, do it.” So I did. It has taken longer than expected to finish this dissertation; however, I never doubted that I would. After all, my mom didn’t raise a quitter. Love you, Ma!

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my family and the many friends and colleagues who have supported me along this journey. There were many times I wanted to quit, but their encouraging words would not allow me to do so. I was told such things as, “If it were easy, everyone would do it” and “You didn’t start this program not to finish.” The most motivating words came from my father, James E. Drye, who said, “Your mother would be so proud.”

My father is the smartest man I know. He was born in 1924, in rural Valdosta, Georgia. He attended a one-room schoolhouse with other African American children of varying ages. At that time, it was more important to his family that he work in the fields than attend school. His formal education ended at 6th grade. However, life took him on an unbelievable journey and after taking advantage of many opportunities, my father retired from the Federal Aviation Administration, with more than 30 years of dedicated service. His entire life is an epitome of perseverance, resilience and commitment. From humble beginnings emerged a great man! I am proud to be his daughter and I honor him with this work.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
Abstract	viii
CHAPTER 1	2
INTRODUCTION	2
Background	2
Statement of Action Research Problem	3
Evidence Supporting the Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs	3
Probable Causes of the Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs	4
Context for the Action Research Study	5
Information Related to the Organization	6
Theoretical Framework	7
Action Research Questions	8
Action Research Model	9
Brief Description of the Intervention	9
Planning Stage of Action Research	10
Action Stage of Action Research	10
Session 1.	10
Session 2.	10
Session 3.	11
Session 4.	11
Observation Stage of Action Research	11

Reflection Stage of Action Research	11
Definitions of Terms	12
CHAPTER 2	14
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	14
Theoretical Framework	15
Historical Information Related to Inequity in American Education	17
The Generational Effects of Inequity in American Education.....	19
Gifted Education	20
Underrepresentation in Gifted Enrollment.....	21
Implicit Bias.....	22
Deficit Mindset	26
Interventions to Address Underrepresentation.....	28
African American Children in Gifted Referral	30
Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs	36
Socioeconomic Status	39
Teachers Perception and Understanding of Giftedness	42
Synthesis of Related Research Studies	45
CHAPTER 3	48
METHODS	48
Choice of Methodology	48
Context of the Study	49
Participant Recruitment and Description	50
Description of the Study Intervention.....	52
Instrumentation	53

Expert Panel.....	54
Field Testing	55
Summary of Intervention Sessions	56
Session 1: Underachievement.....	56
Session 2: Implicit Bias.....	57
Session 3: Deficit Mindset.....	59
Session 4: Recognizing Giftedness in Diverse Populations.....	61
Data Collection	62
Data Analysis	63
Preparing the Data.....	64
Immersion	64
Code Development.....	65
Category Development	65
Theme Development.....	66
CHAPTER 4	67
FINDINGS	67
Summary of Session Conversations	67
Thematic Analysis: Initial Codes.....	69
Thematic Analysis: Category Development	73
Thematic Results.....	75
Action Research Questions 1 and 3	77
Theme 1: Racism is Ordinary When Identifying Gifted Students.....	78
Action Research Questions 2 and 4	81
Theme 2: Race is a Social Construct That Negatively Affects Gifted Identification.....	81

Action Research Question 5.....	84
Theme 3: Interest Convergence Hinders Teachers’ Ability to Effectively Identify Gifted Students.....	86
Summary of Findings.....	89
CHAPTER 5	91
RECOMMENDATIONS	91
Discussion of the Findings.....	92
Action Research Questions 1 and 3	92
Action Research Questions 2 and 4	95
Action Research Question 5.....	97
Implications for Policy and Practice	98
Policy and Practice Recommendation 1	99
Policy and Practice Recommendation 2	100
Policy and Practice Recommendation 3	101
Recommendations for Future Research.....	102
Future Research Recommendation 1	102
Future Research Recommendation 2	102
Summary.....	102
REFERENCES	104
APPENDICES	124
Appendix A: CITI Certifications	124
Appendix B: IRB Approval	126
Appendix C: Site Authorization.....	128
Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer.....	129

Appendix E: Informed Consent Forms	130
Appendix F: Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Questions	132
VITA	134

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>U.S. School Population by Race and Percentage of Students in Gifted Programs ...</i>	4
Table 2. <i>Participant Pseudonyms, Years of Teaching, Gifted Training and Number of Sessions Attended.....</i>	52
Table 3. <i>Codes, Direct Quotes, Pre- and Post-Intervention Count</i>	71
Table 4. <i>Combining Codes into Categories</i>	74
Table 5. <i>Final Themes and Definitions</i>	76

Abstract

African American students are underrepresented in gifted programs in American public schools. This is due in part to the teachers' role in the gifted identification process. Classroom teachers are asked to refer students for evaluation for gifted services. To effectively do this, teachers must understand the unique challenges faced by gifted students from diverse populations, be able to recognize potential and be willing to explore their own perceptions about giftedness. When considering the historical plight of African Americans and their quest for an equitable education, coupled with current statistics on income, employment and educational attainment, the need to address this issue becomes clear. Students of high ability, regardless of race, must be given opportunities to realize their potential, ultimately benefiting the individual and society at large. The purpose of my study was to ascertain elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness toward African American students and to determine the impact that professional development on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations has on teachers' perceptions. Using an online questionnaire and activities designed to capture teacher's perceptions of giftedness, qualitative data were collected before and after teachers participated in a series of professional development sessions. The data collected were analyzed using codes and themes. Grounded in Critical Race Theory, my action research study provided an opportunity for teachers to explore factors that contribute to inequitable trends in gifted education and provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their roles in perpetuating or minimizing this historical concern.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

All students deserve to receive a challenging education that recognizes their potential and pushes them to achieve at the highest level possible. This is particularly true for students with high academic abilities. These students are often assigned to general education classes where they are not challenged and the curriculum fails to meet their needs (Gomez-Arizago et al., 2020; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Siegle & McCoach, 2018). Students with high academic ability benefit from participation in special programs offering opportunities that match their interests, provide enrichment experiences, and allow for academic acceleration (Bates-Krakoff et al., 2017; Colangelo et al., 2010; Hertberg-Davis, 2009). They also benefit from being in classes where students have similar interests and are intellectually compatible, as they often have specialized interests that extend beyond those of their peers (Brown, 2012; Cross, 2014; S. J. Peters, 2022). It is critical for these students to fully develop their academic gifts and talents, as society needs problem-solvers and knowledge producers (Subotnik et al., 2011). All able students should have access to this opportunity. However, unfortunately, students from diverse populations including African American students are not identified or considered to participate in such programs at the same rate as their White and Asian middle-class peers (Ford, 2021; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Ford et al., 2018; Ford & Whiting, 2008; Gentry et al., 2022; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; S. J. Peters et al., 2019). A huge amount of talent goes to

waste as a result. Sadly, this has been a historical reality in this country that has plagued our educational system since its inception.

Statement of Action Research Problem

Researchers agree that intellectual giftedness exists in all populations, throughout all ethnicities, and at all economic levels. However, this diversity is seldom seen in the programs for gifted students in American public schools (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gubbins et al., 2021; Pfeiffer, 2002). According to the National Association for Gifted Children (2021), “Too many students do not receive appropriately challenging curriculum and services and as a result, fail to reach their potential” (para. 1). Underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs is not a new issue in education, but one that warrants continued investigation and a collective commitment to meeting the needs of all students.

Evidence Supporting the Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs

The National Association for Gifted Children (2022) lamented the enduring concern that students from traditionally underserved populations such as African American students “are persistently underrepresented in advanced classes and programs for students identified as gifted” (para. 1). Statistics vary from region to region; however, overall, African American students in the United States constitute 15.1% of the total student population but represent just 8.5% of enrollment in gifted programs. In contrast, White students make up 48.1% of the total school population, yet they make up 58.8% of gifted programs. Similarly, Asian students represent 4.9% of the total student population and make up 9.9% gifted programs (Table 1).

Table 1*U.S. School Population by Race and Percentage of Students in Gifted Programs*

Population	% Students	% Students In Gifted Programs
White	48.1	58.8
Asian	4.9	9.9
African American	15.1	8.5
Latino	27.1	18.1
Other	3.5	3.7
Indigenous	1.3	1.0

Note. From Gentry (2020).

Research indicates that White and Asian students are up to 10 times more likely to be identified as gifted than African American students (Hodges et al., 2018; S. J. Peters et al., 2019; Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). These data should be a call to action for public schools because, based on the decades of data, many capable students are overlooked and are therefore less likely to realize their full potential.

Probable Causes of the Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs

Several probable causes of the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs have been suggested in the literature. These include, but are not limited to, an overreliance on standardized testing, the underachievement of African American students, and of particular interest to my study, the responsibility given to teachers to refer students for such programs (Daniels, 2003; Ford & Helms, 2012; Ford & Whiting, 2008; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Rimm, 1997; Rodgers, 2008). The identification of gifted students begins with a referral for evaluation and classroom teachers

usually make these referrals. Without the proper training, classroom teachers are asked to determine what could be a life-changing decision for students based on limited knowledge or, perhaps, personal opinion (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Hoge & Cudmore, 1986). Teachers must be trained appropriately to increase their ability to recognize the potential in all students.

Context for the Action Research Study

An urban elementary school, located in a southern capital city, was the focus site of my study. The school appears to be enjoying academic success, as it is fully accredited and has been since 2004—a fact that serves as a source of pride among the school community (school principal, personal communication, January 29, 2021). However, upon closer review, an interesting trend emerged. A perusal of extant data revealed that of the 302 students currently enrolled in the school, only four (1.3%) had been identified as gifted. Of particular interest to my study was the fact that, of these four students, none had been referred for evaluation by their classroom teacher. Two students transferred in already identified as gifted, one student had been referred by his parent, and the remaining one student was identified by the gifted resource teacher who visits the school once a week. Moreover, during the past 5 years, no classroom teacher in this school had referred any student for evaluation for gifted services (gifted teacher, personal communication, January 22, 2021). The problem of practice is teachers' failure to refer students for gifted evaluation at this school.

It has been well established that African American students are underrepresented in gifted programs. Consequently, they are not given the opportunity to nurture their gifts and talents, thus limiting their potential to reach higher levels of achievement in school and life (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford & Whiting, 2008; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Subotnik et al., 2011). Considering the student population and the lack of teacher referrals for gifted evaluation in this

school, a study of the perceptions of teachers regarding giftedness in African American students would be beneficial in ensuring that students with high ability are recognized for their potential and teachers are doing so with equity in mind. The failure of teachers to refer African American students for gifted evaluation was cause for alarm. An investigation was warranted and opportunities for teachers to learn and work collaboratively toward positive change were needed.

Information Related to the Organization

The school at the center of my study has been serving its community since 1922 and was formerly named after a Civil War Confederate general. In 2018, the school board voted to rename the school, which caused the immediate school community and supporters near and far to express excitement and a renewed sense of pride. However, the renaming received minor hostility and verbal dissonance from those opposing the name change. Several statues and Civil War memorials remain on display around the city—evidence of a lingering sentiment that seems to exist (Hauser, 2018). Nevertheless, according to the school’s principal, “instead of focusing on any negativity that may be present outside, we focus on the positivity inside our building” (personal communication, January 29, 2021). The school seeks to create and maintain a learning environment for students that pushes them to achieve high academic success. Ongoing professional development has also been identified in the school’s improvement plan as a viable tool to promote the growth and capacity of the faculty and staff. There are 27 teachers at the target school, including classroom teachers and those who work with students sporadically during the week. They all were asked to participate in my study.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is an academic concept with the primary idea that race is a social construct, not merely the product of personal bias but actually embedded in the legal

system of this country (Khalifa et al., 2013; Sawchuk, 2021). It suggests that racist ideas, practices and sentiments of the past are deeply embedded in society today (Kendi, 2017). CRT began in the mid-1970s as a response to issues of race and racism in law. People of color felt marginalized, and this feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction transferred over time to other aspects of society, including education (Ladson-Billings, 2020; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 2016). Throughout American history, laws have been passed and local customs and norms have developed that allowed certain groups of people an advantage over others, particularly African Americans (Miles, 2019). Some believe the ramifications of such treatment have had generational effects (Gaskin et al., 2004; Hartlep, 2009; Vincent et al., 2004; Ward, 1985). The African American search for an equitable education and the problems faced to obtain this are marked throughout history, and some believe they still exist today.

According to CRT, racism is a part of everyday life, so deeply embedded that often individuals make choices without realizing their actions could be promoting unfair practices or treatment of others (Collins & Ha Horne, 2022; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This supports the need for educators to explore and discuss this topic openly and honestly, as their actions could inadvertently be harmful toward students in their care. Supporters of CRT examine how policies and practices in education contribute to ongoing racial inequities in education and explore ways to implement change (Sawchuk, 2021). This action research study aligned with this thinking.

Action Research Questions

It was important to determine the depth of knowledge teachers have about giftedness and what they believed about giftedness in the diverse students they serve. This information provided insight into why teacher referrals for gifted evaluation were virtually nonexistent at the target school for my study. It was also enlightening attempting to determine if teachers' perceptions of

giftedness in diverse populations would change due to their participation in my study, which included four professional development sessions on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset and recognizing giftedness in diverse population. After reflecting on this experience, some teachers even had unique thoughts or suggestions about ways to improve the identification process for students. I sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

RQ2: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled at a southern, urban school?

RQ3: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

RQ4: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled in a southern, urban school?

RQ5: To what extent are elementary school teachers better able to recognize potential in African American students, following participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations?

Action Research Model

Improving the way schools educate children should be a continuous endeavor. Whether strategies are examined, the curriculum is scrutinized, or interactions between teachers and students are studied, educators should be open and flexible to making changes in practice, especially if the possibility exists that students will benefit. Our educational system is not perfect

and individual schools face unique challenges. Action research allows individuals to address the needs of specific schools. By using action research, individuals who are closest to a problem can directly participate in finding possible solutions (Creswell, 2012; Kemmis, 2009; Morales, 2016).

The problem of practice at the target school has been identified as the failure of teachers to refer students for gifted evaluation. Subsequently, action research can help teachers work collaboratively to address this problem. Through collaborative learning and self-reflection, teachers had an opportunity to discuss and foster change that could improve the educational experience for students (Creswell, 2012; Kemmis, 2009; Morales, 2016). My study followed Lewin's model of action research and included one cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Adelman, 1993).

Brief Description of the Intervention

In the literature, professional development was suggested as a meaningful way to increase teacher competence as it relates to identifying and serving gifted students from diverse backgrounds. Specific topics were recommended that reportedly have a direct influence on how teachers interact with and think about diverse students. These topics included underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations (Elhoweris, 2008; Ford, 2021; Ford et al., 2008; Hurt, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Moore & Phelps, 2021; Rudman et al., 2001). In this action research study, I used recommendations from the literature to provide teachers with four interactive professional development sessions, each one focusing on a specific topic listed above. I implemented the four stages of Lewin's model.

Planning Stage of Action Research

I conducted the initial planning stage. After reviewing the current data concerning the status of students enrolled in the school and learning that no student had been referred for gifted evaluation in the past 5 years, the problem of practice emerged. A review of the literature and the recommendations found within led to the planning of the intervention.

Action Stage of Action Research

The action stage began with participants completing the pre-intervention online questionnaire and continued as the professional development sessions took place. Teachers were involved in various activities designed to increase their awareness of concepts related to my study and to increase their ability to recognize giftedness in diverse populations. Specific information about each session is provided in the next sections.

Session 1. The first session was an introduction to the concept of underachievement and possible reasons why many capable African American students settle for mediocrity in the classroom. According to researchers such as Ford (2021), underachievement is a powerful force impacting the performance of many capable students and, at minimum, should be something of which teachers are aware.

Session 2. The second session focused on defining and recognizing implicit bias. During this session, teachers took and discussed the Harvard Implicit Associations Test that focuses on race (Project Implicit, n.d.).

Session 3. The third session introduced and explored the concepts of deficit thinking and deficit mindset. Teachers were given an opportunity to respond to different scenarios and reflect on their reactions. Both implicit bias and deficit mindset are topics that can lead to the discovery of deeply rooted beliefs. Well-intentioned teachers who express a desire for equity often find a

mismatch between their expressed beliefs and unconscious biases (Staats, 2016). Thus, this topic is crucial for educators to explore.

Session 4. The last session focused on recognizing giftedness in diverse populations. Some teachers were surprised at how traditional views of giftedness did not align with the characteristics of gifted students from diverse populations. An elaboration is provided in future chapters.

Observation Stage of Action Research

During the observation stage of this action research study, data was collected through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and simulation activities. The questionnaires were used to capture the thoughts and understandings of participants before starting the professional development and at the completion of all sessions. Simulation activities allowed teachers to manipulate the information presented during the sessions and apply it to real-life scenarios.

Reflection Stage of Action Research

The reflection stage of action research occurred at the end of each session, as teachers completed an exit ticket activity. Further reflection occurred at the end of the final session, when teachers were given the opportunity to reflect on their experience as participants in this process and discuss any changes in thinking that may have occurred. The reflection stage also included the participants' completion of the post-intervention questionnaire. I continued the reflection stage by critically analyzing the data collected and preparing it to be shared with participants.

My study consisted of one cycle of action research that aimed to support teachers as they explored and challenged their perceptions of giftedness toward African American students and reflected on their practice. This initial cycle appeared to produce immediate results as many participants spoke of the changes they planned to make in their interactions with students.

However, it is yet to be seen whether a change in teachers' behavior will actually occur. It will be interesting to see if an increase in the number of African American students referred for gifted evaluation will be observed in the future.

Definitions of Terms

Key terms and concepts employed in this study include the following:

Deficit Mindset/Deficit Thinking. Deficit mindset or deficit thinking is the notion that some students, usually students from diverse populations, fail in school due to internal deficits.

Diverse Populations. Diverse populations are groups of students of all abilities from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Gifted Students. Gifted students are those students who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment (per school district policy).

Identification. Various forms of data must be collected that illustrate a student's performance and potential, which are reviewed by a team of professionals and used to determine if a student qualifies for gifted identification.

Implicit Bias. Implicit bias is defined as attitudes toward or associating stereotypes with people or groups of people without our conscious knowledge.

Professional Development. Professional development is considered an ongoing training provided to teachers.

Referral. A teacher or other individual may make a referral of a student for gifted evaluation if they believe that student has potential and/or could benefit from advanced educational opportunities.

Underachievement. Underachievement is a discrepancy between a student's performance and their ability.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I present a thorough review of the literature. First, I review the search strategy used to obtain relevant literature. The following section discusses the key principles of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) that underpins this action research study. The next section reviews the history of gifted education in the United States (US). Next, historical information relating to the plight of African Americans in their quest for educational equity in this country is provided, followed by current statistics that are comparative in nature and demonstrate manifestations of generational race-based practices that influence modern educational spheres. I share information about the causes of the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the literature review findings as detailed in the empirical literature review.

The search strategy was conducted by first accessing the following databases: JSTOR, PubMed, Web of Science, EBSCO Host and Database, and ERIC. Using the following keywords, I searched for relevant literature related to the purpose of my study: *African American representation in gifted education, underrepresentation AND African American students, exclusionary treatment of African Americans in education, history of gifted education, critical race theory AND education, African American AND gifted education exclusion, representation of African American in gifted education, teachers AND deficit mindset, teachers AND implicit bias, implicit bias AND African American representation in gifted education, deficit mindset AND African American*. Using the selected databases and keywords, I assessed relevant

information published within the past five years (e.g., 2018-2022). Master's theses and dissertations were not included in order to prioritize peer-reviewed research. Instead, the most recent literature was prioritized to represent a contemporary and peer-reviewed selection of literature.

Theoretical Framework

I chose Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework in which my study is grounded. The CRT framework emerged from the seminal research of K. M. Bell (2018), West (1995), and Delgado and Stefancic (1998, 2017) through a series of legal and policy reform analyses. The key ideology of the CRT is that the U.S. is founded on historical ideologies of western and White male power and privilege. The concept of White intelligence over communities of color is pervasive in all elements of policy and legal formation in the U.S. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Racialized ideologies were embedded within all institutions, ranging from education to the criminal justice system. The result, often referred to as systemic racism, ultimately subjugates communities of color and further uplifts ideologies of white superiority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The historical foundation of the CRT originated in recognition of inequities in law. However, research from Delgado and Stefancic (2017) acknowledged the existence of the same inequalities across all institutions in the U.S.. The CRT framework considers the existence of inequalities as powered by prejudiced ideologies perpetuated throughout society. The principles of CRT examine these constructs: (a) racism is ordinary and not aberrational, (b) interest convergence and material determination of racism, (c) and social construction of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Racism is ordinary refers to the social phenomenon in which racism is accepted, ignored, and largely unaddressed in society. The historical treatment of people of color as less than White (primarily male and heterosexual individuals) created precedence in which racism was accepted and rewarded. Despite legal efforts to effectively end segregation and prevent discrimination, racism is ignored and, in many well-documented cases, overlooked by the very institutions reporting to regard racism as abhorrent (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Ideologies that employ color-blind language, in which all races are equal in the U.S., ultimately ignore the reality that racist ideologies place African Americans and other minorities at a disadvantage (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Interest convergence and material determination of racism demonstrate that racism benefits those in power and leaves little incentivization for preventing actual discrimination. White individuals, often of high-socioeconomic status, benefit from racism financially and socially (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). From an early age, lower socioeconomic White communities are taught that gaining mobility requires following the same tactics as those in advantaged positions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As a result, a cycle is created in which White communities rely on the social and financial profit from subjugating people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The social construction of racism refers to the anthropological, sociological, and genetic research that illustrates that the ideology of inter-species genetic variation is falsely associated with differences in intelligence. Skin color is a phenotypic or physical manifestation of the physical environment and migratory patterns but is not indicative of actual variation within the *homo sapiens* species (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). However, the antiquated ideologies of the 1700s, coupled with settler colonialism, argued that Black individuals held less social acumen

and intelligence than the same White individuals. The result was a social construction of race, in which people of color are erroneously regarded as inherently inferior. Racism thrives throughout all levels of society due to the continued perpetuation of this idea (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The CRT framework is an ideal model for considering how societal institutions, such as K-12 education, are inherently corrupted by systemic racism. The aim of my study was to explore and address teachers' perceptions of giftedness regarding African American students and to investigate how bias and deficit mindset may influence referrals for gifted identification. The use of the CRT guided the intricate relationship between teacher perceptions, implicit bias, and deficit mindset, which affect the outcomes of African American students. The use of the theory supplied insight into how teachers' biases and deeply-rooted beliefs inherently affect the educational practices, evaluation means, and outcomes for African American students of gifted status. Critical race theorists examine how race and racism influence everyday life and advocate for equity in all areas. I, through this study, sought to do that as well. As a means of providing context toward the inequalities and systemic racism reviewed throughout this chapter, a brief overview of educational contexts for African American children is supplied in the next section.

Historical Information Related to Inequity in American Education

Inequity in America is rooted in historical injustices founded in slavery, segregation, social rejection, and dehumanization (Munger & Seron, 2022). For example, as early as the 1740s, the South Carolina Negro Act prohibited teaching enslaved people to write (Munger & Seron, 2022). Other southern states followed suit, including Virginia, which in 1819 passed legislation prohibiting enslaved people from gathering to learn to read (Bartscher et al., 2020). The penalties for breaking these laws included fines, corporal punishment, and incarceration (Munger & Seron, 2022). For enslaved people, the punishment often included physical assault,

amputation of body parts, and in many cases, death (Bartscher et al., 2020; Munger & Seron, 2022).

After the Civil War, those who escaped slavery sought education to gain social and financial mobility despite facing continued societal rejection (Kuhn et al., 2020; Lin & Neely, 2020). Informal schools emerged in homes, abandoned buildings and churches— anywhere African American people could assemble (Lin & Neely, 2020). Between 1865 and 1872, the *Freedmen's Bureau* was founded to supply education for newly freed children (Lin & Neely, 2020). The circumstances of these initial schools were characterized by underfunding, lack or absence of supplies, and education aimed at preparation for labor jobs alone (Lin & Neely, 2020).

The 1896 U. S. Supreme Court ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson* judiciously affected American education (Deener, 2020). While this case questioned the legality of providing separate accommodations for railway passengers based on race, the ruling affected all aspects of life in the United States, including public education (Deener, 2020). Segregation was enforced in all public places, the doctrine of “separate but equal” was upheld, and society governed itself accordingly (Munger & Seron, 2022). As a result, a “Jim Crow” system of racial segregation emerged and was widely practiced in this country which was evident in separate facilities, such as bathrooms, parks, restaurants, movie theatres, and schools that informally segregated people of color (Lin & Neely, 2020).

The spaces designated for Black (African American) communities and education were generally inferior in quality to those of White communities (Horsford et al., 2018; Lin & Neely, 2020; Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022). Resources were scarce in schools for African American children. Often children were taught by individuals who were far less qualified than the teachers

who taught at White schools (Lin & Neely, 2020). Often the buildings themselves were dilapidated, and desks, if present, were broken and unsafe (Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022). The curriculum was rudimentary and focused on basic skills, and special programs or classes for advanced students were absent. Resultantly, there were no opportunities for Black students to display their talents, and no one was interested in nurturing their potential (Horsford et al., 2018; Lin & Neely, 2020; Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022).

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which dictated that segregation of public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional. According to Horsford et al. (2018), however, this ruling proved to be merely symbolic, as urban schools continued to be largely segregated, and students who attended urban schools continued to be taught by less-experienced and less-qualified teachers in sub-par facilities (Horsford et al., 2018). Black children were not afforded the same opportunities extended to their White peers (Horsford et al., 2018; Lin & Neely, 2020; Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022). In 2024, educational inequities continue to be present in public schools as many African American students navigate the residual impacts of generational obstacles while facing new challenges to success at school (Deener, 2020).

The Generational Effects of Inequity in American Education

The educational inequalities, fostered through the racialized ideologies of the past and present, continue to affect African American children in the modern K-12 environment (Allen et al., 2018; Yearby, 2018). According to C.N. Bell et al. (2020), failure to receive an equitable education ultimately affects the outcomes amongst communities of color (Allen et al., 2018).

For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), in 2019, the median household income for African American families was \$46,073, compared to \$76,057 for White families.

The poverty rate for African American families was 18.3%, compared to a rate of 8.2% for White families. In 2019, only 5.5% of all doctoral degrees awarded in the United States were earned by African American students, compared to 50.4% for White students.

Similar disparities are observable in employment and business contexts when comparing racial groups' education, financial and social mobility outcomes (Allen et al., 2018; Monk, 2019). For example, the unemployment rate for African Americans in 2019 was 6.1%, compared to 3.3% for White workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Also, of all the businesses in this United States, 9.5% were owned by African Americans, compared to 70.9% owned by White individuals (Darity et al., 2018, p. 34). The reviewed statistics are directly relevant to my study as inequality in education directly influences future outcomes (Allen et al., 2018; Monk, 2019).

Gifted Education

Various definitions of the term “gifted” exist in the empirical literature (Castellano, 2021; Rasheed, 2020). For my study, the definition provided by the National Association for Gifted Children (2019) is used and defines gifted students as such: “Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains” (p. 1). The term gifted has historically been used to target students who demonstrate exceptional academic skills throughout the K-12 public school setting. Students may exhibit such skills from an early period of their life or in more advanced grades, dependent upon resources, support, and the careful monitoring of evaluative sources, such as teachers and parents (Castellano, 2021; Rasheed, 2020). In the next section, I provide extensive details about underrepresentation in gifted enrollment and barriers to overcoming disparities in educational equality for gifted students.

Underrepresentation in Gifted Enrollment

Historical literature demonstrates that when compared to their White peers, African American students have been consistently underrepresented in classes designed for gifted students (Ford & Whiting, 2008). Contemporary literature demonstrates similar statistics across the U.S. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), African American students constitute 16.7% of the student population but just 9.8% of students in gifted programs. This is compared to White students, who represent 60% of the students enrolled in gifted programs while making up only 50% of the school population.

The experiences of African American children in the education system demonstrate highly racialized experiences (Owens et al., 2018; Taysum & Ayanlaja, 2020). Owens et al. (2018) argued that addressing teacher implicit bias is one model for overcoming gifted student underrepresentation. According to Owens et al. (2018), the U.S. educational system is founded on ethnocentric monoculturalism ideologies that fail to center the experiences and needs of diverse populations. The experiences of African American children, highlighted by Taysum and Ayanlaja (2020), are congruent with the reflections of Owens et al. (2018). Taysum and Ayanlaja (2020) explored the experiences of African American children in the public school system by using data from 26 interviews with African American parents. The interviews revealed that despite educational programs' inclusionary language, children often experienced racism from their peers, educators, and administrators. In addition, Taysum and Ayanlaja (2020) reported that parents struggled with overcoming educational inequalities, which illustrates that Black children are continually exposed to a highly racialized school system that lacks support for either parent or child. The experiences of African American parents and children demonstrate a need for research that supplies support to bolster educational equality for diverse student populations

(Owens et al., 2018; Taysum & Ayanlaja, 2020).

Several possible causes for the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs have been suggested in previous literature. Some causes are considered external, such as an overreliance on standardized testing (Gilliam et al., 2016). Other causes directly involve teachers' biases, prejudices, and assumptions about diverse student populations (Chin et al., 2020; Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). Teachers play a huge role in identifying students as the individuals usually making the initial referral (Caldera, 2020). My study focused on teachers' perceptions of giftedness regarding African American children and their responsibility to refer students for gifted evaluation. As such, in the next section, I detail the most reported reasoning for underrepresentation based on empirical research.

Implicit Bias

Implicit bias refers to the underlying perceptions and opinions that individuals hold toward other individuals or groups (Worrell, 2022). The phenomenon of implicit bias is well documented in psychological literature about the subconscious attitudes, feelings, or thoughts about a person or group that emerges outside the realm of awareness (Staats, 2016). Individuals will exhibit an automatic response that results in an immediate evaluation of another person or group of people, often founded on socio-cultural conceptualizations, childhood upbringings, and subjective experiences (Staats, 2016). All individuals, including teachers with the best of intentions, experience implicit bias (Warikoo et al., 2016). However, regardless of intention, the negative effect of implicit bias is its direct effect on decisions, actions, and interactions with others (Warikoo et al., 2016).

Researchers examining the implicit bias of educators indicate the potential for significant negative outcomes for students (Staats, 2016; Worrell, 2022). Staats (2016) examined implicit

bias to document how educators can overcome underlying prejudices against diverse student populations. Using a conceptual review, Staats (2016) argued that implicit bias from educators, if unimpeded, may result in reduced student self-confidence and self-efficacy and lowered academic achievement. In an applied setting, Worrell (2022) investigated implicit bias using a meta-analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies of pre-service and in-service teachers. The data indicated that teachers tend to exhibit implicit bias against students of diverse populations. Worrell (2022) urged that current methods for addressing implicit bias amongst educators are insufficient to correct behavior before negatively impacting students in the educational context. As a result, teachers' implicit bias may negatively affect diverse student populations and hinder their academic progress (Staats, 2016; Worrell, 2022).

Implicit bias may also influence the likelihood of prejudiced suspension and school expulsions (Gilliam et al., 2016; Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). Gilliam et al. (2016) evaluated preschool expulsions and suspensions by race and gender by examining educators' implicit biases. Data were gathered using a sample of national expulsions and suspension data categorized by race and gender. Gilliam et al. (2016) found that African American preschoolers, especially boys, were 3.6 times more likely to receive one or more suspensions when compared to White preschoolers. Additionally, the data showed that while African American children only composed 19% of preschool enrollment that 47% of African American preschoolers were suspended one or more times compared to White peers. Gilliam et al. (2016) argued that national statistical data demonstrates potential implicit biases that disproportionately affect the educational outcomes of students of color, specifically, African American boys in preschool settings across the U.S. Similar disproportionate trends were identified by Kennedy and Soutullo (2018), who also inspected exclusionary discipline and disproportionality in terms of race and

gender using data from twenty-nine educators and nine students in one school district in a Southern state in the U.S. Semi-structured interviews with educators and students identified a high likelihood that a deficit mindset plays a critical role in terms of teacher's use of exclusionary discipline. Students who experienced disciplinary measures from teachers were also less likely to report self-confidence or self-efficacy in their educational abilities (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). Institutional and racialized structures ultimately fail to dissuade deficit mindset thinking and impact students of color negatively in the U.S. school system (Gilliam et al., 2016; Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018).

Teachers' racial biases can also influence their treatment of African American students (Chin et al., 2020). Chin et al. (2020) investigated teachers' biases in terms of racial attitudes and student outcomes using a nationwide data set from *Project Implicit*, which studies the potential for teacher bias, racial disparities, and negative outcomes for students. Data showed that teachers held implicit biases toward African American students. In addition, counties with higher levels of implicit and explicit racial bias were more likely to demonstrate significant test inequality scores between White and African American students, thus further demonstrating the potential for negative impacts upon students in terms of academic achievement, support, and ability to succeed in the K-12 educational context. In agreement with Chin et al. (2020), Caldera (2020) employed a theoretical review of information specific to diversity, underrepresentation, and exclusionary practices negatively impacting diverse students in the K-12 public school system in the U.S. Caldera (2020) provided recommendations to address the underrepresentation of diverse students. Recommendations included emphasizing anti-racism interventions within the school context, humanizing African American children, and creating effective measures to address racism within the K -12 public school system. Despite Caldera's (2020) recommendations, it is

unknown whether such implementations created effective outcomes for improving the racialized treatment of African American children in the school context.

Implicit bias can affect students' academic success (Copur-Gencturk et al., 2020; Daftary & Sugrue, 2022). Copur-Gencturk et al. (2020) used data from a randomized control study of 390 teachers to explore implicit bias toward names that held gender or racial significance during grading student math submissions. Teachers did not display bias when assessing the correctness of student solutions. However, Copur-Gencturk et al. (2020) identified teacher biases in predicting students' mathematical abilities toward African American and Hispanic girls. In addition, White and non-White teachers favored White male students over students of color and females regarding their mathematical ability. As a result, Copur-Gencturk et al. (2020) argued that implicit biases could significantly affect the ability of communities of color to succeed in science, mathematics, and potentially, graduating from high school.

As a solution to the concerns identified by Copur-Gencturk et al. (2020), Daftary and Sugrue (2022) assessed oppressive practices in K-12 educational environments using data from twenty-five educators who identified as anti-oppressive practitioners within the school system. Data from the semi-structured interviews indicated that anti-racism practices employed by teachers included cultural humility, challenging oppression, and injustice, building relationships with students and families, support and accountability within the school community, and the importance of modifying the current curriculum. Recommendations such as those offered by Daftary and Sugrue (2022) may be important for implementing interventions that address teacher implicit bias.

Deficit Mindset

Closely tied to implicit bias is the concept of a deficit mindset (Andrews et al., 2019). A deficit mindset refers to the increased reliance on individuals' or groups' faults, weaknesses, and failures (Ford & Grantham, 2003). A deficit mindset can detrimentally affect African American children's experiences in the classroom (Andrews et al., 2019; Ellison & Solomon, 2019).

Andrews et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of humanizing African American children by investigating the K-12 educational systems, current approaches to improve equity, and social justice-oriented pre-service educational interventions. According to Andrews et al. (2019), addressing issues such as deficit mindset and implicit bias involves firstly humanizing African American children who are often placed in dehumanizing contexts in the educational system. Similar themes of struggle were identified by Ellison and Solomon (2019), who used an ethnographic approach to review the narrative stories of four African American parents and their reported experiences in the K-12 educational system. Ellison and Solomon (2019) identified themes from participants regarding inequality in the school system, prejudice against their children, and a continued fight to gain racial equality with their children and peers in the school setting. In addition, parents reported the importance of standing up for themselves and their children to continue supporting children's outcomes in the classroom. Improving access to support for parents and aligning teachers with an anti-racist pedagogy and training may be one model for improving the inequitable experiences of African American children in the education system (Andrews et al., 2019; Ellison & Solomon, 2019).

Systemic bias can harm students' ability to enter talented or gifted programs (Johnson & Larwin, 2020; Mun et al., 2020; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Neal-Jackson's (2018) meta-ethnographic review of the experiences of African American girls and young women in K-12 education

identified that African American females are dehumanized racially. Teachers often categorized young African American women as undisciplined, low achievers, and disruptive. Neal-Jackson (2018) noted that teachers often referred to these students as unteachable while assuming the student holds all responsibility for their own academic success. Conversely, White boys and girls were provided opportunities regardless of disruptive behaviors or actions in the classroom, while African American students experienced disproportionate and exclusionary discipline.

Johnson and Larwin (2020) also investigated implicit bias by assessing African American student referral to gifted and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Using 2017-2020 data from three school districts within an urban area, Johnson and Larwin (2020) identified African American students who are referred to gifted programs, enrolled in gifted courses, or placed and enrolled in AP courses. The findings showed a substantial lack of African American students enrolled in advanced coursework despite evidence of many students' academic giftedness and high academic achievement. According to Johnson and Larwin (2020), the reviewed data demonstrate a systemic bias within school districts that is reinforced by teachers' implicit bias, deficit mindset, and in some cases, explicit racism toward African American students. Such evidence illustrates a substantial issue of overt and subverted racism within the U.S. public school system, which requires an immediate address to ensure all students receive equitable education regardless of their gender or race (Johnson & Larwin, 2020; Mun et al., 2020; Neal-Jackson, 2018).

For many teachers, early training, experiences, and higher education pedagogy are framed by settler colonialism and White-centered ideologies that influence their perceptions of intelligence and giftedness in diverse populations (Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020). Wynter-Hoyte and Smith (2020) assessed African American dehumanization within the U.S. public school

system using the CRT framework. According to Wynter-Hoyte and Smith's (2020) review, African American children in the U.S. public school system face dehumanizing treatment due to historical, educational models that prioritize Whiteness and associate African American children with narratives as disruptive and unteachable. Anderson (2020) explored African American children and marginalization through assessing underrepresentation and disproportionate referrals for African American children in AP courses. Using CRT, similarly to Wynter-Hoyte and Smith (2020), Anderson (2020) found that underrepresentation in gifted referral programs is inherently bounded by teachers' deficit mindsets and implicit biases that are ingrained culturally and pedagogically before entering educational systems. According to Anderson (2020), the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs is largely due to educators and administrators who have deficit mindsets and have yet to be exposed to training that assesses implicit biases, which further disadvantages African American children.

Interventions to Address Underrepresentation

Fostering change to overcome the underrepresentation of African American students requires addressing implicit bias and deficit mindsets (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022). Bertrand and Marsh (2021) argued that using national data and statistical analysis may provide important means for addressing and reforming deficit mindset thinking amongst educators. Further, they stated that current methods of overcoming deficit mindset have yet to address teacher intervention, training, or professional development. Hines et al. (2022) argued that listening to disadvantaged students and adopting effective solutions for teachers may address racial inequality in the K-12 school system. Hines et al. (2022) investigated disproportionality in the discipline of Black students in the public school system using a theoretical review and policy recommendation about inequality in the educational systems. Potentially, following the

recommendations for improving racial inequality, such as humanizing African American students while implementing anti-racist and culturally competent pedagogical systems, may be key to overcoming implicit bias and deficit mindsets (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022).

In-school policy reform, which targets in-service teacher interventions, may also improve student outcomes (Mun et al., 2020; Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020). Focusing on gifted education, Mun et al. (2020) assessed culturally relevant leadership using a systemic review approach. Mun et al. (2020) examined in-school leadership reform while focusing on the current services and training methods required to improve education for linguistically and economically diverse populations. The systematic review data indicated that the gifted education referral process is inherently framed by a deficit mindset that places the needs of White children over those of children of diverse backgrounds. Mun et al. (2020) suggested that overcoming such issues of inequality may be based on improving professional training development for educators to address implicit biases and deficit mindset while improving the support structures within the school for diverse student populations. Palmer and Witanapatirana (2020) investigated implicit bias and deficit mindset using a content analysis of macro-level politics. The researchers investigated current educational reform systems and the potential for impacting teachers' implicit biases that negatively impact students' ability to gain representation in gifted referrals and programs. The content analysis and micro-level political policies indicated that deficit thinking is often embedded within the language of many educational policies. The same language is also embedded within pre-service training and professional development (Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020). As a result, teachers are inducted into a system that favors the use of language that

devalues diverse students' intelligence and reduces educators' use of culturally competent pedagogical teaching methods (Mun et al., 2020; Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020).

Pre-service training and in-service experiences are insufficient to address racism in the classroom if anti-racist pedagogy is excluded from the K-12 environment (Curenton et al., 2022; Nxumalo & Ross, 2019). Nxumalo and Ross (2019) examined deficit mindset and prejudice assumptions in educational environments in the U.S. Nxumalo and Ross (2019) investigated how deficit mindset assumptions negatively affect the outcomes of African American children in the educational system. Using an analysis of educational pedagogy and the current methods for creating inclusive environments, Nxumalo and Ross (2019) argued that current educational pedagogy is most closely associated with settler colonialism ideologies, racialized exclusionary practices, and absent interventions for in-service and pre-service teachers to identify implicit biases that affect children. In agreement with Nxumalo and Ross (2019), Curenton et al. (2022) assessed racial literacy through a focus on models for improving pedagogical methods and ethnic and racial socialization. According to Curenton et al. (2022), the learning curriculum, especially at a young childhood age, is often focused on White-centered ideologies that use a language of exclusion that directly affects how peers interact with each other and teachers proceed with diverse populations. Therefore, a key technique for overcoming underachievement and racism in the school system could lie in improving the linguistic pedagogical deficits while targeting early learning programs and preservice teacher training (Curenton et al., 2022; Nxumalo & Ross, 2019).

African American Children in Gifted Referral

Historical data demonstrates a long-standing history of inequity in public schools despite legal precedence for equality measures (Gilliam et al., 2016; S. J. Peters, 2022; Worrell, 2022).

S. J. Peters (2022) documented that inequity and public schools' focus on gifted and talented programs. Using a historical review of equity, Worrell (2022) noted that public schools had had a history of inequality embedded within the pedagogical, legal, and educational reforms for decades. Despite legal pathways to establish equity amongst all learners, inclusion has been difficult to achieve for many students in diverse communities. According to Gilliam et al. (2016) and Worrell (2022), the historical legacy of inequality has created a foundation that laid unchanged since the 1970s. Furthermore, current reforms and policy approaches use language that further implicates the deficit mindset of educators and fail to address actual anti-racist and culturally competent reforms within educational systems (Gilliam et al., 2016; S. J. Peters, 2022; Worrell, 2022).

Deficit mindsets of teachers impact students' ability to gain academically successful careers and post-graduate degrees; however, some students rely on their motivation to navigate the inequalities of the educational systems (Redding & Grissom, 2021; Smith, 2018). Smith (2018) investigated teacher deficit mindsets by gathering the perceptions of 63 graduates of a secondary gifted and talented program in an urban school district in the U.S. Students, who had now graduated, reflected on their experiences within the program, challenges, and facilitators for change. According to students, the most key issues included deficit mindset from teachers and the need to overcome racial biases while attempting to continue to academically achieve within such programs. Students reflected that in response to bias, they employed their persistence and motivation to overcome the racialized ideologies and achieve change for their communities (Smith, 2018). Redding and Grissom (2021) explored students' outcomes within gifted programs by focusing on an early childhood longitudinal study from 2010 to 2011 with a kindergarten cohort. Redding and Grissom (2021) identified that school gifted programs were associated with

improved reading and mathematics achievement outcomes. However, low-income African American students did not experience the same academic achievement outcomes that their peers experienced despite receiving referrals or enrollment in gifted and talented programs. Ultimately, this indicates the central implications for how students within such programs are treated equitably compared to their peers (Redding & Grissom, 2021; Smith, 2018).

Students denied or overlooked entrance into gifted programs are disadvantaged academically (Crabtree et al., 2019; Hurt, 2018). Using data from an elementary school in Texas, Hurt (2018) assessed the representation of students in gifted classes. The review of data indicated that 72% of students were White, while 26% identified as Hispanic. Representation of students in gifted or talented programs is significantly low for minorities within the program. According to a narrative interview with the program leader of the gifted and talented program, challenges in terms of overcoming the racial underrepresentation include teachers who have deficit mindsets toward groups and minority students and an apathetic principal who though closer to retirement, has not attempted to implement any anti-racist or implicit bias training for educators. The reflections identified through the narrative review provide unique insight into the challenges identifiable within the program that ultimately reflect inequality in student representation.

Crabtree et al. (2019) argued that systemic biases within educational systems failed gifted students from early childhood to graduation. Using a review of the gifted gap and a single school in a metropolitan area, Crabtree et al. (2019) identified the underrepresentation of African American and Latinx students, specifically of lower socioeconomic status. Enrollment in AP courses was lower, potentially affecting college completion and participation within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs. According to Crabtree et al. (2019), students were denied enrollment or disregarded for referral to talented and gifted programs and

were less likely to receive benefits in terms of college entrance and ability to contribute to research and innovation in the U.S. The exclusionary practices of gifted enrollment and referral have implications for national advancement in science and research innovations (Crabtree et al., 2019; Hurt, 2018).

Racial bias toward African American children is a crucial factor that contributes to gifted evaluation disproportionality (Blackson et al., 2022; Gentry et al., 2022). Blackson et al. (2022) investigated racial bias toward children within the early childhood education system using data from a sample of educators in early childhood education centers across three educational organizations. Using the child race implicit association tests, bias was measured amongst the sample of 48 educators. While 95% of participants reported not having any explicit racial preferences toward White or African American children, bias towards the different races was evident.

School data confirms implicit bias identified by researchers such as Blackson et al. (2022). For example, Gentry et al. (2022) assessed institutional inequity and gentrification of educational systems through exploring data specific to African American youth in a Title I school district in the U.S. According to a review of school data, 45% fewer African American students were identified as gifted in the same school compared to White or Hispanic peers. In addition, African American youth were under-identified as gifted on average by 50% within the school district. Overall, students of Black male status are most often overlooked for evaluation or referral despite high academic achievement and recommendations for testing (Blackson et al., 2022; Gentry et al., 2022).

The disproportionality of gifted African American youth is an issue that stems from internal and external barriers in the school system (Novak & Jones, 2021; Ricciardi et al., 2020).

Novak and Jones (2021) investigated the disproportionality of gifted African American youth by gathering data from elementary schools in a Southern U.S. state. The findings indicated that among the 221 students enrolled, 29% were African American and 58% were White. The school's gifted program consisted of 10% African American students and 86% White students. The findings demonstrated high levels of disproportionality in African American students' referrals to gifted programs compared to White students (Novak & Jones, 2021). Expanding upon the disproportionality problem, Novak and Jones (2021) used a single narrative of a teacher's struggles in the same school department. According to the narrative, the administration provided significant pushback in terms of improving culturally responsive training and improving the potential for educators' ability to refer African American students for gifted referral programs. Bias in the gifted evaluation process inherently affects Black students; however, administration support and policies do not appear effective in overcoming disproportionality in gifted programs (Novak & Jones, 2021; Ricciardi et al., 2020).

Schools that do not implement anti-racist policies and training experience higher rates of disproportionality that affects the academic achievement of minority students (Aston & Brown, 2021; Pearman & McGee, 2022). Pearman and McGee (2022) investigated disparities among gifted enrollment by assessing county levels of anti-racism policies using data from the Civil Rights Data Collection and The Education Opportunity Project. Pearman and McGee (2022) found that counties with lower rates of anti-African American bias were more likely to demonstrate lower levels of racial disparities in gifted and talented programs. Conversely, counties with higher rates of anti-African American bias had an almost non-existent enrollment of African American students in gifted or talented programs. Aston and Brown (2021) also examined overrepresentation in special education and underrepresentation in talented and gifted

programs for African American students. Drawing from a legal and conceptual review, the researchers identified that African American children were most likely to be assigned to special education and were least likely to be placed in talented or gifted programs despite identification or requests for gifted evaluations. In primarily White, urban, and suburban districts, students were more likely to lack resources for support or to be adequately referred or enroll in gifted and talented programs (Aston & Brown, 2021). Disproportionality evidence holds substantial implications for policies that address racial bias and racism through training, policies, and professional development (Aston & Brown, 2021; Pearman & McGee, 2022).

Disproportionate evaluation rates for African American children, rooted in systemic racism, impact students' academic careers after graduation (Boutte & Bryan, 2021; Sewell & Goings, 2020). Sewell and Goings (2020) examined African American gifted students using narrative reflections from four African American adults who had attended K-12 education in New York City. The narratives of these youth demonstrated that, despite their gifted status for academic success, their peers, teachers, and administration failed to provide the same support and opportunities for success as their White peers. Students reflected that support of their success academically and transitioning to college was largely from their support in the family and reliance on personal motivation to pursue success despite lacking support from their educational system. In agreement with Sewell and Goings (2020), Boutte and Bryan (2021) argued that overrepresentation in special education and underrepresentation in gifted programs for African American students represents a form of racial violence, rooted in an educational system designed for the benefit of White students. Focusing upon previous narrative reviews, Boutte and Bryan (2021) reported that African American male students experience differential treatment from their educators and exclusionary and disruptive means of addressing behavior in the classroom.

African American students who experience educational inequality are ultimately denied the same equitable education that their peers received in the same classrooms, which has implications for success after graduation (Boutte & Bryan, 2021; Sewell & Goings, 2020).

Sewell and Goings (2020) examined African American young adults' transition experience from gifted programs to college. The researchers gathered data from interviews with seventeen young adults who attended gifted schools in New York City. The key themes reported by participants included being referred by either teachers or parents, an easy transition into gifted programs due to early identification in elementary school, and the importance of attending a racially diverse and supportive program to gain support for their academic journey. Learners also discussed the difficulty of being one of the only African American students in the gifted programs they attended. Despite previous supportive relationships from parents, attending programs with little diversity was a difficult experience that led to feelings of exclusion. Using a narrative review, Bryson (2022) highlighted a similar story as Sewell and Goings (2020) by sharing the voice of Bianca, who, as an African American female student, experienced exclusionary and devaluing treatment despite her status as a gifted learner. According to Bianca's narrative, her support system was largely her family, faith, and herself. Bryson (2022) urged changes in teachers' perceptions of how Black children are viewed as intelligent and gifted. Reflections such as Bianca's and research from Gentry et al. (2022) demonstrate the importance of understanding how to support such students so that they can continue their academic journey with the full opportunities and support of educators in the U.S.

Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted Programs

Legal reform policies recently demonstrate a renewed focus on amending disproportionality in African American students' referrals to gifted programs. However,

students' outcomes remain unaffected (Ford et al., 2018; Morgan, 2019). Ford et al. (2018) assessed the representation of African American female students in gifted and talented programs by reviewing educational reform and legal policy data. According to the review, African American females reported differential experiences between their White and African American male peers. African American females reported experiences of racialization, sexualization, and objectification within the public school system regardless of their enrollment in gifted and talented programs (Ford et al., 2018). Additionally, the current research reflecting the methods for approaching, changing, or mitigating bias toward African American female students is largely absent despite previous calls for information and interventional changes (Ford et al., 2018). Similar findings to Ford et al. (2018) are reflected by Morgan (2019), who argued that the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education programs is representative of poor anti-racism policies, training, and professional development for pre-and in-service teachers. Morgan (2019) argued that teachers who often have biased ideologies lacked previous exposure to training programs designed to overcome implicit bias and deficit mindset. However, recommendations, such as those by Morgan (2019) and Ford et al. (2018), which are not implemented nationally, fail to address the current in-service teacher population that oversees gifted student evaluation referrals for diverse student populations.

African American educators report recognizing educational disparities in their own schools against African American children (Annamma & Winn, 2019; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). McKinney de Royston et al. (2021) documented African American educators and their experiences with teaching African American students in the U.S. During an interview, twenty-four African American educators reported a sense of protectiveness for African American students due to their awareness of racial intentions from other students, educators, and peers.

Many African American educators reported a personal dedication to ensuring that African American students were treated equally despite acknowledging that the educational system inherently devalues their existence. Annamma and Winn (2019) argued that overcoming disparities lies in targeting teacher education through implementing intersectional justice. Annamma and Winn (2019) explored how poor or absent training increased biases amongst preservice teachers and in-service educators. According to the researchers, the current means for improving anti-racism training and implementing a culturally competent curriculum have been absent across many states in the U.S. As legal reforms are slow to change, educators' understanding of implementing culturally competent pedagogy is largely under-implemented (Annamma & Winn, 2019). Ultimately, if educators are not provided appropriate pre- and in-service training to address deficit mindset and implicit biases, students of color will continue to face educational inequalities in the U.S. (Annamma & Winn, 2019; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021).

Racist ideologies, overt or subverted, are a barrier that all teachers must overcome to provide equitable education for students (Annamma & Winn, 2019; Sondel et al., 2019; Woodson & Love, 2019). Sondel et al. (2019) reviewed the struggles of overcoming racism amongst teachers by focusing on qualitative data collected across two *no-excuses* charter schools in New Orleans. No excuses refer to a system focused primarily on disciplinary treatment to ensure that students do not engage in disruptive behavior in the classroom. Sondel et al. (2019) documented mistreatment of African American children, while teachers justified their efforts by arguing that minority students were more likely to be disruptive or unteachable. Sondel et al. (2019) argued that color-blind racism is a rampant issue across many schools in the U.S., which

Annamma and Winn (2019) emphasized is inadequately addressed through “no excuses” punishment and exclusionary and devaluing treatment from educators.

Woodson and Love (2019) argued that one model for overcoming the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted programs might be improving the representation of these students’ voices in academic literature and legal reform. Woodson and Love (2019) called for research that hears the voices of African American students who have experienced inequalities in the educational system. However, despite recommendations from Woodson and Love (2019) and Sondel et al. (2019), it is unclear the extent to which educators and researchers are taking the initiative to listen to the voices of African American students.

Socioeconomic Status

Racialized barriers inherent in legal and educational policies bolster the disproportionality of African American student representation in gifted programs, while socioeconomic status impairs students and families’ access to resources (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges & Gentry, 2021). Using a systems theory, Crawford et al. (2020) reviewed the underrepresentation of minority students and the obstacles faced in overcoming racial and gender barriers in the education system. According to Crawford et al. (2020), barriers are most likely expressed in the school system, in which peers, teachers, and administration demonstrate low confidence in African American students’ ability to academically achieve in gifted and talented programs. Further, barriers can also be found at home, in which some students of disadvantaged or lower socioeconomic backgrounds cannot obtain the needed resources to academically succeed and overcome the racial inequality experienced at school (Crawford et al., 2020). According to Hodges and Gentry (2021), the main method of overcoming racial barriers requires improving the required support at home and within the school system. Hodges and Gentry (2021)

argued that status and socioeconomic status are key indicators of underrepresentation in gifted programs. Using data from the Department of Education in Florida, from 2011 to 2016, Hodges and Gentry (2021) found that students' likelihood of failing to receive a referral to a gifted or talented program is associated with socioeconomic status and enrollment in rural areas.

Additionally, 59% of African American students were less likely to be referred if they were participating in a federal meal subsidy program. Students with lower socioeconomic status than their peers face reduced access to support and resources and increased bias from educators and administrators (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges & Gentry, 2021).

Socioeconomic status critically influences school resources and students' and parents' access to external support to overcome educational inequalities (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; P. Peters et al., 2021; Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). Yaluma and Tyner (2021) assessed 812 public schools' attempts to overcome the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs. Using a review of national educational data, between 2012 and 2016, Yaluma and Tyner (2021) identified that gifted participation in lower-poverty schools was increasing. However, lower-poverty schools failed to address the underrepresentation gap for gifted students of minority status. Suburban schools were likelier to have gifted programs than urban, rural, or town schools. In agreement with data from Crawford et al. (2020) and Hodges and Gentry (2021), Yaluma and Tyner's (2021), data indicates that African American and other minority students are continually underrepresented in gifted education programs despite legal reforms and supposed efforts to address racism in the U.S. school system. P. Peters et al. (2021) similarly examined the underrepresentation of gifted students. Using data from a review of gifted programs, the researchers argued that students with more affluent backgrounds are more likely to receive enrollment, attention, or referral. However, students who attend lower economic schools

in urban or rural areas are more likely to have experienced discrimination or are not referred despite recommendations to gifted or talented programs. The data indicates that while programs have been implemented to ideally overcome underrepresentation, such programs are largely ineffective for students that are outside of private schools or are enrolled in lower economic, rural, and urban education centers (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; P. Peters et al., 2021; Yaluma & Tyner, 2021).

Legal policies aimed at increasing student enrollment in gifted programs proved ineffective at overcoming disproportionality in many U.S. states (Lamb et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2020). Lamb et al. (2019) explored gifted education programs in Texas by examining legal reforms and data from the Office of Civil Rights and the Texas Education Agency. Based on recent legal reform, enrollment and participation in gifted programs were limited to 20% per school. The 20% rule in Texas originated to improve equality and address underrepresentation. However, because of the program, inequality and achievement gaps have grown. Using statewide data, Lamb et al. (2019) found that 282,994 students (or 28.4% of districts met standards for diverse student inclusion in gifted programs. Further, when employing a Bayesian regression analysis focused on district-level characteristics of teachers, students, and expenditures, a high percentage of variance was noted based on location and teacher-level characteristics. Hispanic and White teachers were associated with higher levels of inequality for African American and other minority students. Yoon et al. (2020), in response to data from Lamb et al. (2019), argued that the underrepresentation of ethnic and minority students requires programs that improve educators' ability to address their own biases while also supporting diverse populations from an early age. Using data from an enrichment program in which 10 gifted and talented students participated, the researchers found that intervention programs can improve access for African

American and other minority students while also allowing educators to undergo training specific to understanding giftedness and potential biases. Ultimately, models such as the 20% rule fail to address the underlying issue of implicit bias and teacher deficit mindset (Lamb et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2020).

Teachers Perception and Understanding of Giftedness

Teachers' subjective beliefs about intelligence vary by demographics and geographic context (Antoun, 2022; Haller-Gryc, 2022; Lee et al., 2022). Lee et al. (2022) conducted a comparative study of teachers' beliefs regarding gifted students by focusing on 478 teachers from South Korea, Australia, and the U.S. The findings indicated that various beliefs regarding intelligence and illustration of intelligent characteristics are different across these countries. In addition, teachers had different identifications about how students expressed intelligent, gifted skills. For example, in the U.S., individualism was most likely to be considered an intelligent characteristic, while South Korea demonstrated collectivism as a crucial factor in intelligent or gifted status. Lee et al. (2022) argued that such findings demonstrate significant sociocultural perceptions of intelligence are identifiable amongst teachers. The same findings were reflected in Antoun (2022) and Haller-Gryc (2022), who urged that teachers' biases toward intelligence are based on experience, background, and geographic context. The perceptions of educators, combined with implicit bias and a deficit mindset, may be central when exploring the disproportionality of students' enrollment and evaluation for gifted and talented programs (Antoun, 2022; Haller-Gryc, 2022; Lee et al., 2022).

The referral and evaluation models also imply that teachers know the variation of giftedness in terms of culture, behavior, and individuality (Mun et al., 2020; Russell, 2018). Mun et al. (2020) argued that the current referral process is largely embedded within the westernized

ideology of intelligence and giftedness, which disadvantages students' ability to gain referral or invitation to talented programs due to educator's implicit biases, and at times overt racism, toward diverse students. Russell (2018) also reviewed teachers' perceptions of giftedness through a sample of seven teachers who completed open-ended questionnaires and interviews within a large high school in a suburban school district in the U.S. using a textual comparison process. Russell (2018) documented differing perceptions of giftedness among teachers. Some reflected giftedness in academic achievement, while others felt it was also related to a verbal and linguistic use of academic knowledge. Teachers' perceptions of giftedness are not often based purely on the current methods for identifying academic talent but instead on a subjective understanding of intelligence (Mun et al., 2020; Russell, 2018).

Teachers' perceptions of intelligence are influenced by deficit mindset and implicit bias (Miller & Brigandi, 2020; Ottwein, 2020). Ottwein (2020) considered deficit thinking and implicit bias from a psychological perspective using a review of known knowledge regarding the definition of giftedness. According to Ottwein (2020), many educators demonstrate subjective ideologies of intelligence when considering giftedness and assessing student referrals. As teachers serve as gatekeepers for referrals and recommendations for gifted programs, Ottwein (2020) argued that understanding the potential for implicit bias and subjective thinking about intelligence is critical. However, according to Miller and Brigandi (2020), research in the U.S. has yet to examine teachers' perceptions of intelligence due to a primary focus on underrepresentation statistics. Miller and Brigandi (2020) investigated gifted programs in rural areas of the U.S. with a focus specific to Appalachia, a characteristically rural and lower social and economic region of the U.S. Using a review of pedagogical teaching policies and school data, the researchers identified policies that may influence gifted programs and talent enrollment

for students of diverse backgrounds. Miller and Brigandi (2020) documented a significant abundance of misinformation, bias, and lack of funding for teacher training that might affect gifted enrollment within these areas. Teachers' biased perceptions of intelligence and giftedness also may significantly impact diverse students' enrollments and talented programs in these areas (Miller & Brigandi, 2020; Ottwein, 2020).

Teachers' perceptions of giftedness often focus on their own experience or self-perception of students' ability to demonstrate academic knowledge (Matheis et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). Matheis et al. (2020) assessed giftedness, gender stereotypes, and student characteristics, focusing on pre-service teachers' beliefs. Using a sample of 315 Australian preservice teachers, questionnaires were distributed regarding stereotypes, giftedness, and gender. An ANOVA analysis demonstrated that preservice teachers were most likely to associate giftedness with high intellectual abilities, perceived student academic ability, adaptability, and the ability to academically display intelligence verbally and linguistically. Preservice teachers also perceived male students as less socially and emotionally competent when compared to female students. Female students were perceived as more favorable when compared to male students (Matheis et al., 2020). In the U.S. context, Szymanski and Lynch (2020) investigated educator perceptions students using data from semi-structured interviews with nine teachers. Teachers reflected on key themes about their perceptions of intelligence often associated with the ability to demonstrate academic knowledge linguistically and verbally. In addition, teachers reflected on the need for professional development and training to inform their understanding of gifted students, which was absent in their respective schools. Teachers' understanding of giftedness is often rooted in undeveloped, able-bodied, and westernized

perspective of giftedness that requires further development to inform affective change in disproportionality (Matheis et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

Teachers' training and experience with cultural and behavioral differences in giftedness expression are often limited (Klimecká, 2022; Lamb-Milligan, 2019). Klimecká (2022) documented variations of intelligence definitions by questioning 223 teachers in the Czech Republic. Educators defined giftedness and intelligence as exhibiting classroom engagement, nondisruptive socialization, and high levels of perfectionism and academic achievement. However, educators were more likely to express difficulty in identifying gifted students that failed to adequately socialize and engage in the classroom regardless of academic achievement (Klimecká, 2022). Despite the limitation outside of the U.S. geographical context, Klimecká's (2022) research illustrated implications for differences in cultural perceptions of intelligence and interschool treatment of gifted students. Lamb-Milligan (2019), in a U.S. context, noted that teachers' subjective reflections of giftedness might significantly affect diverse students' representation in gifted and talented programs. Through reviewing training and pedagogy, Lamb-Milligan (2019) argued that pre-service and in-service training is limited in exploring cultural differences in intelligence and gifted expression. Further, outdated modes of evaluation, such as the intelligence quota, further create disparities in diverse students' representation in gifted and talented programs. Improving teacher's understanding of cultural differences in intelligence and gifted expression may be an outlet for improving disproportionalities for Black students (Klimecká, 2022; Lamb-Milligan, 2019).

Synthesis of Related Research Studies

In this chapter, I reviewed the most relevant literature on the disproportionate referral and evaluation of African American students to gifted and talented programs. First, a historical

review of educational inequality was supplied, which demonstrated a history of repeated subjugation and oppression of African American students that filtered into contemporary educational verbiage and policies (Bartscher et al., 2020; Deener, 2020; Lin & Neely, 2020; Munger & Seron, 2022). As a result, modern educational systems are inundated with policies that reflect the interests of White students and families, of high-socioeconomic status, over that of African American students (Allen et al., 2018; C. N. Bell et al., 2020; Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022; Yearby, 2018).

The second section of the literature review focused on gifted education and underrepresentation in enrollment and evaluation of African American students. Compared to White peers, African American students are less likely to be referred for evaluation or enrolled in gifted and talented programs (Caldera, 2020; Chin et al., 2020). The central reasons for underrepresentation are implicit teacher bias and deficit mindset (Staats, 2016). Educators' unconscious perceptions and biased definitions of intelligence lead to subjective evaluation and under-enrollment of African American students in gifted courses (Gilliam et al., 2016; Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018; Worrell, 2022). Despite academic recognition of these issues, it is unclear if policy, reform, and teacher training has alleviated teachers' implicit biases and deficit mindsets (Caldera, 2020; Chin et al., 2020; Copur-Gencturk et al., 2020; Daftary & Sugrue, 2022).

Educators lack training and development to identify their own implicit biases and deficit mindsets (Caldera, 2020; Chin et al., 2020; Copur-Gencturk et al., 2020; Daftary & Sugrue, 2022), which is coupled with inconsistent and biased perceptions of intelligence and expression of gifted academic talent (Johnson & Larwin, 2020; Mun et al., 2020; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Various researchers across the U.S. and abroad have called for interventions designed to address teachers' implicit biases and deficit mindsets as a means of overcoming disproportionate referral

and evaluation of African American students to gifted and talented programs (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022; Mun et al., 2020; Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020). The current action research study addresses such calls for research through implementing a pre- and post-design to address teacher implicit bias and deficit mindset while offering recommendations to address the disproportionate referral and evaluation of African American students to gifted and talented programs. Chapter 3 presents the design and methodology for this action research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Researchers agree that intellectual giftedness exists in all populations, all ethnicities, and all economic levels. However, this diversity is seldom seen in American public schools' programs for gifted students. African American students are often overlooked, not considered, or misjudged by teachers when asked to make referrals for gifted evaluation (Ford, 2021; Ford & Whiting, 2008). In response to the reviewed literature, I aimed to ascertain elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness toward African American students before and after their participation in a four-part professional development series that focused on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset, and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations. My study involved participants completing a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire as well as their participation in the various activities, discussions and self-exploration, embedded in each professional development session.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the choice of the action research design, followed by a brief description of the study context. The next section provides an explanation of the recruitment process used to obtain participants and a description of the individuals who agreed to participate in my study. Next, a description of the study intervention is provided. The data sources will then be described, followed by a discussion of the data collection process and the data analysis procedures used.

Choice of Methodology

The action research design is used to identify a problem, select a potential solution, and

assess the developed solutions' success (Kemmis, 2009; Morales, 2016). The action research methodology differs from other designs due to a focus on embedding and involving the participants directly within the research project, as both problem solvers and solution seekers, alongside the researcher. In real-world problems, Kemmis (2009) referred to action research design as a means of addressing the problems researchers identify and emerging solutions through direct participant involvement. Morales (2016) additionally regarded action research as embedding the research process within the social phenomenon rather than attempting pure objectivity.

Social phenomena are often embedded within the social context of the specific place, or in this case, the school. The use of an action research design allows those individuals who experience the problem to directly contribute solutions to the identified problem (Creswell, 2012; Kemmis, 2009; Morales, 2016). The action research design is cyclical, meaning that the individuals that provide information, reflections, and solutions, may also contribute to addressing the problem while learning new information to further improve their solutions (Morales, 2016). In my study, the action research design allowed teachers to explore, discuss and self-reflect on their beliefs and practices and determine how these may impact their interactions with students.

Context of the Study

The context of this qualitative study is a K-5 school where teachers can make referrals for gifted evaluation. The target school is located within a southeastern urban school district with a high population of African American students. A recent history of teachers not referring students for gifted identification had been identified as a problem of practice at this school. The study context supplied the opportunity to gain qualitative insight regarding why teacher referrals for gifted evaluation are largely absent at the target school location. Using this context allowed for

the gathering of information that helped determine teachers' opinions and perceptions of gifted students. Targeting this school context also provided the opportunity to assess if factors related to underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations had an impact on teacher's perceptions.

Teachers in my study were provided the opportunity, through the action research intervention, to learn about factors that directly affect teachers' ability to recognize giftedness in diverse students, particularly African American students. By participating in various activities, discussions and self-reflection, these teachers expressed having a powerful growth experience that deepened their understanding of their students and themselves.

Participant Recruitment and Description

I used convenience sampling methods for participant recruitment. The convenience sampling method is a non-random method that involves selecting participants that are most able to address the guiding research and data collection questions based on their personal experience (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). In the case of my study, this included a convenience sample of educators working within the study context who can provide direct referrals for gifted evaluation.

After completing the required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certifications, which are presented in Appendix A, I obtained university IRB approval (Appendix B) and site approval from the school district (Appendix C). Following this, I provided a detailed verbal explanation of my study and its purpose during a faculty meeting in late January and included information regarding the voluntary nature of participation in the study. I made a call for honest input and responses on the questionnaire and outlined steps to ensure. Teachers were given the dates of the professional development sessions and a flyer (Appendix D) was placed in the teacher's lounge as a reminder of the upcoming study and request to participate. Individuals

wishing to be a part of my study indicated their desire verbally. I then provided participants with an informed consent form (see Appendix E) to read and sign, which formally acknowledged their participation in the study.

Of the 27 individuals invited, 14 agreed to participate in my study. The participants included 9 classroom teachers, the reading coach, the math coach, the school counselor, the librarian and the reading interventionist, all of whom can make referrals of students for gifted identification. The participants varied in years of teaching, and one had previously taken a class in gifted education. Of the 14 participants, 12 attended every session and 2 missed one session each. The study participants were sent the pre-intervention questionnaire via email (see Appendix F) and reminded to choose a pseudonym to use when responding (see Table 2).

Table 2*Participant Pseudonyms, Years of Teaching, Gifted Training and Number of Sessions Attended*

Pseudonym	Years Teaching	Gifted Training	No. of Sessions
Beach	17	No	4
Whitman	19	No	4
RPST	16	No	4
Minnie Mouse	4	No	4
Teacher	11	Yes	4
Ashley Edwards	34	No	4
Serenity Wolf	6	No	4
Junie B	12	No	4
NYBB	9	No	3
Chance	18	No	4
Halcyon	7	No	4
Joanne	21	No	3
Shelley	18	No	4
Mom of 2 D1 Athletes	16	No	4

Description of the Study Intervention

My study aimed to ascertain elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness toward African American students and to determine the impact that professional development on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations has on teachers' perceptions. The following were the guiding research questions:

RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

RQ2: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled at a southern, urban school?

RQ3: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

RQ4: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled in a southern, urban school?

RQ5: To what extent are elementary school teachers able to recognize potential in African American students, following participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations?

A pre- and post-questionnaire data collection method analyzed using thematic analysis was employed to address each of the research questions. The details of the instrument used, a summary of the intervention sessions, data collection and analysis methods are provided in the next sections of this chapter.

Instrumentation

A 10-item questionnaire (see Appendix E) was created to capture the thoughts, beliefs and perceptions of the teachers participating in my study. The questions focused on teachers' beliefs about gifted students and their overall understanding of this very complex construct. The questionnaire also asked teachers to share their initial knowledge about the topics covered within the professional development series planned for my study. For example, one question from the questionnaire reads, "Underachievement occurs when students have the ability to perform at high levels but don't, for various reasons. Considering the students currently enrolled in your school, why do you think underachievement might occur." This question prompted the participants to

focus only on the students currently enrolled at the target school and allowed the respondents to share their thoughts about possible explanations for why students may not be showing their full potential. Another question asked, “Underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs is a historical concern. What might be some factors causing this to occur?” Answers to this question provided information about what teachers believe are factors contributing to the problem at large. Because I created this instrumentation, an expert panel and field testing of the instrument was conducted to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire and the applicability to the current study purpose.

Expert Panel. The first validation step included a review of the instrumentation through an expert panel. Expert panels allow individuals with terminal degrees in an applicable field to review the instrument developed by the researcher (Assarroudi et al., 2018). To be considered an expert, the individuals must (a) be in the field of education, (b) have worked a minimum of 10 years in education, and (c) hold a terminal degree in the field of education. Following the recommendations of Assarroudi et al. (2018), I selected an expert panel that held terminal degrees in the K-12 educational field. A sample of four educators and school administrators was composed to review the pre- and post-questionnaire instrument I developed. I provided the questionnaire using Google Forms.

The expert panel had 5-7 days to provide feedback regarding the questionnaire's clarity, feedback, and potential effectiveness in eliciting participants' responses. The expert panel reviewed the questionnaire and provided feedback regarding clarification of questions and revising the order of questions. I incorporated the expert panel's feedback to improve the questionnaire's clarity and flow. Aside from flow and clarification of questions, the expert panel reported that the questionnaire was appropriate for application and alignment with the aims of

the action research study. After the expert panel review was completed, the field-testing measures were completed to further investigate the reliability of the questionnaire tool.

Field Testing. Field testing is used to assess the appropriateness of a questionnaire to gather information from participants that will reveal the desired data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). In addition, a field test can clarify if adjustments are required to study procedures to ensure sufficient data saturation is reached to address the research questions and the purpose of the study (Hayashi et al., 2019). Following the recommendations of Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), three volunteers were chosen to complete the field testing. Their responses have not been included in the actual study and the volunteers are not from the chosen site. Three volunteers from my professional teaching circle agreed to complete the pre- and post-questionnaires as part of the field-testing procedures.

The field testers' responses were only used to improve the questionnaire instrumentation I developed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). As the field test did not involve actual participants, a separate IRB application was not necessary. The primary data source, the pre-and post-questionnaire, was supplied to the field-testing participants via Google Forms. The field testers were asked to complete the pre-questionnaire and return it to me in 2-3 days. The field testers were then sent the PowerPoint presentations that were designed to guide the actual participants through the professional development sessions. Each presentation included information from research, relevant activities, videos pertaining to each topic and opportunities to reflect. The field testers were asked to review the presentations and to contact me with any questions. As each field tester informed me that their review of the PowerPoint presentations had been completed, the research sent each field tester the post-questionnaire to complete via Google Forms. The field-testing procedure took approximately 4 weeks to complete and revealed that the pre-and

post-intervention questionnaires were sufficient to gather approximately five pages of textual data per respondent. Thus, the pre-and post-questionnaire methods were sufficient to conduct the data collection.

Summary of Intervention Sessions

For my study, I chose professional development as the intervention to address the extremely low rate of teachers referring students for gifted evaluation at the chosen school. This intervention was chosen due to the strong recommendations found in the research on ways to address the underrepresentation of diverse populations in gifted programs in public schools. Providing professional development to teachers on very specific topics was offered as a viable means of addressing the issue and its possible contributing factors. These topics included underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset/thinking, and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations. One 90-minute professional development session was conducted afterschool on the Wednesdays in March 2023 (March 8, March 15, March 22 and March 29) for each topic suggested in the literature. Each session included me sharing information, participants involved in collaborative activities, group discussions, and time for reflection. The following section provides a summary of each professional development session.

Session 1: Underachievement. The first session, as with all sessions that followed, began with me welcoming participants to the professional development session. I stated the purpose of the session, and the norms by which the group would govern itself were agreed upon I reminded the group of the confidential nature of all sessions and invited participants so speak openly and honestly. Underachievement was defined as “a severe discrepancy between expected achievement . . . and actual achievement” (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 157). This was followed by a simpler definition I provided: “It’s when students can do better in school, but don’t.” When

asked to share any examples from their experiences in the classroom that may be examples of underachievement in class, several participants provided input. When asked to provide possible reasons underachievement may occur, participants began a lengthy discussion that included viewpoints ranging from poor parenting and lack of parental support to the laziness of some students and the boredom of others. After I shared possible causes of underachievement from the literature, including fear of failure, peer pressure and non-relevant curriculum, the conversation between the participants noticeably changed. One teacher was overheard saying, “I never thought about it like that. I thought my kids were just being lazy.”

This session continued with participants watching a short video to better understand underachievement, breaking into small groups to discuss a fictional student, and with me sharing a list of ways educators can address and minimize underachievement in the classroom. This list included such strategies as capitalizing on students’ interests and maintaining a healthy level of challenge. The session ended with participants completing a short exit activity. On a half sheet of paper, participants were asked to write their definition of underachievement, list two possible causes, and add three things educators can do about it. The purpose of this was to allow participants a moment to reflect on what they had learned. After the session concluded, several participants asked for a copy of the Power Point presentation that was used to guide the group through the session, stating that they wanted to share this information with other teachers who were not present. I shared the presentation as requested.

Session 2: Implicit Bias. The second session began with me welcoming participants to the professional development session. I stated the purpose of the session, and the norms by which the group would govern itself were agreed upon. I highlighted two norms in particular (*No judgment* and *Assume positive intentions*) and cautioned that the topic for this session might be

delicate for some. Hence, I encouraged respectful, open and honest conversation. The topic for this session was implicit bias. Drawing upon Staats (2016), I supplied participants with the following definition for implicit bias: “The subconscious attitudes, feelings, or thoughts about a person or group that emerge without effort and outside the realm of awareness.” Implicit bias triggers an automatic response that causes one to make an immediate evaluation of another person. Everyone, including teachers, experiences implicit bias. However, it can be so deeply ingrained in a person’s psyche that often, they are not cognizant of the effect implicit bias has on decisions, actions, and interactions with others (Warikoo et al., 2016). Early in the session, one teacher stated that she did not “see color and treats everyone the same.” Another participant suggested that “we all form opinions about others without realizing what we’re doing.” The conversation was lively, yet respectful, and one participant was overheard saying, “We never get to talk about this stuff.”

The group proceeded through this session reading the slides detailing how biases are formed through such means as personal experiences, cultural conditioning, media portrayals and upbringing. Several participants wanted to share real-life examples and spoke at length on this topic. I showed a video from YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ZWgVs4qj1ho>) entitled “Our Hidden Biases” and at the conclusion, noticed one of the participants was visibly emotional. The teacher shared with the group that she saw herself in the video and was ashamed. Other participants stated that they, too, made an emotional connection with the video. The conversation turned to how implicit bias impacts our decisions about others, specifically our students. Because participants were offering very honest and real reflections, I decided to allow extended time for discussion. Participants had a lot to say and were deeply engaged in the conversation. As the 90 minutes designated for this session was coming to an end, I asked participants to complete the

final activity for this session at home at their convenience. The request was to log into <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> and take the Harvard Implicit Associations Test on race (Project Implicit, n.d.). I shared that time would be made available at the next session if anyone wanted to share their results. This session concluded with an exit ticket, which allowed participants a moment to reflect on implicit bias and the session for the day.

Session 3: Deficit Mindset. The third session began with me welcoming participants to the professional development session. I stated the purpose of the session, and the norms by which the group would govern itself were agreed upon. A PowerPoint presentation had been created to guide the group through the session. I began by inviting members of the group to participate in an activity where they offered possible reasons why a student might misbehave in school. After allowing time for group discussion, responses were shared and put into two categories – responses that blamed the student and those that did not. I then shared research on how a deficit mindset often causes a teacher to blame a student rather than consider other factors affecting a student’s behavior. After offering their reflections on deficit mindset, participants viewed excerpts from a video by Dr. Andrew Campbell, noted researcher and expert in equity and diversity, entitled “Disrupting & Dismantling Deficit Thinking in Schools.” An engaging discussion ensued as the presentation was paused for comments and reactions from the participants. Following the video, participants discussed steps teachers can take to address and minimize teachers’ deficit mindset in the classroom, including focusing on the positives/potential in students and being brave enough to explore their own thinking.

Having been introduced to this concept and discussed its ramifications in a school scenario, participants completed an activity that gave them additional opportunities to explore their thinking. Participants were shown three separate pictures—an African American boy who

appeared to have a frown on his face; an African American girl sitting beside a White, female adult in uniform; and an African American mother with four children. They were asked to give reactions to each, based solely on the pictures. The descriptions of the African American boy ranged from he was on his way to a fight to he was upset about getting a bad grade in school. The descriptions of the African American girl beside the White, female adult in uniform ranged from the girl needing help with her math, to the girl taking college level math and being tutored by her mentor. When asked about where the father could be in the picture of the African American mother with four children, responses ranged from the father being killed in a drug deal to the father being a soldier and, while deployed, the mother and children were simply playing outside. The range of responses were broad enough to elicit conversations from the participants. One teacher expressed shock and concern at how the same image could cause such drastically different reactions. One teacher noted how some people instantly took a negative stance in their descriptions. I reiterated that exploring such concepts as implicit bias and deficit mindset are vital when educating children.

When a person focuses on another's faults or shortcomings instead of their strengths, they are said to operate from a deficit mindset. A deficit mindset also includes blaming people for their situations or the circumstances in which they find themselves. Individuals, namely teachers, can have a deficit mindset toward their students and not realize its effect on their daily interactions. For instance, when referring students for advanced programming or special classes, teachers influenced by a deficit mindset may unknowingly exclude entire groups of students. Many researchers, including Rodgers (2008) posit that deficit thinking held by educators toward diverse students hinders access to gifted programs and offer suggestions for combating this harmful mindset. These include awareness of its existence and considerable self-reflection

(Rodgers, 2008). After recognizing its presence, teachers can then begin the work of mitigating the invisible barriers created by this subtle yet powerful force.

Session 4: Recognizing Giftedness in Diverse Populations. The fourth and final session had to be shortened due to a conflict with another school activity. This session lasted approximately 60 minutes. It began with me welcoming participants to the session and thanking them for their engagement thus far. I stated the purpose of the session, and the norms by which the group would govern itself were agreed upon. A PowerPoint presentation had been created to guide the group through discussions and activities on this topic. As an initial activity, participants were asked to work in groups to list characteristics or traits they would expect a gifted student to display. They then shared their lists with the larger group and discussed any traits they were surprised to see. Participants were asked to keep their lists readily available and compare it with the information presented in a video by Dr. Dan Peters, author, and advocate for gifted children.

Following the video and the discussion that ensued, participants were asked to consider traits and characteristics that were not so popular but have been displayed by some of their brightest students. They worked in groups with colleagues to discuss these characteristics. When asked to share with the larger group, one teacher offered “disruptive” as a descriptor. A discussion occurred about how a gifted student could also be disruptive. Many participants, drawing on what they had learned in these sessions, explained that a student could be disruptive in class for a variety of reasons including not being interested in the subject matter, not seeing the relevance of the curriculum to their lives, not being challenged in class or trying to gain the respect of their peers. Another participant offered the word “sleepy” to describe one of the brightest students she has had in class. She went on to explain that this particular student had many adult responsibilities at home and lived in a turbulent household which kept him up most nights.

However, this same student, she went on to explain, earned excellent grades and passed all tests. I explained that giftedness may not manifest the same way in diverse students, specifically African American students. A quote from the National Association of Gifted Children (2010) was shared, which stated the following: “Some gifted individuals with exceptional aptitude may not demonstrate outstanding levels of achievement due to environmental circumstances such as limited opportunity to learn as a result of poverty, discrimination, or cultural barriers [or] due to physical or learning disabilities” (para. 4).

This quote sparked several comments, including those directed at the students’ parents. Many participants commented on the perceived lack of parental involvement or support they receive. I will elaborate on this topic in the next chapter. When asked for final reflections on this topic and the overall experience of participating in this series of professional development topics, one participant expressed their frustration in general, stating, “Honestly, I think this is all important, but I feel like I am under pressure to focus on the kids who are struggling.” Another stated that “we need more training like this because I never know what to look for, so I don’t refer anybody.” Because this discussion was lengthy and a common sentiment among most participants, I will also elaborate on this topic in the next chapter.

Data Collection

Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were used to collect teachers’ perspectives of giftedness in African American students before and after participating in four professional development sessions designed to enhance recognition of giftedness in diverse populations. These questionnaires generated an abundance of qualitative data that I analyzed. These two data sources provided enough information to adequately answer and address the research questions driving my study. I sent all recruited participants via Google Forms, an online pre-intervention

questionnaire (see Appendix E). This questionnaire tool collected teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about giftedness related to the students currently enrolled in the school. After all questionnaires were completed, I completed the thematic analysis process using the data obtained from participants' responses.

The same data collection tool was provided to the participants and the same data analysis procedure was used at the conclusion of the professional development sessions. My goal was to determine if professional development on selected topics impacted the perceptions of teachers toward giftedness in African American students. A detailed description of the data analysis procedure is described in the next section.

Data Analysis

I completed the data analysis process two times during my study—once to analyze the data collected from the pre-intervention questionnaire and a second time after collecting the data from the post-intervention questionnaire. The procedures listed here were performed twice, approximately 2 months apart. The data analysis methods I used followed the recommendations of Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step guide to thematic analysis and Saldaña's (2016) recommendations for textual analysis. An inductive approach was used for the initial data analysis procedures. Inductive qualitative analysis uses raw textual data, in this case, the pre-and post-questionnaires, to derive codes, categories, and themes that address the study's proposed research questions and purpose (Saldaña, 2016). The interpretation of textual data, using an inductive analysis approach, is considered an "emergent strategy" (p. 45) in which the reading of the textual data leads to emergent codes, categories and themes rather than those that were pre-developed (Saldaña, 2016). The second time the data analysis procedure was done, however, I used the codes, categories and themes that emerged previously, and included those that became

evident during the process. I also maintained a reflective journal during this entire process. The reflective journal allows for a space for the researcher to consider their own biases, opinions, and reflections on the entire study procedures. The same journal was kept throughout the data analysis procedure to continue the process of reflection during the critical stages of analysis (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018).

Preparing the Data

The first step of data preparation was accessing the pre-questionnaire data downloaded from Google Forms. I printed off all responses and reviewed each form for completion. I applied the chosen pseudonym to each participant's questionnaire for confidentiality (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I then, following member-checking procedures (Koelsch, 2013), then informed the participants that their responses were available for review. Caretta and Pérez (2019) argued that member checking is key to furthering the relationship between the participant and the researcher in an action research design. I invited participants to make further comments or clarifications if desired. No further comments or clarifications were received.

Immersion

I began the analysis stage by becoming immersed in the data, carefully reading the printed text from the pre-intervention questionnaires. The immersion process is fundamental to fully understanding the unique expressions of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). I reread the pre-questionnaires, with reflective journal aside, to record any reflections, opinions, and biases that emerged after reading the textual data (Saldaña, 2016). None were noted. Reviewing each textual response multiple times provided the foundation for the code development phase discussed next.

Code Development

The second phase of the analysis procedure involves the identification of initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). I cut the printed responses from all participants and sorted them by question. Using a set of standard highlighters, I reviewed the textual information from the pre-intervention questionnaires and highlighted words or short phrases with a similar meaning in one color. When a different word or phrase was identified that represented a different meaning, I used a different color highlighter. I continued this process for each question until all textual data had been color coded. After the first iteration of coding, I repeated the coding procedures for a second time to ensure that phrases or words of importance were not missed in the first round of code identification (Saldaña, 2016). The development of initial codes created in this phase is integral to the category development reviewed in the following section.

Category Development

Category development involves reviewing the earlier codes for similarities or differences, which can be collapsed into similar categories (Braun & Clarke, 2019). During code development, I had cut and color-coded the responses from the questionnaires for easy code identification. These slips of paper were reread and evaluated to assess for similarities. The codes with similar elements, phrases, or sentences were merged into categories. I repeated the category development procedure for a second iteration. The second iteration of category development reviewed the previously developed categories and ensured that all codes were represented (Saldaña, 2016). After the second iteration of category development, the theme development procedures commenced.

Theme Development

During the first iteration of theme development, it became clear to me that the guiding principles of CRT were represented in the textual data. As I reviewed and grouped categories into themes these guiding principles naturally emerged. I completed a second iteration of theme development by re-reviewing all codes, categories and themes developed for accuracy to the participant's textual responses and there was no ignoring the alignment of the themes with the CRT principles. During this process, I continued to record their perceptions, opinions, and considerations using their reflective journal (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). After identifying the emergent themes from the pre-intervention questionnaire, I stored this information for later review. The entire thematic analysis process was repeated after the conclusion of the professional development sessions, when participants were given the post-intervention survey to complete. I used the codes, categories and themes that previously emerged during the initial round of data analysis and added those that emerged during the post-intervention data analysis process.

In Chapter 4, I will review each theme by providing descriptions of the textual data. Participant narratives will be included through direct quotes in Chapter 4 to provide a thick description (Geertz, 2008), which is a detailed description of the participant reflections directly from their textual reports.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

African American students are often overlooked, not considered, or misjudged by teachers when asked to make referrals for gifted evaluation (Ford, 2021; Ford & Whiting, 2008). In response to the reviewed literature, my study aimed to ascertain elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness toward African American students and to determine the impact that professional development on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset, and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations has on teachers' perceptions. In Chapter 4, the findings of the action research study conducted are presented, beginning with a summary of the conversations from the professional development sessions.

Summary of Session Conversations

Deep discussions occurred throughout the professional development experience that while not specifically analyzed, surely impacted post-intervention responses. During the session on underachievement, participants openly shared their insights on a variety of subjects, including their thoughts on parental influences and socioeconomic status. Participants alluded to their belief that their students' underachievement was directly related to a lack of parental support or involvement. Some suggested that education was not a priority in the homes of their students and therefore parents were simply not pushing their child(ren) to do better in school. Comments continued to include references to families from a lower socioeconomic status, and the characteristics of such, that some participants believed were preventing their students' parents from better supporting their schooling. Parent absenteeism from working multiple jobs, parents'

having past negative school experiences, and a lack of communication with parents were provided by participants as detrimental factors to students' success at school. During the session, information was shared with the group and suggestions for combating underachievement in school were supplied. When asked what additional steps educators could take to address their concerns regarding parental factors, the conversation noticeably changed. One participant suggested that schools do more to reach out to parents and forge more meaningful relationships, to better understand the parents' perspective. It was also suggested that educators learn more about the cultures of the students they serve, in an effort to lessen the assumptions that teachers make about their students and their families.

The conversation during the session on implicit bias lingered into the session on deficit mindset. Participants were open about their thoughts on these subjects and were pleased that these topics were being presented. The overall sentiment was that while some of the self-reflection was uncomfortable, these conversations needed to be had. Several participants acknowledged the presence of bias and were ashamed. Others wanted to talk extensively about the unfair treatment of African American students not just at the target school, but at large. Many participants shared their belief that different schools, depending on the student makeup, received different resources. The student enrollment at the target school is predominantly African American and participants noted that funds are available for remediation and tutoring initiatives. The school system also supports the training of teachers in remediation strategies to boost academics and ultimately student test scores. Participants felt that if the student population was different, more resources would be available for such things as enrichment opportunities for students and better support and training for teachers.

During the last professional development session, participants were asked to share any final reflections about their participation in my study. Although most participants provided positive comments, appreciating the time to come together and discuss important topics, several expressed their frustrations and feelings of stress regarding the pressures placed on educators today. Participants noted the importance of recognizing the potential in all students, specifically gifted students, but wondered if the school system actually considered this a priority. Participants reported that the demands being placed on them to identify struggling learners and bring them up to an acceptable academic level greatly overshadowed their ability to focus on and support the students who may be advanced or gifted.

Thematic Analysis: Initial Codes

The coding procedures discussed in the previous chapter were completed. The decision rule for establishing a code was that a word or phrase must be offered at least twice in the data from the questionnaires to be considered a code. The coding procedure resulted in 22 initial codes from the pre-intervention questionnaire, with 4 additional codes emerging from the post-intervention questionnaire. A total of 26 codes are presented in Table 3, alongside actual quotes from participants that are found in the pre- and post-intervention data. Also included in Table 3 are the counts demonstrating the frequency that a particular code was mentioned before and after the professional development sessions, across all questionnaires. Based on pre- and post-intervention responses and the codes that emerged from each, a change was observed in participants' understanding and beliefs about giftedness and factors that relate to teachers' ability to recognize this characteristic in the students they serve.

Initial codes revealed that participants described gifted students by such attributes as having a high IQ, displaying "out of the box" thinking and having high test scores. However,

after participating in the professional development series, participants described gifted students with a different understanding. Participants focused more on the importance of student interest and displayed a deeper understanding of factors relating to underachievement. A shift was observed from teachers initially assuming that students were underperforming due to laziness and not being pushed by their parents to understanding that many factors were present that could be impacting a student's underachievement.

Initially, no participant mentioned the potential of their students. However, following their participation in the professional development sessions, several participants spoke of the importance of not only recognizing the potential in students, but also the matter of justice, stating that having students reach their potential is a matter of equity.

The pre-intervention questionnaire revealed that many participants had idealistic outlooks regarding their students, claiming that all students have the same opportunities to achieve and that students simply needed to work hard to find success. However, following their participation in the professional development sessions, participants' responses were reflective of a change in thought. Several participants indicated their greater understanding of such constructs as implicit bias and deficit thinking and how these contribute to the systemic racism that has been and currently exists in our schools. Neither bias nor assumptions were mentioned in the pre-intervention responses. However, all participants referred to either one or both of these in their post-intervention responses. This would indicate a greater awareness, with several respondents stating they wanted to learn more.

The engagement of the participants was high and at times the exchanges were intense. However, deep and thoughtful conversations were shared, and participants supported each other in their growth during this process. The conversations during the professional development

sessions were vital to this process and the change that occurred can be seen in the responses of the participants on the post-intervention questionnaire, as recorded in Table 3.

Table 3
Codes, Direct Quotes, Pre- and Post-Intervention Count

Code	Excerpt	Pre-count	Post-count
Above-average intelligence	(Pre) "I consider students with above-average intelligence to be gifted." (Post) ---	4	0
*Assumptions	(Pre) --- (Post) "I feel that many Whites still feel that African Americans are incapable of being educated above the average students."	0	7
Behavior	(Pre) "Behavior can cause students to be overlooked." (Post) "Students may act out when they're not being challenged."	8	12
*Bias	(Pre) --- (Post) "After attending these sessions, it's clear that all people have implicit biases..."	0	13
Bored	(Pre) "Some students lash out because they are bored." (Post) "Some students are not ever presented with an opportunity and are stuck, bored in class."	9	11
Challenges/ Challenging	(Pre) "Jamel carries that sense of giftedness to solve and survive life's challenges." (Post) "Students who are gifted are often overlooked and therefore they are not challenged."	6	15
Family/Parental Support	(Pre) Students who underachieve most likely have a lack of parent involvement in their education." (Post) "...she is well-rounded due to her family's involvement."	12	17
Giftedness	(Pre) "Yes, giftedness exists in all populations. The students just need to be willing to show what they got..." (Post) "Giftedness exists beyond the naked eye."	14	18
Grade Point Average	(Pre) "I feel that all students who maintain a consistent grade point average that falls in the above level of achievement should be given a Gifted Evaluation." (Post) ---	2	0
Identification	(Pre) "In a way, it's easy because they stand out among all the others and you can't miss them." (Post) "Before a person can identify a gifted student, they must identify and understand the attributes that define giftedness."	8	13
Intelligence/IQ	(Pre) "Having a high IQ..." (Post) "...seeing them work on projects or with creative tools like LEGOS, you can really see that intelligence shine through."	7	5
Interest	(Pre) "In a way, it's easy because they stand out among all the others and you can't miss them." (Post) "Before a person can identify a gifted student, they must identify and understand the attributes that define giftedness."	2	12

Code	Excerpt	Pre-count	Post-count
*Justice	(Pre) --- (Post) “Identifying giftedness is providing justice to our students. They deserve to get what they need.”	0	4
Natural Ability	(Pre) “It can be one’s natural ability to absorb and retain a great amount of knowledge.” (Post) “When students are properly identified, their natural abilities can be strengthened.”	3	6
Opportunities	(Pre) “... giving the ones who need the opportunity to go beyond the assignment and can think out of the box.” (Post) “Lashay...clearly has a lot of opportunities that give her more access to knowledge.”	6	13
Out-of-the-box Thinking	(Pre) “...having the ability to think outside of the box.” (Post) “someone with exceptional talent and thinks outside of the norm.”	14	7
*Potential	(Pre) --- (Post) “When students are performing or have the potential to perform at high levels.”	0	7
Problem-Solving	(Pre) “...fast learner, problem-solver, naturally smart...” (Post) “A person is gifted when they have the ability to think outside the box and use advanced and complex ideas to solve problems and view the world.....”	11	15
Race/Racism	(Pre) “Race, cultures, customs...makes no difference. All should have an opportunity to express themselves and be challenged...” (Post) “Giftedness is not mainly for Whites and Asians.”	6	19
Scores	(Pre) “High reading and math scores...” (Post) “It’s more than just test scores.”	10	8
Socioeconomic	(Pre) “...socioeconomics makes some teachers think that they are low academically because of their home life and circumstances...” (Post) “Giftedness does exist in all socioeconomic levels, but some kids get overlooked.”	10	12
Struggling Students	(Pre) “We get caught up in looking for students with learning struggles and tend to not always recognize and work to improve the areas of giftedness in others.” (Post) “There is a lot of pressure to focus on the kids who are struggling.”	8	17
Support and Resources	(Pre) “Resources, support systems, and expectations all play a role in how giftedness gets recognized.” (Post) “Availability of resources is an issue in many schools.”	5	18
Teacher Demands	(Pre) “Teachers are so busy now.” (Post) “The amount of demands on a teacher become wholly unmanageable and unrealistic.”	5	16
Teacher Training	(Pre) “I believe that depends on how well trained a teacher is to identify this in students...” (Post) “There is a need for more professional development for educators.”	4	15

Code	Excerpt	Pre-count	Post-count
Under-achievement	(Pre) “Underachievement occurs in every sector of human life, when there is no incentive to achieve any more than the bare minimum....” (Post) “There are so many reasons why a student might underachieve. Peer pressure and not wanting to stand out is a big one.”	10	14

* new code emerged from post-intervention data

Thematic Analysis: Category Development

Category development includes the combining of relevant codes with a similar value into one category. As a decision rule, I chose to develop broad themes to which the corresponding codes align. In Table 4, the categories developed based on the initial codes are reviewed alongside a brief explanation. Also included are the counts demonstrating the frequency that a particular category was addressed before and after the professional development sessions, across all questionnaires. Five categories were developed, specifically, ongoing historical beliefs, family issues, student traits, teacher/school issues and societal factors.

The first category, ongoing historical beliefs, combines several codes that were directly related to historical beliefs about African American students and intelligence, and beliefs about what a gifted student should look like and how that student should behave. Biases continue to be present in today’s classrooms and assumptions about student ability based on race continue to be made. The second category, family issues, was created from the codes related to the challenges students face at home and the issues perceived by participants concerning their parents/families. Teachers shared extensively their thoughts on parental input/support, or the lack thereof, and made several statements which illustrated their assumptions of their students’ home environments. The third category, student traits, includes the characteristics used by teachers to describe gifted students. Over the course of my study, the traits transformed from more traditional descriptors like having a high IQ and getting good grades to traits that address a

student’s interest and potential. The fourth category, teacher/school issues, combines all the codes relating to the demands placed on teachers to focus on struggling students, and the lack of training and support for gifted students. The final code, societal factors, combines the codes related to justice, opportunities and socioeconomics. Participants recognized that identifying students for gifted services, thus helping them to meet their potential, is a matter of equity and provides them increased opportunities for academic success.

Ultimately, teachers expressed their beliefs that several factors including systemic racism, challenging home environments and lack of resources and training designed to support teachers’ understanding of giftedness, all uphold and contribute to a system of bias and inequity. Based upon these five identified categories, which are displayed in Table 4, three final themes were created. These will be presented in the next section as they relate to the action research questions.

Table 4
Combining Codes into Categories

Category	Codes (from Table 3)	Explanation	Pre-count	Post-count
Ongoing Historical Beliefs	* Assumptions Behavior * Bias Grade point average Identification Intelligence /IQ Above-average intelligence Giftedness Race/racism Scores	Historical inaccuracies exist today regarding intelligence, giftedness and how a gifted student looks and behaves. No longer should giftedness depend solely on high test scores or intelligence quotas. Educators continue to have assumptions and biases that negatively impact African American students.	46	81
Family Issues	Challenges Family/ parental Support	Many students have incredible responsibilities at home. Parents also are faced with challenges that often prevent them from providing the type of support that educators deem appropriate. Teachers comment often on the lack of parental support, without knowing the details of a student’s home situation.	18	32

Category	Codes (from Table 3)	Explanation	Pre-count	Post-count
Student Traits	Bored Interest Natural Abilities Out of the box thinking *Potential Problem Solving	Teachers provided several student traits with which they associated the presence of giftedness. Initially, those traits involved traditional descriptors, but teachers discussed students' interests and their potential more heavily on the post-intervention questionnaire.	53	72
Teacher/ School Issues	Struggling students Support and Resources Teacher Demands Teacher Training	Teachers reported being stressed and frustrated about the need to focus on students who were struggling academically in their classrooms. Some admitted that they rarely had time to devote to the students who were advanced and potentially gifted. Several reported that there was a great need for training, resources and support for gifted services.	22	66
Societal Factors	Justice Opportunities Socio-Economics	Several teachers reported their belief that socioeconomic factors played a huge role in the identification of gifted students, noting that the same opportunities were not available to all students from all populations. Some teachers made reference to justice and equity in their responses on the post-intervention questionnaire.	16	29

* new code emerged from post-intervention data.

Thematic Results

The final process of thematic analysis included the development of themes based on a combination of categories with a similar value, or the renaming of a category. As a decision rule, I chose to align the final themes with tenets of the theoretical framework CRT, as a natural alignment became quite clear. Multiple iterations of category review and consideration were performed to assess for any missing or overlapping data. Table 5 presents the final themes which summarize and illustrate the data collected from all participants and includes a brief definition of the related theme following the theoretical framework on which my study is based.

Table 5*Final Themes and Definitions*

Theme	Categories (from Table 4)	Definition
Racism is Ordinary when Identifying Gifted Students	Ongoing Historical Beliefs	When considering this theme within the CRT framework, the inherent bias of racism is frequently recognized and accepted by teachers, expressed or implied, with such actions as basing giftedness on high test scores, work completion or positive student behavior. Some teachers seemed to have a nonchalant attitude about the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs and one even commented, “That’s just the way it is.”
Race is a Social Construct that Negatively Impacts Gifted Identification	Family Issues Societal Factors	The second theme demonstrates a larger contextual issue, of which racism is socially constructed and inherently benefits those in power. Years of historical inequity have negatively impacted African American people and the ramifications can be found in all aspects of society. As a result, some families face daily challenges that directly affect a student’s performance at school.
Interest Conversion Hinders Teachers Ability to Effectively Identify Gifted Students	Teacher/School Issues Student Traits	According to CRT, the interests of African Americans will only be accommodated when they converge or align with the interests of elite White people. Those in power receive no benefit from predominantly African American schools having proper support, resources and opportunities. In contrast, schools and school systems with higher populations of White students have the programs and resources to provide better opportunities and educational experiences for their students. Until it becomes beneficial for those in power to better the conditions for African American students, the stress and frustration that participants reported will likely continue.

Note. Critical Race Theory (CRT), the theoretical framework my study is based on, is an academic concept whose central idea is that race is a social and legal construct and that racism is embedded in the legal system of this country, not simply a matter of individual prejudice (Khalifa et al., 2013; Sawchuk, 2021).

The final themes are: *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students*, *race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification*, and *interest conversion hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students*. Each of these themes is discussed in the following sections, as organized through the presentation of the guiding action research questions.

Action Research Questions 1 and 3

The first action research question aimed to understand elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness, based upon a series of questions included in the data collection questionnaire. The third action research question aimed to compare elementary teachers' perceptions following their participation in a series of professional development sessions designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations.

RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

RQ3: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness?

Participants' initial responses provided a unique understanding of their perceptions and definitions of giftedness based largely on intelligence quotas, achievement scores and student behaviors. Several respondents also shared the belief that educational access and opportunities were available to all students on an equal basis. However, teachers' responses following their participation in the professional development sessions illustrated a change in understanding and a broadening of perspective. The first theme, *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students*, provides a deeper understanding of these research questions through consideration of the CRT framework and relevant participant quotes, discussed next. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants.

Theme 1: Racism is Ordinary When Identifying Gifted Students

The inherent bias of racism is frequently recognized by teachers or subtly expressed, such as in determining giftedness using IQ scores and standardized testing. These measures are historically a component that is embedded within racism as well as inaccurate assessments for students' giftedness, but teachers with a lack of training will often rely upon these assessments. When responding to items on the pre-intervention questionnaire, "Chance" stated that it was easy to identify gifted students "if you use test scores and other quantifiable or qualifiable markers," and "RPST" indicated that "having a high IQ and ability to use logic and problem-solving skills to think outside the box to solve questions" would indicate that a student is gifted. "Minnie Mouse" considered "high reading and math scores" to be indicators of giftedness. "Joanne" also felt that recognition of giftedness was not a difficult task and offered, "In a way, it's easy because they stand out among all the others, and you can't miss them."

Participants' initial reflections continued to illustrate their perceptions based upon students' personal behaviors and the traits they exhibited in the classroom. Some of the behaviors noted are traditionally equated to gifted behavior, which might not be representative of a gifted student from a diverse population and can affect the recognition of African American students' giftedness. "Teacher" stated that "gifted students are curious and ask a lot of questions. Their desire for knowledge is like a sponge. The vocabulary is usually large and they want to talk to adults more than their peers."

"Junie B" added:

I think it is difficult to identify gifted students because you do not know if a student is bored, lazy, or gifted based on them not participating, completing work, or being problematic in class. It takes time to observe, talk to, and interact with a student to get a

feel for if they are gifted. I know testing is the ultimate deciding factor - but isn't every student gifted?

Other participants expressed a belief that fails to recognize the presence of bias and racism, or the effects thereof, in our schools. As “Halcyon” stated, “My personal beliefs have no effect. My only expectation is for them to learn and be their best person.” “Shelly” shared that:

My personal belief is that school is a place of opportunity. Therefore, I expect classroom culture to offer opportunities to students. Some students will take advantage of those opportunities, and some will not. This has always been true and always will be true.

A similar sentiment came from “Ashley Edwards,” who felt that all students have an equal chance to achieve success in their classroom: “I believe all students can learn and need a push to show growth/excel, so I work diligently to advance my students to the best of their ability making sure they can do what is needed on their own.”

Participants’ responses after the conclusion of the professional development sessions illustrated a better understanding of giftedness in general and how historical assumptions may no longer be valid. The words used to describe gifted students shifted from focusing on IQ and test scores to words describing student thinking and behaviors. Several teachers used words and phrases like “potential” and “ability” to describe gifted students, such as “NYBB,” who shared the following:

Gifted means having the ability to perform comparatively better than others...It is not exclusively based on academics and not solely based on standardized tests. The giftedness manifests in the student’s daily activities no matter what the situation is around him/her.

“Halcyon” described gifted as “students who are performing or have the potential to perform at a higher level than their peers.”

Several post-intervention responses recognized the presence of bias inherent in the challenge of recognizing giftedness in African American students, such as a statement from “Joanne” which read, “I think it is not so easy to identify and/or differentiate who is gifted mainly because of our bias and preconceived notions of what we think gifted is (only White children).” “Whitman” shared a similar sentiment, stating that “teachers often assume that certain students (usually Black) aren’t bright enough or can’t learn.” “Mom of 2 D1Athletes” shared the following reflection:

After attending these sessions, it’s clear that all people have implicit biases that do affect our ability to sometimes fairly judge our students. It is extremely important to identify these kids but I feel with our current methods, it doesn’t happen nearly enough.

Overall, teachers’ initial perceptions of giftedness were heavily reliant on high IQs and positive student behaviors displayed in class, indicating an outdated understanding of giftedness and support the need for additional training. After the professional development sessions, teachers’ responses reflected a better understanding of what giftedness is and how it may manifest in different students. Traditional assumptions were challenged, and teachers expressed an awareness of how racism and racial bias is manifested in schools.

Action Research Questions 2 and 4

The second and fourth action research questions aimed to better understand teachers' perceptions and recognition of giftedness specifically regarding African American students enrolled in their school.

RQ2: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled at a southern, urban school?

RQ4: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled in a southern, urban school?

The information gathered from the participants' reflections develops a deeper understanding first of the need to teach educators how to recognize the gifted potential in African American students and of the need for training on how systemic racism inherently impacts educators and their ability to properly identify and acknowledge giftedness in African American students.

Theme 2: Race is a Social Construct That Negatively Affects Gifted Identification

The second theme demonstrates a larger contextual issue, of which racism is socially constructed and inherently benefits those in power. Years of historical inequity have negatively impacted some African American people in this country and ramifications can be found in all aspects of society. As a result of what some CRT theorists describe as a caste system in this country, some African American families face daily struggles and life challenges that directly affect a student's performance at school. These struggles and challenges are often generational, and, as such, cause many families served by the participants in my study to fall in the lower socioeconomic range.

When asked to offer initial explanations of the underachievement of African American students in the target school, participants frequently referred to parental support, or the lack thereof, and socioeconomic status as impacting their students' chances of being identified as gifted. An example comes from "Serenity Wolf," who shared the following:

Parents have a huge impact on student learning and success. If they do not help to hold their child to certain standards, it makes it harder for that student to succeed. Many of our students come to school battling anxiety, abuse, unstable home lives, and neglect of all kinds. This greatly impacts their learning and motivation.

"Teacher" commented that "because a student does well academically does not necessarily mean they are gifted. They may just work hard or have really demanding parents that force the students to work hard". "Halcyon" bravely stated, "I believe that parental involvement is important, and the lack of support may affect my outlook on their child."

Initial comments continued with socioeconomic factors listed by participants as influencing their perceptions of student ability and potential giftedness. "NYBB" stated that "socioeconomics make some teachers think that our kids are low academically because of their home life and circumstances." "Whitman" agreed:, stating that "they may be harder to spot depending on social-emotional or economic factors, but they are there no matter the population group."

Initially, participants did not indicate a favorable perception of giftedness regarding the students they served. In addition to focusing on parental and socioeconomic factors, many participants referred to their students' behavior as influencing their perceptions of their students' abilities. "Chance" offered, "Behavior can cause students to be overlooked," with some educators equating certain classroom behaviors, such as silliness, defiance or failure to turn in

work, with low ability. “Mom of 2 D1 Athletes” suggested that “the students just need to be willing to show what they got,” which illustrates a lack of understanding of the lived experiences of many African American students, who underachieve in school for a variety of reasons. One participant, Shelly, plainly , “I have not seen any gifted students since I’ve been here,” which would indicate at least one person’s perception that giftedness simply does not exist at the target school.

Following the professional development sessions, participants’ responses indicated a deeper understanding of parental and socioeconomic factors and how they impact their perceptions of giftedness in the students they served. Responses from participants regarding socioeconomic status as it relates to the underachievement of African American students included such statements as the following, from “Ashley Edwards”: “Part of this (underachievement) may be a result of systemic influences which are hard to break and undo. Another part is policy which seeks to suppress individuals either directly or covertly.”

“Joanne” shared her thoughts concerning “the faulty notion that White is superior, our own acceptance of inferiority and the unwillingness of the system to self-correct.” A powerful statement was provided by “Halcyon,” which illustrated her sentiments regarding the social construction of racism: “With 400 years of slavery and over 100 years of Jim Crow, institutionalized racism has stunted or stymied the full potential of African Americans.”

These statements indicate a deeper understanding of some of the factors that affected the participants’ perceptions of giftedness regarding the African American students they served. Participants indicated a willingness to better understand the issues that impact their thoughts and beliefs about giftedness in the students they serve and also expressed the desire to provide these students an equitable chance at gifted status identification. As “Teacher” stated, “Before a person

can identify a gifted student, they must identify and understand the attributes that define giftedness.” “RPST” echoed this, sharing that “some students are not ever presented with an opportunity and are stuck, bored in class.”

Participants’ post-intervention responses indicated that teachers’ perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students they serve expanded to embrace the possibility that giftedness exists among the student body, but several factors have prevented teachers from recognizing this characteristic. One prominent factor with many layers and facets is the racism that is embedded in our school systems. Teachers have been conditioned to have low expectations for African American students and to accept that students from lower socioeconomic levels will have uninvolved parents and display unfavorable behaviors. The gathered data support the social construction of racism, which inherently supports the growth and progress of advantaged students, while hindering the growth of others. Teachers expressed an interest to do better in this area.

Action Research Question 5

The fifth action research question aimed to ascertain the extent to which teachers could better recognize potential in African American students following their participation in a series of professional development sessions designed for this purpose.

RQ5: To what extent are elementary school teachers better able to recognize potential in African American students, following participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations?

One item on the pre-intervention questionnaire presented participants with two fictitious scenarios—one that described a boy, Jamel, whose circumstances may be indicative of a child from a lower socioeconomic status and another that described a girl, LaShay, from a middle class

family with many experiences and opportunities. Both children had strengths in different areas as described in the scenarios. When asked about making referrals for gifted evaluation, participants' initial responses overwhelmingly supported LaShay, noting her ability to handle extracurricular activities and responsibilities at home, while maintaining good grades and strong participation at school. However one participant, "Joanne" did support Jamel and made the observation that "Jamel carries that sense of giftedness to solve and survive life's challenges."

When presented with the same scenarios following the professional development sessions, and asked about making referrals for gifted evaluation, the responses from participants illustrated a deeper understanding. "Beach" shared that "Lashay is able to give insight in class because she is well rounded due to her family's involvement in her life and education" and went on to say, "that doesn't make her gifted." "Teacher" added,

Lashay...clearly has a lot of opportunities that give her more access to knowledge. She has a strong support base and that's great. Jamel doesn't have these luxuries. However, he is using his natural abilities to not only take care of himself, but his younger siblings as well. He is meeting life's challenges with his raw talent, and surviving in real-life situations.

Referring to LaShay, "Minnie Mouse" offered, "She's a lucky girl. But gifted? I'm not so sure." Other participants, such as "Junie B," recognized the potential in Jamel by stating, "Wow, he's great with math! He needs to be challenged. I would refer him."

The information gathered from participants' post-intervention reflections indicated a change in how teachers contemplated and considered the potential for giftedness. However, while their thought processes may have expanded and their ability to recognize giftedness may have improved, many participants expressed the need for additional training on matters relating

to giftedness and gifted identification. Several participants indicated their frustration concerning the pressures of the classroom, which include such stressors as teaching students with multiple levels of ability and facing unrealistic workloads. A sentiment expressed by many included the belief that recognizing giftedness in general and specifically in African American students, was not a priority in the school system and therefore, the resources needed by teachers to effectively do so, were simply not available. The final theme, presented next, provides elaboration.

Theme 3: Interest Convergence Hinders Teachers' Ability to Effectively Identify Gifted Students

Interest convergence, as described by CRT, occurs when the interests of those in power (elite White Americans) align or converge with the interests of minority populations (specifically African Americans). According to CRT, until the interests of both groups converge, the experience of African Americans will not improve. Change will only occur if it is beneficial to the majority group. CRT continues to posit that racism favors the interests of those in power. Those without power lack opportunity, resources, and support. This sentiment is illustrated in the final theme which speaks to the needs of teachers, which are inherently suppressed or lacking due to a larger systemic issue inherent within education and federal governing practices. For example, teachers felt that they would be better able to recognize their own biases, understand the traits and behaviors of their students and be better able to recognize giftedness in their students if resources such as time, assistance with heavy workloads and support were available. The target school is classified as a Title 1 School, and as such, the focus is on school improvement and increasing the achievement of struggling students. Funds are available for remediation purposes, which illustrates the school system's commitment to and focus on students needing academic support. However, resources for such things as enrichment opportunities for

students and teachers and extensive training on topics related to gifted education, specifically, identifying and teaching gifted students, were simply not available. Teachers' ability to effectively recognize giftedness amongst African American students is hindered greatly due to interest convergence as defined by CRT.

Individuals reflected on identification as a general concept requiring specific training, as noted in this comment from "Shelley":

Honestly, I believe that (identification) depends on how well-trained a teacher is to identify this in students. It is not always easy to identify gifted students. A teacher needs to be well-tuned to the whole child in order to pick up on social and emotional intelligence that may indicate giftedness. It is not just about making the honor roll. There are gifted children who do not achieve high marks because they need to learn organization or consistency in returning work. A teacher who understands that not all children learn the same way or express what they know in the same way will be able to better identify a child than a teacher who does not have that background training.

"Mom of 2 D1 Athletes" added:

It also depends on the district's commitment to providing enrichment teachers and programs for the students who are identified. Many communities spend most of their resources and energy on bridging the gap for struggling students that even students who are known to be gifted would not receive what they need anyway. A general ed teacher should not be tasked with providing extra help to students who may be retained, students at the mid-mark, and students who need enrichment. There needs to be intervention AND enrichment resources available at every school, given on a consistent basis.

“Minnie Mouse” also noted that teachers’ own struggles, in terms of planning and access, are challenges to gifted identification. Her comments were:

Teachers are so busy now. There is so much planning, testing, and data required and of course, the task of discipline. It takes more time to "differentiate" and it's easier to clump them together as a group. There are so many high needs and teachers tend to teach to that population. The students who are gifted tend to get basic lessons and are not challenged as a result.

“Chance” expressed frustration in the comments that follow:

Students who are gifted are often overlooked because they are not struggling or in jeopardy of retention. It is a disservice to them to not receive enrichment that would cultivate their natural abilities... Teachers are being pulled in many directions with a lack of resources and often prioritize the struggling students.”

Participants’ reflections identified in this third and final theme illustrate that teachers are both overburdened and undertrained when examining their ability to recognize giftedness among their students. The teachers expressed a critical need to address teacher training and resources and to gain appropriate support that will foster equality for African American students. They also recognized the school system’s prioritization of the needs of struggling students. The teachers involved in my study expressed a desire to better serve their students who may be gifted and recognized the importance of doing so. However, there was a strong belief that without the right support from the school system, which included more training on topics related to gifted education, more support for teachers who are overburdened with heavy workloads and little time, the current situation would not change. The interests of those who have the power to foster change, create optimal educational environments and shift the focus from identifying struggling

students to identifying potential in all students must align with the interests of the teachers who participate in my study. Data obtained from this research question aligns with the theme that interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students.

Summary of Findings

This chapter presented a summary of the conversations held during the professional development sessions. Although not a formal component to the data analysis process, these conversations were meaningful and surely influenced the responses on the post-intervention questionnaires. Information was supplied about the development and identification of codes and categories. Developed categories led to three key themes (*racism is ordinary when identify gifted students; race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification; and interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted student*), which are related to the guiding CRT framework and were derived directly from participants' quotes and reflections. Each of the action research questions was discussed concerning these themes.

Information obtained for action research questions one and three demonstrated teachers' various perceptions of giftedness, both before and after their participation in four professional development sessions designed to build teacher capacity for recognizing giftedness in African American students. These two questions were addressed by the theme that *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students*. Action research questions two and four were addressed by exploring how educators process giftedness relative to African American students before and after their participation in the professional development sessions mentioned above. These two questions were addressed by the second theme which was *race is a social construct that negatively affects gifted identification*. Action research question five was addressed by the third theme that *interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students*.

An elaboration on the research questions and their alignment to each theme was provided. In Chapter 5, I review implications and recommendations for policy, practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the United States, gifted students are more likely to receive academic and social advancement opportunities (Gentry, 2020; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2017). However, giftedness in African American students is often overlooked due to systemic racism and an educational system that has failed to support the ascent of all students through effective equity initiatives (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford & Whiting, 2008; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Teachers play a crucial role in addressing the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs (S. J. Peters et al., 2019; Plucker & Peters, 2018). The aim of my study was to assess elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness toward African American students and to determine the impact that professional development on underachievement, implicit bias, deficit mindset, and recognizing giftedness in diverse populations has on teachers' perceptions. I conducted textual analysis using information gathered from 14 educators who participated in my study and provided pre- and post-intervention data. The thematic analysis results included: *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students, race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification and interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students.*

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings is supplied. The action research questions and their relation to the identified themes are also reviewed. Based upon the discussion of the findings, implications for policy and practice are provided. Recommendations for future research are also discussed. A summary concludes Chapter 5.

Discussion of the Findings

I addressed the aim of my study through the collection of textual data, which I analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) guidelines for thematic analysis. Textual analysis procedures resulted in a series of three themes: *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students*, *race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification* and *interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students*. In the following sections, each action research question and associated themes are reviewed in association with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This discussion addresses research gaps, advancements made by my study, and data that could contribute to policy, practice, and research.

Action Research Questions 1 and 3

The first action research question (What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness?) aimed to understand elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness, based upon a series of questions included in the data collection questionnaire. The third action research question (How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness?) aimed to determine elementary teachers' perceptions following their participation in a series of professional development sessions designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations. Participants' initial responses provided a unique understanding of their perceptions and definitions of giftedness which were based largely on intelligence quotas, achievement scores and student behaviors. Several respondents also shared the belief that educational access and opportunities were available to all students on an equal basis. Teachers' responses following their participation in the professional development sessions illustrated a change in understanding and a broadening of perspective. The first theme, *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted*

students, provides a deeper understanding of these research questions through consideration of the CRT framework.

For example, some teachers, when asked about underachievement, initially described their students using such words as bored, unmotivated, and lazy. Some participants argued that the modern student generation lacks the motivation to achieve as previous generations.

According to Smith (2018), orienting blame to students fails to recognize that the current system is historically designed to benefit only White students while discouraging the self-efficacy and motivation of African American students. Another teacher, in response to a question about the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs, made the statement, “That’s just the way it is.” This is directly related to the first theme, as according to CRT, racism, due to its ordinary nature, is generally accepted as a part of life (Khalifa et al., 2013; Sawchuck, 2021).

Some educators felt that the school experience provided all students with the same advantages and opportunities for success, regardless of their race. Though well-meaning, such a mindset falls short of recognizing the impact of systemic racism on the U.S. educational system and specifically African American students (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022).

Anderson (2020) argued that assuming all students are capable of high achievement regardless of the impact of racism is common among educators who lack agency for change and hold implicit biases. The gathered data shows that teachers actively attempt to provide equal space for all students but struggle to enact effective change (due to training and implicit bias limitations), which requires a change in practice and policy.

Following the professional development sessions, participants expressed a newfound understanding regarding gifted identification. They emphasized that giftedness should not be

defined solely by grades, IQ tests, or standardized scores, which reflects a change in the thought process of many participants. Previous research data indicated that student success, defined by academic scores, is problematic due to significant test inequality (Caldera, 2020; Chin et al., 2020). IQ testing was historically used to deny African American students social entry and academic access to educational knowledge (Matheis et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). Ottwein (2020) argued that many students are unfairly judged due to outmoded ideals of intelligence testing. Miller and Brigandi (2020) also found that teaching policies surrounding giftedness are markedly defined by bias, misinformation, and poor teacher training, which my study confirms. While some forms of achievement testing and standardized testing remain an inherent part of the educational circle, it remains apparent from participants' reflections that a better training method is required to overcome misinformation and train teachers to understand the incredibly complex process of assessing students' giftedness.

Participants also shared their post-professional development thoughts, acknowledging the bias shared by all. Often teachers referenced their students' behaviors in class and stated that judgements had been made about their students' intelligence based on the actions displayed. Lamb-Milligan (2019) argued that behavioral issues are often targets of teachers' biases, which requires renewing teacher understanding of cultural differences in intelligence and gifted expression. Indeed, many students may struggle with boredom in the classroom or other personal characteristics brought on by lack of academic challenge; however, further examination of this topic may prove useful to understanding the ideal means of improving teacher identification of giftedness among diverse student populations.

Action Research Questions 2 and 4

The second and fourth action research questions aimed to understand teachers' perceptions and recognition of giftedness relative to the African American students enrolled at their school, before and after their participation in the professional development sessions.

RQ2: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled at a southern, urban school?

RQ4: How does participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations impact teachers' perceptions of giftedness relative to the African American students currently enrolled in a southern, urban school?

Initial information obtained provided valuable data that illustrated teachers' need for training as it relates to the larger issue represented in the second identified theme: *race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification*. The theoretical framework, CRT, indicates that race is socially constructed and benefits those in power (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Crenshaw, 2010; Tate, 2016). Participants in my study often discussed the socioeconomic levels of their students and families, with some initially making comments that were derogatory in nature. For example, one teacher expressed her disbelief that a parent could not provide the requested school supplies for her child, but the child regularly wore new tennis shoes to school. Another stated that she did not give her students at-home projects because she knew the parents would not help students complete them. Several participants expressed frustration at what appeared to be parents absent from their children's educational lives. However, following the professional development sessions, teachers' comments and discussions indicate a change of thought. Participants began to explore the possibility that socioeconomic factors, poor

opportunities, and lack of parental support and participation could all be products of the systemically constructed nature of racism.

Teachers reflected on socioeconomic status as a critical factor influencing gifted student identification. Participants noted that some teachers view lower socioeconomic students as unlikely to be gifted. Other educators acknowledged that historically African American students are less likely to be identified as gifted due to an implicit bias about the socioeconomic and cultural status of these same students. Crawford et al. (2020) argued that socioeconomic status is likely to reflect low teacher confidence due to racial bias. Hodges and Gentry (2021) also regarded socioeconomic barriers as the most significant barrier to improved student outcomes and overcoming teacher biases. Socioeconomic status is one factor that might prove detrimental to African American student success if policy and practice (both for teacher training and community support) are not addressed.

Participants also emphasized that parents play a central role in terms of gifted evaluation and identification. Yet, some participants felt parents were not adequately involved, and education was not valued or considered unnecessary at home. In reviewing relevant literature, researchers indicate that parents and educators of African American children are often at odds due to implicit biases, varying cultural differences, and a lack of Black educator representation (Bryson, 2022; Sewell & Goings, 2020). Ultimately, parental involvement is vital for student success, but many parents feel at odds with teachers who lack cultural training (Bryson, 2022; Gentry et al., 2022). Thus, when considering my study data, it is essential to recognize a potentially unbalanced relationship between parents and educators while acknowledging that parental support is essential to students' academic outcomes.

Action Research Question 5

The fifth action research question aimed to ascertain the extent to which teachers could better recognize potential in African American students following their participation in a series of professional development sessions designed for this purpose.

RQ5: To what extent are elementary school teachers better able to recognize potential in African American students, following participation in a professional development program designed to help teachers recognize giftedness in diverse populations?)

The information gathered from participants' reflections indicates that, although teachers felt their ability to recognize giftedness in African American students had improved, they also felt they required additional training on matters relating to giftedness and gifted identification.

Additionally, teachers expressed overall frustration surrounding the lack of training, resources and commitment to anything outside of initiatives to support struggling learners. Furthermore, several teachers expressed feeling overwhelmed with what was described as the unrealistic expectations of teaching. The third theme that emerged from the thematic analysis elaborates on this sentiment: *interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students.*

The CRT framework indicates that interest convergence, also called material determination, is a crucial driving factor for modern-day racism and the historical atrocities committed against communities like African Americans (Collins & Ha Horne, 2022; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT theorists like Delgado and Stefancic (2017) proposed that change for minority groups only occurs when their interests align with that of those in power. Interest convergence, in relationship to my study, shows that teachers' needs are less likely to be satisfied because the system inherently devalues their work and the students within their school districts

(Horsford et al., 2018; Lin & Neely, 2020; Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022). Teachers felt that resources were available for remediation efforts, but very little was committed to identifying and serving gifted students.

Various researchers indicated that teacher training is paramount to improving the inequitable experiences of Black children in the education system (Andrews et al., 2019; Ellison & Solomon, 2019). Johnson and Larwin (2020) argued that if training is absent, educational outcomes for African American students will continue to fall. Training is critical for all educators to improve their understanding of giftedness and address implicit biases embedded within the educational system.

Teachers in my study were notably overworked and overburdened. Some educators emphasized that it is unfair for general education teachers, lacking in training, to identify gifted students amongst their high population loads. Lack of energy, training, and resources, such as time and support further exasperate this stressful issue. Researchers corroborated that teacher stress and heavy workloads negatively affect student outcomes (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022). Researchers like D. A. Bell (1995) and Bouie (2021) confirmed that individual actors often feel the effects of systemic racism but struggle to overcome such barriers to change. These reflections illustrate a difficult challenge for educators who actively desire to change the system but are inherently limited by a system that has profited from precluding African American students' progress.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The following section supplies a list of implications for policy and practice. The key findings about teachers' struggles with gifted identification, systemic racism and the need to

improve training and other resources are related to specific recommendations for policy and research. In Table 6, I supply recommendations to address each finding.

Table 6

Findings and Related Recommendations

Findings	Related Recommendations
Racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students. Teachers struggle with gifted identification due to a lack of training and biases that exist in terms of recognizing giftedness in African American students.	Provide professional development on gifted identification to include such topics as implicit bias.
Race is a social construct that negatively affects gifted identification. Historical factors have led to socioeconomic issues which directly influence a student's performance at school.	Provide professional development on systemic racism and cultural awareness to promote understanding of how societal factors affect student performance. Improve teacher-parent relationships.
Interest convergence hinders teachers' ability to effectively identify gifted students. Teachers feel the resources they need are not available. Teachers feel overworked and are frustrated.	Provide teachers with the training and support they need to effectively identify gifted students. Improve the working conditions for teachers to minimize their stress.

Policy and Practice Recommendation 1

Teachers struggled with a clear consensus on identifying giftedness among students. Students were often labeled as bored or showing behavioral issues in the classroom. Other issues included an unclear consensus about identifying giftedness and whether IQ measurements were the ideal measure for students' evaluations. Problematic biases, such as an inherent reliance on academic achievement and intelligence quotas, must be addressed (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; P. Peters et al., 2021; Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). Teachers require further training regarding definitions, evaluation procedures, and identification methods.

Based on the findings, as expressed by participants, it is critical for policy and practice to address both teacher training and implicit bias professional development. Ideally, such training and methods would occur biannually or yearly. Training led by appropriate professionals, including community members, can allow for a deeper understanding of the issues inherently embedded within the educational system, methods for gifted identification, and an improved understanding of the various ways teachers can identify a gifted student for evaluation. Training can also improve the self-efficacy of educators and overall increase the likelihood of African American students being identified as gifted students (Matheis et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

Policy and Practice Recommendation 2

Teachers felt that socioeconomic status impacts students, while a perceived lack of parental support may dissuade students' ability to succeed. A meaningful parent and teacher relationship was not evident among reflections. Often teachers' reflections seemed to assume that the absence of parental involvement indicated an absence of parental concern. Teachers should understand that teacher and parental relationships must be improved and biases about socioeconomic status must be resolved (Sawchuk, 2021).

Practitioners should make training on systemic racism available to educators to better understand the historical ramifications that are present today. Educators who are more informed may interact with parents differently when they have a better understanding of their circumstances. Cultural awareness training should also be provided. Teachers will benefit from having the knowledge of how giftedness may manifest differently in other groups, including others from different socioeconomic statuses. Teachers are encouraged to strengthen and improve teacher-parent relationships, by increasing communication with parents and initiating

outreach efforts. Improved teacher-parent relationships can aid in identifying gifted students and improve general educational practices.

Policy and Practice Recommendation 3

Educators felt that they were overworked and undertrained to effectively identify giftedness in their students. They expressed frustration concerning their heavy workloads, the expectation of teaching students with varying ability levels and the prioritization of addressing the needs of struggling learners. Furthermore, teachers felt their school district failed to provide the resources needed to properly address and support gifted evaluation, specifically of African American students. It was noted that funds were readily available to support remediation efforts, but the same was not true for enrichment activities. Teachers expressed a desire to give their students the education they deserved but indicated that unrealistic workloads, lack of time, lack of training and the pressure to focus on struggling students prevents them from doing so.

The third recommendation for policy and practice addresses teacher needs, including a decrease in responsibilities, more unencumbered time and more support and training. If teachers continue to be overloaded and overworked, African American students will continue to face the consequences of poor teaching and a lack of gifted identification (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Hines et al., 2022). Addressing teachers' needs and improving work expectations/demands may allow teachers to have more time, knowledge, and capability to identify giftedness amongst African American students. Policymakers should address this issue to improve education and students' long and short-term outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future Research Recommendation 1

The first recommendation for future research is to identify and evaluate professional development opportunities for teachers that address giftedness and gifted identification at a specific school. Reflections from my study indicate that teachers found the professional development sessions helpful. However, many stated that more training is required and on a more consistent basis to effectively identify African American students' giftedness. Determine the effectiveness the trainings have on teachers' ability to recognize giftedness in their students and make adjustments as needed. Providing the appropriate training can allow for improved practitioner approaches and school interventions and ultimately support teachers and their ability to effectively evaluate students for giftedness.

Future Research Recommendation 2

The second recommendation for research is to expand upon my study's limitations by exploring gifted evaluation specifically for African American students in different geographical contexts and school grade levels. My study focused on elementary school teacher perceptions and, as such, is not inclusive of an entire national context or teachers in differing grade levels. Thus, educators in differing grade levels, school districts, and geographical areas must be examined using qualitative or quantitative research to expand upon this topic. Researchers who follow this recommendation may find useful information to further understand the nuances of giftedness evaluation, implicit bias, and African American student giftedness.

Summary

This study represented one cycle of action research. The experience was powerful, in that it provided educators opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other as historical beliefs

were challenged, biases were confronted, and new ways of thinking were explored. African American underrepresentation in gifted programs is primarily linked to issues associated with biases in teachers' perceptions and historical flaws in the U.S. educational system. To further this topic by supplying new information, 14 educators at the target elementary school supplied their perceptions about giftedness amongst African American students before and after their participation in a series of professional developments sessions designed to build teacher capacity for recognizing giftedness in African American students. Three themes were identified based on the textual analysis completed: *racism is ordinary when identifying gifted students*, *race is a social construct that negatively impacts gifted identification* and *interest convergence hinders teacher's ability to effectively identify gifted students*. These themes align with the tenets found in the theoretical framework Critical Race Theory and addressed the action research questions that guided my study.

Researchers and practitioners are encouraged to further assess this topic, explore information relevant to teachers in different geographic regions, and support teachers through improved training to allow for a better understanding of giftedness amongst African American students. Racism is embedded in all aspects of society, including our educational system. However, addressing this topic may prove useful in overcoming historical and contemporary biases that hinder academic success of African Americans students in the United States.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: CITI Certifications

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS***

* NOTE: Scores on this **Requirements Report** reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- Name: Jacqueline Drye (ID: 8652643)
- Institution Affiliation: William & Mary (ID: 1870)
- Institution Email: jdrye@email.wm.edu
- Institution Unit: EPPI
- Phone: 8048405743

- Curriculum Group: AREA II DISCIPLINES - Research Ethics
- Course Learner Group: Same as Curriculum Group
- Stage: Stage 1 - RCR
- Description:

- Record ID: 51067874
- Completion Date: 17-Oct-2022
- Expiration Date: 16-Oct-2025
- Minimum Passing: 80
- Reported Score*: 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Research Misconduct (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16604)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Data Management (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16600)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Authorship (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16597)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16603)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Mentoring (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16602)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16598)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16596)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we559b9cb-a097-4d9c-ac84-7d449170b46a-51067874

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929
Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT****

** NOTE: Scores on this **Transcript Report** reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- Name: Jacqueline Drye (ID: 8652643)
- Institution Affiliation: William & Mary (ID: 1870)
- Institution Email: jdrye@email.wm.edu
- Institution Unit: EPPI
- Phone: 8048405743

- Curriculum Group: AREA II DISCIPLINES - Research Ethics
- Course Learner Group: Same as Curriculum Group
- Stage: Stage 1 - RCR
- Description:


- Record ID: 51067874
- Report Date: 17-Oct-2022
- Current Score**: 100

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR-Basic) (ID: 13566)	30-Nov-2019	5/5 (100%)
Authorship (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16597)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16598)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16599)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Data Management (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16600)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Mentoring (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16602)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16603)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Research Misconduct (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16604)	17-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)


For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we559b9cb-a097-4d9c-ac84-7d449170b46a-51067874

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929
Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>



Completion Date 17-Oct-2022
Expiration Date 16-Oct-2025
Record ID 51067874



This is to certify that:

Jacqueline Drye

Has completed the following CITI Program course:


AREA II DISCIPLINES - Research Ethics
(Curriculum Group)

AREA II Disciplines - Research Ethics
(Course Learner Group)

1 - RCR
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

William & Mary



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we559b9cb-a097-4d9c-ac84-7d449170b46a-51067874

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.



Completion Date 17-Oct-2022
 Expiration Date 16-Oct-2025
 Record ID 51067875

This is to certify that:

Jacqueline Drye

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

School of Education/EDIRC
 (Curriculum Group)
School of Education/EDIRC
 (Course Learner Group)
2 - Refresher Course
 (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

William & Mary

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w770258b4-3766-4ca0-849c-847b194f281d-51067875

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
 COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this [Requirements Report](#) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate [Transcript Report](#) for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- Name: Jacqueline Drye (ID: 8692643)
- Institution Affiliation: William & Mary (ID: 1870)
- Institution Email: jdrye@emil.wm.edu
- Institution Unit: EPPL
- Phone: 8048405743
- Curriculum Group: School of Education/EDIRC
- Course Learner Group: Same as Curriculum Group
- Stage: Stage 2 - Refresher Course

- Record ID: 51067875
- Completion Date: 17-Oct-2022
- Expiration Date: 16-Oct-2025
- Minimum Passing: 80
- Reported Score**: 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
SBE Refresher 1 - Instructions (ID: 943)	17-Oct-2022	No Quiz
SBE Refresher 1 - History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects (ID: 937)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Informed Consent (ID: 938)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Defining Research with Human Subjects (ID: 15029)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Assessing Risk (ID: 15034)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Privacy and Confidentiality (ID: 15035)	17-Oct-2022	4/4 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Research with Children (ID: 15036)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w56cc11ca-1ede-4f25-b664-9339a191c73-51067875

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
 Email: support@citiprogram.org
 Phone: 888-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
 COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
 COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this [Transcript Report](#) reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate [Requirements Report](#) for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- Name: Jacqueline Drye (ID: 8692643)
- Institution Affiliation: William & Mary (ID: 1870)
- Institution Email: jdrye@emil.wm.edu
- Institution Unit: EPPL
- Phone: 8048405743
- Curriculum Group: School of Education/EDIRC
- Course Learner Group: Same as Curriculum Group
- Stage: Stage 2 - Refresher Course

- Record ID: 51067875
- Report Date: 17-Oct-2022
- Current Score**: 100

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
SBE Refresher 1 - Instructions (ID: 943)	17-Oct-2022	No Quiz
SBE Refresher 1 - History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects (ID: 937)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Defining Research with Human Subjects (ID: 15029)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Informed Consent (ID: 938)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Assessing Risk (ID: 15034)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Privacy and Confidentiality (ID: 15035)	17-Oct-2022	4/4 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Research with Children (ID: 15036)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)
SBE Refresher 1 - Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940)	17-Oct-2022	2/2 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w56cc11ca-1ede-4f25-b664-9339a191c73-51067875

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
 Email: support@citiprogram.org
 Phone: 888-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

Appendix B: IRB Approval

From: Compliance <compli@wm.edu>
Reply-To: Compliance <compli@wm.edu>
Date: Tuesday, December 20, 2022 at 9:01 AM
To: "Drye, Jackie" <jddrye@wm.edu>, TRACY CROSS <tlcross@wm.edu>, "edirc-l@wm.edu" <edirc-l@wm.edu>
Cc: Me <jrcross@wm.edu>, Mihyeon Kim <mxkim3@wm.edu>
Subject: STATUS OF PROTOCOL EDIRC-2022-12-17-15998-tlcross set to active

This is to notify you on behalf of the Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC) that protocol EDIRC-2022-12-17-15998-tlcross titled Using Professional Development to Build Teacher Capacity for Recognizing Giftedness in African American Students has been EXEMPTED from formal review because it falls under the following category(ies) defined by DHHS Federal Regulations: 45CFR46.104.d.1, 45CFR46.104.d.2.

Work on this protocol may begin on 2023-02-01 .

This protocol must be submitted for annual renewal on 2024-02-01, at which time the PI will be asked to indicate whether the protocol will continue as active, will continue with changes, or should be set to inactive.

Should there be any changes to this protocol, please submit these changes to the committee for determination of continuing exemption using the Protocol and Compliance Management application (<https://compliance.wm.edu>).

Please add the following statement to the footer of all consent forms, cover letters, etc.:

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2023-02-01 AND EXPIRES ON 2024-02-01.

You are required to notify Dr. Ward, chair of the EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) and Dr. Jennifer Stevens, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu) if any issues arise during this study.

Good luck with your study.

COMMENTS

No comments available

BASIC INFO

Title: Using Professional Development to Build Teacher Capacity for Recognizing Giftedness in African American Students

Start Date: 2023-02-01

Year Number: 1

Years Total: 1

Campus: Main

Committee(s): EDIRC

Cc: Emails: jrcross@wm.edu, mxkim3@wm.edu

PI INFO

W&M UserID: jddrye
Full Name: jddrye,
Role: Undergraduate Student
Department: School of Education
Day/Work Phone: 8048405743
Ext:
Alternate Phone:

W&M UserID: tlcross
Full Name: Cross, Tracy
Role: Faculty
Department: School of Education
Day/Work Phone: 757-221-2210
Ext:
Alternate Phone:

Protocol modified by tjward on 2022-12-20 09:01:10

Appendix C: Site Authorization

ADMINISTRATOR APPROVAL

To Whom it May Concern:

As an administrator of the school where the action research project is being conducted, I was informed by the researcher of the general nature of the project and of any foreseeable potential risks. I also understand the benefits that may result from this study.

All of the questions that I had have been answered.

Name: Jennifer K. Moore Title: Principal
Signature: Jennifer K. Moore Date: 2/17/2023

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

PD's with Ms. Drye

“Using Professional Development as a Tool to Build Teacher
Capacity for Recognizing Giftedness in
African American Students”

The following days have been selected for this PD opportunity:

Wednesday, March 8

Wednesday, March 15

Wednesday, March 22

Wednesday, March 29

All sessions will be held in the Media Center at 3:00 p.m.

**Thank you in advance to all who choose to participate!
Please know that your time and anticipated engagement are
greatly appreciated!**

Appendix E: Informed Consent Forms

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Dear Colleagues,

I am conducting an action research study through The College of William & Mary to fulfill the dissertation requirements for my Doctor of Education degree. The dissertation is entitled “Using Professional Development as a Tool to Increase Teacher Capacity in Recognizing Giftedness in African American Students.” This study aims to provide teachers with research-based information, while facilitating discussion and self-exploration that could improve teachers’ understanding of the phenomenon of giftedness and better equip them to identify giftedness in the students they serve.

For my dissertation work, I have developed 4 professional development sessions, each focusing on a topic related to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs that were offered in the research as important topics to explore with teachers. I have designed a questionnaire that I plan to administer prior to the start of the professional development sessions and again at the conclusion of the sessions. Analysis of the pre- and post- intervention data will be summarized and made available to you upon request.

As a teacher at this school and someone who has the ability to refer students for gifted evaluation, you are invited to participate in this study. I hereby request your consent to participate. Your identifying information will be maintained securely on my password protected computer and will not be shared with anyone else. My notes and questionnaire results will not be used for anything other than this dissertation. There is no penalty for withdrawing from this study.

Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your standing at this school. Should you have any questions or desire further information please feel free to contact me at jdrye@rvaschools.net or Dr. Cross at tlcross@wm.edu. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Drye

I, _____ (printed name of participant), agree to participate in the action research study “Using Professional Development as a Tool to Increase Teacher Capacity in Recognizing Giftedness in African American Students,” being conducted by Jacqueline D.

Drye. I have been informed by the evaluator of the general nature of the evaluation and any foreseeable potential risks.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time, and that even if I do not withdraw, I have the right to withhold permission from the evaluator to use any data based on my participation.

I understand that some topics presented and discussed may be sensitive in nature and I further understand that deeply held feelings and beliefs may emerge. I acknowledge that all professional development sessions will occur in a respectful space that values everyone's input and honest participation. We will grow together and support each other in this learning.

I understand that there are no known physical risks associated with the evaluation.

I understand that participants will not be compensated for their participation.

I also understand that upon my request, the evaluator will provide me with a written summary of the evaluation's findings.

Participant's signature

Date

*The questionnaire will be sent to all participants after informed consent has been obtained.

Appendix F: Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Questions

Hello Teachers!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Google Forms questionnaire. Please be reminded that only I will read your responses and that your replies will be anonymous and kept confidential. As an added step to protect your identity, please give yourself a pseudonym that only you will know when completing this questionnaire. (Remember this information as you will use it again.) Any reports of findings will include this pseudonym so that only you will recognize it.

I invite you to elaborate on the following questions honestly and openly. Please know that I truly value and respect your thoughts and opinions.

Thank you!

1. What is your chosen pseudonym?
2. What does the word “gifted” mean to you?
3. List as many words as you can to describe a gifted student.
4. What are your thoughts on the importance of identifying students who may be gifted?
5. Please share your thoughts on the follow statement:
“It’s easy to identify gifted students.”
6. Underachievement occurs when students have the ability to perform at high levels but don’t, for various reasons. Considering the students currently enrolled in your school, why do you think “underachievement” might occur?
7. How might your personal beliefs affect your expectations of students currently enrolled in your school?
8. Please share your thoughts on the following statement:
“Giftedness exists throughout all populations.”
9. Underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs is a historical concern. What might be some factors causing this to occur?
10. Read about Jamel and LaShay below. Would you refer one or both of them for gifted evaluation? Please elaborate on your response with supporting comments.

Jamel

Jamel is a 9-year old African American male in the fourth grade. He is physically healthy and lives with his biological mother. Jamel is popular among some of his peers but disliked by others. His teachers state that Jamel's behavior tends to get in the way of his completing classwork, but that he does extremely well when the assignments are interesting to him. In class Jamel distracts his classmates, corrects the teacher and calls out answers to his teachers' questions. Some teachers consider Jamel to be a troublemaker.

Jamel has 2 younger siblings at home and often takes care of them in the evenings. His mom leaves \$10 a day on the table for food. Jamel uses grocery store coupons that he found online to buy food for himself and his siblings. He has discovered that if he saves 20% each day, he will have enough to buy candy on Friday.

In the past, Jamel has stated that he feels different than his peers and believes that those in his daily environment don't understand him. Jamel holds high expectations for himself as well as for others, which occasionally leads to social difficulties with peers and adults who do not meet his expectations. When presented with a difficult task, Jamel sometimes gives up, becomes visibly frustrated and calls himself stupid.

LaShay

LaShay is an 8-year old African American female in the 3rd grade. She is in great health and lives with both parents in a nearby subdivision of upscale homes. LaShay is popular at school and has many friends. Her teachers state that LaShay completes all classwork and homework and never has any discipline issues. She participates in class and offers much insight during class discussions, often drawing from her vast experiences and travels with her family.

LaShay is an only child and has playdates scheduled by her parents on some weekends. She takes dance and gymnastics lessons two nights during the week. On the other nights, she spends time with her grandmother who also lives in the home. They read books together and LaShay's grandmother is teaching her to speak French.

One of LaShay's responsibilities at home is helping to take care of the family's dog. She has stated in the past that she wants to be a veterinarian or a ballerina when she grows up. LaShay's parents and grandmother encourage her to follow her dreams. They plan activities to nurture LaShay's interests. This includes visiting various animals at zoos near and far and attending ballets and other live performances.

VITA

Dr. Jacqueline D. Drye

320 Southern Court

Highland Springs, VA. 23075

jddrye@wm.edu

(804) 840-5743

Educational Background

The College of William & Mary – January 2024 (anticipated)

Doctoral Degree – Educational Policy, Planning & Leadership – Gifted Education

Virginia Commonwealth University - 2010

Postmaster's Certificate in Educational Leadership & Administration

James Madison University Graduate School - 1993

Master's Degree in School Counseling

James Madison University - 1990

Bachelor of Science Degree in Early Childhood Education

Training & Experience

Dr. Jacqueline D. Drye is a talented administrative leader with 30 years of experience educating, inspiring and advocating for all children, particularly those who have been traditionally underserved. She is an effective communicator, skilled at developing and implementing academic programs to create high-quality learning environments. She is personable, outgoing and skilled in building rapport with individuals from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Accomplishments

Dr. Jacqueline D. Drye is the published author of two children's books. "Jo Jo the Bunny" offers encouragement to young readers and reminds them to never give up. "Ms. Drye Tells a Story" is a modern twist on three known stories, designed to uplift the reader, while providing a positive message and relatable characters.

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Affiliations

Dr. Jacqueline D. Drye is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and is a licensed Realtor in the state of Virginia.