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Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Gifted Identification in a Heterogeneous School: A Case Study

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GIFTED IDENTIFICATION IN A HETEROGENEOUS SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY, by KIMBERLY M. KRANZLEIN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctorate of Education, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GIFTED IDENTIFICATION
IN A HETEROGENEOUS SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

by

KIMBERLY M. KRANZLEIN

Under the Direction of Kristina Brezicha, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study is to gain a deeper understanding of how school leaders approach giftedness identification in a school that serves students who are racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse through the lens of culturally responsive school leadership. This study utilizes descriptive case study methods to examine the screening of first-grade students using data collected over six weeks through interviews, a focus group, observations, journaling, and document reviews. Data analysis employs an iterative coding process aided by NVivo to discover themes and develop thick descriptions of the gifted identification process within this context. Study participants include staff members who directly and indirectly provide educational services for the screened students. The findings and conclusions of this study further the dialogue for helping school leaders improve teacher practice and build capacity for identifying giftedness in students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

INDEX WORDS: gifted identification, underrepresentation, minority, descriptive case study, culturally responsive school leadership, cultural proficiency

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GIFTED IDENTIFICATION
IN A HETEROGENEOUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Romans 8:26-27 indicates there are times when we do not know what to say to God, how to communicate, how to pray. In those times, His Spirit communicates on our behalf and translates our heart and soul into groanings too deep for words. I find that my heart and soul are full and that words cannot adequately capture all I wish to say to my family. My prayer is that God would intercede for me and somehow my husband, my children, my parents, my siblings, my extended family, and my cohort family would know my heart and hear my soul.

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To Anna, Michael, Jessica, and Bethany, you are loved more than words can say. I am so proud of each and every one of you.

To Dad, you are the best, and I love you.

May the blessing of God be upon you ...

May God keep you safe when you are in danger.

May God guide you in the way of Love.

May God support you in danger or hardship.

May God lift up your heart when you are feeling low.

May God comfort you when you are feeling lonely.

May God give you strength when you are weak.

May God bring you home when you are lost.

May God surround you with loving care, always and forever.

the rev. jane r. dunning - may, 2012

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THE UNDER-IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED MINORITY STUDENTS

Introduction

Research question.

How do the school leaders of a heterogeneous, non-Title I suburban school incorporate culturally responsive practices to approach the gifted identification process for underrepresented populations?

Background.

The underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs has persisted since the inception of gifted education despite decades of focused research and federal initiatives targeting this inequity (Callahan, 2005; Ford, 2011; Frasier & Passow, 1994). Specifically, the proportion of students in gifted programs compared to the student population as a whole continues to be heavily skewed based on race, ethnicity, language proficiency, and socioeconomic status in favor of white, middle-class students (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). Gifted identification begins in kindergarten and first grade, the earliest entry points into public education. Failure to accurately identify and serve gifted students can be the first domino in a line leading to denied access to advanced curriculum and Advanced Placement courses in high school and subsequently opportunities for higher education and higher-paying career options. In their report highlighting the impact of emphasizing minimum competency through the No Child Left Behind Act, Plucker et al. (2010) identified an increase in the excellence gap, the gap between the highest achieving minority and majority students, resulting in substantial economic losses for the United States.

Minority status does not preclude a student from having the potential to achieve academically at high levels (Naglieri & Ford, 2003). Race, ethnicity, native language, and socioeconomic standing do not have a causal relationship with a student's giftedness or

intellectual ability (Fish, 2001). These two fundamental beliefs stand in stark contrast to decades of disparity between the rate of gifted identification of minority and White, middle-class students (Plucker et al., 2010). High-ability minority students have limited access to needed supports due to factors unrelated to their academic potential such as limited exposure to literacy in the home and lower preschool enrollment (Ford, 2011; Ford & Grantham, 2003).

The seminal research of Geneva Gay (2010) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2014) focused on understanding and meeting the unique learning needs of culturally diverse students. As a result, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) are widely accepted frameworks that provide insight for best practices to improve equity and increase achievement for all students, especially those from a minority culture (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) extended this work by developing a culturally responsive school leadership (CSRL) framework that speaks to the critical work principal and teacher leaders do to provide equity for all students. Evidence shows that culturally responsive education (CRE) practices have a positive impact on the achievement of diverse students (Dee & Penner, 2017), yet this research does not infiltrate the daily practice of classroom teachers. One evidence of this disconnect between theory and practice is the gap in gifted identification remains unimpacted by this new understanding (Lakin, 2016; McBee, 2010; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018).

Problem statement.

An excellence gap has been growing among high-ability students; one manifestation of this gap is the ongoing underrepresentation of minority students based on race, ethnicity, linguistic and socioeconomic status in gifted programs (Plucker et al., 2010). One reason minority students are underrepresented in gifted programs is they are under-identified. School

leaders and teachers play an essential role in addressing inequities in gifted identification. CRSL and CRE frameworks provide a critical toolkit for serving diverse student groups (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2016). This study seeks to further the understanding of CRSL by examining the connection between school leadership and teaching practices that positively influence the gifted identification process for diverse students.

Purpose.

Scholars have scrutinized the equity issues associated with gifted identification primarily through a quantitative lens with limited results (Alvarez, 2015; Card & Giuliano, 2015; Lakin, 2018; McBee, 2016; McBee, Miller, & Peters, 2016; McBee, Peters, & Waterman, 2014). The purpose of this study is to extend the understanding of this problem by using qualitative methods to describe the implementation of the gifted identification process in a diverse setting. More specifically, this instrumental single case study seeks to discover how school leaders who serve a diverse student body approach gifted identification in order to identify disconnects between practice and theory that impede access for high-ability minority students to gifted services.

Using CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016) as the theoretical frame for the study serves two purposes. First, this framework grounds the study in research-based best practices for meeting the needs of diverse learners. Second, by focusing on the beliefs and behaviors of school leaders who are serving a diverse student population, this study reveals how current research is influencing classroom instruction through school leadership. Additionally, this study fills a gap in the research associated with CRSL by examining the intersection of this framework and the gifted identification of culturally diverse students.

Context.

This study examines the gifted identification cycle for first-grade students at a heterogeneous, non-Title I suburban school located in Georgia. Each case descriptor is purposefully selected and merits further discussion because of its implications for the study.

Working from the outside in, the fact that the study was conducted in Georgia is significant. Georgia has historically been a leader in serving gifted students. Georgia, one of the first states to develop and fund a gifted program, adopted legislation recognizing students of high ability as a special needs population in 1958 (Tagami, McCaffrey, & Sposito, 2014). In the same year, Georgia became the first state to have a state gifted program coordinator (Dubner, 2007). For the next three and a half decades, Georgia continued to lead the way in gifted education as one of only four states “with educational programs that recognized and addressed the needs of gifted students” (Dubner, 2007, p. 15A). As late as the early 1990’s, Georgia remained one of only four states providing gifted services (Dubner, 2007, p. 15A).

Additionally, the University of Georgia (UGA) has been a hub for gifted research at the local, state and national level. For example, UGA education psychology professor, Dr. Mary Frasier served as an associate director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT), a coalition of higher education research institutions funded through the Javits Act. In the 1990s, Dr. Frasier was the principal investigator of a five-year national study on identification practices of minority students in Georgia (Burson, 1993; "Education in brief," 1992). In legislation based in part on these findings, Georgia policymakers shifted from relying solely on an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test as a single identifier to a multiple criteria approach for gifted identification. This change resulted in a sustained decrease in the ratio of White to minority gifted students from five-to-one to three-to-one (Tagami et al., 2014).

UGA is also the home of the Torrence Center for Creativity and Talent Development. Paul Torrence, widely known for developing tools to measure creativity, joined the University of Georgia faculty in 1966. Many school districts have used the Torrence Tests of Creative Thinking as one of the multiple criteria assessments for identifying gifted students (Hebert, Cramond, Spiers Neumeister, Millar, & Silvian, 2002; Torrance, 1993).

Plucker et al. (2010) analyzed data from surveys conducted by the National Association for Gifted Children of gifted policies of all 50 states. Based on reported 2006-2007 state gifted education policies, Georgia ranked fourth in the total number of identified students that year behind California, Texas, and Ohio - three states with larger student populations (Plucker et al., 2010). Of the 25 states that mandated both gifted identification and gifted services, Georgia spent the most state dollars on gifted education (Plucker et al., 2010). Georgia's financial commitment to gifted education, \$197,182,317, was more than double that of Texas, the second-ranked state, at \$77,191,366 (Plucker et al., 2010). Georgia contributed 26% of all state dollars spent on gifted services (Plucker et al., 2010). Given Georgia's history of investment in research and financial capital to identify and serve gifted students, the state provides a culture that promotes awareness of the unique needs of these students.

The selection of a suburban school narrows the scope of the study further and fills a gap in the body of knowledge regarding identifying gifted minority students. Most previous studies of diverse gifted students focus on rural areas with a relatively large indigenous population or urban schools serving a large racial or ethnic minority group (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Ford, 1998; Lakin, 2016; McBee, 2006; Savage et al., 2011; Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2014). No identified studies examine a school in a suburban setting.

The selected case provides a heterogeneous student body. According to publicly available demographic data, the students are 49% White/Caucasian, 25% Black, 15% Hispanic and 11% Asian. In addition to being racially and ethnically diverse, the school serves a linguistically and socioeconomically diverse community with 13% of the students learning English and 32% of the students coming from a low-income family. It is important to note that this school serves a relatively large Brazilian population. These Portuguese-speaking students and families identify themselves as non-Hispanic and typically Caucasian, inflating the percentage of White/Caucasian students and partially masking the diversity of the student body. The gifted population should be equally heterogeneous, but it is not. The results section includes a detailed comparison of the gifted and school populations.

Another factor narrowing the case selection is the Non-Title I descriptor. Title I schools serve a majority low-income student population with at least 50% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Title I schools receive federal funding that they use for many purposes including supplementing efforts to increase gifted identification of minority students (United States Department of Education, 2015). As a Non-Title I school, the selected site does not receive this additional funding, yet over a quarter of the students are low-income. This criterion further bounds the case to a context with more limited resources and increases the relevance of CRSL practices.

Finally, this study focuses on the gifted identification cycle for first-grade students. Although gifted programs assess students at several points throughout their K-12 years, the first opportunities for identification occur in kindergarten and first grade. In the last three years, this school district added testing students for gifted services at the end of kindergarten, but the earliest identification using formal standardized tests as qualifiers for further testing occurs in

November and December of first grade. Studying the first-grade gifted identification cycle may provide insight into when and how the under-identification of gifted minority students starts and how school leaders are addressing this issue.

Literature Review

Gifted programs, like public education in America at the time of its institution, were systemically designed to meet the needs of the children of the voting class: White, middle-class students (Wright, Ford, & Young, 2017). From the start of formal gifted programming in public education, educators have identified gifted students from White, middle to upper-class families at significantly higher rates than students from minority populations (McBee, 2010). Although changes in identification policies have narrowed the gap, this disparity persists (Callahan, 2005; Ford, 1998, 2013; Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio Jr, 2007). As a result, high-ability students from diverse backgrounds do not consistently receive the academic support needed to achieve their full potential. Systemic practices and policies, as well as educators' beliefs and perceptions, institutionalize inequities in the identification of gifted students from low income, culturally and linguistically diverse, and racial minority families (Dee & Penner, 2017; Ford, 1998; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014).

Giftedness.

History.

Giftedness was first theorized toward the end of the nineteenth century as Galton applied scientific and psychometric principles in eugenics research to determine the heredity of intellectual capacity ("A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.; Galton, 1869). As giftedness grew as a field of study, Binet, Simon, Goddard, Terman and other scientists made rapid progress in developing measures and assessments of intelligence such as the Stanford-Binet

IQ test ("A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.). Due to segregation in the early and mid-1900s, gifted identification and services were primarily available to White children from middle class or affluent families. International politics and civil rights movements played a documented role in the history of gifted research and programming ("A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.; Gubbins, Callahan, & Renzulli, 2014; *National excellence: A case for developing America's talent*, 1993).

At a federal level, funding for, and thus interest in, gifted research ebbed and flowed in the same pattern as times of international and domestic calm and unrest (Boren, 2000; "A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.). Major historical events like the launching of Sputnik and *Brown vs. the Board of Education* have preceded federal legislation, in these cases the National Defense Act and the Civil Rights Act respectively, investing in gifted education and issues of equity (Boren, 2000; "A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and its subsequent reauthorizations have shaped our definition and understanding of giftedness. *A Nation At Risk*, a highly-publicized federal report that placed a spotlight on the underperformance of the United States' gifted students relative to their international peers, was quickly followed by the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988. The Javits Act, part of an ESEA reauthorization, provided federal funding for gifted research and grants supporting the identification and educational needs of gifted students from underrepresented populations (Boren, 2000).

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) was established in 1990 to carry out the provisions of the Javits Act. The NRC/GT spearheaded research that led to the use of multiple criteria for gifted identification, a significant advancement in the field that narrowed the gap in identification between minority and nonminority students. One year after the

Georgia Department of Education implemented this policy change, the overall number of gifted-identified students increased by 12.7 percent, while the number black students in the gifted program rose 28 percent (Loupe, 1998).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, shifted focus to establishing a minimum academic achievement level for all students, effectively marginalizing the needs of gifted students. Even though NCLB expanded the Javits program, the NRC/GT was defunded in 2012 ("A brief history of gifted and talented education," n.d.). While gifted research continued after the turn of the century, progress in closing the gap in gifted identification plateaued (Callahan, 2005; Plucker & Callahan, 2014).

Definition.

As the theories and practices associated with giftedness have evolved, so have definitions (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). Early understandings equated giftedness with intelligence. Built on descriptions of behaviors and outcomes associated with giftedness, Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness (1978) and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (1983) pushed the boundaries of the IQ paradigm to include concepts of motivation, creativity, and leadership (Plucker & Callahan, 2014; Reis, n.d.). Frasier (1991) went farther and categorized the characteristics of gifted and talented as motivation and interests, communication, humor, memory, problem-solving, inquiry, insight, reasoning, and imagination. In 1993, the United States Department of Education adopted the currently used broader, multidimensional definition aligned with these emerging theories and emphasized inclusivity:

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance

capability in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas; possess an unusual leadership capacity; or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (Gubbins et al., 2014, p. 423; *National excellence: A case for developing America's talent*, 1993, p. 26)

Gifted identification.

Initially, IQ was the single score used to qualify students for gifted programs. Students scoring in the top 10% on an IQ test are considered gifted. Passow and Frasier (1996) provide this analysis of the limitations of using IQ as the sole indicator for giftedness especially for culturally diverse students:

The components of traditional models and paradigms for identifying talent potential have come under criticism for a variety of reasons including: the giftedness construct is too narrow and limited; alternative approaches to or modifications of the identification processes focus on "fitting" populations into a narrow giftedness construct; and the impact of culture and environment is not taken into account. (p. 7)

Passow and Frasier (1996) advocate for a multiple-criteria approach that includes achievement, creativity, and motivation as well as intellectual ability as measured by IQ.

In Georgia, state law OCGA 120-2-152, Title 20, Article 6, Part 3 and the state board of education rule 160-4-2-.38 ("Georgia resource manual for gifted education services," 2018) define the requirements for eligibility for gifted services and delineate two options. The first path relies primarily on intellectual ability and requires that a student achieve a qualifying score in mental ability and achievement. The second option broadens eligibility to include additional

measures of giftedness. This path requires a student to obtain a qualifying score in three of four areas: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation. These regulations identify the specific types of assessments that local school districts can use for each of these categories as follows:

Mental ability: a norm-referenced test

Achievement: a norm-referenced test or student product evaluated by a qualified panel

Creativity: a norm-referenced test, rating scale, or panel score

Motivation: a rating scale, panel score, or grade point average in core subjects

Certified educators screen students for gifted eligibility based on a referral by an individual with knowledge of the student's abilities or because the student scored at a high level on a norm-referenced test. While these policies allow local school districts some leeway in gifted identification procedures and decisions, they provide a clear, consistent framework for identifying students across the state.

Minority underrepresentation.

Scholars document several factors that play a role in the complex problem of the under-identification of minority students. Noting the complexity of the issue, Callahan (2005) highlights definitions of giftedness; one-shot paper-and-pencil assessments; biases in policies and procedures; and misalignment of curriculum to placement as factors that serve as barriers for minority students.

Nomination versus universal screening.

The bias of gifted identification and screening practices is an area of concern and a priority for researchers (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). Some school systems use nomination, the request of a teacher or parent for gifted testing, to initiate the gifted identification process.

Others use a universal screener, a preliminary assessment given to all students, to narrow the pool for further testing. McBee et al. (2016) conclude that nomination precludes a majority of gifted students from entering the assessment phase for identification, resulting in over 60% remaining unidentified. Card and Giuliano (2015) provide empirical evidence that universal screening is more effective for identifying gifted students from underrepresented populations than nomination or referral systems. Card and Giuliano (2015) report that the use of a universal screener increases the identification of economically disadvantaged students by 180%. In a critique of Card and Giuliano's study, Lakin (2016) highlights the strength of their findings and notes that the use of parent provided IQ scores and teacher checklists to qualify students after the initial screening likely artificially lowers the impact of the universal screener. That is, bias in the steps following the use of the universal screener potentially masks some of its impact on culturally diverse students.

Alternative assessment methodologies.

McBee, Peters, and Waterman (2014) report that multiple measures alone may not improve identification rates among all subgroups. Using alternative assessment tools, strategies and methods for combining the assessment results for each criterion can reduce false positives, identifying non-gifted students as gifted, or false negatives, failing to qualify students who are gifted. Taking a different approach, Calero, Belen, and Robles (2011) conducted a quantitative study that proposed dynamic assessment as an approach to compensate for lack of exposure due to environment or culture. Students were given intensive training on a task. The researchers measured the rate of improvement on the task to quantify learning potential. Calero et al. (2011) found empirical evidence to support "the contention that dynamic tests are capable of accurate identification of gifted children" (p. 179). They conclude that dynamic assessments measuring

learning potential can be a valid alternative to IQ for identifying students who have low initial ability or achievement scores, a typical occurrence for students from diverse backgrounds. Callahan, Renzulli, Delcourt, and Hertberg-Davis (2013) raise several considerations for improving the effectiveness of gifted identification such as providing opportunities for re-assessment and considering student demographics when determining which measures to use.

In a mixed methods action research study, Alvarez (2015) found that the A&W Buttons Creativity Performance Task, an alternative to traditional creativity assessments such as the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and Profile of Creative Abilities (PCA), allows students to demonstrate creativity without being limited by vocabulary or artistic talent. Qualification rates for black males increased from 0% to 50% using the A&W assessment compared to the PCA. Overall, black females perform better on the PCA, while white females and all males perform better using the A&W performance task. While Alvarez' work is not generalizable due to the study's small sample size, it does support the concept that a wider variety of assessments are needed to address different ways in which giftedness manifests (Calero et al., 2011).

Peters and Engerrand (2016) conducted a case review of institutions that utilized alternative gifted assessments challenged in the court system. These schools or systems used different criteria for selection depending on the student's racial, ethnic or socioeconomic classification. While the research supports using race, ethnicity or class as a factor in the evaluation process to increase the accurate identification of diverse students, the courts do not. Litigious concerns make the use of alternative assessment methodologies problematic.

Talent development.

In *Unlocking Emerging Talent*, a report published by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, President of NAGC, and Jane Clarenbach, Director of Public Education at NAGC, (2012) question the long-held paradigm that gifted education practices require students to demonstrate ability before receiving specialized instruction through gifted programs. This practice marginalizes students who do not have the benefit of literacy-rich home environment or parents with the social capital to support their academic success. They note “capable children may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential on tests or other performance assessments until after they have access to challenging curriculum and enriched learning opportunities” (p. 9). Gentry concurs, “To recognize whether talent exists there must be opportunities for talent to emerge” (2009, p. 265).

In one example of the practical application in this shift in thinking, Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) characterize creativity, one of the four criteria considered for gifted placement, and detail how teachers can foster the development of creativity in their students through talent development. Talent development can be defined as assistance for high-ability learners to provide gateways to gifted programming offered beginning in kindergarten through twelfth grade and beyond (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Talent development can take a variety of forms such as academic support, direct instruction in non-cognitive skills, extended learning time, exposure to gifted curriculum, and augmented social support (Gentry, 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Renzulli, 2012; Robinson, Adelson, Kidd, & Cunningham, 2018). Models for talent development activities include pull-out: a gifted teacher pulls students from their regular classroom; push-in: a gifted teacher leads a lesson in a general education classroom;

collaborative: a gifted teacher provides materials and coaching for a general education teacher to deliver, and extracurricular: before or after school lessons (Gentry, 2009, p. 265).

Teacher's role.

Classroom teachers perform multiple roles in the gifted identification process. These teachers directly impact gifted identification of the students they serve by nominating students for further testing, completing questionnaires regarding student motivation and creativity, and assembling portfolios of student work (Allen, 2017). Additionally, teachers indirectly influence the gifted identification process to the extent by which they enrich and extend the curriculum to meet the needs of high-ability learners and integrate the development of critical and creative thinking skills into instruction. As a result, classroom teachers serve as gatekeepers who can facilitate or inhibit access to gifted services for all students (McDonald, 2014).

Researchers continue to investigate the teacher's role in the gifted identification process and its connection to the under-identification of gifted minority students (Gubbins et al., 2014). In a mixed-methods study, Brighton, Moon, Jarvis, and Hockett (2007) examine the connection between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as related to giftedness. Brighton et al. (2007) note that most primary teachers surveyed believe that gifted students display traits typical of students who have attended preschool, an option not available for many economically disadvantaged students. Examples of these traits include "strong reasoning skills, a general storehouse of knowledge, and facility with language" (Brighton et al., 2007, p. xi). Additionally, the study participants found it difficult to associate giftedness with students who lack strong early reading skills, have a limited vocabulary, cannot work independently, or appear unmotivated; traits often used to describe students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Brighton et al., 2007).

Jennifer Allen (2017) conducted a qualitative study framed by critical theory to describe the decision-making process elementary teachers use to refer students for gifted testing. After interviewing six teachers with over five years of experience instructing English Language Learners and gifted students, Allen (2017) identifies several perceptions that reduce the number of referrals for ELLs. When considering these students for referral for gifted evaluation, the study participants consider the impact of the language barrier, place a higher emphasis on standardized test scores, and do not collaborate with other teachers who serve these students.

Using a multiple case study design, Tomlinson and Jarvis (2014) look for commonalities in schools that have succeeded in identifying and developing academic talent in minority students, a pre-cursor to gifted identification. They report that teachers in these schools operate from a strength-versus-deficit perspective. The belief that academic achievement is congruent with the cultures of students of all races and ethnicity, not just white students, permeates the school culture. Additionally, students are placed in advanced classes while educators addressed gaps in language proficiency through scaffolding. A student's need for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services does not pre-empt exposure to challenging curricula. Finally, the teachers are willing to adapt the curriculum and their teaching styles and the curriculum to be relevant and accessible to students from diverse backgrounds rather than taking a rigid stance of sink or swim. Teacher beliefs and attitudes about students as learners are a critical factor in providing equity in access to advanced content for minority students.

School leader's role.

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5). At a high level, Hitt and Tucker (2016) synthesize the research on

school leadership and develop a unified framework of the critical leader practices that directly and indirectly influence student achievement: building a shared vision, facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students, building professional capacity, creating a supportive organization for learning, and connecting with external partners. Khalifa et al. (2016) narrow this focus of leadership practices to the needs of minoritized students by developing a culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework.

Only a few studies have examined the role of school leaders in gifted education. For example, McDonald (2014) conducted a phenomenological study of principals who were active advocates for gifted programs and found that both principals and teachers lacked training in understanding and meeting the needs of gifted students. If school leaders who actively invest in gifted programs are ill-equipped to meet the needs of gifted students as a whole, what does that mean for the more nuanced needs of gifted minority students? In a qualitative case study of stakeholders in schools with a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs), Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, and Knapp (2013) note that teachers and administrators need systematic professional development, coaching, and collaboration to build capacity in serving these students. While studies like this one help fill the gap for understanding the role school leaders play in serving culturally diverse students, they do not examine the specific implications for high-ability minority students who are under-identified as gifted. At this time, no studies specifically address school leadership for diverse gifted students or for the identification of minority students.

Limitations.

Several quantitative studies confirm that current gifted identification practices fail to identify minority students at the same rate as their White, middle-class peers (Frasier & Passow,

1994; Plucker et al., 2010). Existing research identifies factors and underlying causes to the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs and even proposes changes in educational and identification practices (Hodges, Tay, Maeda, & Gentry, 2018; Lakin, 2016, 2018; McBee, 2006, 2010; McBee et al., 2016; McBee et al., 2014; Naglieri & Ford, 2003). This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature regarding qualitative studies, particularly those trying to understand how the research surrounding the identification of gifted minority students is impacting or failing to impact practice.

Furthermore, a significant body of research has provided an understanding of the impact of school leaders on student outcomes and the critical practices of school leaders that meet the needs of all students and particularly culturally diverse students. However, this knowledge has not moved the needle on the problem of under-identification of high-ability minority students. This study adds to the current corpus of knowledge by examining the role of school leaders in the gifted identification process in a diverse setting.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally responsive school leadership.

Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) builds on the foundation of culturally relevant education (CRE), an evolving concept and framework for addressing the learning needs of diverse students. CRE is returning to center stage in education reform after being sidelined for a period by a focus on standardized testing and Common Core curriculum (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Dover, 2013; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Following desegregation, education researchers turned attention to identifying effective teaching strategies for students with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Trailblazers in the effort to synthesize this research coined several similar phrases such as culturally responsive

teaching (Gay, 1975, 2002, 2010) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Many of the initial studies centered on homogenous, bilingual classrooms where the teacher was from the dominant culture and the students were from the same minority culture. Examples include work with indigenous people groups in Hawaii (Au & Jordan, 1981), Canada (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), and New Zealand (Averill et al., 2009). While the origins of CRE are rooted in ethnic and linguistic differences, concepts of cultural diversity have expanded to include race, class, and, at times, gender (Boutte, Kelly-Jackson, & Johnson, 2010; Laughter, 2011; Nasir & Cobb, 2002).

As the demographics of American students are shifting from predominantly White to multicultural, issues of teaching diverse students are regaining the spotlight (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Caballero, 2010; Sleeter, 2012). Just like teachers, school leaders must be equipped to adapt to the needs of students from many different backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and economic levels in the same setting (Howard, 2007). Khalifa et al. (2016) synthesize the extant literature on culturally responsive education, school leadership, social justice, and diverse students to develop a framework for CRSL.

Key components.

Khalifa et al. (2016) identify four strands or categories of CRSL behaviors: critical self-reflection, development of culturally responsive teachers and curriculum, promotion of an inclusive school environment, and engaging students and community contexts. Khalifa et al. (2016) provide detailed descriptions and support for the elements included in each strand. Regarding the first strand, Khalifa et al. (2016) note for culturally responsive school leaders critical, self-reflection “unearths their personal biases, assumptions, and values that stem from

their cultural backgrounds” (p. 1285). This strand includes using data from sources such as equity audits and parent surveys to inform ongoing self-reflection.

The second strand of CRSL, developing culturally responsive teachers and curriculum, focuses on viewing every component of school leadership through a culturally responsive lens. This work includes building a shared vision for serving diverse students; providing professional development to increase teacher capacity in CRE practices, and using data to identify cultural gaps in achievement, placement, and discipline. Ensuring curriculum, instruction, and assessment address the needs of culturally diverse students falls into this category, as well.

The next strand addresses school climate and culture. CRSL calls for school leaders to create and maintain an inclusive and validating environment that values the unique contributions of each student. In this atmosphere, diverse students do not see themselves as an outsider in a dominant culture, but rather as a respected community member whose heritage is celebrated.

The final component of CRSL bridges the gap between home and school. Culturally responsive instructional leaders help teachers build on the background knowledge and experiences of the students by connecting content knowledge to the cultural framework each student develops at home. CRSL leaders “create authentic overlapping school-community spaces” (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1291). Including community members in school decision-making, tapping into community resources to connect content to real life, and engaging students in community service are a few examples of this strand of CSRL.

Strengths.

The CRSL framework integrates the instructional methods and materials components of Gay’s (2010) culturally responsive teaching research with the underlying beliefs and dispositions associated with Ladson-Billings’ (1995) work in culturally relevant pedagogy. This synthesis

provides a lens that recognizes the interrelated roles that both pedagogy and practice play in effective instruction. Many quantitative studies highlight links between culturally responsive education practices and improved student outcomes in achievement, engagement, or motivation (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Dee & Penner, 2017; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). In an article discussing the implications of culturally responsive teaching to special education for diverse students, Gay specifically notes the:

...strong correlations between culturally responsive teaching and the school achievement of students of color. The higher the one the greater the other on all measures including academic performance, social adjustment, school satisfaction, self-concept, and students' feeling of confidence and efficacy. (2002, p. 627)

Dee and Penner (2017) take this work a step further by conducting a quantitative analysis of the effects of implementing CRE through a high school ethnic studies course on key achievement indicators. On average, students in this course experienced significant gains in attendance (+21%), grade point average (+1.4), and credits earned (+23) indicating a causal relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and student achievement.

On the leadership side, elements of transformative, instructional, and social justice leadership are interwoven to provide a model that recognizes the need for deep-seated change to remove the barriers and biases embedded in current education systems, policies, and beliefs that marginalize diverse students (Khalifa et al., 2016). This model addresses the need to build leadership capacity for culturally diverse students by establishing critical self-reflection as the first strand (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; McDonald, 2014)

Limitations.

CRSL is one of the most recent extensions of the research concerning how to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners. Khalifa et al. “acknowledged that CRSL is deeply undertheorized and under-researched” (2016, p. 1297). They identify several cultural contexts such as the deaf community that have not been considered in the development of this framework. Additionally, researchers have yet to conduct studies correlating culturally responsive school leadership to increased student achievement.

Significance of the study.

Teachers provide leadership for their classrooms and take on a variety of leadership roles in the school such as grade level or service lead teachers. Teachers act as gatekeepers in the identification of gifted students (de Wet & Gubbins, 2011; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Speirs Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon, 2007). They provide instruction that exposes students to creative and critical thinking, differentiate content to enrich and extend, administer assessments to assess giftedness, nominate students who demonstrate potential, provide data on creativity and motivation, and advocate for students. Research shows that teacher perceptions and beliefs about giftedness: what it looks like in the classroom, what behaviors indicate giftedness, what the needs of gifted students are, what gifted looks like in minority students -- inform their actions as gatekeepers (Allen, 2017; Speirs Neumeister et al., 2007). Therefore, the extent to which teachers embrace and implement CRSL practices may impact access to gifted programs for high ability minority students.

School administrators also have a role to play in addressing inequities in gifted identification through staffing and scheduling decisions, teacher evaluations and instructional support, professional development priorities, and equity oversight. Over one half million

minority gifted students go unidentified and unserved (Ford, 2014; Hodges et al., 2018; Office for Civil Rights, 2018). There is a moral imperative to address the inequities in gifted education to meet the academic needs of culturally diverse students. The CRSL framework provides a tool for gauging the effectiveness of school leaders in this work and a roadmap for those who want to take up this work in a practical way. This study may have implications for current leadership and gifted identification practices, leader and teacher evaluation tools, educational preparation programs, and ongoing professional development.

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GIFTED IDENTIFICATION IN A HETEROGENEOUS SCHOOL

Given the persistent problem of under-identification of gifted students from diverse backgrounds, this study seeks to expand the understanding of this phenomenon by examining the gifted identification process within a heterogeneous context through the lens of Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL). The methodology section below provides a detailed description of the decisions that frame the study as well as the data collection methods used to improve validity and reliability. Next, the findings section documents the prevailing themes and patterns that emerge from the data and their connections to the four elements of culturally responsive school leadership. Finally, the conclusion section looks at the implications of these findings on current practices and narrowing the excellence gap.

Methodology

Interpretive framework.

Researchers, scholars, and journalists have long recognized and documented the disparity in the identification of gifted students along racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines ("Failing our best and brightest," 1993; Hagan, 1994; McBee, 2010; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; Olszewski Kubilius, Lee, Ngoi, & Ngoi, 2004; Renzulli & Reis, 2004). Quantitative studies rooted in a positivist approach validate that White students have been and continue to be identified as gifted at significantly higher rates than minority students (McBee, 2010; McBee, Miller, & Peters, 2016). As a result, steps have been taken to reduce the excellence gap such as the adoption of multiple criteria for identification (Loupe, 1994) and the use of universal screeners in the nomination process (McBee et al., 2016). While these procedural changes have helped educators and policymakers make progress in narrowing the gap, they have not eliminated the excellence gap.

The underrepresentation of minorities can be characterized as systemic and intertwined with beliefs that perpetuate the status of the elite (Wright, Ford, & Young, 2017). Additionally, culturally responsive education, a potential next step toward equity, emphasizes the role of beliefs and perceptions in meeting the learning needs of culturally diverse students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Culture itself is a socially constructed concept in which context matters. While quantitative research in this area has moved us forward in the quest to resolve the inequities in gifted identification, it is void of context and rooted in a positivist ontology and etic epistemology (Padilla, 2004). More qualitative work, research premised on the belief that reality is context-bound, is needed to add to the solution discourse.

This study seeks to understand how a school with a diverse student population implements the gifted identification process and, more specifically, how school leaders and teachers construct the concept of giftedness in this setting. Creswell and Poth (2017) note that philosophical assumptions and beliefs undergird research design. A social constructivism paradigm, the idea that learning takes place through interactions with people, fundamentally grounds this study. The complexity of defining and identifying giftedness eludes a scientific method approach that generates a formula of assessments, or other measures, to yield a reliable, accurate result regardless of racial, ethnic, linguistic, or socioeconomic status. Contextual factors influence gifted identification. This study acknowledges that school leaders and teachers, as well as students, construct meaning through lived experiences and social interactions at home and at school. School leaders, teachers, and students bring their own realities to the classroom and the school as a whole. In this study, the researcher and the participants co-construct the reality of gifted identification influenced by each one's individual, unique lived experiences.

Pragmatism drives the research goals: to understand how school leaders influence the gifted identification process and to look for what works regarding accurately identifying gifted minority students. The researcher's initial interest in this topic originates in the recognition of the problem of disparity in gifted identification in the researcher's school and a desire as an educational leader to help solve the problem. Inequities, wherever they are found, deserve a call for action and scrutiny with a transformative lens. A social constructivist philosophy focused on pragmatism informs the research design of this study. In other words, the researcher believes that giftedness is a socially constructed concept and wants to understand how school leaders influence identification in a diverse context. Given the purpose of providing a detailed, holistic description of a present social phenomenon, this research utilizes a descriptive case study design (Yin, 2013)

Research design.

This study seeks to understand the gifted identification process in context to gain insight into the underrepresentation of diverse students and the role of school leaders in mitigating inequities. The research occurs in the field with the researcher serving as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis intent on capturing the multiple perspectives of the participants. A case study design focuses on developing in-depth description and analysis; therefore, given the research problem of providing a comprehensive understanding of the gifted identification process, a case study approach best fits the research needs of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 67; Yin, 2013). Furthermore, this study is an instrumental case study because the intent is to gain an understanding of a specific issue, namely the identification of gifted minority students (Stake, 1995).

In addition to the criteria for case selection detailed below, the gifted identification cycle and its timeline bound the case. Data collection occurs during and after the gifted identification process for current first-grade students. All first-grade students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in September. The gifted identification cycle for these students begins with the return of the CogAT scores in November and concludes with parent notification of results at the end of December.

Case/site selection.

The case for this study is the gifted identification process for first-grade students at a heterogeneous, non-Title I elementary school in a suburban setting. Multiple factors influenced the selection of this case and site. Typically, a researcher formulates a research question, establishes criteria for site or case selection, and then finds a site that meets that criteria. The opposite is true in this study. The researcher worked at this school as an administrator and, along with other school leaders, questioned perceived patterns of disparity in gifted identification especially given the diversity of the student body. A desire to know more and to provide effective leadership based on current research to ensure equal access to gifted services for all students at this school spawned the research question.

The researcher's move into an administrative role at a different school during the design phase of this study provided a unique opportunity. If the researcher had remained at this site, then criteria would have been used to locate a site where the researcher did not have supervisory responsibility for the participants. The case selection would have been a purposeful sample. The change in the researcher's school assignment opened options for a convenience sample, instead. In this study, the researcher's relationship with the staff provided a level of trust and transparency that is not typically available when the researcher is a stranger to the participants.

This access to the site and the participants was a critical component of the research design, made a convenience sample the best fit for this study, and was one of the primary reasons for this site selection.

Additionally, this site meets the criteria that would have been established for a purposive sample. First, the case has explicit place bounds that are relevant to the research problem. The school is heterogeneous, meaning it serves a diverse student population. No one race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class is significantly dominant. Staff members describe it as a small neighborhood school that is reflective of the community it serves. Study participants refer to the school as a melting pot or small United Nations; therefore, moving forward, this study refers to this site as United Nations Elementary.

When students enroll, parents or guardians complete an enrollment form that provides five categories for race and six for ethnicity. Table 1 presents the number and percentage of students in each of these categories at United Nations Elementary as of December 21, 2018. Based on this data, most self-reported racial and ethnic groups include more than fifteen percent of the students, enough to provide insight into how the gifted identification process affects these students as a subgroup.

United Nations Elementary has experienced an influx of immigrants from Brazil and India in the last five years. Staff members believe that the self-reported demographics do not portray an accurate picture of the school's diversity because the Brazilian families often identify themselves as White/Caucasian and non-Hispanic. In order to calculate gifted identification rates for these two cultural subgroups and develop a more accurate understanding of the student population, the researcher developed an adjusted demographic profile using birth country and home language data to identify ethnicity. For example, self-reported race data place the

White/Caucasian population at 57.2%, while the self-reported ethnicity and adjusted ethnicity percentages are 39.3% and 36.4% respectively. This minor difference indicates that the self-reported ethnicity numbers for White/Caucasian students are not as overinflated as staff members perceive. Still, it is helpful to note that there are more Hispanics than Brazilians and more Indians than other Asian ethnicities. In general, the Hispanic and Asian (other than Indian) subgroups consist of second and third generation immigrants, students who were born in the United States and exposed to a language other than English at home. The Hispanic students have cultural links to various South American countries or Mexico. The Asian (other than Indian) students are a diverse group and have ties to a wide range of countries on the continent of Asia. The results section provides an in-depth description of each of these racial and ethnic subgroups.

Table 1
Student Race and Ethnicity at United Nations Elementary

Category	Race		Ethnicity		Ethnicity	
	Self-Reported		Self-Reported		Adjusted	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
American Indian or Alaskan Nat	2	.3	2	.3	1	.1
Asian	119	16.8	117	16.5		
Asian – Indian					79	10.6
Asian – Other than Indian					41	5.8
Black	154	21.8	148	20.9	148	20.9
Hispanic			137	19.4		
Brazilian					77	10.9
Not-Brazilian					78	11.0
Multiracial	28	4.0	26	3.7	26	3.7
White/Caucasian	405	57.2	278	39.3	258	36.4
Total	708	100	708	100	708	100

Note: Adjusted Ethnicity counts students based on reported country of birth and home language creating separate categories for Brazilian and Indian students.

United Nations Elementary is not a Title I school; however, 26.3% of the students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Table 2 shows the number and percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch by racial and ethnic category. For a school to qualify as Title I, a

majority of the students must receive free or reduced lunch. Title I schools receive federal funding that may affect the context of gifted identification. School leaders can use these funds to hire additional staff and provide targeted professional development. This study seeks local leadership-based solutions that do not require access to supplemental funding, such as Title I, to implement. Thus, a defining contextual characteristic of the site relates to the Title I status of the school. The selection of a non-Title I school with a significant percentage of economically disadvantaged students allows for the exploration of the gifted identification process in a setting that includes students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Table 2
Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch By Race and Ethnicity

Category	Race		Ethnicity		Ethnicity	
	Self-Reported		Self-Reported		Adjusted	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
American Indian or Alaskan Nat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	5	2.7	5	2.7		
Asian – Indian					4	2.2
Asian – Other than Indian					1	0.5
Black	72	38.7	68	36.6	68	36.6
Hispanic			69	37.1		
Brazilian					28	15.1
Not-Brazilian					47	25.3
Multiracial	15	8.1	13	7.0	13	7.0
White/Caucasian	94	50.5	31	16.7	25	13.4
Total	186		186		186	

Note: Adjusted Ethnicity counts students based on reported country of birth and home language creating separate categories for Brazilian and Indian students.

Timing further bounds the case. While the excellence gap is pervasive across the K-12 continuum, this study focuses on the first steps of the gifted identification process. The earliest screenings for giftedness occur in kindergarten and first grade. The gifted identification cycle for kindergarten students at United Nations Elementary begins in late spring and concludes in May. The cycle for first-grade students occurs from mid-November to mid-December each year.

The subject of this study is the first-grade cycle due to the researcher's availability, time constraints, and the timing of IRB approval (see Appendix A).

A final consideration, the researcher's access, plays a significant role in the site selection for this case study (Yin, 2013, p. 28). As the primary tool for data collection and analysis, the researcher needs to build rapport and develop trust with the participants. The researcher worked at the school as a school administrator prior to conducting the study. The strong base of rapport and trust already established by the researcher at this school facilitates access to the community and culture associated with gifted identification. Because the researcher no longer works at this school, data collection issues of "power and risk to the researcher, the participants, and the site" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 153) are minimal though they still exist. The research design incorporates multiple validation strategies to identify and address these concerns.

Participant selection.

The pool of possible participants contains 22 individuals who work with first-grade students in a wide variety of roles. This population included seven homeroom teachers, five specialist teachers, two gifted resource teachers, two English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, one Early Intervention Program (EIP) teacher, the principal, the assistant principal, a counselor, and the Portuguese interpreter, and one paraprofessional. All of these staff members were invited to participate in the study to increase the likelihood that both the case description and themes incorporate multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The researcher divided the pool of participants into two categories: participants and key participants. The difference in the two groups was the level of leadership and interaction with students and families in under-identified subgroups; therefore, key participants included the gifted, ESOL, and EIP teachers as well as the administrators and Portuguese translator. The

study required key participants to possibly participate in more activities and be willing to make a greater time commitment for the study. Each person in the participant pool received a consent letter tailored to their participation type (see Appendices B and C) providing information about the research including the purpose, data collection procedures, confidentiality protocols, known participation risks, and expected benefits (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 155). The letter clearly stated that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Both the researcher and the participant signed the consent document and retained a copy of the completed form. After receiving the invitation to participate in the research, sixteen educators met with the researcher to discuss the study and sign the consent form to participate.

The research design capped the sample size at 15 participants due to limited resources available for data collection. Because more than 15 invitees provided consent, the researcher used role redundancy and other characteristics to pare down the sample size while maximizing variation. The researcher considered the role, certifications, years in education, years in current position, and years at United Nations Elementary as well as the gender, age, and race/ethnicity of the potential participants. Table 3 provides a detailed description of these characteristics for the selected members of the purposeful sample.

Table 3
Characteristics of Participants in Maximum Variation, Purposeful Sample

Characteristic	Quantity				
Participation Type					
Participant	7				
Key Participant	8				
Role					
Homeroom Teacher	4				
Support Staff					
EIP	1				
ESOL	2				
Gifted	2				
Specials	3				
Translator	1				
Administrator	2				
Certification/Endorsements					
ESOL	5				
Gifted	6				
Leadership	2				
Special Education	3				
Age					
30-39	4				
40-49	5				
50+	6				
Gender					
Female	13				
Male	2				
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian (Indian)	1				
Black	2				
Hispanic (Brazilian)	1				
White/Caucasian	11				
Immigrant	3				
Non-immigrant	12				
Years					
In Current Position	At Current School	In Education			
<5	5	<5	8	<10	2
5-9	6	5-9	4	10-19	7
9-14	4	10-14	1	20-29	4
		15+	2	30+	2

Note: Compiled from publicly available and participant provided data as of the 2018-19 school year.

Data collection.

Established protocols guided all data collection activities. Yin enumerates four supporting principles of data collection that address issues of validity and reliability: using multiple sources, creating a database, maintaining a chain of evidence and exercising caution with electronic sources (2013, pp. 104-105). The following sections address each of these principles.

Multiple sources.

Data collection included multiple sources to capture the complexity of the gifted identification process and provide triangulation of data to increase the accuracy and strength of the study's findings and conclusions (Yin, 2013, p. 120). Primarily, the researcher collected data through individual and focus group interviews. Documents such as manuals, emails, notes, forms, and training materials supplemented and corroborated the primary data sources. The researcher kept a journal to record the emerging and reflexive elements of the case study.

Interviews.

The original research design included individual interviews lasting no more than one hour with each participant shortly before the gifted identification cycle began and immediately after it concluded. As the first round of interviews progressed, it became clear that the gifted identification cycle was already in full swing and starting to wrap up. Most participants already knew which first-grade students were going to be qualified for the gifted program as a result of the current identification process. Because the pre-interview occurred later in the gifted identification cycle than initially planned, the opportunity to capture different perspectives before and after the cycle did not exist. Moreover, the data obtained in the initial round of interviews was robust and full of insight. In addition to these reasons, the desire to use the time of all

involved in the study wisely led the researcher to revise the research methods and replace the second set of interviews with follow-up questions as needed based on the analysis of the data from the initial interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they were fluid, “guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin, 2013, p. 110). The researcher allotted more time for the interviews of key informants, such as the gifted lead teacher, with the intention of using a prolonged case study format lasting up to two hours over multiple sittings (Yin, 2013, pp. 110-111). In reality, the initial interviews of key participants took longer than the interviews of the other participants, but were generally conducted in one setting and lasted less than an hour.

Allen (2017) developed a set of interview questions to investigate the role of teacher perceptions in the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted programs. The interview questions for this study expanded on this work by using Allen’s items as a starting point and adding questions to explore the role of school leaders in this problem (see Appendix D). The researcher followed the same interview protocol and used the same questions for both participants and key participants. The researcher scheduled more time for key participant interviews with the anticipation that key participants would provide more detailed responses given their role working with the targeted subgroups of students.

One focus group session completed the interviews and included five people. The principle of maximum variation (Creswell & Poth, 2017) guided the formation of the group along with individual availability. The focus group included one administrator, the gifted lead teacher, the English Language Learner (ELL) lead teacher, one first-grade teacher, and the Portuguese translator. In addition to providing leadership or playing an active role in working with diverse high ability students, each member of the focus group completed an interview and

offered a unique perspective on the problem of under-identification. The goal of the focus group session was to bring this group of United Nations Elementary school leaders together to understand their views as a collaborative community and to gather any new data that might surface from their interaction with each other that did not come to light in one-on-one interviews. The focus group protocol was similar to the interview protocol with a focus on the four strands of CRSL, data, and possible action steps (see Appendix E).

Each interview session was recorded. The researcher transcribed the audio recordings and then used the audio to verify the transcription. The researcher utilized member checking by asking each participant to review the session transcript to ensure the content accurately reflected their intended responses. All 15 participants and key participants completed the member checking protocol. Ten did not revise the transcript. Four provided only minor revisions to clarify meaning. One participant returned significant edits that modified the conversational language to resemble formal writing but did not alter the substance of the interview significantly.

Observations.

The initial study design included two types of observations: direct observation and participant observation. These observations were intended to provide insight into what school leaders and teachers do to support gifted minority students. Complexities associated with protecting the FERPA rights of students and the integrity of the gifted assessment procedures led to minimizing this component of data collection. The researcher did take notes to capture relevant data observed while visiting the site and teacher classrooms for interviews. No students were present during these times. During the classroom visits, the researcher looked for evidence of culturally responsive school leadership including critical self-reflection; curriculum, instruction, and assessment that supports culturally diverse learners; classroom and school

cultures that celebrate and leverage student heritage; and authentic overlapping school and community spaces. The observation data collected was minimal consisting of less than ten anecdotal notes.

Other data sources.

The researcher kept a detailed journal throughout the entire study to capture details regarding the researcher's position in the study and uncover possible bias through self-reflection. A document review of all available documents associated with the identification process supplemented the data collected in the interviews, focus group and observations. This document review included student schedules, talent development curriculum, and lesson plans, as well as policy manuals and parent communications, to consider issues of accessibility and equity for diverse students.

Data database.

An electronic data log documents all data collection activities and provides a searchable, sortable organization tool to facilitate retrieval. Each entry includes the date, item number, data source, data type (electronic or hard copy), storage location, and participants. Microsoft OneNote® houses all electronic files in titled folders, tabs, and pages. A binder that holds all paper documents associated with this study is stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

Chain of evidence.

A chain of evidence linking data collection, analysis and reporting provides the reader with a clear path from the evidence to the findings and back. From the research questions to the protocols to the data to the log to the final report (Yin, 2013, p. 128), each step cites references to the previous step and illuminates the next.

Data analysis.

Data analysis serves two primary purposes: 1) to develop a thick, rich contextual description of the case and 2) to identify themes and multiple perspectives surrounding the gifted identification process in a school that serves a variety of minority categories. The case study protocol prioritizes analysis based on the research question and utilizes a case study database to facilitate retrieval.

The researcher engaged in the data analysis process concurrently with data collection. The research journal captured the researcher's first impressions via preliminary coding and analytic memos. For example, in one of the first interviews, the participant focused on challenges for Indian students. In the research journal notes for that day, one jotting is a list titled, "Possible Themes/Codes," which includes the entry "Issues by Culture." During data collection, the researcher prepared each piece of evidence for analysis by logging, securely storing, and, if needed, converting it into an electronic format for coding. This process included transcribing interviews, verifying transcriptions, member checking, and transferring documents to a central, password-protected location.

Because of the volume and complexity of the data, the researcher used NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, to code the data and assist with analysis. The coding process involved several iterative passes in two cycles. The first cycle employed an open coding or initial coding approach (Saldaña, 2015). During this phase, the researcher added attributes to notate basic descriptive information for each datum. Then referring to the interview, focus group, and observation protocols as well as the preliminary coding notes in the journal, the researcher created an initial list of nodes for preliminary coding (see Appendix G). The first codes added to the initial list connected directly with the research

question. Provisional codes associated with the four strands of the culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework provided nodes to identify evidence and non-evidence relevant to the theoretical frame that grounds the study (Saldaña, 2015). The research question yielded codes associated with the gifted identification process and underrepresented populations. Then the researcher turned to the interview protocol and incorporated process codes that captured actions in the data and values codes that uncovered the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the participants concerning gifted identification and minority students. Codes for specific ethnicities and support programs originated from research journal memos. Additional nodes such as missed opportunities, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, surprises, and wonderings were added during the initial coding cycle. At the conclusion of the initial coding phase, each node contained the relevant data from each data source including interview and focus group transcripts and collected documents.

After stepping away from the data for a week or more to get a fresh perspective, the researcher began the second cycle of coding. During the second cycle, axial, or pattern, coding revealed emergent themes in the data (Saldaña, 2015). In this round, the researcher analyzed the data elements associated with each node seeking connections back to the problem statement, research question, study goals, and theoretical frame. The researcher examined the text associated with each node and categorized the data based on recurring thoughts or words. The researcher made multiple passes through each node as new patterns came to light. Three themes surfaced during this round: awareness, language barrier, and systems. The results section describes these themes and connections in detail.

Yin proposes four general strategies for case study analysis: relying on a theoretical proposition, working from the ground up, developing a case description, and examining plausible

rival explanations (Yin, 2013). Yin's strategy of developing a case description, which relies on using a descriptive framework to organize findings by topics, aligns best with the research design of this study. The four strands of CRSL supply the theoretical framework, or lens, for analysis of the coded data.

Ethical and quality considerations.

Informed consent.

As part of the selection process, all participants received detailed information regarding the purpose, protocols, and procedures of the study as well as risks and benefits. Each participant acknowledged understanding that he or she could withdraw at any time without penalty. Each participant received a copy of the consent form detailing this information signed by both the participant and the researcher. The case study database provided secure storage for the original forms.

Validity.

To establish the quality of the case study research design, Yin details tests for three types of validity: construct validity, internal validity, and external validity (Yin, 2013). The first, construct validity, addresses concerns regarding subjectivity and the influence of the researcher's bias on data collection and findings. The research design for this study employs all three tactics identified by Yin (2013) to increase construct validity: multiple sources of evidence (interviews, focus group, document review, and research journal), chain of evidence (protocols and data log), and report draft review by key informants (principal, gifted lead teacher and ESOL lead teacher).

The second test considers internal validity and threats to conclusions or inferences involving causal relationships. This test is most relevant in "explanatory case studies, when an investigator is trying to explain how and why event x led to event y" (Yin, 2013, p. 47). Given

this is a descriptive case study, the research attempts to describe events rather than make conclusions regarding causal relationships. Convergent evidence, evidence from multiple data types and sources, supports inferences. Initial coding included all collected data. The second round of coding identified themes or patterns that occurred repeatedly and consistently across the interview, focus group, document review, and research journal data. The researcher analyzed disparate evidence, evidence that countered the emergent patterns, for themes and trends as well and captured these alternate explanations in the findings.

The third test, external validity, addresses the analytic generalization of the study, whether links can be made between the findings in this case and a broader model or theory. The research design for this study uses Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) as the theoretical framework. Neither the conditions nor the conclusions allow for generalization beyond the bounds of this specific case. The findings include an in-depth description of the context and multiple realities of gifted identification as well as details regarding the identification of emergent themes. While the findings and conclusions of this study are context sensitive and, therefore, not generalizable, the lessons learned are transferable and could inform future research initiatives considering the identification of gifted minorities or additional implications of CSRL (Yin, 2013).

Reliability.

The final test for quality in a case study design is a test of reliability. A well-designed case study will yield similar results if replicated. Key design components that increase reliability are a case study protocol and a case study database (Yin, 2013). The protocol is the roadmap and directions to follow for each step of the study (Yin, 2013). The database is the organized and indexed collection of the raw data that allows anyone to follow the chain of evidence from

research question to protocol to data collection to analysis of findings and back (Yin, 2013).

Because the researcher is such an integral factor of emic qualitative research, this case study will never be perfectly reproducible (Creswell & Poth, 2017). However, this study utilizes a documented protocol and accessible database to increase reliability (Yin, 2013).

Limitations of the study.

This case study considers the lived experiences of educators who serve first-grade students in a suburban community and investigates a non-Title I school with a heterogeneous student population. Time and resource constraints limit the study to one gifted cycle. A comparative case study examining both the winter and spring cycles may have led to more robust conclusions. The findings are specific to this case and, therefore, not generalizable. The researcher serves as the primary tool for data collection and interacts directly and indirectly with the participants. The presence of the researcher in the setting affects the environment, and the researcher's perspective influences the data analysis, conclusions, and presentation of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this instance, the researcher was recently an administrator at this school and attended this school as a child. The researcher is known to most participants and enjoys an insider status throughout data collection. A foundational rapport and trust facilitate recruitment and dialogue. Participants may have responded differently to a true outsider, reducing reproducibility and thus reliability of the study results.

Results

The research question guiding this study is: How do the school leaders of a heterogeneous, non-Title I suburban school incorporate culturally responsive practices to approach the gifted identification process for underrepresented populations? This question frames the analysis and results of the study. The results section begins with a thick description

of the case integrating the critical components of context, CRSL practices, and gifted identification of diverse students. A presentation of the emergent themes and perspectives associated with the four pillars of CRSL follows.

Case description.

The case description includes two components. First, it describes the context of the case through the lens of descriptive data compiled from student data, interviews, and document review. A second depiction of the case through the lens of the four strands of CRSL, the theoretical framework for the study, follows.

Context.

Located just outside the perimeter of a major city, United Nations Elementary sits in the heart of a residential community, yet serves students from several nearby apartment buildings as well as students living in single-family homes. These apartment complexes have become cultural centers for different racial and ethnic groups. Dismissal tends to segregate the blended student population as the children on each bus typically share a common race or ethnicity in addition to a common address.

The numbers paint a broad picture of diversity reinforced by perception as staff members frequently refer to the school as a melting pot. A deeper dive reveals that most of the 708 students fall into one of six different demographic groups with remarkably similar characteristics: White, Black, Hispanic (not Brazilian), Indian, Brazilian, and Asian (not Indian).

White students make up 39.4% of the student body. Most of these students live in single-unit homes with two parents and remain at one school during their elementary years. Their families are educated and financially stable ranging from lower to upper middle class. Only

9.4% of white students at United Nations Elementary qualify for the free or reduced lunch program, and 75% of their families own their home.

Roughly one-fifth or 20.4% of the students at United Nations Elementary are Black. Almost half of these students, 46.6%, are economically disadvantaged with only 25% of their families owning their home. According to the student data, most of these students live in apartments and have attended more than one elementary school.

Hispanic students are the next largest subgroup at 12.4% of the population. This number does not include Brazilian students. The vast majority, approximately 85%, of Hispanic students at United Nations Elementary were born in the United States. Most list Spanish as their primary language and Hispanic students at United Nations Elementary rarely attend preschool before enrolling in kindergarten. Their families come from Mexico, Central America or South America. Hispanic families tend to fall into one of two categories. Some are financially stable and own their home. Many others are economically disadvantaged with 52.8% of Hispanic families qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Students from the first group primarily speak English at school and at home. In general, these students do not need support services such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or EIP (Early Intervention Program). As for the second group, the student data reveal that they speak Spanish in the home and typically qualify for EIP services. Many times, they also qualify for ESOL services.

Indian students comprise 10.6% of the student body and 79% of these students were born in India. They are a surprisingly homogeneous group. Even though India is the eighth largest country in the world with the second highest population, United Nations students come primarily from South India according to one of the ESOL teachers. She characterized this part of India as including a mixture of city and rural areas and shared that many of their families come to the

United States for training for a few years and then return to India. According to the student data, less than 2% of the Indian students at United Nations Elementary qualify for free or reduced lunch. The student data also indicates that over 97% of the Indian students live in apartments, and 85% of them live in the same complex.

Other study participants shed additional light on this group of students. They share that the Indian students generally live in two-parent households where the mom stays home, and the dad works. The parents are well-educated and take a very active role in the education of their children both inside and outside of the school. The mom often takes the lead and previews the curriculum and assessments with the child at home. The Indian community is tight-knit and highly communicative, especially on topics related to education and the school. They take great pride in academic achievement and make academics a priority at home. The gifted lead teacher shared that Indian parents teach their children to follow directions precisely and not deviate from the instructions of the adults; therefore, they do not demonstrate creativity and motivation in typical ways. Referring to Indian students, one teacher explains:

They are not going to perform well on the GES-3 [Gifted Evaluation Scale, 3rd Edition] because they're not going to show their teacher their creativity and their motivation.

Because they're going to do exactly what their parents trained them and tell them to do in their home because they respect their elders (Gwen, interview, December 4, 2018).

Another teacher expounds further:

When it comes to the Indian population, CogAT score supports that they are gifted and then when the teacher goes and checks their RI [Reading Inventory] and DRA [Development Reading Analysis], it's equally as high. They are either on grade level or above grade level especially in first grade, and that's when they qualify. Um, creativity

may or may not be there a lot of times, but that's, you know, based on individual teacher's discretion and decision. I think that's a cultural thing. (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018).

Brazilian students are another significant ethnic group at United Nations Elementary. These students account for most of the rapid growth in ESOL students over the last five years. Of the Brazilian students, 46.6% receive free or reduced lunch and 96% of the families rent or share housing. While over a quarter of these students live in the same apartment complex, many live in single-family houses. The Portuguese interpreter is originally from Brazil herself and has in-depth insight into this community. Similar to the Indian population, even though they come from a very diverse nation, the Brazilian families at United Nations Elementary and the school district as a whole primarily come from one state in Brazil called Goias. The interpreter shares that the Brazilian families at United Nations Elementary mostly come from the rural villages in Goias where they were impoverished and undereducated. Many of the parents are illiterate in their native language because they did not finish high school in Brazil. The public K-12 school system in Brazil is free but significantly inferior to the private school system there. Brazilian families often view public school as a place to send their children for supervision and food. Based on the information the families share with her, the translator feels for many of them education is secondary to survival.

When asked to describe the Brazilian families at United Nations Elementary, the Portuguese interpreter notes that Brazilian families immigrate to America to escape violence and poverty and make a better life for themselves and their families. She adds that a church located near the school typically sponsors them. Often the mom comes to the United States with the youngest children and the father remains behind providing support until the family can reunite.

So, most of the Brazilian students live with one parent who is working multiple jobs. Like the Indian community, the Brazilian community is tight-knit and support one another. Unlike the Indian community, that support focuses on employment, childcare, and basic needs with little emphasis on education or extracurricular activities.

The final group is Asian students who are not from India. Because there are only six ethnicity categories to choose from on the student registration form (American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multiracial, and White/Caucasian), this group includes a wide range of ethnicities such as Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Israeli, and Arab. There are not enough students representing each cultural background to divide this subgroup further. These students are American and speak English in the home. Most live in houses that are owned by their family. Only 8.5% of these students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Transient rates are low in this group, and very few receive EIP or ESOL services.

CRSL practices.

It is relevant for this study to consider how United Nations Elementary fits within the context of the CRSL framework. When directly asked about their knowledge of culturally responsive education or culturally responsive school leadership, the focus group responded unanimously with a resounding “I haven’t” (Focus group, January 4, 2019) that they have not heard of these research-based frameworks for meeting the needs of diverse learners. Given that the critical school leaders associated with gifted identification participated in the focus group, this response might lead one to believe that there is no evidence of CRSL practices at United Nations Elementary, but the opposite is true. United Nations Elementary school leaders do not have a working knowledge of CRSL and, therefore, do not intentionally implement CRSL practices. However, they do display pockets of the practices and behaviors associated with this

framework. Like an unsolved jigsaw puzzle, the individual pieces are there, but they are not assembled in a cohesive way that produces the overall desired effect.

Critical self-awareness.

The first strand of CRSL is critical self-awareness, or critical consciousness (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) define this trait as the leader's need "to have an awareness of self and his/her values, beliefs, and/or dispositions" (p. 1280) related to serving racially and socioeconomically diverse students. They elaborate further by stating "leaders must have an awareness of self and an understanding of the context in which they lead" (p. 1281). Specific behaviors associated with this strand include building personal capacity in cultural knowledge and awareness, using existing data sources to gauge cultural responsiveness at the local school level, implementing equity audits to bring inequities to light, and taking courageous action to advocate for social justice (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Critical self-awareness involves having a basic understanding of how one's own racial and ethnic identity influences one's practice. The first two interview questions in Section III of the protocol address this foundational concept by asking (1) how are the social norms and lived experiences of your students different from your own? and (2) what challenges do these differences present for you in serving these students? Many participants ask for clarification before responding to these questions. For example, when asked the first question, one participant replies, "Of all of the kids here or just ESOL kids here?" followed by "As to how I raise my own kids? Is that what you're asking me?" (Bill, interview, December 4, 2018). Another asks, "From my personal like background and everything?" (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018). A third responds, "From my own? From my own growing up, you know, experience?" (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018). And a fourth questions, "Um, than my own

experience of rules and norms? Is that what you are asking?” (Dot, interview, December 10, 2018). The participants lacked confidence in approaching these questions giving the researcher the impression that they have not previously considered the connections between who they are as individuals and how they teach and lead. This understanding is critical before extending that reflection to implications for teaching and leading culturally diverse students.

Even though they may not have considered questions regarding critical self-awareness previously, several key leaders have firsthand knowledge of the norms and lived experiences of several of the cultural subgroups. The Portuguese translator is a Brazilian immigrant. Her work with families gives her insight into the challenges they face in the school and in the community that most educators could never access. One of the ESOL teachers is Indian, and the gifted lead teacher has an Indian friend who has shared much information about cultural norms with her. These two have an in-depth awareness of the barriers the Indian students face in the school. The lead ESOL teacher is a Russian immigrant who has developed robust connections with all of the ESOL families and has taken part in home visits. She understands firsthand how student living conditions can vary based on their socioeconomic status and culture. Passionate about cultural consciousness especially regarding racial diversity, another school leader shares:

Working with racially diverse students, I feel like you really have to have a good background and understanding of different cultures. Because if you just come at it from one, your perspective, your background, it's not fair to the students at all. And you're not going to meet students where they are and do not get them where your goal is to get them (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018).

Another school leader reveals his understanding of the impact of cultural background on learning as follows:

With any student, you need to learn about what is their motivation...what is important to them. And that's going to be very different...from our diverse population because... different cultures hold different things at high, high value. Families, different families even within the same culture and same background, will hold...different things at high value. So I...think the challenge is understanding...what that value is, understanding what that motivation is, and understanding...their perspective...What may be completely foreign to teachers is completely common and comfortable with the student, and that's not just what they value but how they learn as well. (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018)

In contrast, the first-grade teachers do not articulate a deep understanding of the cultural background of their students in the same way as the teachers tasked with providing specialized services such as EIP, ESOL, and gifted do. The first-grade teachers create an inclusive classroom environment where everyone is treated the same. In response to questions about how her social norms differ from her students, one teacher elaborates:

Oh, my social norms and the kids' social norms. I feel like we're the same. You know, I mean I share about my life. I love hearing about their lives...trying to make those connections like, oh, we have that in common (Susan, interview, December 5, 2018).

The first-grade teachers believe all students can be successful and are skilled at differentiation for various learning needs. When asked about how her perceptions of diverse students influence her support for these students for gifted identification, one teacher responds, "I support them the same as I would support any other student" (Susan, interview, December 5, 2018). When considering her colleagues' perceptions, she continues:

I would hope that they view it the same as I do. I mean I really do feel like success is for everyone and you just have to make sure that it's attainable for each student individually (Susan, interview, December 5, 2018).

Another teammate concurs:

I assume they pretty much feel the same. You know, we are all teachers and we kind of all think somewhat alike regarding the students' abilities (Dot, interview, December 10, 2018).

While they are caring teachers who are committed to each and every one of their students, they do not express a high level of knowledge about the home lives of their students. One notable exception is a teacher who has participated in home visits in the community. She paints the following vivid picture of the home life of some of the students:

When it's a Brazilian or Hispanic family, it's a large family where we have sometimes grandparents and multiple siblings. It's an apartment with one or two bedrooms where children do not even have space of their own, like I'm not talking about even a desk of their own or supplies.. they don't even have a specific area where they have supplies. It's just kind of whether they're sitting down, whether they're maybe doing homework in the kitchen or together in the living room. And all the siblings are all around them. So if they were taken to a good pre-K where they had that kind of experience to explore their creativity, then they're lucky. (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018).

This cultural blindness prevents teachers from understanding how they can build on the strengths of these different cultures in the academic setting.

Several behaviors associated with the critical self-awareness strand of CRSL involve using data to raise consciousness of areas of potential marginalization and inequity. Most study

participants express a general knowledge of the school's achievement, demographics, and perceptions data. None of the interview, observation, or document review data provides evidence that educators at United Nations Elementary conduct equity audits or analyze data through a social justice lens. School leaders do not systematically review gifted identification results at the subgroup level to check for equity. Referring to a request from the researcher for updated student data for newly identified students, one school leader commented:

It definitely made [us], more for your purposes than we would have in the past, go ahead and do a breakdown to see how many children we have in different ethnic groups in our program overall. And we were excited that this year we had several [minority students qualify]...although we knew it was lacking, we never truly sat down and mapped it out (Focus group, January 4, 2019).

Culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation.

A document review of lesson plans shows that teachers at United Nations Elementary rely primarily on district-provided curriculum that addresses the need for culturally responsive curricula at surface level, i.e., students can see themselves in the illustrations, and word problems may use ethnically diverse names. The Learning Commons, also known as the Media Center or school library, is the hub of the school physically and figuratively. The Learning Commons staff are intentional about ensuring that their instruction and instructional materials reflect and celebrate the diversity of the school. One of these educators shares, "We have worked so hard to have books on the shelves, or displayed even, where they can see them that show children of different cultures (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018). She points out and describes a specific collection of books that celebrate the contributions of an Indian parent volunteer:

We've got those, the very end little bookcase down there, all of those books we dedicated to Ms. Patel for all of her time in this building and in here helping us. All of the books have her picture on the inside of them...The kids go, "oh, we know her." Yea, you do know her. Do you know what she did here? (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018).

The district-provided curricula and media center initiatives are the only evidence that culturally responsive curricula are a priority.

Likewise, culturally responsive teacher preparation is not evident at United Nations Elementary based on a review of training documents and analysis of interview data. Only five teachers on staff have an ESOL endorsement. Of those, four are study participants. Even though the ESOL teachers and Portuguese translator have a strong working knowledge of the cultural communities they serve, they do not seem to have background knowledge of CRE practices (Focus group, January 4, 2019). For example, when asked to describe her students, one of these educators notes the cultural differences in home priorities for her students:

And so there are parents who will get tutors for their children, do a lot more activities with their children, more involved in their education. And then we get others where their focus is different. It's more on family, get-togethers, going out. And you can tell by what the children say when you're talking to them, what their home life is like (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

When asked questions using terms associated with CRSL, like many of her colleagues, this teacher struggles with the context as the following exchange exemplifies:

Q: How do you build on the home life and experiences of your students to develop a sense of community in your class?

A: Can you read it again?

Q: How do you build on the home life and experiences of your students to develop a sense of community?

A: Is that with the parents? Or just with the students? (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

Requests to re-state or paraphrase the questions associated with CSRL led the researcher to infer that staff members have not been exposed to these concepts and terms. Current in-school professional development does not address this lack of exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy.

Culturally responsive and inclusive school environments.

United Nations Elementary strives to provide a culturally inclusive school environment. All stakeholders work together to make the school a place where diversity is welcome and celebrated. This aspect of the school is deeply embedded in the school culture as a whole as staff members reflect, “I think we continue to be the melting pot and very reflective of our community” (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018). Another staff member elaborates:

What I think our school does better than any other schools is...what we call called the little UN, which is we have just a strong variety of cultures. And so for students to be working in close proximity and with students in other groups of so many different cultures, of so many different backgrounds, it is not anything to our students to learn about someone else’s family or culture of how they do things (Bob, interview, December 4).

Understanding the importance of school culture, the principal leads by example making relationships and trust with students, staff, parents, and stakeholders a daily priority. Several participants commented on his visibility and accessibility. When describing the challenges that

diverse parents face, one school leader notes, “It always comes down to communication and trust...communication, and that’s not just a language barrier communication, but...frequency of contact, or miscommunication...can happen” (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

One school leader describes her approach to developing a culturally inclusive school climate as she shares an experience when she donned a sari in celebration of Diwali:

...they asked me to dress up in a sari. When I walked around the school, you would have thought that I had like the biggest beauty crown on. Those, our Indian students were so excited to see somebody not of their culture celebrating their heritage with them (Bill, interview, December 4, 2018).

She elaborates further:

I’ve tried to take and personalize that by...dressing in their native culture...but also participating with our community in things like...going to their performances, becoming a part of their...celebrations, International Night...It’s not only do I show that it’s important by...being here myself but...bringing members of my family here with me so that they can then share that. ...Personalizing it is how I try to make that connection (Bill, interview, December 4, 2018).

While this respondent provides multiple examples of actions she takes personally to move toward cultural proficiency, she does not describe how she is leading teachers to do the same.

The PTA and Foundation at United Nations work cohesively with each other, as well as with the administration and staff to contribute to the inclusive environment. Almost all of the study participants mention a new initiative by the PTA’s Diversity/Culture Committee promoting a different ethnic celebration each month. They provide information about the holiday on a central bulletin board and share fun facts about it on the morning news broadcast each day. The

PTA and Foundation also sponsor International Night, which is one of the most well-attended events of the school year. Parent and community volunteers set up displays for each country represented in the student body. The students put on a talent show that shares their culture's ethnic dances, activities, and music with the audience. Beyond the International Night event, these organizations actively seek volunteers and leadership from all segments of the community; yet, participation in most activities is not reflective of the school's diversity. Study participants voice a perception that white middle-class families provide most of the leadership for the PTA and Foundation, Indian families gravitate toward volunteering in the school library, and Hispanic and Brazilian families rarely volunteer at the school. These perceptions align with the researcher's experience at the school; however, data collection did not include quantitative volunteer data.

While celebrating and taking pride in the diversity of its community is a strength of United Nations Elementary, efforts to develop a culturally responsive and inclusive environment appear limited to festivals and holidays. While these activities play an essential role, they stop short of true cultural inclusivity: "educators and our schools embracing our students and communities for the assets they bring to school" (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2018, p. 3).

Some study participants express concerns about deficit thinking, particularly regarding parents. In a discussion on the role of critical self-reflection in meeting the needs of diverse students and providing a culturally responsive learning environment, one teacher captures both the strengths and weaknesses of the school culture. She begins with a discussion of how teachers perceive students and the experiences of diverse students:

Overall I think you would agree with me, I think...teachers at [United Nations] are doing such a great job just celebrating the diversity. And I have not seen a single student who would feel like isolated or being picked on just because they've come from a different country or speak a different language or have different color of their skin. (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

Then she contrasts this with how teachers perceive diverse parents:

I see it a lot... when teachers judge parents. That's a huge thing because they feel they don't see sometimes that and it comes racially across like, you know, the black parents are not as involved with their children's education. Why the agenda isn't being signed? And why I send the form three times already to these Brazilian students in Portuguese, but they are still not getting it back? (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

She continues with another comparison that emphasizes the strength she perceives in the climate teachers create for students and the concerns she has about the climate teachers create for parents:

So that's probably a different topic for discussion, but within the students, I think we really created such a welcoming environment where we, the teachers really celebrate successes of students. But when it comes to parents, I hear a lot of like why are they not even trying to speak English when they come through these doors? (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

This description indicates that teachers may be in different categories on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum in terms of developing a culturally inclusive school environment (Lindsey et al., 2018). With students, teachers tend to fall in the Culturally Blind category where differences may be perceived as deficits that need remediation (Lindsey et al., 2018). With parents, teachers

may actually fall in the Culturally Incapacity category because they recognize a difference and make it wrong (Lindsey et al., 2018).

Very few participants share stories about challenging the status quo even though some acknowledge that they question inequities that they see particularly in the gifted program. One teacher leader notes:

If you look at our population of gifted students in the school, ...the majority of them come from one demographic and one type of student ... but when it comes to Hispanic or African-American students, our numbers are low and have remained low (Gwen, interview, December 4, 2019).

Another participant states:

I would like to see some change. I would like to see the talented and gifted group at this school be more reflective of the student body in this school. I just would. (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2019)

Regarding this study, another teacher adds, “hopefully you will share the results with us and see how we can improve our practice here” (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018).

Engaging students and parents in community contexts.

The fourth strand of CRSL “highlights the ability of the school leader to engage students, families, and communities in culturally appropriate ways” (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1282). One behavior associated with this component of CRSL involves “promoting overlapping school—community contexts” (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1290). School leaders facilitate this overlap in creative ways at United Nations Elementary. In the summers, the administration team goes out into the community and challenges the students to locate them. The PTA hosts play dates around

the community and at the school for rising kindergarteners to help families get to know each other.

During the school year, some of the staff members volunteer in the community. One of the study participants goes to a church-based after-school program and reads to the students. She shares:

I go over to [the church after-school program] one day a week. And they have primarily a Brazilian population over there. And I read. I read picture books for two hours (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018).

The community also comes and serves in the school. The Indian mothers tend to volunteer in the Learning Commons and donate books. Another local church works with the ESOL teachers to provide volunteers to come work with ESOL students, typically Brazilian immigrants, before school to build their social language skills. One teacher explains, “We have church helpers come, and they work with individuals or groups of students” (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018). Three participants mention participating in home visits and community-based parent education events hosted by the district. It is not clear what motivates these educators to participate in these types of activities. Home visits can be valuable to teachers by expanding knowledge of the cultures they serve. Community-based parent education programs can build social capital for families within these cultures.

Several school programs encourage the students to engage with the community. One school leader shares that student leadership is foundational to the school culture. When responding to a question about culturally responsive curriculum and teaching, he explains:

I think one of the greatest benefits at this school is meeting the needs of a diverse population through a consistent message of leadership. As a Leader-in-Me school, we

look at those seven habits...from the seven habits of highly effective people book, that verbiage that they receive. That consistent verbiage that meets and addresses the need of a variety of students no matter what their specific need is...within the same subgroup, [or] from different subgroups (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

United Nations Elementary is a Leader-in-Me school, a designation associated with Steven Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective Kids. Using the core values of the Leader-in-Me program, the staff members teach students to be leaders through academics and service to the community. When responding to how students support their communities, one school leader shares:

Students support the community through the seven habits...What we want to communicate to them more than anything through Leader-in-Me is that leadership is for everyone. So part of those goals, leadership is academics and academic achievement, so we have a reading goal for every student. But the other part of that is leadership is service. So we have Synergy Squads that have multiple grade levels in them that has a giveback piece. And that giveback piece is give back to the school or to give back to the community (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

As a part of being a Leader-in-Me school, all students participate in Synergy Squads on a monthly or quarterly basis. Synergy Squads are teacher-led clubs that meet at a designated time and day during school hours to promote leadership and develop personal interests. Each club has a give-back component. For example, the Paw Patrol Club donates old blankets to the local animal shelter as one teacher explains:

One [Synergy Squad] is called Paw Patrol, which is kind of like a fun little show for kids and it's all about... service to the community. So that's like the theme, but they're giving

back. And I think right now they're putting together or getting donations for making blankets for dogs and giving them back to the community shelter (GC, December 5, 2018).

Other groups conduct food drives to stock the school-based food pantry at the feeder middle school, which serves low-income students in the community.

Gifted identification.

United Nations Elementary follows district guidelines for identifying and placing students in the gifted program, which are governed by Georgia State Department of Education Rule 160-4-2-.38. Procedures outline steps for both automatic and reported referrals. Students can qualify in two ways. Under Option A, the student achieves a qualifying score on an ability and achievement test. Under Option B, the student achieves a qualifying score on assessments in three out of four areas: ability, achievement, creativity or motivation. Although parents and teachers can refer students for gifted testing, the vast majority of identification assessment stems from the automatic referral process.

Cycle.

Students can qualify for gifted services based on a combination of scores measuring four areas: ability, achievement, motivation, and creativity. Districtwide, all first-grade students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in September each year, which provides a score for intellectual ability similar to an IQ [Intelligence Quotient] score. The gifted identification cycle for these students begins in mid-November when administrators and gifted lead teacher receive the CogAT scores. The district uses the CogAT as a universal screener to identify high ability students for gifted testing thus generating the automatic referral for gifted identification. Before proceeding with additional assessments, the gifted resource teachers train all certified staff on the

motivation and creativity rating scales and portfolios. They also conduct parent meetings to explain standardized test scores and the identification process. Homeroom teachers complete the rating scales, providing scores for two additional measures of giftedness: motivation and creativity. If students have a qualifying score for ability or for both motivation and creativity, the gifted teachers send parents a permission-to-test form. Once parents return these forms, the gifted teachers administer the assessment for achievement, the final of the four measures used for qualification, and any additional assessments needed to determine if the student is either eligible or ineligible for gifted services. This process takes approximately six weeks to complete. Parents received notification of the results of gifted testing via mail over the holiday break at the end of December.

Rates.

When considering if the under-identification of gifted minority students is a problem at United Nations Elementary, participant responses vary widely from no to unsure to absolutely. Only three participants respond yes without hesitation. One replies, “Yeah, definitely” (Gwen, interview, December 4, 2018). Another says, “ Yes...I guess because our numbers tell the story” (Jim, interview, December 4, 2018). The third includes a caveat, “Yes, only because there’s a lot of traditional practices...and I say it’s a problem only in the sense of our school has just gotten so much more diverse within the past five years that I don’t think we’ve caught up with the change of the demographic population” (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

The other participants either do not feel it is a problem or seem hesitant to appear critical mentioning time and workload as potential challenges that may prevent action. One school leader responds, “It’s probably a problem in every school” (Bill, interview, December 4, 2108). One participant shares, “I don’t know that it’s a problem, but I just think it’s – I just believe there

have to be more gifted children in minorities than I see reflected when I see the classes come in. Have to be” (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018). All responses are based on perception or experience as none of the study participants provide data to support their answers. Regarding the gifted program, one participant notes, “it seems to be a lily-white program” (Rachel, interview, December 4, 2018).

A deep dive into the student data is revealing. Using race and ethnicity categories tailored to the current populations at United Nations Elementary and adjusting counts to reflect home language and birth country data, there are gaps in the gifted identification rates based on race, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, and socioeconomic status. Table 4 presents the adjusted number and percentage of students in each ethnic subgroup in the school compared to the gifted program. This data addresses the question: How do the demographics of the gifted program compare to the demographics of the school as a whole?

Table 4
Comparison of School vs. Gifted Demographics

Category	School		Gifted	
	#	%	#	%
American Indian or Alaskan Nat	1	0.1	0	0
Asian				
Indian	79	11.2	20	16.8
Not Indian	41	5.8	12	10.1
Black	148	20.9	11	9.2
Hispanic				
Brazilian	77	10.9	2	1.7
Not-Brazilian	78	11.0	3	2.5
Multiracial	26	3.7	1	0.8
White/Caucasian	258	36.4	70	58.8
Total	708		119	

Note: Adjusted Ethnicity counts students based on reported country of birth and home language creating separate categories for Brazilian and Indian students.

Overall, 16.8% of the students at United Nations Elementary are gifted as of the completion of the mid-year gifted identification cycle. An administrator acknowledges, “if your

school population has a certain percentage of those subgroups, you would want something in the ballpark of those percentages in your gifted program” (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

Unfortunately, this is not the case at United Nations Elementary as the gifted numbers are heavily skewed in both directions. White and Asian students are over-represented in the gifted program. White students comprise 36.4 % of the student population, but 58.8% of the gifted population. Indian students are 11.2% of the student population, and 16.8% of the gifted population. Finally, Asian – Not Indian students represent 5.8% of the school but 10.1% of the gifted program. Asian – Not Indian, White, and Indian students are over-represented at a ratio of 1.74, 1.61, and 1.51 respectively.

On the other hand, other ethnic subgroups are significantly under-represented. The ratios for Brazilian, Hispanic, Multiracial, and Black students are 0.16, 0.23, 0.23, and 0.44 respectively. These statistics indicate that high-ability Brazilian students are least likely to qualify for gifted services, yet they make up 20.9% of the student body.

Table 5 slices this data a different way and answers the question: How many and what percentage of students in each ethnic group receive support services including gifted services? From this perspective, the percentage of gifted students for each ethnicity should be similar to the percentage of gifted students in the school as a whole. At United Nations Elementary, the overall percentage of gifted students is 16.8%, but the percentages of Asian and White/Caucasian students in the gifted program are over 25%. The percentage of Black students in the gifted program is under half of the overall number at 7.4%. Brazilian, Hispanic and Multiracial percentages are less than a quarter of the overall gifted rate at 2.6%, 3.8%, and 3.8%. These statistics provide the real story behind the perception that visually the gifted students do not match the student body as a whole.

The most unexpected statistic has to do with a characteristic that is not as easily identified at first glance, socioeconomic status. Although economically disadvantaged (ED) students comprise 26.3% of the student population at United Nations Elementary, only 3.2% of these students participate in the gifted program. In other words, only six of the 186 ED students are identified as gifted as compared to 21.7%, or 113 of the 522 other students. In summary, the gifted population does not reflect the diversity of the student body in terms of race, ethnicity, language proficiency, or socioeconomic status with low-income students experiencing the most significant disparity.

Table 5
Student Services by Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status

Category	All		EIP		ESOL		Gifted	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Amer Indian/Alaskan Nat	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian								
Asian – Indian	79	11.2	11	13.9	43	54.4	20	25.3
Asian – Other than Indian	41	5.8	6	14.6	13	31.7	12	29.3
Black	148	20.9	52	35.1	4	2.7	11	7.4
Hispanic								
Brazilian	77	10.9	48	62.3	66	85.7	2	2.6
Not-Brazilian	78	11.0	34	43.6	45	57.7	3	3.8
Multiracial	26	3.7	9	34.6	0	0	1	3.8
White/Caucasian	258	36.4	43	16.7	10	3.9	70	27.1
Total	708	100	203	28.7	181	25.6	119	16.8
Economically Disadvantaged	186	26.3	89	47.8	69	37.1	6	3.2

Note: Adjusted Ethnicity counts students based on reported country of birth and home language creating separate categories for Brazilian and Indian students.

Emergent themes.

In addition to providing contextual information used to describe the case, the data yield thoughts and ideas that occur across multiple sources. In the initial round of coding, interviews, and documents, as well as anecdotal notes from observations and the research journal are coded using keywords associated with gifted identification and CSRL. During the second round of

coding, specific phrases and thoughts began to surface as patterns and themes in the data across data types and participants. These emergent themes fall into three broad categories or obstacles for gifted identification: awareness, language barrier, and systemic issues.

Awareness.

The disconnect between perception and reality, research and practice, hope and actuality poses obstacles to rectifying the injustice that occurs when gifted minority students are under-identified. Awareness is a critical component that surfaces time and time again in the data. It takes on many forms and levels: awareness of the problem of under-identification, awareness of its long-term impact on student achievement and the economy, awareness of the breadth and depth of the problem, awareness of current research on best practices, awareness of the influence of culture on learning. The list goes on and on. It seems fitting and almost foreshadowing that the first pillar of CRSL is critical self-awareness.

The first step to solving any problem is to acknowledge that it exists. Only three of the 15 participants in this study willingly and explicitly recognize that the identification of gifted minority students is a problem at United Nations Elementary. One of these states, “yes, because our numbers tell the story” (Ellen, interview, December 4, 2019). One administrator acknowledges the problem and notes teacher beliefs about language and behavior must shift as the student population becomes more diverse in order to change the gifted identification trends. He notes:

I think we allow the...language barrier to inhibit our judgment of [giftedness]. I also think that sometimes we allow behavior to inhibit our judgment of [giftedness]. Maybe even more so than language barrier...I think, first and foremost, teachers just want well-behaved kids. Kids...that aren't distracting them from their learning because I think their

highest...priority, which isn't a bad priority to have, is that safe environment. And if there is something going on that interrupts their teaching then they have trouble getting back on track. So...it's a mix of certain...demographic definitions such as, you know, if there is a language barrier, or if there is a behavior issue, of that clouding the judgment in identifying that student...Because if they are not doing the work in the classroom, they can't obviously do...the extension...that they are getting. But again, that's also going to take self-reflection, too, of that. So...I am not sure if we've caught up to the demographic change [in our student population] (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

Most participants express some level of awareness but stop short of affirming that something is wrong that deserves priority attention and action. For example, one participant responds:

I don't know if I would say it's a problem. I would say that it's an issue. It's something that can be looked into further. Um, problems to me are things that are dangerous. Things that need almost immediate correction (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018).

One school leader hedges:

Is it a huge problem? I don't know only because our population is so diverse that ... every year when we add additional students to our gifted population, by default, I feel like it's a fairly diverse population (Bill, interview, December 4, 2018).

Many teachers do not perceive that there is a problem and provide a wide variety of reasons.

One teacher who has a high ratio of gifted students in her class responds, "I am assuming that there's not...a problem ...because...at least half of ...minority students in my class are in the gifted [program]" (Connie, interview, December 10, 2018). Another teacher feels that current practices go far enough in identifying gifted minority students. She points out that all students

participate in talent development lessons and that the gifted teachers do an excellent job of advocating for high ability students based on previous year's test scores. A third teacher shares:

I don't believe that it is a problem because I feel like it's a very inclusive school and that we make sure that everyone is considered regardless of where they come from or what their background is (Susan, interview, December 5, 2018).

Awareness is also a concern in terms of best practices for serving diverse students. The current research in culturally responsive education and culturally responsive school leadership is not making its way to the classroom, at least not at United Nations Elementary. Given the increasing diversity of the student body, it is easy to presume that the staff of United Nations Elementary would be keenly interested in and aware of this research, but it has not reached the school leaders or the teachers. Based on publicly available certification records and the demographic data she provided in the interview, the only participant who seems somewhat knowledgeable of the underlying concepts associated with culturally responsive teaching is relatively new to education and has recently received extensive training in working with English Language Learners and gifted students. When asked about her experiences working with diverse students, she shares:

I feel like you really have to have a good background and understanding of different cultures. Because if you just come at it from one, your perspective, your background, it's not fair to the students at all. You're not going to meet students where they are, and you do not get them where your goal is to get them (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018).

Based on their responses to questions about how they build on a student's home life and lived experiences, most teachers seem to lack awareness when it comes to understanding how to leverage culture and home life to improve student learning. For example, several teachers share

how they provide visuals if a student may not have experience with a specific word or concept. If they are discussing fruits, they might bring in a pear or apple for the students to touch and taste. One teacher touches on how to take that experience to the next level by capitalizing on cultural knowledge. She explains:

We try to make... a lot of connections to their real home life... One of their little pictures for their E words, when we were doing letter E, was an eggplant. So I will bring in an eggplant, and it was amazing. So I knew that this would happen with all the Indian students because I'm Indian. "I know what that is, I know." We were using the Indian word for it, and I was like "Yes, I cook that too!" And then the other students, they had no idea what an eggplant is. So I think using those real home life connections where they can connect to something really helps them. (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

Culturally responsive teaching does not just fill in the gaps for what students have not experienced personally. It builds on what they have experienced focusing on the strengths of the students rather than the deficits. Teachers and school leaders cannot tap into the full power of this paradigm shift if they are not aware of it.

Additionally, educators can fail to understand how their own identities in terms of race, ethnicity, beliefs, and lived experiences can impact their practice. Study participants struggle to make sense of and respond to the interview questions associated with critical self-reflection. They often ask to have the questions repeated or paraphrased. Their answers tend to drift from the original question and answer a different version of the question. Some discuss how home rules are different than classroom rules. When asked how are your social norms and lived experiences different from your students, one participant replies:

I think most of the time it is pretty much the same. But I guess it is more of an adult vs. child role. They'll have different norms based on them being children and whatever their parents set at home as rules. I have noticed that sometimes with a rule that I may have established here, you can tell that it is not a rule that is at home (Dot, interview, December 10, 2018).

Another participant responds:

My social norms and the kids' social norms? I feel like we're the same. I mean I share about my life. I love hearing about their lives...So I feel like in my classroom this year we all have something in common and we find that common ground (Susan, interview, December 5, 2018).

A third participant responds, "Well, I think we are pretty similar. I really do" (Dot, interview, December 13, 2018). It is interesting that these three like responses come from three educators of different races, ages and years teaching. This pattern in responses supports the inference that the study participants have not grappled with understanding how their own heritage, beliefs, and values affect how they construct knowledge and approach teaching. They do not have prior knowledge and context to respond to questions about cultural consciousness. Without this foundational knowledge, critical self-reflection cannot reveal instructional changes and paradigm shifts the teacher may need to make.

Language barrier.

A second recurring theme involves language barriers. The study participants bring up the challenges of linguistic diversity in a variety of ways including revealing misconceptions regarding language acquisition. These educators note that the language barrier presents unique challenges in assessing mastery of content and find that alternative assessments, instructional

strategies, and learning environments can influence student outcomes for English Language Learners (ELLs). Issues regarding parental involvement and awareness emerge as recurrent topics connected with language barriers. The final idea related to this theme concerns the gifted identification assessments.

One of the apparent challenges of teaching ELLs is developing a mastery of academic content. When asked about her perceptions of ELL students' ability to be successful at school, one first-grade teacher responds:

Well, I personally believe that they could be very successful in school, but my one caveat is that I think they need that reinforcement from home. I really feel like if my student would have someone at home saying okay, I know we speak a different language, but we are going to really focus and practice on our English, and we are going to push to do this. I think if they saw that interest from home, they might be a little more interested and pursue just a little bit more at school (Dot, interview, December 13, 2018).

While this belief seems intuitive, research by Jim Cummins, a widely respected expert on dual language acquisition, contradicts this thinking. Based on his research, Cummins argues that language acquisition requires a common set of skills and knowledge; therefore, growth in a primary language will translate into growth in secondary language (Longbottom, 2018).

Additionally, Cummins recommends encouraging parents to use the primary language at home to practice reading and to discuss the school day and academic content (Longbottom, 2018). This paradigm shift aligns with the strengths-based approach of CRE by acknowledging that students' bilingualism is an asset, not a deficit.

An element of bias associated with the language barrier surfaces as a concern throughout the data as well. One administrator shares that teachers often ask if students can qualify for both

gifted and ESOL services. According to this school leader, some teachers perceive the ESOL program to be a form of remediation and the gifted program to be an enrichment opportunity. They believe these two programs to be linear; first, you address the deficit or gap, then you extend and enrich. This thinking can lead to years of denied services for gifted students who are learning English. “What are the possibilities of our students that actually would qualify for gifted and talented...if we didn’t let something like a language barrier cloud our judgment?” (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018). When asked about her experiences working with gifted students, one teacher observes:

You definitely notice it. Even if you’re with an ESOL student, you can definitely tell if they’re thinking a little bit more outside the box or if they have a different way of thinking about things. They can’t always express themselves. So I feel like you have to look for it in more underlying ways. Sometimes it will come out in their work. You’ll notice that they do something more in the creativity. You’ll notice that they have a certain way of going about things that another student doesn’t. But it might not always be as obvious. It might not be a verbal because they cannot express themselves. But you do notice them. And then you do know that you have to challenge them a little bit in the classroom or maybe really make sure that they get the language skills that they need in order to express themselves (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

She adds to this thought by noting that sometimes ELL students cannot answer in English, but that does not mean they do not know the answer:

How can they answer the questions? Like I said before, sometimes they don’t have the ability to answer with the language. So you might have to word it differently or go about it in a different way to get that same information out of them (Sarah, interview,

December 4, 2018).

It is critical for teachers to use a variety of assessment strategies to determine what these students know and can do.

Continuing this thought, one teacher explains that even when a student masters academic skills and concepts, a language barrier can make it difficult to assess that mastery. This teacher uses a translator device to allow her ELL students to communicate in their native language when she evaluates their understanding of the standards she is teaching. She identifies the language barrier as an obstacle to academic success for some students and shares the following anecdote:

I had a student that spoke barely any English, so at the beginning, it was a real challenge for her. It was hard to know what she did know and what she did not know. I started using a translator where I could say something in her language, and she could respond to me. We used it a lot between us. That helped me to see, okay, she actually knows the information that is being taught rather than she is not understanding. So it is getting that information, knowing that she knows, but is not understanding the language. We do not want the language to be a barrier for her (Connie, interview, December 10, 2018).

This practice allows the teacher to monitor progress and even advocate for her high ability ELL students.

The Physical Education (PE) teacher adds another perspective on the language barrier. He sees students over multiple years in a low risk, highly social setting. He shares:

In Physical Education, it's probably a little easier than most settings, I would imagine, because they can see and do. And I think it's a good area for socializing to kind of be submersed into the language (Jim, interview, December 5, 2018).

Even though the academic content and rigor may be lower in PE, the instructional strategies emphasize visual and kinesthetic learning modalities which facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills, especially for ELL students.

In addition to the instructional approach, the class environment can impact ELLs. One support teacher comments that her students will come out of their shell when she works with them in a small group in her classroom. She shares:

They want to learn...and being in a small group out of the classroom I think is really beneficial because it gives them time to become confident without any fears of “Oh, I am in a big classroom with others who can do so much more.” Everybody’s kind of the same. You have different abilities, but we’re all doing the same activities. And they just feel it’s a safer place to experiment and try with their language (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

The downside to a pullout ESOL model is that the homeroom teacher does not observe this side of the student and the student misses exposure to the content that all the other students receive. Additionally, it may reinforce deficit-thinking by perpetuating the belief that a second language is a deficit requiring remediation before a student can fully participate in the general education setting.

Several participants note the impact that the language barrier has for culturally diverse parents. One school administrator shares:

Families, certainly with our Portuguese speaking population, our Spanish-speaking population, are very supportive of the classroom teachers, very respectful. Where they are hesitant, I really call this one of our greatest untapped resources,...where they are hesitant is where they just either don’t feel comfortable to be directly involved, or they

feel like they don't have something to contribute to the involvement because they don't speak the language (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018).

The ESOL teachers and Portuguese translator echo this observation. One of these participants notes:

If sometimes if they do have a little bit of time, they are lacking the language to come. So they are embarrassed to come and to support...the community in an educational kind of sense. But we know that if it's an International Night when there's no language needed, they are always here (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018).

When parents are not able to speak English with confidence or at all, they avoid situations that might highlight this language barrier. As a result, these parents are not visible in the school exacerbating the problem of cultural blindness.

In addition, culturally and linguistically diverse parents may lack the social capital to advocate for their students. One teacher leader touches on this:

Even though they have an interpreter, there's no one saying...you can ask for this or you can even want that, because...their culture doesn't necessarily...dictate that they would ever have a say (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018).

One of the ESOL teachers raises another obstacle for gifted identification associated with language acquisition. In general, staff members administer all gifted identification assessments in English. A student may be able to demonstrate gifted ability in his native language, but it can take five to seven years for a student to master academic vocabulary and skills in a second language (Longbottom, 2018). For this reason, this ESOL teacher feels it is critical to identify gifted ELL students in first grade. This educator explains that there is a shift in the level of academic language in achievement assessments used for gifted identification in the upper grades.

She states, “If they don’t qualify in first grade, chances that they will make it in third are really slim because of the language piece” (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018). At the first-grade level, these assessments do not require high levels of reading comprehension and language skills. This teacher shares the following about this assessment, “First grade is so much easier. It’s all pictures, you know. It’s all imagination. It’s really, really simple” (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018). In third grade, this assessment place more emphasis on language including synonyms, antonyms, and analogies. It is challenging for English Language Learners to do well regardless of their potential giftedness due to their level of academic language acquisition.

Systemic issues.

The third theme that emerges from the data relates to systems and procedures surrounding gifted identification. Much of the knowledge regarding best practices for serving culturally diverse students and CRSL as well as understanding of the problem of under-identification resides in isolated pockets at United Nations Elementary and the district. This knowledge does not appear to permeate the staff or procedures. Many ideas that participants share for improving the identification of gifted minority students include a common component that relates to addressing gaps in knowledge and formalizing processes to increase collaboration.

During the focus group session when participants were asked to share ideas for improving the gifted identification of students that seem to be missed, the principal spoke of intentionality. Currently, United Nations Elementary is not intentional as a school about addressing this problem. Based on the school improvement plan, school leaders do not clearly define the problem of under-identifying gifted minority students or analyze gifted identification data to identify areas of concern. Speaking of the number of minority students in the gifted

program, one of the gifted teachers acknowledges, “although we knew it was lacking, we never truly sat down and mapped it out” (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

Several study participants describe specific curriculum or instructional activities they are using to enrich their students or increase critical and creative thinking skills. This exposure helps level the playing field for students who have not had access to this type of learning activity at home or through a pre-school program. In addition to the talent development program that every first-grade student participates in, specific teachers incorporate analogies, word and number games, logic puzzles and choice board activities into their centers. They may also provide these options when students finish early. For example, one teacher comments that all her students “have a notebook that has choice boards in it” (Connie, interview, December 6, 2018) that they use when they finish early and during daily free choice time. This teacher also employs critical thinking activities such as Waker-uppers, and analogies for students who arrive early. Another teacher takes a different approach. She explains:

So what I have started doing is in my reading stations, I have added a free choice creativity/motivation station. So those who are interested and inspired by that...I just tell them it has to be something that we are learning about or something that you can teach someone. You can decide if you want it to be a poster, a booklet or something else (Dot, interview, December 10, 2018).

During the focus group, a teacher mentions research she has done into Genius Hour, another approach to providing students opportunities to demonstrate creativity and motivation.

Individual teachers and leaders are doing vital work to improve identification rates for different subgroups of students, but a school-wide focus or strategic initiative is not in place. One of the

gifted teachers notes the inconsistent in practice becomes evident when motivation portfolios are required. She elaborates:

I do feel like we need to offer students...a chance to be a little bit more creative and I think we need other [enrichment] opportunities in all the rooms. I am not saying all day. I am not saying every day. Even if it is once a month to just give the children a chance to be creative. Because often when I go to the teachers about motivation portfolios, the common statement I hear is I've got nothing (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

An administrator adds:

But to move students towards...an opportunity like that is a little more daunting in the sense of just intentionally planning for...and intentionally implementing something like that. So I think a big discussion...is can we intentionally come up with activities or opportunities for students to display that growth and can you provide some analysis on that? Can you look at that and assess that and see how competent they are in those opportunities, too? (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

Other staff members are also providing direct instruction in critical and creative thinking skills as well as opportunities for students to create. For example, the media specialist works with each class weekly in the maker space in the Learning Commons. She connects literature to performance tasks in which students use craft supplies or technology tools to create a product. Many of these products can be appropriate evidence for use in creativity portfolios. The STEAM Lab, Technology, music and art teachers are specialists who also see students every week. Support services teachers such as counselors, and ESOL and EIP teachers may have student products that could be helpful as well. The only time devoted to gifted identification during staff meetings or grade level planning appears to be the required annual training. While participants

do mention collaborating with the gifted teachers and other support personnel, this work is done informally.

Another procedural issue involves collaboration on completing gifted assessments during the identification cycle. As noted above, minority students may perform differently in different settings. Teachers who have contact with students at every grade level such as the PE teacher may notice rapid growth in a student from one year to the next that the homeroom teacher who has only known the student for a quarter may miss. However, the homeroom teacher completes the motivation and creativity rating scales for each student. During the mandatory annual gifted training session, collaboration with other teachers is encouraged, but not required. In the focus group discussion, a gifted teacher explains:

During that training, we say you can go talk to [support teachers and specialists]. Now whether or not they do that, we cannot say they have done it. But they are trained and told to reach out to different people that work with the student. (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019).

The homeroom teacher must initiate this dialogue with the specialists and support teachers and often completes the rating scales in isolation. All study participants indicate that informal conversations advocating for students among the gifted, homeroom, ESOL and EIP teachers are a strength of the gifted identification process at United Nations Elementary. Unfortunately, this practice leaves the ESOL and EIP teachers who serve most of the minority students without a formal voice in the gifted identification cycle. When asked how she approaches decisions about students she feels should be evaluated for gifted services, one support teacher replies:

Well, it really does not come from our end. We kind of find out about students that were chosen to be rescreened or looked at it again once the testing is done...But prior to that,

we are not really being asked if we see some talent in one student or the other. So that's kind of happening after the fact (Leslie, interview, December 4, 2018).

Another support teacher concurs:

Unfortunately, I don't really feel like they, that anybody, any power that be, is coming to me and saying what do you think of such and such student and their abilities (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018).

Additionally, one administrator points out that teachers must complete the rating scales midway through the second quarter stating, "they haven't had a full year's experience knowing the student" (Focus Group, interview, January 4, 2019). Therefore, he believes that it would be beneficial to include the student's previous teacher in the collaborative dialogue as well.

Discussion

Summary of findings.

The depth of cultural knowledge at United Nations Elementary is robust; however, this knowledge exists in silos of expertise. As noted in the methodology section, two criteria identify key participants: the level of leadership and the amount of interaction with students and families in under-identified subgroups. One might expect that the key participants in the study are also the experts in teaching and leading in a culturally diverse setting. The participants and key participants who know the most about culturally responsive education practices, who have a deep understanding of the students' lived experiences and norms, or who operate at a proficient level on the cultural continuum share some commonalities. They do work closely with under-identified students and their families providing support such as ELL or EIP services. However, they do not have a leadership role in the gifted identification process. This result challenges the initial categorization of key and non-key participants.

Awareness at all levels: cultural awareness, self-awareness, and awareness of culturally responsive practices appear to be a product of personalized professional development, personal practice and background knowledge. The participant who is most fluent in the terminology and concepts associated with culturally responsive education has recently acquired her gifted and ESOL endorsements on her own. Three participants who have significant knowledge of the diverse cultures in the student body are immigrants themselves and initiate home visits.

While these experts are easily accessible by those who have need or interest, the problem remains that this knowledge does not permeate the school culture as a whole. When asked about serving ethnically diverse students, one teacher shares, “I feel we don’t value different races and their experiences and backgrounds and understand that they are coming from their own experience and it’s got to be valued” (Gene, interview, December 4, 2018). Multiple homeroom teachers express that they purposely try not to see differences or treat students differently based on their cultural background. While it is essential to guard against discrimination, taking a color-blind approach fails to value cultural differences and does not allow teachers to build on the strengths inherent in these differences (Lindsey et al., 2018). This philosophy gives rise to epistemological hegemony that values the dominant culture and marginalizes other cultures.

Shared awareness and knowledge can lead to a shared vision and mission for change. Study participants acknowledge this begins with education and intentionality. When asked what do you need from school leaders to improve your practice in recognizing and addressing the needs of gifted minority students, one teacher responds:

I think since we’ve been talking about all of this it brings to my attention that I really don’t identify or do anything different except for talking to other teachers. So it would be

nice to maybe have some kind of training...I think that would be really useful. To have an expert talk to us about it (Sarah, interview, December 4, 2018).

During his interview and the focus group, the principal reiterates the need for intentionality in school level planning and grade level collaboration. He identifies getting information, providing a course of direction, and moving forward as essential steps for addressing the problem of under-identification of gifted minority students.

School leaders should critically examine beliefs, perceptions, and procedures surrounding gifted identification at United Nations Elementary through the CSRL lens. Some teachers recommend moving gifted training from the beginning of the gifted identification cycle to pre-planning so that quarter and yearlong planning can incorporate strategies for developing creativity and motivation portfolios. If ESOL, EIP, and specialists complete rating scales on students in addition to the homeroom teacher, these educators who see students in different contexts will have a formal, intentional voice in the identification process. If the need for additional testing materials makes this option cost prohibitive, an alternative could be to schedule formal school-wide collaboration time. Grade-level teachers, support teachers, and specialists could use this time to complete rating scales together and plan instruction in critical and creative thinking. Ideally, school leaders would form a collaborative community similar to the focus group to establish specific goals for increasing the identification of Hispanic, Brazilian, Black, Multi-racial, and low-income students, as well as recommend operational adjustments that would facilitate the achievement of those goals.

Procedures and processes play a role in perpetuating the status quo. In order to impact inequity in gifted identification, the operational norms need critical review and revision. For example, despite individual exceptions, the gifted teachers find that when it is time to evaluate

creativity and motivation, many students do not receive regular opportunities to explore and shine in these areas. Teachers seem hard pressed to find items to include in creativity and motivation portfolios. Based on a document review, meeting schedules offer no time for formal collaboration with all staff members who provide instruction at each grade level to coordinate extension and enrichment. At the grade level, the structure is already in place to do this work through collaborative planning time. Other staff members are also providing direct instruction in critical and creative thinking skills, as well as opportunities for students to create. For example, the Media Specialist works with each class everything in the maker space in the Learning Commons. She connects literature to performance tasks in which students use craft supplies or technology tools to create a product. Teachers can use any of these products as evidence in creativity portfolios. The STEAM lab, technology, music, and art teachers are specialists who also see students on a weekly basis. Support services teachers such as counselors, and ESOL and EIP teachers may have student products that could be helpful as well. Intentional collaboration on instructional planning could resolve this problem and increase consistency in enrichment for all students. Scheduled, school-wide collaboration during critical times in the gifted identification cycle could increase the opportunities for all staff members to advocate for high-ability minority students.

Finally, this study points to a link between the parent's beliefs about education and gifted identification. Indian parents take primary responsibility for their child's education, invest time at home on academics, and actively volunteer in the school. As a community, these families network and share information about all things involving student success. They arm themselves with knowledge about the gifted identification process and use that knowledge to increase the likelihood that their child will qualify. The Brazilian parents feel that primary responsibility for

education lies with the school. They have little understanding of the gifted program and defer to the teacher's recommendation. The opportunity exists to gain a deeper understanding of the students' home cultures and provide programs to build social capital and awareness. For example, study participants point out that the Brazilian community connects through a local church and uses a common after-school program. One participant volunteers regularly at this program reading to students. School leaders can leverage these relationships to improve the home-school connection. For example, offering English classes for adults at the school may increase the comfort level these families experience in the school environment. Increasing physical visibility could increase cultural visibility allowing the climate of International Night to spill over into every day. Additionally, staff members could conduct parent presentations for the gifted program in the community or identify other opportunities to build knowledge and equip parents to meet the needs of high-ability students.

A CRSL approach has the potential to solve the puzzle at United Nations Elementary. So many of the individual pieces are present and in place. To turn the corner and shift the narrative for gifted minority students, school leadership must lead the charge to educate the staff on the problem, build a shared vision, develop a plan that targets each of the four strands of CRSL, and take action.

Connections to literature.

Gifted identification patterns at United Nations Elementary follow the national trends for excellence gaps reported by (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). At United Nations Elementary, students are identified for gifted services disproportionately based on race, ethnicity, language proficiency, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, Asian and White students are over-represented in the gifted program compared to the school demographics. Black and

Hispanic students, English Language Learners (ELLs), students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are under-represented.

The findings support the body of research that equity and access issues are systemic and rooted in the initial design and purpose for public education to serve the needs of the dominant culture (Wright et al., 2017). Specifically, district training materials acknowledge and student data validate that the gifted identification process yields disproportionate results for diverse students. Current school improvement plans do not address inequities, so the pattern continues unchallenged. When asked whether under-identification of gifted minority students is a problem at United Nations Elementary, one administrator captures this sentiment as follows:

Is it a huge problem? I don't know only because our population is so diverse that every year when we add additional students to our gifted population, by default, I feel like it's a fairly diverse population (Bill, interview, December 4, 2018).

Cultural blindness and systemic issues that perpetuate the status quo are prevalent themes that emerge from the analysis of the data. For example, teachers perceive ESOL and EIP to be forms of remediation and question whether students should in one of these programs and participate in the gifted program (Bob, interview, December 4, 2018; Focus group, January 4, 2018). This result aligns with previous research that argues that beliefs, perceptions, and practices all play a role in institutionalizing inequity (Dee & Penner, 2017; Ford, 1998; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

United Nations follows state and district guidelines and procedures for gifted identification, which include the use of multiple measures and universal screening. Given the implementation of these practices and the persistence of the under-identification of minority students, this study provides qualitative research that supports conclusions from quantitative

studies that multiple measures alone may not close gaps in all subgroups (McBee, Peters, & Waterman, 2014).

Additionally, gifted teachers provide talent development lessons to all students regardless of perceived potential ability. Classroom teachers also extend and enrich early finishers and high ability students, but that enrichment varies from teacher to teacher. The data for this study does not provide insight into whether talent development influences gifted identification rates for diverse students (Gentry, 2009). It does provide an example case where talent development occurs routinely yet identification rates remain problematic.

At multiple points throughout data collection, participants discuss topics related to teacher beliefs and perceptions, particularly regarding language barriers and behavior. School leaders acknowledge that teachers believe that remediation needs to occur before extension, which is a form of deficit thinking (Allen, 2017). All evidence places the teachers and leaders at United Nations Elementary somewhere within the range of Cultural Pre-Competence and Cultural Blindness on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Lindsey et al., 2018). Although a causal relationship between teacher role or leader role and identification of gifted minority students cannot be inferred, the results of this study highlight the need for further research into the role teacher and leader perceptions and beliefs play in gifted identification.

Overall, this study extends the current understanding of the under-identification of culturally diverse gifted students by adding to the qualitative analysis of the problem. By engaging in a descriptive case study of a school with a heterogeneous population, the researcher confirms that the problem persists and provides context regarding how school leaders incorporate CRSL practices to approach gifted identification for a diverse student body. In addition,

awareness, concepts of language barriers, and school operational procedures surface as issues that perpetuate inequitable gifted identification results.

Implications for educational leadership.

The CRSL framework provides many probable solutions to the gaps between traditional and non-traditional students in gifted identification rates; however, this framework is completely unknown to the United Nations Elementary school leaders and staff. The results of this study have implication for the field of educational leadership in the areas of awareness, policy, capacity building, analytic tools, and further research.

Awareness is a critical problem with many facets that impacts gifted identification, as well as a host of other social justice issues. Education practitioners at all levels need to be aware of the expanding knowledge base surrounding diversity and equity. The disconnects between theory and practice, research and application need further investigation and resolution. To meet the needs of diverse learners, school leaders and teachers also need to practice critical self-reflection. Self-awareness is a pre-requisite for this work. Educators need to be aware of how their own cultural background, beliefs, and expectations mold their perceptions of socially-constructed concepts such as normal and gifted. This level of understanding is not intuitive and requires ongoing professional learning.

Awareness and accountability go hand-in-hand. This is where policy needs to align with calls for action to eliminate persistent disparity such as the under-representation of minority students in gifted programs. Current educational leadership standards do not hold administrators at any level accountable for equity. It is time for leadership standards, evaluation tools, and measures to include equity. Given competing demands for resources, district and school leaders do not have incentives to prioritize professional development to increase cultural proficiency

without this embedded accountability for equity. With or without a change in the leadership standards, other educational leaders who set or influence policy need to lead the charge. Lindsey et al. (2018) provide a roadmap for building cultural proficiency, but underscore the importance of long-term, systemic change:

Change can begin anywhere in a school district, but to have systemic change that stands the test of time, the higher in the hierarchy of the school district that change is embraced as natural and normal, the more likely the change initiatives will be embraced throughout the organization (p. 57).

In terms of this study, any action plan for change at United Nations will have a more significant impact if using the CRSL framework to increase identification of gifted minority students gains traction as a district priority.

The capacity for school leaders and teachers to address equity is a barrier to improved outcomes for gifted minority students. Equipping current and future school leaders and teachers with the call to action and with the tools to identify and address inequity needs to become the new norm. Ongoing school-based professional development and teacher and leader preparation programs need to include building capacity for cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2018).

Khalifa et al. (2016) point out:

Culturally responsive teacher education preparation—be it school-based professional development or a university preparation program—is necessary, even when teachers are from the same cultural, racial, and socioeconomic background of students (p. 1281).

How much more so when those backgrounds are different? Specifically related to this study, school leaders need to provide on-going professional opportunities for staff members that include

dialogue and simulations on how giftedness manifests based on cultural differences in language, ethnicity, race and socioeconomic status.

The amount of data now available to school leaders is overwhelming. Leaders need analytical tools that will quickly point them to areas of strength and areas of concern. Automated equity audits could provide school leaders with updated results as new data becomes available. Equipping school leaders with timely data allows them to engage in meaningful critical self-awareness and lead their teams in this work.

Finally, additional research is needed both to understand if other obstacles are preventing the shift from theory to practice for CRSL and CRE research and to further explore possible connections between CRSL and equity in gifted identification. An extension of this study would be to develop and implement a CRSL initiative to move the staff from Cultural Blindness and Cultural Precompetence to Cultural Proficiency on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Lindsey et al., 2018) and monitor any significant changes to gifted identification rates associated with under-served subgroups. It might also be useful to investigate if any correlations exist between gifted identification rates and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum.

This case study of the gifted identification cycle at a heterogeneous school provides a thick description of the context of the case through a descriptive lens and the Culturally Responsive School Leadership theoretical framework. Awareness, language barrier, and systemic issues emerge as themes that highlight where the school leaders and staff fall on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum. This study answers the question of how, rather than why, gifted minority students continue to be under-identified and presents implications for the field of educational leadership. As it adds to the knowledge base as a whole and the gap in qualitative studies specifically regarding the excellence gap and disparities in gifted identification, this study

will hopefully raise awareness of CRSL and increase minority representation in gifted and talented programs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Mail: P.O. Box 3999
Atlanta, Georgia 30302-3999
Phone: 404/413-3500

In Person: Dahlberg Hall
30 Courtland St, Suite 217
Fax: 404/413-3504



November 29, 2018

Principal Investigator: Kristina F Brezicha

Key Personnel: Brezicha, Kristina F; Curlette, William; Kranzlein, Kimberly M

Study Department: Educational Policy Studies

Study Title: Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Gifted Identification in a Heterogeneous Elementary School: A Case Study

Review Type: Expedited 5, 6, 7

IRB Number: H19235

Reference Number: 352325

Approval Date: 11/29/2018

Expiration Date: 11/28/2019

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the above referenced study in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. The IRB has reviewed and approved the study and any informed consent forms, recruitment materials, and other research materials that are marked as approved in the application. The approval period is listed above. Research that has been approved by the IRB may be subject to further appropriate review and approval or disapproval by officials of the Institution.

Federal regulations require researchers to follow specific procedures in a timely manner. For the protection of all concerned, the IRB calls your attention to the following obligations that you have as Principal Investigator of this study.

1. For any changes to the study (except to protect the safety of participants), an Amendment Application must be submitted to the IRB. The Amendment Application must be reviewed and approved before any changes can take place
2. Any unanticipated/adverse events or problems occurring as a result of participation in this study must be reported immediately to the IRB using the Unanticipated/Adverse Event Form.
3. Principal investigators are responsible for ensuring that informed consent is properly documented in accordance with 45 CFR 46.116.
 - The Informed Consent Form (ICF) used must be the one reviewed and approved by the IRB with the approval dates stamped on each page.
4. For any research that is conducted beyond the approval period, a Renewal Application must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the expiration date. The Renewal Application must be approved by the IRB before the expiration date else automatic termination of this study will occur. If the study expires, all research activities associated with the study must cease and a new application must be approved before any work can continue.
5. When the study is completed, a Study Closure Report must be submitted to the IRB.

All of the above referenced forms are available online at <http://protocol.gsu.edu>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research Integrity (404-413-3500) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Cynthia A. Hoffner, IRB Chair

Federal Wide Assurance Number: 00000129

Appendix B

Georgia State University Informed Consent - Participant

Title: Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Gifted Identification in a Heterogeneous Elementary School: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristina Brezicha

Student Principal Investigator: Kim Kranzlein

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the gifted identification process for diverse students and the role of school leadership. I am asking you to consider taking part in this research study because you are a teacher or support staff member who serves first-grade students or plays a role in gifted identification. The study will include 15 participants.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will participate in the following study related activities:

- Pre-interview: a one-hour audio-recorded interview at the beginning of the gifted identification cycle
- Post-interview: a one-hour audio-recorded interview at the end of the gifted identification cycle

In addition, you may be selected to participate in none, one or all of the following study related activities:

- Focus Group: a one-hour audio-recorded focus group discussion following the gifted identification cycle with five participants
- Classroom Observation: up to 2 hours of observations of classroom instruction (Note: photographs may be taken but will not include any images that identify adults or students)
- Document Review: up to 30 minutes to retrieve and provide documents associated with meeting the educational needs of high-ability minority students such as general parent notifications, lesson plans, emails regarding gifted identification, etc. No documents related to specific students will be requested.

It is unknown at this time which of the above activities you may be asked to participate in. You can decline to participate in any or all of these activities at any time.

Study participation will span three months. All study-related activities including interviews and the focus group will take place at the school. Your role at the school will determine the type and number of study related activities you are asked to complete. No participant will be asked to complete more than four hours of study related activities.

Observations will be conducted during the school day. Interviews will be conducted as convenient for the participant.

Participants who leave their school role during the study will be removed from the study.

Future Research

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you personally; however, information about the role of school leaders in the identification of gifted minority students presents a benefit to society.

Alternatives

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. You may decline to participate in any of the requested study-related activities.

You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time; this will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality

Your records will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Kim Kranzlein and Dr. Kristina Brezicha
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

Kim Kranzlein will assign and utilize a code rather use than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet or password protected external drive. The key to identify research participant codes will be stored separately from the data to protect privacy. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet, on a password protected external drive or in secured cloud storage for one year following the publication of the results of the study and then destroyed.

If you participate in the focus group activity, you will be asked not to reveal what was discussed in the group. You will also be warned that the researchers do not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data.

When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Kristina Brezicha at (404) 413-8261 or kbrezicha@gsu.edu or Kim Kranzlein at (404) 5636440 or kim.kranzlein@gmail.com.

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant
- if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

Consent

Kim Kranzlein will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix C

Georgia State University Informed Consent – Key Participant

Title: Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Gifted Identification in a Heterogeneous Elementary School: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristina Brezicha

Student Principal Investigator: Kim Kranzlein

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the gifted identification process for diverse students and the role of school leadership. I am asking you to consider taking part in this research study because you are an administrator or school leader who serves first-grade students or plays a key role in gifted identification. The study will include 15 participants.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will participate in the following study related activities:

- Pre-interview: a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview at the beginning of the gifted identification cycle
- Post-interview: a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview at the end of the gifted identification cycle

In addition, you may be selected to participate in none, one or all of the following study-related activities:

- Follow-up Conversations: up to 2 additional audio-recorded follow-up conversations lasting no more than an hour during or after the gifted identification cycle
- Focus Group: a one-hour audio-recorded focus group discussion following the gifted identification cycle with five participants
- Classroom Observation: up to 4 hours of observations of classroom instruction (Note: photographs may be taken but will not include any images that identify adults or students)
- Document Review: up to 1 hour to retrieve and provide documents associated with meeting the educational needs of high-ability minority students such as general parent notifications, lesson plans, emails regarding gifted identification, etc. No documents related to specific students will be requested.

It is unknown at this time which of the above activities you may be asked to participate in. You can decline to participate in any or all of these activities at any time.

Study participation will span three months. All study-related activities including interviews and the focus group will take place at the school. Your role at the school will determine the type and number of study related activities you are asked to complete. No key participant will be asked to complete more than eight hours of study related activities.

Observations will be conducted during the school day. Interviews will be conducted as convenient for the participant.

Participants who leave their school role during the study will be removed from the study.

Future Research

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you personally; however, information about the role of school leaders in the identification of gifted minority students presents a benefit to society.

Alternatives

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. You may decline to participate in any of the requested study related activities.

You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time, this will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality

Your records will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Kim Kranzlein and Dr. Kristina Brezicha
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

Kim Kranzlein will assign and utilize a code rather use than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet or password protected external drive. The key to identify the research participant codes will be stored separately from the data to protect privacy. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet, on a password protected external drive or in secured cloud storage for one year following the publication of the results of the study and then destroyed.

If you participate in the focus group activity, you will be asked not to reveal what was discussed in the group. You will also be warned that the researchers do not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data.

When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Kristina Brezicha at (404) 413-8261 or kbrezicha@gsu.edu or Kim Kranzlein at (404) 5636440 or kim.kranzlein@gmail.com.

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant
- if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

Consent

Kim Kranzlein will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix D

Semistructured Interview Protocol 1

Note: Using Allen's Interview Protocol with modifications and additions

Allen, J. K. (2017). Exploring the role teacher perceptions play in the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted programming. *Gifted child today*, 40(2), 77-86.

Thank you for participating in this interview. The focus of this study is on teaching and leader practices and beliefs as they relate to the gifted identification of minority students. As you respond to the interview questions, to comply with FERPA requirements please refrain from identifying any students or other individuals by name.

Section I: Basic demographic information

What is your current title/position in your school?

How many years have you been in that position?

How many years have you taught altogether?

Describe the demographics of the students you serve (race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, services: ELL, EIP, Gifted).

Section II: Experiences and Perceptions

What is your experience working with English Language Learners (ELLs; that is, students whose native language is not English)? Tell me about some of your English language learners.

What is your experience working with Early Intervention Program students (EIP students; that is, students who are behind their peers in reading, language arts, or math)? Tell me about some of your EIP students.

What is your experience working with Economically Disadvantaged students (ED students; that is, students who qualify for free or reduced lunch)? Tell me about some of your ED students.

What is your experience working with racially diverse students? Tell me about some of your racially diverse students.

What is your experience working with ethnically diverse students? Tell me about some of your ethnically diverse students.

What is your experience working with students in the gifted/talented program? Tell me about some of your gifted learners.

How do you make decisions about students you believe should be evaluated for gifted and talented programming?

How do you perceive the abilities of students whose first language is not English? Who require early intervention? Who come from low-income homes? Who are racial minorities? Who are ethnically diverse? Who are in the gifted program?

How has your experience working with ELLs influenced your support for them for gifted and talented evaluation? with EIP student? with ED students? with black students? with Hispanic students? with Brazilian students?

Do you have any insight into how your colleagues perceive the abilities of students whose first language is not English? EIP students? ED students? Black students? Hispanic students? Brazilian students?

In what ways do you think your experiences and perceptions and those of your colleagues influence the referral process?

Section III: Culturally Responsive Practices

Critical Self-Reflection

How are the social norms and lived experiences of your students different from your own?

What challenges do these differences present for you in serving these students?

How do you identify and address these differences?

How do you advocate for high ability students from diverse backgrounds?

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Curriculum

Describe ways that you adapt your instruction, curriculum, and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners.

What does talent development look like for your diverse students?

Inclusive Climate

How do you build on the home life and lived experiences of your students to develop a sense of community in your classroom?

How do you build on the home life and lived experiences of your students to develop knowledge, understanding, and skills connected to the content you teach?

Describe how you recognize and celebrate the heritage of your diverse students (ELL, EIP, ED, black, Hispanic, Brazilian, gifted). How is individual heritage valued through your classroom set-up, your behavior expectations, your instruction?

Parent/Community Overlap

Describe some of the issues that the parents and communities of your diverse students face (ELL, EIP, ED, black, Hispanic, Brazilian, gifted).

Describe how parents and community members interact with and support your students (ELL, EIP, ED, black, Hispanic, Brazilian, gifted).

Describe how your students support their communities.

Section IV: Needs and Expectations of School Leaders

How do leaders in the school identify and address possible inequities in gifted identification?

Who provides the most support to you in serving high ability students from diverse backgrounds?

What do you need from school leaders to improve your practice in recognizing and addressing the needs of gifted minority students?

Section V: Wrap Up

Do you believe that the under-identification of gifted minority students is a problem at this school? Why or why not?

If so, what are the first steps that need to be taken to solve the problem? Who should take the lead?

Do you have any additional thoughts about this topic before we end our time together?

Appendix E

Semistructured Focus Group Protocol

Note: Using Allen's Interview Protocol with modifications and additions

Allen, J. K. (2017). Exploring the role teacher perceptions play in the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted programming. *Gifted child today*, 40(2), 77-86.

Thank you for participating in this interview. The focus of this study is on teaching and leader practices and beliefs as they relate to the gifted identification of minority students. As you respond to the interview questions, to comply with FERPA requirements please refrain from identifying any students or other individuals by name.

Focus Group Introductions

What is your current title/position in your school?

How many years have you been in that position?

How many years have you taught altogether?

Describe the demographics of the students you serve (race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, services: ELL, EIP, Gifted).

Semistructured Focus Group Protocol

What have you thought about, observed, or been in conversation about regarding minority students and gifted education since you began participating in this study?

What role do you think a student's country of origin or ethnicity plays in referral or qualification for gifted services? a student's race? a student's native language? a student's socio-economic status?

What are some possible explanations for why minority students may be underidentified for gifted services?

How familiar are you with current research on best practices for teaching culturally diverse students such as CRI/CRP/CRSL?

How important are awareness and critical self-reflection in meeting the needs of high-ability minority students and increasing gifted identification rates for diverse students? Elaborate.

What role do you feel culturally responsive instruction and curriculum should play in serving the diverse students, particularly those who are potentially gifted and talented?

What role do you feel parents and other family members have in whether a student is evaluated for and/or qualifies for gifted services? Have you experienced parent advocacy on behalf of students?

What, if anything, do you think might help in closing the gap in the number of ELLs evaluated for gifted services? Of EIP students? of ED students? of black students? of Hispanic students? of Brazilian students?

What, if anything, do you think might help increase the opportunities of minority students in qualifying for gifted services?

How might being aware of nationwide statistics and your school statistics help?

How might research enlighten you and/or your colleagues?

How would more exposure to more minority students help you better notice their gifts and talents?

How would collaboration/communication while filling out motivation and creativity assessments help?

What alternative identification methods could be used?

Can you think of any innovative ways we might serve gifted and talented minority students who may/may not qualify for state-funded gifted services?

What can you do to improve the identification of gifted minority students? What do you need leaders to do?

Do you have any additional thoughts about this topic before we end our time?

Appendix F

Observation Record

Date:

Location:

Start Time:

Stop Time:

Notes on:

Talent Development:

Culturally Inclusive Classroom Environment:

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Appendix G

Nodes								Search Project
Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By		
Case Description		1	1	12/21/2018 10:36 PM	KMK	12/21/2018 10:39 PM	KMK	
Demographics		13	17	12/21/2018 10:38 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:51 AM	KMK	
Descriptive Words		4	7	12/21/2018 10:37 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 7:32 PM	KMK	
Services		8	12	12/21/2018 10:40 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:51 AM	KMK	
Socioeconomy		6	6	12/21/2018 10:39 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:07 PM	KMK	
CRSL		3	4	12/21/2018 11:19 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:47 AM	KMK	
Critical Self-Reflection		11	24	12/21/2018 10:58 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:49 AM	KMK	
Challenges		11	19	12/22/2018 7:50 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:50 AM	KMK	
Differences		13	28	12/22/2018 7:50 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:49 AM	KMK	
Lived Experiences		10	19	12/22/2018 7:49 AM	KMK	12/29/2018 7:41 PM	KMK	
Norms		12	25	12/22/2018 7:49 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:50 AM	KMK	
Culturally Responsive		16	38	12/21/2018 11:00 PM	KMK	1/1/2019 9:59 PM	KMK	
Inclusive Climate		16	34	12/21/2018 11:00 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:29 AM	KMK	
Parent Community Ov		18	58	12/21/2018 10:58 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:41 AM	KMK	
Issues, Challenges		14	32	12/22/2018 8:25 AM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:16 PM	KMK	
Gifted Program		4	8	12/21/2018 11:21 PM	KMK	1/1/2019 10:09 PM	KMK	
Ideas, Solutions		9	25	12/21/2018 11:17 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:52 AM	KMK	
Identification Measur		11	29	12/22/2018 7:32 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:47 AM	KMK	
Inequity		13	31	12/22/2018 8:29 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:25 AM	KMK	
Strengths of Gifted Id		12	25	12/21/2018 11:17 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:52 AM	KMK	
Support for Staff		14	28	12/22/2018 8:29 AM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:54 AM	KMK	
Talent Development		16	48	12/21/2018 11:24 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:54 AM	KMK	
Weaknesses of Gifted		10	28	12/21/2018 11:17 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:52 AM	KMK	
Hidden Influences		0	0	12/22/2018 7:25 AM	KMK	12/22/2018 7:25 AM	KMK	
Beliefs		10	28	12/21/2018 10:57 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:49 AM	KMK	
Perceptions		15	51	12/21/2018 10:57 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:49 AM	KMK	
Understandings		6	17	12/21/2018 11:14 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 3:24 PM	KMK	
Missed Opportunities		6	13	12/22/2018 7:24 AM	KMK	12/28/2018 1:48 PM	KMK	
School Leadership		3	3	12/21/2018 11:01 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 11:50 AM	KMK	
Expectations		9	16	12/21/2018 11:02 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:16 PM	KMK	
Needs		10	16	12/21/2018 11:01 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:03 PM	KMK	
Structural Issues		10	20	12/21/2018 11:29 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:25 AM	KMK	
Subgroups		7	7	12/21/2018 11:04 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:10 PM	KMK	
Cultural		6	7	12/21/2018 11:09 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:31 AM	KMK	
ED		15	27	12/21/2018 11:04 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:42 AM	KMK	
Ethnicity		10	14	12/21/2018 11:05 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:40 AM	KMK	
Brazilian		7	30	12/21/2018 11:16 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:41 AM	KMK	
Hispanic		6	13	12/21/2018 11:15 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:40 AM	KMK	
Indian		10	24	12/21/2018 11:15 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:40 AM	KMK	
Immigrant		5	10	12/21/2018 11:05 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:42 AM	KMK	
Linguistic		1	1	12/21/2018 11:05 PM	KMK	12/28/2018 1:24 PM	KMK	
Race		15	23	12/21/2018 11:04 PM	KMK	12/29/2018 9:17 PM	KMK	
Services		1	3	12/21/2018 11:07 PM	KMK	12/28/2018 4:00 PM	KMK	
Surprises		9	24	12/21/2018 11:16 PM	KMK	1/12/2019 10:31 AM	KMK	
Wonderings		2	2	12/22/2018 8:24 AM	KMK	12/24/2018 4:27 PM	KMK	