2020

Early Childhood Educator Knowledge: An Exploratory Study Regarding Giftedness and Students of Color

Stephanie A. Peralta
University of Denver

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color. The research questions that guided the study were the following: How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color? How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color? What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

In reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. The relevant literature focused on areas in recognizing general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of giftedness and students of color. The theoretical frameworks were Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017).

A Qualitative Educational Criticism guided this study (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). This research design was chosen to analyze curriculum practices used in general early childhood educator classrooms and aid in the construction of data collection procedures (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). Within the study, qualitative research aimed to recognize whether general early childhood educators were knowledgeable about gifted students of color and provided instructional practices that fostered access and opportunity (Creswell, 2018).

Upon data collection and analysis of the data, using an interview protocol and a classroom environment observation protocol, emerging themes arose. Using Eisner's (2017) four dimensions, the collected data was described, interpreted, and evaluated for emerging themes. The emerging themes found were further analyzed to understand general early childhood educator's knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color. The evaluation process included a comparison to The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020). Findings included discrepancies among general early childhood educator knowledge regarding students of color, giftedness, access to gifted services, social and emotional awareness, and early childhood curriculum and instruction.

Document Type
Dissertation in Practice

Degree Name
Ed.D.

Department
Curriculum and Instruction

First Advisor
Norma L. Hafenstein

Second Advisor
Paul Michalec

Third Advisor
Lindsey Reinert

Keywords
Curriculum, Early childhood, Gifted education, Instruction, Students of color

Subject Categories
Curriculum and Instruction | Disability and Equity in Education | Early Childhood Education | Education | Gifted Education

Publication Statement
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Early Childhood Educator Knowledge: An Exploratory Study Regarding Giftedness and

Students of Color

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A Dissertation in Practice

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Stephanie A. Peralta

August 2020

Advisor: Dr. Norma L. Hafenstein

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Chapter One: Introduction

"All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them." – Walt Disney

Background of Researcher

I, the researcher, have a personal goal to push myself beyond my limits. Being a first-generation student of color who was once identified as gifted for one year, has stuck with me. I was identified as a gifted learner in mathematics when I was in third grade. Since then, I reflected on the experience I had being pulled out of class to accelerate my knowledge using manipulatives that older students were using. Why did it stop there? Identifying as a Hispanic female in the educational field is a big feat. I want to overcome the stereotype of low socioeconomic status and pave the way for my deserving family and fellow *hermanas* in the field of education. My voice will increase awareness and advocacy.

I have a passion for advancement of knowledge. I hope to use my passions to guide, create, and expand upon curricula development. My personal background as a student of color has driven me to use my voice for gifted students of color who otherwise do not know their potential. I hope to take current research in the field and mesh it with personal student experiences to transform the ways in which we view gifted education

and provide historically marginalized students the opportunity and access they deserve alongside their peers.

As I continue work in the field, I hope to use my future position as a Gifted Director in a local school district to enlighten other educators with current trends and tools to better the educational process of all students. Once I have gained the knowledge and expertise within the field, I will embark on a mission to create and fully implement a new curriculum that is designed to incorporate student identity to transcend over time as students' progress through their academic career. With the mentoring and guidance of my colleagues, peers, professors and family throughout this process, I am grateful to be where I am and hope to fulfill my duty in changing students of color lives for the better.

Background of Study

This study was created to enhance the researcher's knowledge and contribute to the field surrounding early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of giftedness and students of color. This study includes a literature review that examined the relevant literature regarding preschool through second grade gifted curricula for rates of academic success, social emotional learning, and inclusive practices for gifted students of color. There was limited literature and research in support of the curricula aspect. With this, the literature review focused primarily on gifted students of color, identification for these students, and theoretical frameworks to guide curricula in a positive direction. The theoretical frameworks included Culturally Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017) to promote inclusivity and allow educators the understanding of gifted students of color. The researcher used a Qualitative Educational

Criticism approach to describe, interpret, evaluate and find emerging themes in terms of the curriculum and instruction approaches of general early childhood educators (Eisner, 2017). The researcher conducted interviews with general early childhood educators with an interview protocol and took photographs of general early childhood classrooms by using a classroom environment observation protocol, at a school site of the district. *The district* should serve as the pseudonym for a large urban district in a western state of the United States educating more than 90,000 students.

The researcher first created a Gifted Curriculum Rubric with the literature as the foundation, to be compared to data collection findings. However, upon literature exploration and expert review of the structure and purpose of the rubric (Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020), a literature-based guide evolved (Peralta, 2020).

Overall there were discrepancies between current practices in general early childhood classrooms and literature-based practices for gifted students of color. The following study looked at relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, data collection, and analysis to determine if general early childhood educators knew about giftedness and students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Kingore, 2008; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). The purpose of the study should be outlined next.

Purpose of Study

  The purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in accordance to the study:

- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?

- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color?

- What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

Research Questions Rationale

  An explanation of each research question provides clarity and direction of the study. In reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. "Research questions narrow the purpose statement to predictions about what will be learned or questions to be answered in the study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 133). Every question begins "with the words *what* or *how* to convey an open and emerging design" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p, 134). Including

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preschool through second grade, or early childhood, outlined the target audience for the study (Tomonari, 2019). Each question also included the term *curricula* due to the desire to understand instructional practices in general early childhood classrooms (Kettler, 2016). Each research question was created using the lens of the theoretical frameworks, to recognize early childhood educator knowledge in regard to being culturally responsive and understanding of students of color. The following information includes explanation surrounding the intentions of each question.

The first research question was: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?* This question included the beginning word for open-ended discussion and the target audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tomonari, 2019). The next portion of the question incorporated curriculum used in the classroom for preschool through second grade (Kettler, 2016). Including curriculum supported the desire to understand the impact general early childhood curriculum had on gifted students of color in general early childhood classrooms (Kettler, 2016). "Academic success" was included in terms of a multicultural inclusive education (Gay, 2018). The terms "support or impede" were included for the impact curriculum had on gifted students of color (Webb, 1994; Kingore, 2008; Gay, 2018). For this question, curriculum was in accordance with academic needs in the classroom specifically because of academic-based curriculum and instructional practices in general early childhood classrooms (Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). The term "students of color" was included in the

question to understand general early childhood educator knowledge of students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018).

The second research question was: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color?* This question included the beginning word for open-ended discussion and the target audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tomonari, 2019). The next portion of the question incorporated curriculum as it related to social emotional instruction (Cross, 2011), due to the desire to recognize social and emotional needs of gifted students of color in a general early childhood classroom (Cross, 2011). The terms "support or impede" were included for the impact social emotional curriculum has on gifted students of color (Webb, 1994; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012). The term "students of color" was included in the question to understand general early childhood educator knowledge of students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018).

The third research question was: *What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?* This question included the beginning word for open-ended discussion and the target audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tomonari, 2019). The terms "perspectives of educators" was included to recognize what educators know and understand about inclusive instruction and practice in general early childhood classrooms, which includes Critical Race Theory as a lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). *Gifted curricula,* as a term, was used to recognize curriculum for gifted students, in accordance to inclusive practices (Kettler, 2014; Kettler, 2016;

Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). The term "students of color" was included in the question to understand general early childhood educator knowledge of students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018).

Early childhood as a demographic for educators, was chosen for this study. The rationale for choosing this demographic follows.

Rationale for Early Childhood

Due to the lack of gifted identification of early childhood students of color, general early childhood educators were the focus of the study (Lewis, Novak & Weber, 2018; Milner, 2007). General early childhood educators were selected as a demographic population because of the need to identify gifted students at a young age in order to provide appropriate access and opportunity for these students (Webb, 1994; Cross, 2011; Tomonari, 2019). Preschool through second grade educators were selected because "early childhood" was defined as:

> "birth to eight years, [and] early childhood is a time of tremendous growth across all areas of development. The dependent newborn grows into a young person who can take care of his or her own body and interact effectively with others. For these reasons, the primary developmental task of this stage is *skill development"* (Tomonari, 2019, n.p.).

Therefore, preschool through second grade fall within the early childhood developmental age group.

There are many different terms used throughout the study, therefore their definitions were included to allow for recognition and understanding. The terms are included in the following section.

Definition of Terms

  With the following study and research, key aspects included gifted students of color, gifted identification, and current curriculum. However, it was imperative that there was grounding through definitions in the literature about the topics to include current practical definitions used.

Definitions

  The terms within the following work needed definitions for all to understand the background and context of language. The following terms were defined as:

- *Curriculum* should be defined as "the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program" (Glossary of Education Reform, 2015).

- *Culture* should be defined as "the values and practices of a given society or group, the culture of poverty, or the culture of an ethnic group in the United States" (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012).

- *Historically marginalized* students are students who by definition "have been pushed to the edge of society by not allowing them a place within it" and past occurrences and traditional views on society have otherwise deemed this normal (vocabulary.com). This term should take the place of the term *minority* within context, because of the negative connotation.

- *Students of color* are students who identify as "not white or of European parentage" and may include but is not limited to students who are ELL and low income (Oxford Dictionary, 2019, n.p).

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- *English Language Learners* are "Students who are learning English as an additional language. Special consideration should be taken to identify these students properly for gifted programming" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

- *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners (CLD)* should be referred to as "Students from diverse backgrounds, including those of black, Hispanic, and Asian descent, those learning English as a second language, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Often, these students are considered as being underrepresented in gifted programming. Can sometimes be referred to as culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) students" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

- *Underserved Populations* "are commonly CLD learners. Specifically, this population includes groups of learners who have not traditionally been served in large numbers by gifted education programs" (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012).

- *Dehumanization* should be defined as "those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (Freire, 2018).

- *Inclusion/Inclusive classroom* should "contain students of varying ability levels" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

- *Overexcitability* is "a theory proposed by Kazimierz Dąbrowski, a Polish psychologist, psychiatrist, and physician, that suggests that some individuals have heightened sensitivities, awareness, and intensity in one or more of five areas:

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psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

- *Portfolios* are "an alternative or supplement to traditional measures of giftedness, portfolios offer a collection of student work over time that can help to determine achievement and progress. Many of the elements found in portfolios cannot be captures by a standardized test" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

- *Preschool* should be defined as "an early childhood program in which children combine learning with play in a program run by professionally trained adults. Children are most commonly enrolled in preschool between the ages of three and five, though those as young as two can attend some schools. Preschools are different from traditional day care in that their emphasis is learning and development rather than enabling parents to work or pursue other activities" (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, 2019).

- *Social Emotional Needs* should be defined as "Gifted and talented students may have affective needs that include heightened or unusual sensitivity to self-awareness, emotions, and expectations of themselves or others, and a sense of justice, moral judgment, or altruism. Counselors working in this area may address issues such as perfectionism, depression, low self-concept, bullying, or underachievement" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

These terms were necessary to define since they appeared in the literature, and provide a better understanding of characteristics, populations, and overarching themes within the study. Definitions of giftedness were also included and follow next.

Definition of Giftedness

From a research standpoint, Erwin and Worrell (2012) define giftedness as the following:

> "[Giftedness] is presumed to exist in equal proportions across all demographic groups, leading to the assumption that any gifted program that does not reflect the demographic makeup of the district or school is somehow biased. However, whether in athletics, academics, the performing arts, or any other endeavor, giftedness is not about the potential that you have in the domain; rather, giftedness is the manifestation of that potential through actual accomplishments in the real world. In other words, giftedness is not about who you are but what you do" (p. 75).

The root of the above definition described personal identity and how one aspect (being gifted) has an impact on other daily facets.

On a national level, understanding the term of giftedness was necessary. Within the National Association for Gifted Children, the definition of gifted was:

> "Children are gifted when their ability is significantly above the norm for their age. Giftedness may manifest in one or more domains such as; intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or in a specific academic field such as language arts, mathematics or science" (NAGC, n.d., n.p).

Locally, two different institutions: Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the district were inclusive with their language when defining giftedness.

> "The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) defines 'gifted' children as: Those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural populations" (CDE, 2018, n.p).

The district defined giftedness specifically as:

"Children are gifted when their ability is significantly above the norm for their age. Giftedness may manifest in one or more domains such as; intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or in a specific academic field such as language arts, mathematics or science. It is important to note that not all gifted children look or act alike. Giftedness exists in every demographic group and personality type. It is important that adults look hard to discover potential and support gifted children as they reach for the personal best" (2019).

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE, 2018) and the district (District, 2019) defined giftedness in a similar light. The district definition of giftedness was chosen as the definition used during the study.

With the purpose of the study, research questions, and definitions the persistent problem of practice follows, as it presents limited literature existing in the field related to general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions regarding giftedness and students of color.

Framing Persistent Problem of Practice

In reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. This persistent problem of practice provided an opportunity for exploration of students of color representation and general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions through the lens of Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Milner, 2007; Lewis, Novak & Weber, 2018; Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Jeong, 2010).

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks researched and used within the study were Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and GifedCrit™ (Greene, 2017), to provide a culturally relevant lens when reviewing the representation of students identified who are gifted students of color and the lack of general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color and culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning.

GiftedCrit™ aimed to "analyze the educational and societal mechanisms in place for gifted culturally linguistically diverse learners" (Greene, 2017, p. 208). GiftedCrit™ as a theoretical framework was created based on the gaps in the literature according to Greene (2017). "There [was] a gap, however, in the literature where a CRT framework [was] used to explicitly detail how culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural education, and gifted education intersect and overlap," which served as the purpose of creating the framework, GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017, p. 39).

GiftedCrit™ was used in accordance with the research of the study to understand at greater lengths potential curricula and its benefits for gifted students of color (Greene, 2017). General early childhood educator knowledge, surrounding different areas of gifted education, as it relates to gifted students of color, included the notion of curriculum and the impacts curriculum has on students of color in gifted programming (Greene, 2017). Greene (2017) asserts, "GiftedCrit should also actively critique the multicultural education practices and multicultural curriculum that may or may not exist within classrooms" (p. 195). GiftedCrit™ was used as a framework to understand curriculum use in general early childhood educator classrooms and provided a lens in recognizing if

culturally relevant teaching strategies were present and being implemented (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Benefits of GiftedCrit™ included ensuring proportionality when identifying students of color which was also seen in Ladson-Billings' and Tate's (1995) Critical Race Theory. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) offer a thought "The 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (p. 58). The experiences of gifted students of color vary among general early childhood educators, which contends the notion of understanding gifted students of color and providing accessible opportunities, and for 'voices' to be heard (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Ladson-Billings (1995) incorporates Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in teaching practices as it relates to race, class and gender. Ladson-Billings (1995) states:

> "a next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469).

The pedagogical stance of Ladson-Billings (1995) was inherent to the study in order to understand general early childhood educator knowledge of students of color, and the position they have in the classroom.

Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ can be considered to provide students of color opportunity to an appropriate gifted education which includes a culturally appropriate curriculum, allowing students to develop a sense of identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Students of Color Representation

The persistent problem of practice includes knowledge and perceptions of general early childhood educators as it relates to students of color, which limited studies and research exist regarding the knowledge of early childhood educators pertaining to students of color. Therefore, scholarly work in terms of students of color representation was examined. When looking at student demographics of public schools, the student body that was identified as gifted and talented was strikingly different (Milner, 2007). Milner (2007) included a statistic: "African American and Hispanic American students tend to be underrepresented in gifted programs by 50% each" (p. 166). Students of color were more than likely not being identified for different reasons, some include being "linked to assessment and identification instruments such as standardized tests or identification checklists, which can often be culturally biased. It may also be linked to teachers' lack of knowledge about giftedness and implicit bias about students of color" (Lewis, Novak & Weber, 2018, p. 51). The research lends itself to different ways in which students of color were not given the appropriate access and opportunity for gifted programming in comparison to white students (Lewis, Novak & Weber, 2018; Milner, 2007).

Equal access and opportunity for gifted students of color starts in the classroom and extends to standardized test taking (Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012).

> "Arguments against using standardized tests with minority students have proliferated in recent years on the grounds that these tests are culturally biased. That is, tests normed on a sample of all or predominately White students are less valid and reliable for minority students" (Ford, 1998, p. 8).

Standardized tests were culturally tailored to a specific demographic (Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012). Erwin and Worrell (2012) bring to light "content related bias" which

> "refers to whether questions or instructions from tests are unfair for a specific group (or groups). For instance, ethnic minority students may be less familiar with the content of items on a test than their majority peers, may provide incorrect answers that would be considered correct in the context of their culture, or may have simply not been afforded the opportunity to learn the test's content" (p. 78).

Standardized tests do not accurately identify gifted students of color, "multiple sources of evidence should always be used in making decisions" (Erwin & Worrell, 2012, p. 78).

General Early Childhood Educator Perceptions of Giftedness

Upon reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators, few studies pertained to general early childhood perceptions and knowledge of giftedness and students of color.

General *educator* perceptions of giftedness should be examined from a previous study because of the viewpoints regarding giftedness. While this study did not include general early childhood educators as part of their study, the educator perceptions of giftedness are included in the study. One study, *Teacher Perceptions of Supporting Gifted Learners in General Education Classes*, included the notion that general educators recognize the academic and social needs of gifted students (Williams, 2019). This study found that "while teachers recognize these students in their classrooms, teachers

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communicated that they do not plan for gifted students due to a perceived lack of knowledge and time. Teachers do utilize differentiation, project based learning, and compacting strategies. However, they handle social needs in the moment" (Williams, 2019, p. iii). This was a crucial study to recognize because 1) it was the only study found that dealt with perceptions and knowledge of general educators (note: this study did not include general early childhood educators). 2) while the study included giftedness as a component for educators to understand, students of color were not an aspect within the study, varying from the study at hand. Not including students of color in the study (Williams, 2019) allowed for a gap to be filled by reviewing the representation of giftedness *and* students of color in general early childhood classrooms, and culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities.

General *early childhood* educator perceptions of giftedness from previous studies should be examined to recognize findings and promote the need for further investigation and research regarding early childhood educator knowledge of giftedness. One study, *Teacher Perceptions Regarding Gifted and Talented Early Childhood Students (Three to Eight Years of Age)*, was examined based on the findings of the study to recognize what perceptions educators hold regarding gifted and talented early childhood students (Jeong, 2010). The most common perceptions made by educators during this study included: "a) the need for differentiation in the regular classroom, b) advanced verbal skills, c) standardized test bias, d) families as active partners in the identification, and e) language issues" (Jeong, 2010, p. 67-68). There were also misconceptions measured within the study which included:

"a) the effectiveness of cooperative learning in heterogeneous group, b) the effectiveness of creativity tests for identifying artistically gifted students, c) acceleration options such as early entrance, grade skipping, and early exit tend to be harmful for gifted and talented students' social-emotional development, d) cooperative play style that young gifted children usually initiate play sessions, coordinate and integrate multiple complementary roles, taking into consideration the actions of other children, and e) without special programs, gifted children will succeed" (Jeong, 2010, p. 71-72).

Assessing this study was integral when creating the persistent problem of practice due to the perceptions and misconceptions early childhood educators had regarding gifted and talented students. These thoughts of misconceptions and perceptions or pre-conceived notions of gifted and talented young students, led to further investigation in understanding what general early childhood educators knew in terms of giftedness and students of color being gifted, as well as culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities.

While reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. The persistent problem of practice was then addressed with the community partners.

Community Partners

To help aid the researcher in distribution of recruitment materials upon starting the data collection process, community partners were asked to help. The community partners were chosen and asked to be community partners due to their commitment and involvement in the community. Two individuals served as community partners for the

study but did not directly participate in the study. The community of the school site was rather tight knit and was on the rise in fostering growth within gifted and talented instruction. This growth was seen through the active partnership of the principal and the gifted and talented teacher, therefore, the two individuals were chosen and asked to be community partners.

The researcher had two community partners in order to prevent coercion when recruiting and dispersing consent forms for indicated participants. The first community partner was the principal of the school site, who sent a recruitment flyer on behalf of the researcher to the indicated participants inviting them to participate. The second community partner was the gifted and talented teacher who sent a consent form on behalf of the researcher to the indicated participants (general early childhood educators) who signed and acknowledged their participation in the study. The methodology used for this study follows and briefly described.

Methodology

A Qualitative Educational Criticism guided this study (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). This research design was chosen due to alignment with analyzing curriculum practices used in general early childhood educator classrooms and to aid in the construction of data collection procedures (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). Within the study, qualitative research aimed to recognize whether general early childhood educators were knowledgeable about gifted students of color, and curriculum and instructional practices that foster access and opportunity for gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). Eisner (2017) presents four dimensions through which data can be analyzed. These four

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dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics were used to cohesively analyze the data collected with two data collection protocols. Using Eisner's (2017) four dimensions of an Educational Criticism was of importance. This included describing the setting of the study to allow recognition of where the study took place, interpreting the data collected provided a sense of understanding of what the data represented, evaluating the data using a literature-based approach (The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide) allowed for recognizing potential discrepancies between the data and actual practices in general early childhood classrooms; and finally thematics were found as emerging themes from the data collected (Eisner, 2017).

Recognition of general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color presented an improvement to the field of education by distinguishing the discrepancies disproportionality of gifted students of color in gifted programming; and providing awareness of access, and opportunity for gifted students of color (Eisner, 2017). There were some delimitations to the study and should be discussed next.

Delimitations of the Study

When thinking of delimitations to the study at hand, understanding general early childhood educator knowledge was at the forefront. This population was chosen due to the researcher working with preschool students and wanting to understand this population's general educator knowledge of gifted students of color. Early childhood spans from preschool through second grade (Tomonari, 2019), therefore general educators of grades three through eight, paraprofessionals, high school, college

professors, and non-educators were not included in the study. This study took place at one school site in one school district, which also narrowed the focus of the study and narrowed the general presumptions of the data collected. The participants were chosen based on role at the school site. Creswell (2018) asserts that a well-rounded sample size allows for trends across the data, therefore the researcher chose to invite 10 participants who were specifically teaching one grade level or taught across the early childhood spectrum (specials teachers). Fascination with general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color provoked research to take place and increase awareness surrounding the topic. There were some pre-conceived notions going into the study, that educators would not have background knowledge about giftedness, students of color, and gifted students of color. These preconceived notions led to gathered supportive relevant literature and data collected to determine if discrepancies exist between the literature and among general early childhood educator knowledge.

Conclusion

Defining the persistent problem of practice, relating to general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color, allowed for the purpose of the study to arise, and an opportunity for understanding existing discrepancies in the field of gifted education. Four additional chapters describe the process by which the researcher engulfed themselves in the literature, completed a review of the relevant literature, methodologically created a study, collected data with various protocols, analyzed the collected data, and provided future endeavors regarding the collected data.

The following chapter provides the Review of Relevant Literature containing literature as it relates to the purpose of the study and persistent problem of practice.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

"When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionable." –

Walt Disney

Introduction

The purpose of this review of relevant literature was to examine the relevant

literature regarding preschool through second grade gifted curricula for rates of academic

success, social emotional learning, and inclusive practices for gifted students of color.

Upon reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified

gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood

educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color

and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for

general early childhood educators. There was limited literature and research in support of

the curricula aspect, therefore few similar studies were included (Harradine et.al, 2013;

Gould et.al, 2001). The relevant literature focused on the following areas in recognizing

general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of giftedness and students

of color: giftedness, gifted students of color, disproportionality, racial bias, social and

emotional advocacy, gifted curriculum rationale, established curricula, instructional

strategies for gifted students, and culturally responsive lens for a multicultural education

(Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Kingore, 2008; Kettler,

2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Cross, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018). The theoretical frameworks were Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017). The two theoretical frameworks provided a complete understanding and historical background of students of color in an educational setting, and that of gifted students of color and their needs. The chapter begins with the theoretical frameworks to outline the theoretical lens used during the study.

Theoretical Frameworks

The following theoretical frameworks outlined by scholars (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017) served as the foundation in recognizing underrepresentation of gifted students of color. The development of GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017) began with Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) at the root. It was critical to include both theoretical frameworks to influence the thought process of identification for gifted students of color among general early childhood educators (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework, began with the notions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) presented Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) as it related to

> "student 'success' represented in achievement within the current social structures extant in schools. Thus, the goal of education becomes how to 'fit' students constructed as 'other' by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchal structure that is defined as a meritocracy" (p. 467).

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Ladson-Billings (1995) used these assertions as a pedagogical stance to incorporate race and its inequities in the classroom, this then transformed mindsets around race and identity in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2014) reflected on her earlier work and continued to strive toward her working definition of CRP, in which "[she] generally took the time to point out that our work to examine success among the students who had been least successful was likely to reveal important pedagogical principles for achieving success for all students" as a response to her demographic choice of African-American students (p. 76). Therefore, as educators continue to use "students of color" as a generalized phrase, educators can include students from all backgrounds, as the literature suggests "students of color" encompasses more than just Hispanic or African American students as the impacted groups (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Within these working curricula, Ladson-Billings (2014) noted that "[curriculum] rarely pushed students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have direct impact on their lives and communities" (p. 78). Incorporating daily issues that students face as a lens to teach through, transforms the way in which students engage with content, and ultimately take with them as they learn and grow (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The pedagogical stance of Ladson-Billings (1995; 2014) was used in accordance with Critical Race Theory (CRT) as Tate (1997) presented:

> "the CRT movement in legal studies is rooted in the social missions and struggles of the 1960s that sought justice, liberation, and economic empowerment; thus, from its inception, it has had both academic and social activist goals" (Tate, 1997, p.197).

Tate (1997) goes on to speak about historical injustice implications of race in correlation to CRT upbringing. CRT was defined as:

"the elimination of racial oppression as part of the larger goal of eradicating all forms of oppression [and] how these traditional interests and cultural artifacts serve as vehicles to limit and bind the educational opportunities of students of color" (Tate, 1997, p. 234).

Landon-Billings and Tate (1995) presented race as it pertained to Critical Race

Theory and its injustices to the school system:

"The 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice. As we attempt to make linkages between critical race theory and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58).

Yet, these voices were critical in the process of improving identification rates of

gifted students of color in an academic system.

The sense of appreciating a student based on their own culture or background is to

acknowledge their presence in the space (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As classrooms become

more and more culturally diverse as demographics are changing, educators can better

attend to the needs of these students by using cultural appreciation (Sleeter, 2012).

Sleeter (2012) states, "one of the major reasons why minority students in general, and

immigrant new-comers in particular, perform poorly in schools is that their home

cultures, while being 'celebrated' are not sufficiently utilized as a resource for their own

learning" (569). The cultural differences of historically marginalized students created a

barrier between them and their teachers, which did not allow for sufficient learning and

attainment to take place (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In any situation, Ladson-Billings (1995)

included "cultural congruence in an inherently moderate pedagogical strategy that accepts

that the goal of educating minority students is to train individuals in those skills needed to

succeed in mainstream society" (p. 467).

Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) was presented as one of the theoretical lenses to proactively understand one's own intentional conscious regarding gifted students of color. Through this culturally responsive lens, another theoretical framework was created, GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017), which provided avenues in recognizing gifted students of color in a general early childhood classroom (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kettler, 2016). Greene's (2017) theoretical framework, GiftedCrit™, follows Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995).

GiftedCrit™

Delving deeper into the literature, a theoretical framework was present when looking at students of color in a gifted classroom, GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017). Greene (2017), included "there are many authors and researchers in the field who have discussed oppression of culturally linguistically diverse learners, but the scholarship does not show a CRT framework through which that oppression has been viewed (Ford & Trotman, 2001; Ford and Grantham, 2003; Ford, 2008; Plucker and Burroughs, 2013: Borland, 2013; Ford, 2016)" (Greene, 2017, p. 208). This framework served as the lens for an equitable understanding of students of color by general early childhood educators. Greene (2017) goes on, noting our nation is changing "from predominately White to predominantly Hispanic and African American, the field will need to use a GiftedCrit lens to understand how to reverse disproportionality and develop talent systemically" (p. 208). This was an important lens to incorporate and use because it was newly developed and incorporated Critical Race Theory and increases awareness for gifted students of

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color through current implementation in general education classroom settings (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

When using a GiftedCrit™ lens to evaluate a curriculum, it was essential to ask if the curriculum at hand represented students of color through their culture, lifestyles, and backgrounds (Greene, 2017). Greene (2017) also brought to light the issues surrounding certain research structures surrounding identification and perpetual racism in the classroom. GiftedCrit™ aims to address and adjust educator actions, remarks, thoughts and intentions leading to perpetual racism in relation to students who identify as a student of color (Greene, 2017). GiftedCrit™ was intertwined with the ideals of racial bias (Fish, 2017; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Greene, 2017). Racial bias and perpetual racism are similar in that educators may tend to gravitate toward identifying their white students as gifted because of historical upbringing and continuing to provide the majority with opportunities (Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Fish, 2017; Greene, 2017). Using the lens of GiftedCrit™ in terms of curriculum development, allows understanding of educator background, educator intentions, and an equitable outlook on gifted students of color and their successes (Greene, 2017).

The theoretical frameworks Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017), were used during the study to provide a culturally relevant lens when looking at general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color. The relevant literature (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Tate, 2017; Creswell, 2018; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018;

Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning; 2013) supported claims

and assertions in creating a literature-based guide as an additional lens to analyze

curriculum and instruction practices in general early childhood classrooms (Peralta,

2020).

Relevant Literature

The relevant literature that follows was included in this study to present the

different areas of supported literature regarding the problem of practice and research

questions of the study. The relevant literature focused on giftedness, disproportionality,

gifted students of color, established curricula, instructional strategies for gifted students,

and social and emotional advocacy. The relevant literature served as crucial areas in

recognizing general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color. The

literature provided an outlook on established practices and outcomes, however, the lack

of literature regarding general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of

color, were gaps in the literature and was the persistent problem of practice and purpose

of this study. The review of relevant literature begins with giftedness, and proceeds with

gifted students of color, disproportionality, racial bias, social and emotional advocacy,

gifted curriculum rationale, established curricula, instructional strategies for gifted

students, and culturally responsive lens for a multicultural education.

Giftedness

The term giftedness has many connotations and understandings by different

individuals (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). Different perspectives play a large role

in being able to accurately depict, define, and identify giftedness in a classroom

(Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). Giftedness as an overarching theme in this study

provided the classification of curriculum and instruction development for gifted students

of color (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018).

> "Definitions of giftedness can be extremely powerful—determining not only who
> will qualify to receive gifted education services, but also which services are
> offered, when they are offered, and even why the services are offered. High stakes
> indeed, and from this perspective, the need for clarity cannot be overstated"
> (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018, p. 36).

The definitions of giftedness previously stated provided an onset outline for the

positionality of giftedness in the study.

Understanding giftedness as it relates to identifying a student, brings to light

Callahan and Hertberg-Davis' (2018) understanding of the federal definition of

giftedness:

> "The federal definition is silent regarding measuring giftedness based on age, but
> instead focuses on the regular school curriculum as a point of comparison for
> determining which students require specialized gifted education services. Inherent
> in this broad, inclusive approach to defining giftedness is the assumption that the
> more rigorous the general education curriculum, the larger the number of students
> who will benefit in that setting, thereby lowering the demand for specialized
> gifted education services. However, the question remains whether the ceiling in
> the general education classroom is high enough for the most advanced students"
> (p. 36).

Using the term giftedness, creates connotations for general educators, a theory of action

for remediating students 'giftedness' through minimal differentiation of the whole class

(Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). Understanding the definition of giftedness as defined

by the school and district, allows general early childhood educators the opportunity to

'raise the ceiling' for advanced students (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018).

Students who exhibit characteristics that may be far from the norm, including high ability, are considered gifted individuals (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). As seen with the definitions of giftedness in chapter one, creativity as a form of giftedness was briefly mentioned and one of the largest indicators of influential gifted learners. Creativity should be weighed accordingly to understand and identify students (Webb, 1994). Callahan and Hertberg-Davis (2018) state "history tells us it has been the creative and productive people of the world, the producers rather than consumers of knowledge, the reconstructionist of thought in all areas of human endeavor, who have become recognized as 'truly gifted' individuals" (p. 45).

Giftedness exists at different levels, starting at preschool (Johnsen, 2012). The different realms and tiers that exist within all domains of being gifted have an impact on communities, schools, parents, and children (Webb, 1994). Within different student demographics, giftedness has improved upon in identification rates (Milner, 2007), but there is still room for further advancement for gifted students of color (Ford, 2008).

Specific curriculum should be necessary for gifted students of color, however, funding lacks in support of gifted students of color in our schools (Webb, 1994). James T. Webb (1994) explains, "Services to gifted and talented children are viewed as a low priority at federal, state and most levels of government, and by educational administrations. Even where there are legal or administrative mandates for providing services, the lack of trained personnel and funds cause programs for gifted children to be miniscule" (chap. 1, para. 3). With giftedness present, gifted and talented programs in

schools with general early childhood educators need a fundamental budget from administration in support of creative outlets (Webb, 1994).

Mentors and coaches serve as creative outlets that provide gifted students of color motivation to excel (Cash, 2017). "Always keep in mind that the number one factor in increasing achievement motivation is a caring adult who can guide, coach, and encourage the learner—no matter the learner's gender, race, ethnicity, or cultural background" (Cash, 2017, chap 4, para 33). Connections that students of color make with individuals who can mentor, provide support, and increase student growth, could be seen as factors in allowing gifted students of color opportunity in gifted programming (Cash, 2017). These individuals allow for students to experience and start to recognize passion areas of interest (Cash, 2017). "Incorporate authentic mentors and coaches from the wider community within the content areas. Connect students to these adults to explore their areas of interest" (Cash, 2017, chap 4, para 121). Gifted student of color exploration through individuals who care and support for their needs, allows for increased awareness for identification of gifted students of color (Cash, 2017). The term giftedness does not always lend itself to students of color, therefore gifted students of color should be recognized next.

Gifted Students of Color

"Too many students of color have not been achieving in school as well as they should (and can) for far too long. The consequences of these disproportionally high levels of low achievement are long-term and wide-reaching, personal and civic, individual and collective" (Gay, 2018, p. 1). Students come to school with different home and life

experiences. Students of color typically come from different cultures, races, backgrounds, religions, etc. and the intersectionality of any of these in the classroom leads to the necessity of culturally competent educators (Ladson-Billings, 1995). "There are many factors that may contribute to the underrepresentation of minority children in programs for the gifted. [One factor] is the fact that teachers tend to under refer minority students to gifted programs" (Scott & Delgado, 2005, p. 199). This proposed that educators make an unconscious decision to not include students of color.

When looking at student populations in a traditional public-school setting, resources were not always available for gifted students of color (Johnsen, 2012). Not identifying students of color in preschool means not identifying students at an early age which takes away from the academic success a student achieves (Johnsen, 2012). Early childhood students experience grade level expectations, while asynchronous development inhibits the overall student performance rate (Johnsen, 2012).

Identifying students in preschool presents challenges because funds are limited for educators in the gifted education field (Pfeiffer, 2008). Identifying at an early age promotes more success for students in the long run (Harrison, 2003; Pfeiffer, 2008). "Early recognition and appropriate educational intervention for gifted preschool and kindergarten students increases the probability of future extraordinary achievement and reduces the risk for later social, behavioral, emotional, and/or educational problems" (Pfeiffer, 2008, p. 19). Standardized tests or gifted identification tests were not appropriate for preschool aged children due to their attention span and potential bias of the educator (Fish, 2017). Dabrowski's Theory of Positive disintegration and

overexcitabilities (VanTassel-Baska, 2009), GiftedCrit™ (Greene, 2017), and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) could be used to enhance the quality of education and increase identification rates for students of color in gifted programs by encompassing the whole child.

Sometimes gifted students are disadvantaged due to the lack of opportunity presented to their families (Webb, 1994). The intersection of being identified as gifted and a student of color provides for the opportunity of student portfolios, to see the whole child, which can be created and implemented by educators to break the gap (Webb, 1994). "When considering the needs of these children, we must be aware of the potential for depressed test performance caused by environments that are not enriched in ways the term is understood by most educators. Portfolios, we believe, can provide a way to overcome the problems encountered in assessing these students" (Wright & Borland, 1993, p. 205). Student portfolios are a humanizing way to identify early childhood students of color and students overall because of the collection process (Wright & Borland, 1993). Student portfolios encompass the whole child through multiple modalities of student work which include defining characteristics of a student (Wright & Borland, 1993). These defining moments may lead to proper identification as the child progresses through school (Wright & Borland, 1993).

Students of color receive appropriate access and opportunity to a gifted centered education by incorporating student portfolios inclusive to student performance and depth of knowledge (Kingore, 2008).

"The intent of portfolios with prekindergarten and kindergarten children is to initiate the portfolio process by involving children in collecting and managing a representative sample of work to document achievements and celebrate their learning. The intent with first- through third-grade children is to expand the portfolio process and increase students' involvement and responsibilities" (Kingore, 2008, p. 14).

The intentions of using portfolios provides early childhood students the capacity to expand on their learning and showcase development over time (Kingore, 2008). "Portfolios are successfully used nationwide with children as young as four to celebrate children's work and validate their learning. Not everything a child produces is kept in the portfolio; rather, the portfolio is a selection of representative or especially significant items" (Kingore, 2008, p. 13). Using student portfolios captures the whole student, inclusive to students of color, and allowing for students of color to be represented among the gifted demographic (Kingore, 2008).

Kingore (2008) included reasoning for student portfolios and the ways in which we can incorporate portfolios into daily classroom learnings. "Portfolios offer a concrete record of children's modes of learning and the development of their talents and achievements during a year or more. In classrooms where all children develop portfolios, the process enables each student to be acknowledged for the level of work he or she produces" (Kingore, 2008, p. 13). It is evident that as Kingore (2008) incorporated these ideals, the understanding of these "portfolios [is to] promote students' success by providing multiple opportunities for children from every population to demonstrate talents and potential" (p. 13). Kingore (2008) offered inclusive practices to all student demographics, including students of color, which enhanced the gifted education experience for students of color. Students of color benefited from this experience, and

educators may benefit from the practice and implementation of portfolios. Kingore

(2008) believes "portfolios assist teachers in their quest to honor the diversity of students

and discover the strengths of each learner" (p. 13). While it is important for educators to

understand their students, engaging their students and involving them in the portfolio

process was also necessary (Kingore, 2008). "When children are significantly involved in

the ongoing organization and management, portfolios are more likely to increase pride in

their work and extend their intrinsic motivation to learn" (p. 21). Educators allowed

student involvement in the process through student reflections (Kingore, 2008). Allowing

students to reflect "increase[d] children's involvement in the process and provide a

window to their perspectives…products without perspectives have less significance over

time" (Kingore, 2008, p. 25). Allowing students to become involved was a great way for

students to take ownership of their learning and allowed students of color the access and

opportunity to advance their education; while simultaneously informing students of color

families the progression of their student (Kingore, 2008).

Every student has family traditions. Families of color navigating the school

system may be unaware of the services that can be provided. This can impact the family,

dynamics at home, and upbringing of their exceptionally bright student. "More than most

parents, [some] may have to rely on [themselves] to determine what course is best for

[their] child. [They] may need to grow away from some of the traditions with which

[they] were raised" (Webb, 1994, chap. 12, para. 3). Families of color usually have

certain cultural traditions (Webb, 1994). These traditions vary within the daily household

routine, and gifted traits has an impact on the student and their access and opportunities

within their own culture (Webb, 1994). Parents who are unaware of their student's giftedness may not be aware of the services for their gifted child (Webb, 1994).

As Milner (2007) describes, it was vital that educators were educated and well-versed in cultural understandings of their students. He argues this allowed for more representation of students of color in programs. Starting with the classroom culture, "professional learning strategies can help narrow the representation gap and increase diversity in programs for the gifted. Because personal beliefs and experiences influence instruction, professional learning is essential to increase educators' awareness of the needs of students who do not share their cultural or class backgrounds" (Lewis, Novak, & Weber, 2018, p. 51). The representation gap of gifted students of color can be decreased and improved upon with further educator training and implementation (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012). This training could include a professional development series in accordance with a newly established curriculum that would hold the value of cultural pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and established gifted competencies (Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016). Gifted students of color were typically disproportionally represented among their peers in gifted programming. Disproportionality should be discussed at length next.

Disproportionality

When researchers look at the student demographics represented in different school programs, it was clear that students of color were represented disproportionately in gifted education vs. special education (Daniels, 1998). There tends to be more students identified with special education services and less in gifted education (Daniels, 1998).

Why is it that students of color were placed in programming that may or may not fit their academic needs? Student needs were being met from disproportionate representation. Daniels (1998) explores this topic and stated:

> "The underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education programs is a national problem receiving too little attention, especially as it involves African American learners. Considering the variability and diversity of gifts and talents, as well as the sociocultural and sociopolitical venues in which they are exhibited, more consideration should be given to exploring categories of giftedness not typically discussed in the literature" (p. 42).

Understanding the inequities that exist in overlap of personal identity and in-school programs allows educators to make possibly informed decisions that better the academic career path for students. Grissom and Redding (2016) include a staggering statistic,

> "Substantial race disparities exist in student receipt of gifted education services in American schools. Data from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education reveal that as of 2009, African American students constitute 16.7% of the student population but just 9.8% of students in gifted programs. Similarly, Hispanic students constitute 22.3% of students but only 15.4% of students receiving gifted services (U.S. Department of Education, 2010)" (p. 1).

The statistic proposed that the percentage of African American and Hispanic students in gifted programs were significantly lower (CDE, 2018, p. 6). "Overall, about 3.4 million K-12 children residing in households with incomes below the national median rank in the top quartile academically. This population is larger than the individual populations of 21 states" (Wyner et al., 2009, Executive Summary, para. 7).

Underrepresentation and disproportionality, terms used quite frequently when talking about minority or gifted students of color, were attributed to the achievement gap (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). "Although it is important to acknowledge that there will be

underrepresentation of minority students in GATE programs until the achievement gap

goes away, at the same time, we must also recognize that equitable representation in these

programs is a worthy goal that we need to work toward" (Erwin & Worrell, 2012, p. 81).

This assertion was the first step to working toward this goal of shrinking the achievement

gap, which entails gifted students of color not being proportionately enrolled or given

opportunities in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs (Erwin & Worrell,

2012). The disproportionality of ethnic/racial groups in gifted programs exists because:

> "[There are] narrow definitions of giftedness, using standardized cognitive and
> achievement tests as criteria for identification, differences in cultural learning
> styles, the inability of teachers to recognize giftedness, parental mistrust of
> schools, academic underachievement on the part of gifted students, failure to
> consider multiple intelligences, schools with little resources, and the
> characteristics and training of assessment personnel" (Erwin & Worrell, 2012, p.
> 75).

Erwin and Worrell (2012) gave further suggestions in support of each of the reasons

above. It is critical from a pedagogical (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) standpoint to

understand who your students are, so that identification and access are given

appropriately to our students (Erwin & Worrell, 2012).

Erwin and Worrell (2012) warrant that "teachers are often asked to nominate the

students in their classroom who demonstrate, or have the potential to demonstrate,

giftedness. However, this request is related to the fallacy of giftedness as a trait or set of

characteristics that are evident and easily identifiable. It might be less subjective to

require teachers to nominate the students who are doing the best academic work" (p. 76).

This is an intriguing notion as Erwin and Worrell (2012) have brought to the reader's

attention the fallacy of bias. Disproportionality was attributed to less advocating for

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students who have gifted characteristics, or a tendency to over identify within one population of the classroom (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). Using a rich pedagogical standpoint that was inclusive to students and their identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in relation to curriculum development, aids Erwin and Worrell's (2012) preliminary suggestion that "the disproportionate representation of [gifted] ethnic/racial minorities is even starker in many urban areas" (p. 75).

Peters and Gentry (2012) brought to light group specific norms and educator rating scales to understand underrepresentation of students of color in gifted programming.

> "When a teacher-rating scale is used in conjunction with local norms, additional students, including those who underachieve or who perform poorly on achievement tests, can also be located. Included would be students who achieve at levels lower than their higher income peers, but at high achievement levels when compared with their specific income group" (Peters & Gentry, 2012, p. 135).

Using the two identification tools: group specific norms and educator rating scales allows for student recognition no matter their background (ie: race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, etc.) (Peters & Gentry, 2012). Within the study, it was eminent that using the tools allowed for students to be recognized in the second grade in three different domains: math, reading, and science (Peters & Gentry, 2012). Group specific norms and educator rating scales showed:

> "[A break] down [of] the students scoring in the top 10% [of] those who received high teacher ratings and those who did not. This kind of distinction is important when it comes to programming as those students who do not receive high ratings could be more likely to underachieve, go unrecognized by their teachers as gifted, have trouble learning in a typical classroom environment, or fall behind" (Peters & Gentry, 2012, p. 137).

As Peters and Gentry (2012) suggest, using different tools provided gifted students of color the opportunities and access they deserve in the classroom. The disproportional gap in identifying gifted students of color exists due to the lack of curricula support for these learners.

Student of color representation in gifted programming does not equate to the student body representation of schools (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). This is discussed further in relation to racial biases held by educators, regarding gifted students of color.

Racial Bias

General early childhood educators have experienced many different characteristics exhibited by students in their classroom (Webb, 1994). These characteristics were attributed to students who personally identify as a student of color and have gifted traits or may qualify for special education (Fish, 2017). Educators should examine their own values and viewpoints when identifying students of color to either a special education teacher versus a gifted and talented teacher (Fish, 2017). Racial bias has correspondence with disproportionality of identified gifted students of color (Fish, 2017; Erwin & Worrell, 2012). Fish (2017) described the innate thought process of educators when referring students for gifted programming:

> "Teachers play an important role in identifying students with exceptionalities, but their decision-making processes about who to refer to testing is not entirely understood. How do teachers decide that particular students are capable of higher performance than is observed, and how do they decide that particular students' behaviors are sufficiently dangerous to warrant specialized programming and exclusion from the general education classroom?" (Fish, 2017, p. 317).

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It was crucial that educator bias was examined to negate biased influences of general early childhood educators (Fish, 2017). Fish (2017) goes on to say that "despite the evidence that teachers are 'more racially tolerant than the majority of Americans,' research indicates that their perceptions and treatment of students differs by student race/ethnicity" (p. 319). Student race and ethnicity was a defining factor for educators when it came to academic recommendations as "teachers hold higher academic expectations for and perceptions of white and Asian American students than they do for Latino or Black students" (Fish, 2017, p. 319). As racial bias diminishes (Fish, 2017), relevant gifted curriculum for students with exceptionalities were implemented in general education classrooms (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012).

Fish (2017) presumes that educator perceptions of students are racially biased. "Teachers also appear to perceive students' abilities and motivations differently in ways that align with racist stereotypes. White high ability is seen as natural, while Asian American high ability is perceived as the product of parental pressure, and black and Latino high ability is questioned and made invisible" (p. 320). Stereotypes present barriers for educators to accurately refer students for gifted programming (Fish, 2017). These stereotypes lead "to differences in teachers' interpretations of intentionality of misbehavior and motivation" (Fish, 2017, p. 320). Educating students within a general early childhood education classroom presents many obstacles for educators, as all students have different learning styles (Fish, 2017). However, Fish (2017) described how general stereotypes and assumption of student identity play a role in referring students for gifted programming.

Underrepresentation of gifted students of color in gifted programming due to

racial bias on behalf of the educator, prevents opportunity and access for gifted students

of color to succeed in the classroom (Fish, 2017). Therefore, identification rates of gifted

students of color also diminish (Fish, 2017). Social and emotional advocacy is explored

further in the next section.

Social and Emotional Advocacy

Gifted students have heightened abilities which innately provides for a plethora of

attributes and characteristics that identify them as gifted among their peers (Neihart,

Pfeiffer, & Cross, 2016). Fostering a caring network should be part of the classroom

culture (Cross, 2011). "Unless adults intervene to create opportunities for gifted children

to be together, their friendship possibilities will require them to cope with their

differences" (Neihart, Pfeiffer, & Cross, 2016, p. 41). This should be at the forefront as

educators build the foundation for communication skills while fostering a growth mindset

(Cross, 2011).

Webb (1994) includes an entire guide to help foster social and emotional

tendencies in students. He brings to light family and the influences family has on a

student's social and emotional well-being:

> "We recognize that there are ways of using the special abilities of gifted children
> to help them meet their own needs and have attempted to focus on these positive
> characteristics. We also have emphasized the family as a whole. We believe that
> the emotional well-being of the child cannot be understood without considering
> his family, and that the family cannot function well without understanding the
> emotional needs of the gifted child" (chap. 1, para. 6).

Social and emotional indicators and/or characteristics seen in gifted students of color relates to their home life (Webb, 1994). Incorporating ways to cope and recognize these tendencies are imperative (Webb, 1994). Students may also "possess exceptional capabilities, [and] most cannot excel without assistance. They need assistance academically, but they also need assistance emotionally through understanding, acceptance, support and encouragement" (Webb, 1994, chap. 1, para. 28).

Family is an important aspect for most students of color, due to their intersectionality of identity, culture, and innate social and emotional characteristics (Cross, 2011).

> "The culture in which a child is immersed has an important influence on the experience of being gifted. The cultural values interact with the social goals of the student and the issues associated with growing up in America. In short, although the characteristics of the gifted child, along with certain environmental factors, might create conditions where needs should exist, unless the individual child perceives or experiences the needs, they do not exist—no matter what a list might include or an expert might say" (Cross, 2011, p. 11).

The identity of a student impacts social and emotional awareness and advocacy (Cross, 2011). Culturally competent educators know their students, and students of color recognize the comfort and value their educators bring to their classrooms and surrounding communities (Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012). The rationale for a gifted curriculum should be discussed next.

Gifted Curriculum Rationale

In a traditional early childhood classroom, the general curriculum has not included gifted standards (Johnsen, 2012), nor does it include social and emotional learning and culturally relevant pedagogy, benefitting gifted students of color (Cross,

2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). "Gifted education curriculum reflects the process of developing elite talent projecting toward eminent levels of adult achievement" (Kettler, 2016, chap. 1, para 12).

Kettler (2016) brings to the forefront the impact over time of integrated gifted curriculum in a general classroom:

> "Despite the field's history of innovation in curriculum theory and learning design, we might be hard pressed to assemble evidence that curriculum and instructional innovations are emerging from gifted education to influence general education today. In fact, the opposite may be true. Differentiation strategies have dominated gifted education, creating a parasitic relationship in which gifted education is seen largely as an add-on or a reaction to general education curriculum" (chap 1, para 15).

General education classrooms have a set of standards they need to ensure students are meeting for grade-level expectations (Kettler, 2016). When general early childhood educators are faced with the task of meeting the needs of gifted students, and even more so gifted students of color, differentiation does not always elevate gifted student learning (Kettler, 2016). The development of curriculum integrated into the general classroom, allows educators the opportunity to meet the needs of various students (Kettler, 2016).

By intertwining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Greene, 2017) and social emotional needs (Cross, 2011) in the general educator classroom (Kettler, 2016) educators better understand students, no matter their background (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012). Students learn at different rates, therefore, a curriculum formatted to reach their individual needs increases student growth and representation among students of color in gifted programming (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Greene,

2017; 1995; Kettler, 2016; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012). The established curricula for students should be explored next.

Established Curricula

Certain curricula have been developed over the years in accordance with gifted standards and gifted theory (Kettler, 2016). These established curricula should be used to further enhance the work of this study with gifted students of color and Culturally Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students. "When developing curriculum for gifted CLD learners, there are three core components to be included as part of the actual curriculum: models and organizers for scaffolding of tasks, relevant task demands and activities, and higher order thinking and problem-solving tasks embedded within a particular discipline or content domain" (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012, p. 49). These relative domains are essential in allowing consistency with students, families, and districts. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, n.d.) provided educators with the conceptual knowledge of gifted students. Johnsen (2012) presented an overarching framework for districts to utilize spanning all grade levels. This framework "articulates goals, outcomes, strategies, activities, and assessment across the pre-K–12 levels of schooling. A second emphasis is the development of a scope and sequence that goes beyond the grade-level content standards and demonstrates reasonable outcomes for gifted learners to master at appropriate levels of learning" (p. 98).

Kettler (2016) takes a modern approach to curriculum and infuses repertoire that has been successful, to not impede on established curricula. "Curriculum and instruction was child-centered—matched to children's academic needs rather than children having to

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regulate themselves to narrow and rigid curricula and instructional strategies monopolized by the teacher" (Kettler, 2016, chap. 2, para. 11). As society has progressed, so have gifted curriculum standards which correlated to the decrease in student identification rates, as curriculum and standards do not align (Johnsen, 2012).

Kettler (2014) presented new findings in understanding critical thinking skills and the connections to gifted elementary student's progression in a traditional classroom setting. The student groups he looked at are either identified as gifted students or general education students. Kettler (2014) argues

"The field of gifted education has considered critical thinking a desirable goal for gifted programs and critical thinking instruction has been included as evidence-based practice in the National Gifted Programming Standards. [However] the literature of gifted education has not actively advocated for using documented levels of critical thinking as a foundation on which to differentiate instruction" (p. 128).

He then compares this statement to relevant literature which provided information on the functioning of gifted students and gifted student's critical thinking skills. Kettler's (2014) critical thinking study were relevant to the progression of gifted curriculum because he was inclusive of elementary students. While his definition of elementary students was not inclusive of all grades, the study was aimed at older elementary students in fourth grade due to the age of the participant population. Kettler's (2014) assertions of little to no studies conducted with elementary gifted students offered insight to the study at hand and continual research to be done, especially regarding gifted students of color. Kettler (2014) argues differentiation is key when curriculum is developed for gifted and talented learners. Differentiation across different content areas was necessary for gifted students to excel in their traditional classroom settings (Kettler, 2014; Sisk, 2018). Sisk (2018)

offered alternative ideas to differentiation when it came to literacy as a content area. She

claimed,

> "Gifted students deal with issues about their strengths and weaknesses in different ways from students in the general population, and therefore differentiating their learning activities is essential to help them develop their potential. Without educators there to foster that growth, these students might not make the much-needed contributions and innovations that our global world needs" (Sisk, 2018, p. 41).

Indeed, critical thinking components (Kettler, 2014) and differentiation across content

areas (Sisk, 2018) were inclusive of gifted curriculum development.

Harrison (2003) indicates an "early childhood pedagogy" was formed. This

pedagogy promoted "the awareness that there is much that adults can learn from children

[which] reinforces the need for collaborative learning and teaching partnerships between

children and educators (including family members) in which adults are willing to admit

their own ignorance and are eager to engage in reflection and to undertake their own

further research and investigation" (p. 83). This pedagogical approach benefited early

childhood gifted students of color because educators were able to understand their

potential bias through adequate training and implementation within curricula

development (Harrison, 2003). Building upon experiences and thought processes

provides educators and researchers alike the ability to reach students in new ways.

Districts could adopt current modes of curriculum to build from these platforms.

It was crucial that "appropriate modifications for students who have the ability to learn

regular curricular content at advanced rates and levels of understanding" were taken into

consideration when constructing curricula reform (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018, p.

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44). Reform and change to a curriculum, leads to curriculum compacting (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). Callahan and Hertberg-Davis (2018) continue in recognizing "Curriculum Compacting (Reis, Westberg, Kulikowich, Caillard, Hébert, Plucker, et al., 1993; Reis & Renzulli, n.d.), one research-based practice strategy used for modifying curricular content to accommodate advanced learners and complement other acceleration techniques, should be an essential part of school programs that strive to respect individual differences clearly evident from scores on cognitive ability and achievement tests" (p. 44). Supporting students through a curriculum that impacts the student on a personal level was imperative as Callahan and Hertberg-Davis (2018) suggested curriculum compacting assisted students in narrowing what they needed to accomplish.

It is imperative that curricula structures were set in place for gifted students (Kettler, 2014; 2016). Too often high achieving and high ability students are forced to complete tasks that general education students should complete, when these tasks were not meeting their academic needs (Stamps, 2004). Stamps (2004) suggests "the use of curriculum compacting in the regular classroom for high ability students seems paramount in meeting their educational needs," (p. 31). Stamps (2004) goes on to say, "the main rationale for the first-grade curriculum compacting project was to eliminate already mastered curriculum and offer enrichment or acceleration activities to high ability first grade students in the regular classroom" (p. 31). The study by Stamps (2004) included first grade students as there was minimal literature that includes younger students. The elementary population is often overlooked when it comes to gifted education and providing them with an applicable curriculum for their abilities.

Curriculum compacting is a first step in understanding early childhood students when providing them with materials across content areas (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). Established curricula afford general early childhood educators the opportunity to recognize gifted students of color, and instructional practices enhances the student experience. Instructional practices should be outlined next.

Instructional Strategies for Gifted Students

Following established curricula in the gifted field, instructional strategies allow educators to incorporate gifted aspects for students of color in their general early childhood classroom (Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). Kingore (2013) includes, "instruction enables or limits academic rigor through curriculum content and instructional decisions. A rich classroom-learning environment is such a significant influence on students that it actually impacts brain development and levels of intelligence" (p. 155). General early childhood educator's awareness of the curriculum and instruction being presented to gifted students of color allows for some students to be recognized, but when different strategies are implemented, students are seen (Kingore, 2013). "Today there is a growing realization among educators that curriculum and instruction must move beyond knowledge and skills to include the deeper, transferable understandings realized at the conceptual level of thinking" (Erickson, 2014, p.10). To ensure student understandings are transferable, educators incorporate "concept-based models [to] differentiate clearly between what students must Know factually, understand conceptually, and be able to Do in processes, strategies, and skills" (Erickson, 2014, p. 10-11). This conceptual level of understanding and thinking by general early childhood

educators, allows for the learning process to be broken down, and students have the opportunity to explain their own thinking (Erickson, 2014). In using a conceptual level of understanding, educators can incorporate and be aware of student identity (Sousa, 2011). Sousa (2011) includes the notion, "if we expect students to find meaning, we need to be certain today's curriculum contains connections to their past experiences, not just ours" (chap. 3, para. 18). In providing a culturally relevant educational experience for gifted students of color, their experiences can be incorporated into curriculum, which increases engagement and stimulates learning (Sousa, 2011).

Providing for gifted students of color in a general early childhood classroom begins with recognition and awareness of who is in the room and what their experiences have been (Kingore, 2013; Sousa, 2011). To bridge the gap between curriculum and instruction, a conceptual level of thinking provides students opportunities to express thought processes and grow among their peers (Erickson, 2014). Instructional strategies can include culturally relevant learning within a multicultural education and lens, which should be discussed next.

Culturally Responsive Lens for a Multicultural Education

Instructional strategies can include a culturally responsive multicultural education, an education in which students are seen and recognized for the value they bring to the classroom and community. "Multicultural education is grounded in ideals of social justice, educational equity, and a dedication to providing educational experiences that allow every child to reach his or her full potential as a learner and as a socially aware and active being" (Souto-Manning, 2013, p. 11). This thought of allowing students the

opportunity to expand upon their own knowledge using educational experiences comes

from being caring as educators. Gay (2018) brings to light the notion of care such as,

> "culturally responsive caring as an essential part of the educational process is much more. It focuses on caring *for* instead of *about* the personal well-being and academic success of ethnically diverse students, with a clear understanding that the two are interrelated…caring for others requires being able to understand them and their worlds from insider perspectives, being able to understand what they are striving to be, and what they require to grow. A caring person is emotionally invested in the cared for, as well as *acts* in their best interest" (p. 58).

Intertwining the two, culturally responsive and multicultural education, provides

students with an educated mindset of inclusion and level of care. "Multicultural

education, when conceived as education for transformation, involves three layers of

interrelated transformation: (1) of self, (2) of teaching, and (3) of society" (Souto-

Manning, 2013, p. 11). These layers of transformation allow for educators to recognize

who they are as individuals, how their own biases may impact the way they teach and

how their students view society (Souto-Manning, 2013). These layers of transformation

allow for educators to "[see], [respect], and [assist] diverse students from their own

vantage points, [which] can better help them grow academically, culturally, and psycho-

emotionally…[educators] seek to know what [student] strengths or assets are, and to act

relevantly and responsively to facilitate students' further growth and development" (Gay,

2018, p. 59). The lens educators choose to use when teaching, may impact students in the

long run, "academically, culturally, and psycho-emotionally" (Gay, 2018, p. 59).

Souto-Manning (2013) brings to light the notion of "equity" and ensuring that all

students are seen and heard. "Multicultural education is about equity – and in the early

childhood classroom, equity has to do with whose voices are heard and read" (Souto-

Manning, 2013, p. 15). Within the text, it was important to note that all students have the equivalent ability to understand and acquire the skills needed throughout their educational career (Souto-Manning, 2013). "It is about developing these knowledges, attitudes, and skills as a teacher as well" (Souto-Manning, 2013, p. 15). Developing these multicultural based competencies as educators allow for students to be multiculturally competent in their learning and social interactions with others (Souto-Manning, 2013).

> "The heart of the educational process is the interactions that occur between teachers and students. These interactions are major determinants of the quality of education children receive. Unfortunately, all teachers do not have positive attitudes toward, expectations of, and interactions with students of color. Racial biases, ethnic stereotyping, cultural ethnocentrism and personal rejections cause teachers who don't care to devalue, demean and even fear some African American, Latino American, Native American and Asian American students in their classrooms" (Gay, 2018, p. 60).

The way in which educators interact and provide educational learning through a culturally responsive multicultural lens, for different learning styles, allows for students to gain a better sense of the world around them, allows for caring and compassionate exchanges between students and educators, and students of color are heard and seen (Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018).

A literature-based guide was created to guide educators toward a more culturally responsive curriculum and instruction outlook. The rationale for the guide should be found next.

Rationale for Literature-Based Guide

In making sure that educators were humanizing the gifted student of color experience in their classroom, examination of general early childhood educator

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knowledge and classroom environments were at the forefront (Creswell, 2018; Freire, 2018).

Understanding the gifted student of color experience included supportive literature surrounding culturally relevant instruction for gifted students of color and understanding general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color. Due to the literature, gifted students of color were disproportionately identified by their general educators (Lewis, Novak & Weber, 2018; Milner, 2007; Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Fish, 2017; Johnsen, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). Freire's (2018) humanization was recognized in support of gifted students of color and their potential, seeing students of color as humans, through the guidance of the following areas: social and emotional advocacy (Webb, 1994; Cross, 2011), early childhood curriculum (Johnsen, 2012), and access to gifted services (Kingore, 2008).

Guiding general early childhood educators to educate through a culturally relevant lens begins with understanding the whole student and humanizing the student experience in the classroom (Freire, 2018). "Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility" (Freire, 2018, chap 1, para 1). Humanizing the gifted student of color experience can be achieved by guiding general early childhood educators with literature-based techniques (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay,

2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013), to seek and recognize gifted students of color in the general early childhood classroom (Peralta, 2020).

Recognizing gifted students of color in a general early childhood classroom can be achieved through guidance and implementation of culturally relevant instruction techniques (Freire, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Peralta, 2020). Similar studies were found and should be discussed next.

Similar Studies

It was critical to examine and include similar studies in recognition of current practices in the field, and the ways in which other researchers have impacted the field. These studies included early childhood gifted curricula and identification of gifted students of color (Harradine et.al, 2013; Gould et.al, 2001).

The intersectionality of being gifted and a student of color presents challenges for educators (Harradine et.al, 2013).

> "To be a responsive multicultural teacher, teachers must do three things: understand their own biases, assumptions and perspectives; learn about general and specific knowledge and perspectives of others; and be able to use different strategies responsive to different perspectives and cultures. These strategies are possible no matter the race, culture, gender or experience of the teacher" (Harradine et.al, 2013, p. 25).

While general early childhood educators spend time observing their students on a daily basis, "this documentation process can be critical to identifying strengths in typically underserved populations, because it offers evidence of thinking process and concept development" (Harradine et.al., 2013, p. 25). The study that Harradine et.al.

(2013) presented incorporated students of color and the impact educator perceptions have on identifying these students as gifted. This study presented in detail the connection between educator perception/bias and students of color being identified. The results showed that without the identification methods the author introduced, students of color would have been missed and not identified (Harradine et.al, 2013).

Gould et.al. (2001) presented a study in which an early childhood accelerated program was introduced. This program had three goals in mind: "to identify significant numbers of gifted children at an early stage of learning, to place them in an accelerated program that provided appropriate experience to match their ability levels, and to focus on an underserved target population – culturally diverse children of high ability" (Gould et.al., 2001, p. 47). The goals outlined in the study were relevant to early childhood practices and aligned with gifted standards as well (Johnsen, 2012). Gould et.al. (2001) incorporated identification procedures and social and behavioral expectations when observing students. These ramifications were critical in identifying the needs of the youngest students being three and four years old, who were typically "[nominated] by a parent" as well as "an interview with the child, an informal assessment of skills, and administration of the Bracken Basic Concept Scale" (Gould et.al., 2001, p. 48). The author went on to include more about the curriculum implemented and the scheduled times during the school day that curriculum was enriched by gifted aspects, for preschool aged children.

In reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early

childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. The two studies showed that early childhood gifted curricula and identification of gifted students of color were not intertwined (Harradine et.al, 2013; Gould et.al, 2001) nor did either study include a Qualitative Educational Criticism as a methodological analysis approach, which allowed for this study to be different in approach by describing, interpreting, evaluating and having emerging themes (thematics) (Eisner, 2017). Within the studies, the idea of early childhood gifted curricula existed and the idea of identifying gifted students of color existed, but not intertwined together (Harradine et.al, 2013; Gould et.al, 2001). Therefore, the literature-based guide (Peralta, 2020) specifically tailored to gifted students of color promotes rigorous standards (Johnsen, 2012), social and emotional needs (Cross, 2011), and culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017) to improve identification rates of gifted students of color in an early childhood general education classroom.

After examining relevant literature and similar studies, gaps within the literature were found and should be discussed to further understand the purpose of the study.

Gaps in Literature

There were gaps in the literature regarding general early childhood educator's knowledge of gifted students of color, in preschool through second grade. Gaps in the literature included gifted identification (Johnsen, 2012) of preschool aged children, and the lack of identified preschool students of color. There were gaps in the literature when

looking at established curriculum (Kettler, 2016; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018) as it related to students of color, their culture, community, and home life. Other gaps existed with curriculum as it related to social and emotional awareness and needs of gifted students of color by general early childhood educators (Webb, 1994; Cross, 2011).

The relationship between identification of gifted students of color and humanization lacks thereof in the literature (Johnsen 2012; Freire, 2018). Culturally responsive professional pedagogical learning opportunities was important when looking at identification rates, programs and services being offered, and student engagement in programs since this was reflective in the persistent problem of practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gifted students of color should have a humanizing, culturally relevant, inclusive, and appropriate education (Freire, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Cross, 2011) through appropriate curriculum practices (Kettler, 2016; Johnsen 2012; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). General early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color was not seen in existing literature, therefore, theoretical frameworks (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017), similar studies (Harradine et.al, 2013; Gould et.al, 2001) and gaps in the literature provided a road map for the study, and inclusion to the field.

General early childhood educator knowledge and humanization (Freire, 2018) lends itself to Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ by providing safe spaces for learning to occur (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). Humanization gives a voice to students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Freire, 2018)

which rectifies and advocates for social and emotional needs in a general education classroom (Cross, 2011; Webb, 1994). Humanizing the student experience through appropriate means of identification (Ford, 1998; Erwin & Worrell, 2012) ensures positive student outcomes to encompass the whole child and their school career (Kingore, 2008).

Chapter Three: Methodology

"When you're curious, you find lots of interesting things to do. And one thing it takes to

accomplish something is courage." – Walt Disney

Introduction

A Qualitative Educational Criticism guided this study (Eisner, 2017; Creswell,

2018). This research design was chosen due to alignment with analyzing curriculum

practices used in general early childhood educator classrooms and to aid in the

construction of data collection procedures (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). Within the

study, qualitative research aimed to recognize whether general early childhood educators

were knowledgeable about gifted students of color, and instructional practices that foster

access and opportunity for gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). Upon reviewing the

literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of

color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices

explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of

culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early

childhood educators. This presented an improvement to the field of education by

distinguishing the disproportionality of gifted students of color in gifted programming;

and providing awareness of access, and opportunity for gifted students of color (Eisner,

2017). The purpose of the study should be addressed next.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color. This study included different perspectives of preschool through second grade early childhood educators. A first-order narrative where "individuals tell stories about themselves, [their students] and their own experiences" has been chosen to understand viewpoints within interviews of educators (Creswell, 2018, p. 153). A literature-based guide (Peralta, 2020) grounded in the literature (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013) has been developed by the researcher and compared to the interview answers from educators and photographs taken within the classroom environment protocol (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). The following research questions were used to help guide research inquiries regarding what curriculum already exists for early childhood gifted students of color, the results and implications are connected to the success rate of gifted students of color.

Research Questions

- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?
- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color?

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- What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

Research Design Rationale

A Qualitative Educational Criticism guided this study (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). This research design was chosen due to alignment with analyzing curriculum practices used in general early childhood educator classrooms and to aid in the construction of data collection procedures (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2018) asserted "qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 42). Within the study, qualitative research aimed to recognize whether general early childhood educators were knowledgeable about gifted students of color, and instructional practices that foster access and opportunity for gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). A qualitative approach was used "because a problem or issue need[ed] to be explored. This exploration [was] needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot easily be measured, or *hear silenced voices*" (Creswell, 2018, p. 45). "Hear silenced voices" in the previous quote was intentionally italicized, by the researcher, to highlight the demographic group, general early childhood educators, as their perspectives and voices were included in the study.

"Educational criticism is especially important in the current climate of schooling in which teachers are ordered to use a specific learning objective for every lesson, test constantly, record test results, and retest. Are the students bored? Are teachers frustrated?

Are there better practices available?" (Eisner, 2017, Foreword, para 2). The questions

Eisner (2017) positioned within the above statement, provoked the design and intent of

the study, to understand general early childhood educator knowledge regarding gifted

students of color. The purpose for an Educational Criticism "should contribute to the

enhancement of the educational process and through it to the educational enhancement of

students. In this sense educational criticism is an educational medium [and] concerned

with understanding for educational improvement. Does it contribute to the improvement

of education?" (Eisner, 2017, chap 6, para 26). The four dimensions of an Educational

Criticism was of importance (Eisner, 2017). These dimensions included describing the

setting of the study to allow recognition of where the study took place, interpreting the

data collected provided a sense of understanding of what the data represented, evaluating

the data using a literature-based approach (The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood

Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide) allowed for recognizing potential discrepancies

between the data and actual practices in general early childhood classrooms; and finally

thematics were found as emerging themes from the data collected (Eisner, 2017).

Recognizing general early childhood educator knowledge about giftedness and students

of color presented an improvement to the field of education by distinguishing the

disproportionality of gifted students of color in gifted programming; and providing

awareness of access, and opportunity for gifted students of color (Eisner, 2017).

    This study included two different protocols: interview protocol and classroom

environment protocol which were created on the foundation of a Qualitative Educational

Criticism (Creswell, 2018; Eisner, 2017). The data collection protocols were outlined and

explained within this chapter, recognizing how the protocols were created, why they were created, and the intent of use throughout the data collection process (Eisner, 2017). Once the research design (Creswell, 2018; Eisner, 2017) was chosen, the intended setting and participants for the study were chosen, to understand general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color.

Study Setting and Participants

This study took place at a school in the district, that housed preschool through eighth grade. This study was focusing on grades preschool through second grade, grades that had limited research of gifted curriculum for students of color (Kettler, 2016; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). These grades were chosen to highlight the gaps in the literature of early childhood education and to potentially enhance gifted curriculum for these populations. The participants were general early childhood educators within preschool through second grade. There were ten total participants the researcher intended to invite to participate in the study because all invited participants were inclusive to early childhood educators at the school site. All ten invited participants accepted and completed the consent form (10:10). Participants were selected based on the following criteria: general early childhood educators (preschool through second grade), educator during the school year 2019-2020, educator in the district. Creswell (2018) asserts that "purposeful sampling of individuals or sites will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination" (p. 148). Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity for this research study. Each participant was known as "participant 1, 2, 3…10" (Creswell, 2018).

Before beginning the study, the researcher had to position themselves in recognizing who they were as a person in the field, and the values, thoughts, and intentions they brought with them into the study (Creswell, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

As we delve into the topic, a "qualitative [researcher studies] things in [his/her] natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Creswell, 2018, p. 7). It is critical to know the researcher has experience with preschool aged children but sees the discrepancies reported by Johnsen (2012) that exist in gifted curriculum and this age group. It is critical that the researcher have an ethical lens when approaching, completing, and collecting the data (Creswell, 2018). The researcher "attend[s] to ethical considerations by locating site/individual, gaining access and developing rapport, sampling purposefully, collecting data, recording information, minimizing field issues and storing data securely" (Creswell, 2018, p. 149). In attending to ethical considerations, it was crucial to ensure anonymity of all participants during the study. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity for this research study. Each participant was known as "participant 1, 2, 3…10" (Creswell, 2018). These pseudonyms were used and referred to within the study and all protocols used to collect data. A separate chart was created privately and securely for the researcher only, in reference to who each pseudonym represented.

Data Collection Protocols

In order to collect data, there were two different protocols: Interview Protocol and Classroom Environment Observation Protocol used to gather and organize the data

(Creswell, 2018). "Once the inquirer selects the sites or people, decisions need to be made about the most appropriate data collection approaches. Typically, the qualitative researcher will collect data from more than one source. To guide data collection, the researcher develops protocols for recording the information and needs to pilot the forms for recording the data, such as interview or observational protocols" (Creswell, 2018, p. 148). The two protocols were chosen to gather general early childhood educator responses regarding educator knowledge surrounding gifted students of color and photographs of the classroom environment and were created to use consistently with every participant. The development of the two protocols follow with enhanced narratives in describing the process.

Interview Protocol Development

Organizing interview responses was critical when considering implications and data analysis of the collected data. Creswell (2018) provides an outline to organize interview information. This outline was used to organize who was being interviewed, the time of the interview, the location of the interview, who the interviewer was, the purpose of the study and the interview questions to be asked. A document with the organizational outline was created per participant and stored on the online University secure server. The outline was used during every interview per participant for organizational needs, and for notes to be taken during the interview by the researcher (Creswell, 2018). See *Table 1* for the interview protocol outline.

Table 1: Interview Protocol – Sample Interview Protocol or Guide
(Creswell, 2018, p. 166)

Time of Interview:	Dependent on participant
Date:	Dependent on participant
Place:	Office space
Interviewer:	Lead Researcher
Participant:	*Example:* Participant 1
Position of Participant:	ECE general eduhcation teacher
Purpose of Study:	The purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color.
Interview Questions:	*(Include Interview Questions here in specific order, Appendix B)*

Gaining insight from educators regarding their knowledge surrounding gifted students of color was the focus of the study. Conducting interviews to capture general early childhood educator thoughts regarding giftedness and students of color was necessary (Creswell, 2018). The development of the interview questions began with recognizing areas of need for gifted students of color. The areas of need were determined based on the relevant literature, which include areas of growth for educators in the field (NAGC, n.d; CDE, 2018; District, 2019; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Harrison, 2003; Kettler, 2014; Cross, 2011; Neihart, 2016). Based on areas of need for gifted students of color and the literature, there were five overarching themes: giftedness, access to gifted services, students of color, early childhood curriculum, and social-emotional advocacy. With the five overarching

themes, scaffolded interview questions were created, building upon one another to provide a depth of understanding with each overarching theme (Creswell, 2018). In order to decide how many questions to include per overarching theme, Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert, "in qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight participants in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (p. 187). Therefore, three open-ended interview questions were created per overarching theme, which totaled 15 questions asked of participants during an interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Each overarching theme started with a question that would allow educators to become comfortable with the subject and be able to share their thoughts and lived experiences (Creswell, 2018). The questions then built upon one another to increase depth of complexity and knowledge surrounding the topic of gifted students of color. *Table 2* provides the interview questions as they pertain to each of the overarching themes and literature relevant to the development of the questions, as well as the intended purpose for each question.

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Table 2: Interview Questions Chart

Theme	Questions	Citation	Purpose
Giftedness	• What is giftedness (to you)? • How does giftedness manifest in your classroom? • How do you promote giftedness in your classroom for gifted students of color?	(NAGC, n.d; CDE, 2018; District, 2019; Erwin & Worrell, 2012)	The purpose of the questions within *Giftedness*, were to recognize a) general educator knowledge about the term giftedness, b) general educator knowledge and awareness of giftedness in their classroom and c) general educator knowledge of inclusion of gifted aspects as well as students of color in their classroom
Access to Gifted Services	• What does access for gifted students of color look like? • What access (to other materials) is being given to identified gifted students in your classroom? • What culturally responsive materials are provided for gifted students of color in your classroom?	(Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018)	The purpose of the questions within *Access to Gifted Services*, were to recognize a) general educator knowledge of accessibility for gifted students of color b) general educator knowledge of materials to provide for gifted students of color and c) general educator knowledge of culturally responsive teaching inclusive to materials provided for students.

Students of Color	• How do you define 'students of color'? • How are you helping students of color in your classroom succeed? How are you helping gifted students of color succeed? • How do gifted students of color excel in your classroom?	(Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012)	The purpose of the questions within *Students of Color*, were to recognize a) general educator knowledge of students of color b) general educator knowledge and awareness of students of color potentially in their classroom and c) general educator knowledge of bridging the gap between students of color and giftedness.
Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction	• What curriculum do you use in your classroom? • How can you implement gifted ideologies into the curriculum you use? • What next steps will be taken when implementing gifted aspects into your curriculum?	(Harrison, 2003; Kettler, 2014)	The purpose of the questions within *Early Childhood Curriculum*, were to recognize a) general educator knowledge of curriculum used in their classroom b) general educator knowledge of recognizing and implementing strategies for gifted students in their classroom, and c) general educator knowledge of adjusting, adding, and implementing within curriculum to meet needs for gifted students in their classroom.

| Social and Emotional Needs | • Socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your class?
• What techniques to do you use to assist student's social and emotional needs?
• How do you foster social and emotional awareness in your classroom for gifted students of color? | (Cross, 2011; Neihart, 2016) | The purpose of the questions within *Social Emotional Needs*, were to recognize a) general educator knowledge and awareness of social and emotional needs in the classroom, b) general educator knowledge of informed social emotional techniques used with students and c) general educator knowledge and awareness of providing social emotional tools for gifted students of color. |

The order of the interview questions was of importance (Creswell, 2018). Since

each question created was intentionally worded to build off one another and provide a

scaffold during the interview process, it was imperative that all preliminary questions per

overarching theme were presented first in a specific order. The order of the questions was

determined based on the overarching theme (Creswell, 2018). Since each overarching

theme was broad in topic, starting with a question under the early childhood curriculum

and instruction overarching theme provided participants with the opportunity to ease into

the interview process because that is an area that all early childhood educators were

familiar coming into the study and interview process (Creswell, 218). The order of

questions asked per overarching theme was early childhood curriculum, social emotional

advocacy, giftedness, students of color, and access to gifted services. This order of

questions to be asked under each theme was chosen due to the overarching theme and

comfort level of educators understanding questions (Creswell, 2018). This interview

question order pattern proceeded as the order in which questions were asked, again

scaffolding each question and increasing knowledge needed by participant responses as

questions progressed. For the specific order of questions asked, see *Table 3*.

Table 3: Interview Question Order

Question Number:	Question:	Theme:
1	What curriculum do you use in your classroom?	Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction
2	Socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?	Social and Emotional Needs
3	What is giftedness to you?	Giftedness
4	How do you define "students of color"?	Students of Color
5	What does access for gifted students of color look like?	Access to Gifted Services
6	How can you implement gifted ideologies into the curriculum you use?	Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction
7	What techniques do you use to assist student's social and emotional needs?	Social and Emotional Needs

8	How does giftedness manifest in your classroom?	Giftedness
9	How are you helping students of color in your classroom succeed? How are you helping gifted students of color succeed?	Students of Color
10	What access (to other materials) is being given to identified gifted students in your classroom?	Access to Gifted Services
11	What next steps will be taken when implementing gifted aspects into your curriculum?	Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction
12	How do you foster social and emotional awareness in your classroom for gifted students of color?	Social and Emotional Needs
13	How do you promote giftedness in your classroom for gifted students of color?	Giftedness
14	How do gifted students of color excel in your classroom?	Students of Color
15	What culturally responsive materials are provided for gifted students of color in your classroom?	Access to Gifted Services
16	What is your understanding of (school district's) policy for screening students for GT/HGT status?	District Policy
17	Do you believe the process is equitable? Why or why not?	District Policy

The process of developing the interview protocol allowed for the development of the classroom environment observation protocol through the intent of understanding accessibility for gifted students of color in general early childhood educator classrooms. The development of the classroom environment observation protocol should be discussed next.

Classroom Environment Observation Protocol Development

In order to capture further narratives of general early childhood educator knowledge surrounding gifted students of color, the space in which educators teach and allow students the capacity to learn and grow, was observed (Creswell, 2018). There needed to be an outline or guide to collect observations per participant. The Classroom Environment Observation Protocol was created with the intent of collecting various photographs of each participant classroom. The photographs were to capture the environment that each educator has come to make their own. The Classroom Environment Observation Protocol was created in a table format. The first column included the classroom for which the observation took place with participant pseudonym. The second column included emerging themes that were found during data analysis. The third column included photographs taken of the classroom. The fourth column was created for additional notes taken of the classroom when observing. The final column, areas of growth, provided space to detail areas for the educator to grow within the space they create for students. See *Table 4* for outline of the Classroom Environment Observation Protocol.

Table 4: Classroom Environment Observation Protocol

Classroom:	Emerging Themes:	Photographs:	Classroom Comments:	Areas of Growth:
Participant 1-10				

The development of the interview protocol and the classroom environment observation protocol were created with the intent to collect data based on general early childhood educator knowledge and the accessibility for gifted students of color in classrooms (Creswell, 2018). Development of a literature-based guide took place after with the intent of comparing the guide, that includes relevant literature as support, to the data collected through the two protocols (Peralta, 2020). The development of the guide should be found next.

Literature-Based Guide

The above protocols were created as tools to be able to collect data during the data collection process. The following section delves into how a literature-based guide was created and evolved in order to compare to the data collected (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018). Expert reviews are included to provide reliability and validity in practice (Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020). Developing a literature-based guide was imperative in being able to compare what general early childhood educators knew, to the literature-based approaches in the field (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Freire, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013).

Development of Guide

Initially a Gifted Curriculum Rubric was created to compare to the above protocols. The rubric was developed through a process of understanding the literature and being able to incorporate the literature as the foundation. The rubric included five overarching themes (giftedness, access to gifted services, students of color, early childhood curriculum, social and emotional needs) plus characteristics that were included within those overarching themes. The characteristics under each theme are areas that should be included within a gifted curriculum for early childhood gifted students of color. The Gifted Curriculum Rubric was created with the intention of recognizing curriculum literature-based approaches in a general early childhood classroom. The rubric would allow educators the opportunity to understand areas they need to improve as it relates to curriculum in the general early childhood classroom. The rubric underwent expert review by two scholars to ensure validity for use in the field.

Expert Review

To ensure the developed Gifted Curriculum Rubric (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018) was valid and reliable for future use and implementation, two different scholars provided an expert review and critical feedback based on the preliminary layout of the Gifted Curriculum Rubric (Creswell, 2018). The two scholars that the researcher reached out to and was given feedback from were Dr. Robin Greene, the current Gifted and Talented Director of Denver Public Schools and author of GiftedCrit™, and Dr. Nancy

Hertzog, the Director at the University of Washington Robinson Center for Young

Scholars. Each scholar was asked to review the Gifted Curriculum Rubric and provide

critical feedback to the researcher. The researcher met virtually with each scholar to

discuss and deliberate the rubric at hand (Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020). The two

individuals provided a neutral lens through their expertise in gifted education, early

childhood education, and culturally responsive curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995;

Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020; Creswell, 2018).

The expert review provides validity from experienced scholars in the field

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After discussions with each scholar, it was determined that

the language used in the rubric originally should be enhanced to better suit the nature of

the study (Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020). Since the researcher was interested in

understanding general early childhood educator knowledge surrounding curriculum and

instruction practices in the classroom, the researcher decided re-framing the Gifted

Curriculum Rubric as a literature-based *guide* better incorporated the literature presented

and provided a more robust instruction practice for general early childhood educators to

follow (Greene, 2020; Hertzog, 2020). Upon the expert review and literature support, the

rubric transformed to a guide, and the discussion should follow next.

Transformation

Upon expert review and literature support, the Gifted Curriculum Rubric

transformed to a literature-based guide, The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted

Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020), captured the purpose of the study, and

presented a whole student approach for gifted students of color (Freire, 2018).

Humanizing the gifted student of color experience can be accomplished by guiding general early childhood educators to recognize giftedness and students of color in their classrooms (Freire, 2018). How do educators incorporate new learnings and ideas into their teaching to reach all populations in their classrooms? Freire (2018) speaks to the "banking concept of education, which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human" (Freire, 2018, chap 2, para 5). The banking model suggests that educators 'feed' information to students in a traditional school setting, and unaware of WHO sits in their classroom (Freire, 2018). Freire (2018) goes on to speak about the notion of dehumanizing an individual and the oppressive nature: "sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (Freire, 2018, chap 1, para 4). To combat the traditional general early childhood experience of school systems, guiding educators to seek and humanize their instructional practices through a culturally relevant lens creates a classroom environment that appreciates and acknowledges students, as humans (Freire, 2018). Scholarly work in the field of gifted education was included as the foundation for educator guidance in culturally relevant instruction practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene,

2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014).

A literature-based guide was developed to increase the awareness of gifted students of color in general early childhood education classrooms (Peralta, 2020). The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was compared to the data collection protocols during this study, to further the understanding of discrepancies that existed among general early childhood educators and their knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color (Peralta, 2020). The newly developed framework should be introduced and discussed next.
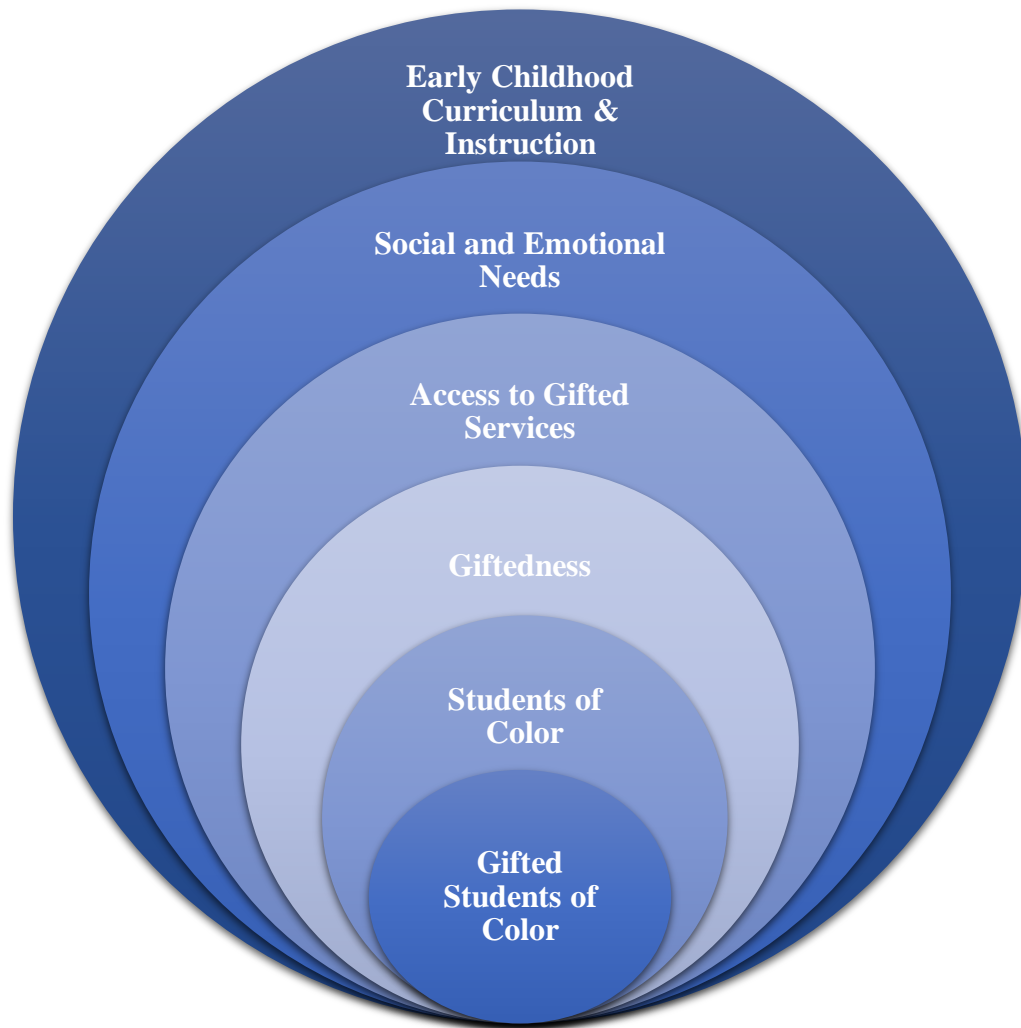
The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide

A newly developed guide, The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was designed to be used as a guide when observing curriculum and instruction-based practices in general early childhood education classrooms. The outline of the guide visually includes layers of circles with gifted students of color at the center, then expands to different overarching themes that impact gifted students of color including students of color, giftedness, access to gifted services, social emotional needs, and early childhood curriculum and instruction (*Figure 1*). These overarching themes are not hierarchical and are solely included to impact gifted students of color in terms of access and opportunity in the general early childhood classroom. The outline was created to show a wholistic approach in humanizing the student experience for gifted students of color, hence the circles (Freire, 2018). The theoretical frameworks of the study provided for an inclusive lens when looking at gifted

students of color and the innate needs of these students, which assisted in the development of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Peralta, 2020).

Under each overarching theme there should be essential components, or practices that should be implemented in general early childhood classrooms. The literature served as the textual evidence and foundation for the creation of the guide, inclusive to the essential components (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Tate, 2017; Creswell, 2018; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018).

Figure 1: *The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide* **Outline**

Early Childhood Curriculum & Instruction

Social and Emotional Needs

Access to Gifted Services

Giftedness

Students of Color

Gifted Students of Color

The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide

Overarching Themes

Each of the different overarching themes were included to show the direct impact to gifted students of color in a general early childhood education classroom. Each of the following overarching themes should include certain essential components when observing instructional practices in a general early childhood education classroom. The essential components, or attributes included as instructional practices are within the five overarching themes, and serve as ideal instructional-based practices that allow gifted students of color access and opportunity for growth, based on previous scholar experience (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Tate, 2017; Creswell, 2018; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013).

Students of Color. *Students of color* should include the following essential components under this overarching theme: a) ensure personal growth is accomplished through intrinsic motivation of a topic of interest, b) use student's cultural background to guide lessons, c) allow students to conduct own authentic independent research (project) true to who they are as an individual, d) include student goal setting and self-monitoring (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018). These components can provide gifted students of color the opportunity for expression of one's own identity, as seen through the literature (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018).

Giftedness. *Giftedness* should include the following essential components under this overarching theme: a) allow students the freedom to design their own units, lessons or projects, b) Provide authentic mentors and coaches to aid in academic success and goal attainment; students will have access to mentors during school sessions, c) Use creative activities and lessons to engage student learning, and d) Have appropriate high expectations of students, which are known and posted in the classroom (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Cash, 2017). These components can provide gifted students of color the opportunity to be identified as a gifted student, and be heard (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Cash, 2017).

Access to Gifted Services. *Access to Gifted Services* should include the following essential components under this overarching theme: a) incorporate flexible grouping for student learning, b) ensure push and pull-out sessions are offered during the school day, c) provide extra-curricular activities to foster intensive growth in and out of the classroom, d) incorporate individual cultural contexts for students to engage with and promote inclusivity, and e) collect body of evidence to include in portfolios (Kingore, 2008; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). These components can provide gifted students of color with the necessary support to close the achievement gap for underrepresented under identified students (Kingore, 2008; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018).
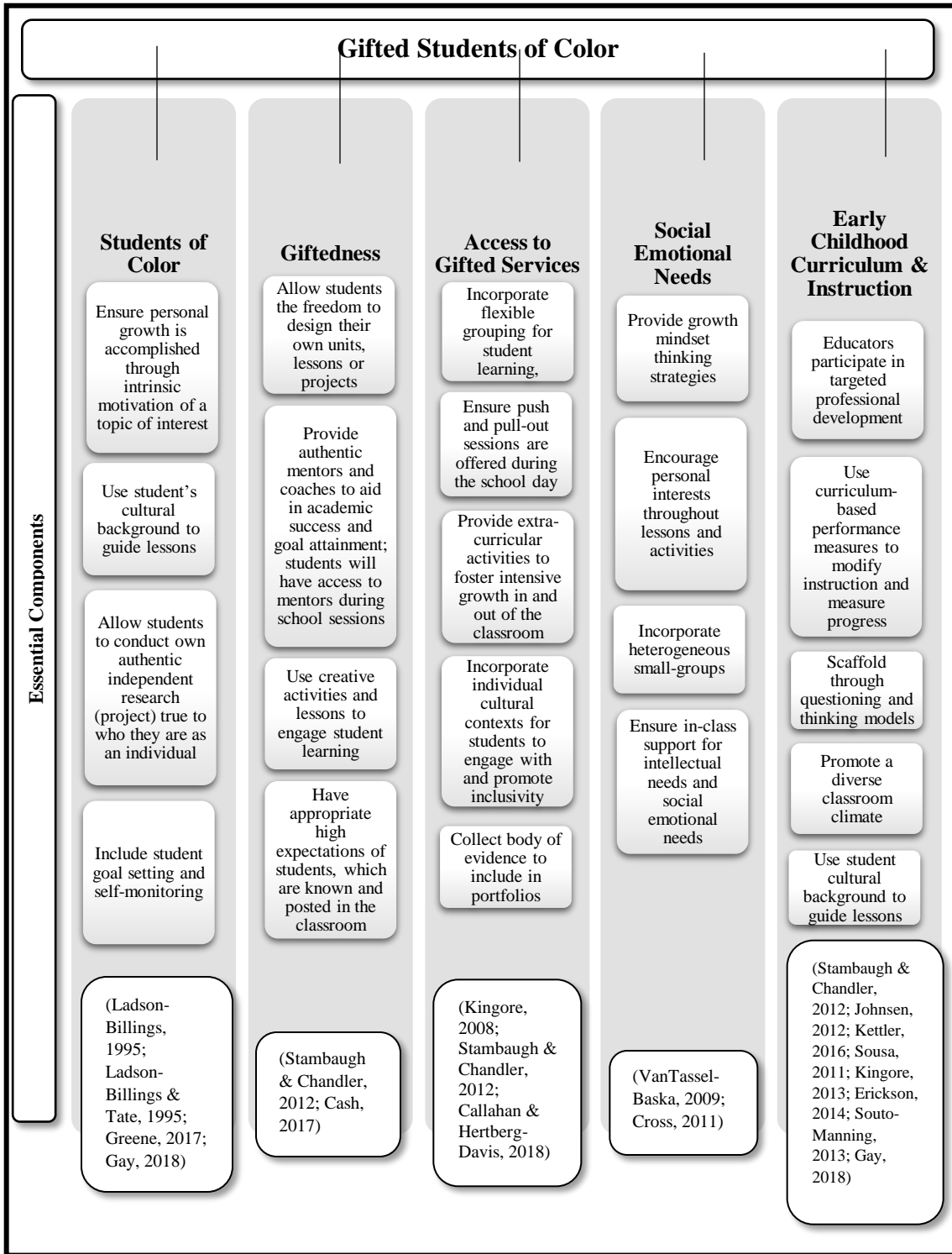
Social and Emotional Needs. *Social and Emotional Needs* should include the following essential components under this overarching theme: a) provide growth mindset thinking strategies, b) encourage personal interests throughout lessons and activities, c)

incorporate heterogeneous small-groups, d) ensure in-class support for intellectual needs and social emotional needs (VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011). These components can allow gifted students of color to express who they are as individuals, while also meeting extensive needs beyond the classroom (VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011).

Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction. *Early Childhood Curriculum* should include the following essential components under this overarching theme: a) educators participate in targeted professional development, b) use curriculum-based performance measures to modify instruction and measure progress, c) scaffold through questioning and thinking models, d) promote a diverse classroom climate, e) use student cultural background to guide lessons (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). These components can provide gifted students of color the opportunity to see themselves as part of lessons taught, they have the opportunity to grow in the classroom based on essential training for educators to understand who is in the room, and their developmental needs (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012, Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018).

Figure 2 provides a more in-depth outline of the guide in terms of essential components per overarching theme and the literature supports. This format of the guide could be used in terms of educator support and guidance.

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Figure 2: *The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide*

Gifted Students of Color

Essential Components

Students of Color

Ensure personal growth is accomplished through intrinsic motivation of a topic of interest

Use student's cultural background to guide lessons

Allow students to conduct own authentic independent research (project) true to who they are as an individual

Include student goal setting and self-monitoring

(Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018)

Giftedness

Allow students the freedom to design their own units, lessons or projects

Provide authentic mentors and coaches to aid in academic success and goal attainment; students will have access to mentors during school sessions

Use creative activities and lessons to engage student learning

Have appropriate high expectations of students, which are known and posted in the classroom

(Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Cash, 2017)

Access to Gifted Services

Incorporate flexible grouping for student learning,

Ensure push and pull-out sessions are offered during the school day

Provide extra-curricular activities to foster intensive growth in and out of the classroom

Incorporate individual cultural contexts for students to engage with and promote inclusivity

Collect body of evidence to include in portfolios

(Kingore, 2008; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018)

Social Emotional Needs

Provide growth mindset thinking strategies

Encourage personal interests throughout lessons and activities

Incorporate heterogeneous small-groups

Ensure in-class support for intellectual needs and social emotional needs

(VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011)

Early Childhood Curriculum & Instruction

Educators participate in targeted professional development

Use curriculum-based performance measures to modify instruction and measure progress

Scaffold through questioning and thinking models

Promote a diverse classroom climate

Use student cultural background to guide lessons

(Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018)

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The creation of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was from a literature-based standpoint, in recognizing the supporting educational practices in the general early childhood classroom. Therefore, using a Qualitative Educational Criticism methodological approach (Eisner, 2017), allowed for four dimensions to be used when analyzing the data collected. describing the setting of the study was of importance to allow recognition of where the study took place, interpreting the data collected provided a sense of understanding of what the data represented, evaluating the data using a literature-based approach (The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide) allowed for recognizing potential discrepancies between the data and actual practices in general early childhood classrooms; and finally thematics were found as emerging themes from the data collected (Eisner, 2017). The next step in the research process was to gain approval from review boards for data collection to begin. These processes should be briefly outlined next.

Review Board Process

Once protocols were completed and created along with the purpose of the research study, the study must undergo review by the Internal Review Board of the University and the district review board to ensure no participants were harmed, and ethical considerations were taken when conducting the study.

Through the district review board process, changes and additions were made to different documents. One of the changes occurred within the consent form due to language and providing a space for participants to acknowledge their participation with a

check mark in a small section of the consent form. Another revision made based on the advice of the review board was to add two specific interview questions to the interview protocol regarding the identification process within the district. The two interview questions that were added include:

- What is your understanding of (<u>school district's</u>) policy for screening students for GT/HGT status?

- Do you believe the process is equitable? Why or why not?

These questions were added to the interview protocol, totaling 17 interview questions, to gain a better understanding of general early childhood educator knowledge surrounding district policy and procedures as it pertains to identifying gifted students. A sponsor form was completed by the researcher and the director of gifted and talented to ensure the work done within the district was adequate and contributed to the betterment of the district.

After the study was completed, an overview of findings was created and distributed to the district review board including findings inclusive to the district interview questions and overall findings surrounding general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color. Recruitment efforts started upon approval of the internal review board.

Recruitment Efforts

Upon IRB approval, recruitment efforts were able to begin. A recruitment flyer (Appendix E) was made in advance in highlighting the procedures that would take place

when collecting data. The flyer was created with the intention of "inviting" indicated

participants to partake in the research study. The flyer was visually appealing to enhance

the opportunity for participants to engage in data collection procedures. The flyer was

sent to one community partner. The community partner then sent the flyer on behalf of

the researcher to the intended participants of the study. The community partners who

aided in the recruitment process and participant acceptance process are described next.

Community Partners

To help aid the researcher in distribution of recruitment materials upon starting

the data collection process, community partners were asked to help. The community

partners were chosen and asked to be community partners due to their commitment and

involvement in the community. Two individuals served as community partners for the

study but did not directly participate in the study. The community of the school site was

rather tight knit and was on the rise in fostering growth within gifted and talented

instruction. This growth was seen through the active partnership of the principal and the

gifted and talented teacher, therefore, the two individuals were chosen, asked, and

accepted to be community partners.

The principal of the school site served as one of the community partners for the

research study. To avoid coercion, or intimidation by leadership, when recruiting and

asking individuals to participate in the study, the principal was asked to distribute a

recruitment flyer, *Appendix E*, to indicated participants. The recruitment flyer was

designed and created to capture the attention of the indicated participants with concise

and pertinent information regarding the study and participation level included. The

recruitment flyer was sent out by the principal on behalf of the researcher once the Internal Review Board approved of the study. The principal was given a list of the intended participants for the study and distributed the recruitment flyer via email to the ten indicated participants.

Another community partner was the gifted and talented teacher of the school site whose responsibility was to send a consent form, *Appendix F*, on behalf of the researcher. The gifted and talented teacher was chosen to send the consent form on behalf of the researcher because of the individual's position within the school site, which avoided coercion. The gifted and talented teacher received a list of the intended participants and sent the consent form via email to all intended participants. The participants then accepted or denied their willingness to participate in an interview process and photographs to be taken of their classroom by following up with the researcher via email. All ten participants provided informed consent (10:10). The participants and researcher were able to schedule interview times accordingly dependent upon participant availability. For both community partner letters acknowledging their participation as a community partner, see *Appendices G and H*.

The following procedures were undergone to ensure data collection could be accomplished and accurate.

Data Collection Procedures

As data was collected, two protocols were utilized: Interview Protocol and Classroom Environment Observation Protocol, and briefly described below in terms of how they were utilized during the data collection process (Creswell, 2018).

Individual Interviews

An interview protocol comprised of seventeen interview questions was used during data collection to capture ten individual participant (preschool through second grade educator) responses (Creswell, 2018). The interview questions were tailored to giftedness (NAGC, n.d; CDE, 2018; District, 2019; Erwin & Worrell, 2012), access to gifted services (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018), students of color (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012), early childhood curriculum and instruction (Kettler, 2016; Harrison, 2003), and social and emotional needs (Cross, 2011; Neihart, 2016). After participants signed the designated consent form and scheduled an interview time, participants completed the interview process at a designated private area of the school office. Each interview took place in the same office room after school hours. The participants met the researcher at the office space at their interview time and began the interview shortly after. Participant responses were typed into the interview protocol document that was stored on the University secure drive, and digitally voice recorded via mobile app, *Otter* (Liang, 2020). Participants had the option to opt out of being digitally recorded at no further penalty. "The interview protocol enables a person to take notes during the interview about the responses of the participant. It also helps a researcher organize thoughts on items such as headings, information about starting the interview concluding ideas, information on ending the interview, and thanking the respondent" (Creswell, 2018, p. 169). The procedures for the classroom environment observation protocol should be next and discussed.

Classroom Environment Observations

A Classroom Environment Observation Protocol was created and used to collect photographs of the individual participant's classrooms, preschool through second grade (Creswell, 2018). After the interview process was completed per individual participant, photographs of the participant's classrooms were taken. Photographs of the whole room as well as separate areas of the room, which incorporated different aspects educators were passionate about with their teaching. These photographs were taken with an iPhone then transferred to the University secure drive to ensure anonymity of each participant (Creswell, 2018). The photographs were then inserted into the Classroom Environment Protocol document, located on the University secure drive, and data analysis of the photographs and coding of the classroom occurred (Creswell, 2018). There was a column for notes to be documented in describing the classroom environment and classroom set-up, as seen in photographs. The notes within the protocol were used to distinguish and determine areas of growth for educators and emerging themes as it pertained to gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). During the data collection process, there were audio-visual materials that were used, and those should be included and discussed as well.

Audio-Visual Materials

Two different audio-visual materials were utilized when collecting data: a mobile app and camera, both of which were used through an iPhone. To ensure all interviews received a transcript of interview questions and responses, another tool was needed to aid in gathering voice recordings. An iPhone device collected voice recordings of the interview questions and responses, using a mobile app, *Otter* (Liang, 2020). The mobile

app automatically transcribes words spoken and creates a text form transcription of the dialogue. These transcriptions from the mobile app were downloaded and stored to the University secure drive. Comparisons were made between the transcriptions and the hand-typed notes taken during the interview process (Creswell, 2018). The wireless internet connection at the school site was varied and not connecting continuously, which did not allow for some participants to have hand-typed notes by the researcher, therefore some participants were only voice recorded using the mobile app. Some participants opted to only have notes taken and not be recorded, luckily the wireless connection was functioning for those individual interviews. After all interviews were completed the transcriptions were transcribed and responses were sorted to accurately depict emerging themes that arose from interview responses (Creswell, 2018).

In order to gather photographs concisely and ensure the transportation of photographs to the University secure server, an iPhone camera was used to take photographs that were incorporated in the Classroom Environment Protocol. These photographs serve as artifacts for reference and understanding of classroom teaching methods for gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). Data analysis procedures should be discussed at length next.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interview protocol and classroom environment observation protocol were coded and analyzed and emerging themes arose (Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2018) asserts:

"To engage in meaning-making of the data, we analyze the qualitative data working inductively from particulars to more general perspectives, whether these perspectives are called codes, categories, themes, or dimensions. We then work deductively to gather evidence to support the themes and the interpretations. One helpful way to see this process is to recognize it as working through multiple levels of abstraction, starting with the raw data and forming broader and broader categories" (p. 51-52).

The emerging themes were compared to the literature-based guide, The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) to critically analyze future curriculum implementation. "Next, we might layer the analysis into increasing levels of abstractions from codes, to themes, to the interrelationship of themes, to larger conceptual models" (Creswell, 2018, p. 52). Coding of collected data is further discussed regarding general educator responses to interview questions and photographs of classroom environments.

Coding of General Educator Responses

After interviews were completed with all ten participants, the interview transcripts were coded and sorted. "Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins. It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often based on the language of the participant" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.193-94). The process of coding included reading all transcripts of individual participants and highlighting words or phrases that were prominent in the answer of the participant. This ensured all educator responses were categorized. The interview transcripts were highlighted for organization of thoughts and ideas that

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emerged within the data. After highlighting the words and phrases, the highlights were annotated with codes that described the highlighted portions, the codes became emerging themes from the data, which recognized areas of need according to general early childhood educator knowledge. (Creswell, 2018). This process continued until all transcripts were read over and bracketed with terms for all responses from participants. "The coding" was used "for generating a small number of themes or categories" to describe the knowledge of general early childhood educators (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194). The codes used became the emerging themes that arose from bracketing the information with codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The responses of each individual interview showed "the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals…the focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Creswell, 2018, p. 67). These emerging themes were relevant to the development of gifted students of color and provided access and opportunity for students in general early childhood classrooms (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Coding of Classroom Environment Observations

The classroom environment observation protocol was created to understand general early childhood educator awareness of providing access to materials for gifted students of color. The protocol included an area for photographs to be inserted of each participant's classroom as well as an area for the researcher to describe the classroom,

through field notes based on observations of the classroom. The protocol provided additional information regarding classroom operations and learning opportunities. Photographs were taken of different areas in the classroom. Coding continued with the photographs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Coding included looking through photographs and making notes of what was in the picture and recording notes in the classroom environment observation protocol. Based on the notes that described the picture, codes were generated to recognize what was present in the classroom (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Emerging themes arose from the photographs taken (Creswell, 2018). These emerging themes were relevant in understanding general early childhood educator knowledge regarding gifted students of color and recognizing access and opportunity for gifted students of color in general early childhood classrooms (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

As data was collected, coded, and made sense of, it was important to distinguish emerging themes from the data, so that comparisons to a literature-based guide could take place. These comparisons were necessary in distinguishing the discrepancies that existed between general early childhood educator knowledge and the relevant literature supporting gifted students of color.

The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide: A Comparison

The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was used to compare to the data collection protocols to recognize areas of growth for general early childhood educators (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995;

Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013). The overarching themes of the guide were: giftedness, access to gifted services, students of color, early childhood gifted curriculum, and social and emotional needs (Peralta, 2020). The overarching themes were an organizational strategy to implement the grounding in the literature, and further promote access for gifted students of color.

To ensure further analysis of the data, the results were sent to the participants to engage with the dialogue and provide feedback if necessary, also known as member checking. The process should be described next.

Member Checking

Upon completion of data collection and analysis of the data, the information was gathered and compiled and provided to the participants of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Member checking should be used:

> "to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate. This does not mean taking back the raw transcripts to check for accuracy; instead, the researcher takes back parts of the polished or semi-polished product, such as the major findings, the themes, the cultural description. This procedure can involve conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study and providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200).

The process of member checking included a created document that succinctly and accurately depicted findings for general early childhood educators to decipher and make

meaning from the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The document included the following items: definition of terms from the study, the purpose and research questions of the study, Interview Responses by Question, and emerging themes found from interviews and photographs of classrooms. Every item included in the document had a brief summary to describe what was presented (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The definition of terms was included first to present the terms necessary and used within the study. Language was an important aspect of the study, in terms of interview question development, having the terms provided allowed for participants to understand more background information. The purpose and research questions were included to show the direction of the study. The selected interview responses were included to show trends in answers. The responses did not have names or pseudonyms included with the responses, for protection of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The overall emerging themes found from data analysis were included. The emerging themes served as a critical part of the study in recognizing general early childhood educator knowledge and the presentation of classroom environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A concluding statement tied all the information together and provided a summary of the findings. The member checking document was sent to the participants via email from the researcher. The email indicated that participants could respond with questions or comments about the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additional reliability and validity measures took place to ensure ethical considerations, this is discussed further in the next section.

Reliability and Validity

When thinking about the study at hand, it was important to note the researcher's standpoint (Creswell, 2018). The researcher collected data from the school site they are currently employed. "To study one's own workplace, for example, raises questions about whether good data can be collected when the act of data collection may introduce a power imbalance between the researcher and the individuals being studied" (Creswell, 2018, p. 154).

However, the researcher used an ethical standpoint (Creswell, 2018) when speaking to and including individual responses. These responses and "findings" were "transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description [was] necessary" (p. 255). The researcher used ethics as a grounding for understanding and being relatable to the participants (Creswell, 2018). "Ethical validation means that all research agendas must question their underlying moral assumptions, and the equitable treatment of diverse voices" (Creswell, 2018, p. 257). Equitable treatment of participants was of the utmost responsibility of the researcher because of the established relationships the researcher has with participants. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate, the American Educational Research Association on Ethical Standards (AERA, 2011) includes a Code of Ethics educators can use when completing research discourse.

Conclusion

The use of a Qualitative Educational Criticism design (Eisner, 2017; Creswell, 2018) allowed for protocol creation based on curiosity of the field regarding general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color.

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Individual interviews collected with an interview protocol provided authentic conversations regarding general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color (Creswell, 2018). An observation protocol was utilized to collect evidence of the classroom environment in which students absorb information (Creswell, 2018). Once data was collected, a literature-based guide (Peralta, 2020) was compared to findings of general early childhood educator interview responses and photographs within a classroom environment observation protocol (Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Creswell, 2018).

The data collected and analyzed, provided discrepancies that existed between the literature and general early childhood educators. Analyzed data supported the issue in closing the gap to identify gifted students of color (Johnsen, 2012). Gifted students of color should be given an appropriate education inclusive of relevant gifted standards and identification processes in preschool through second grade (Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Tomonari, 2019).

Chapter Four: Results and Analysis

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." - Walt Disney

Introduction

Chapter four includes the data that was collected in correspondence to the study presented. The lack of developed research of general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color allowed for data collection using two protocols: an interview protocol and a classroom environment observation protocol. These data collection protocols were used to understanding general early childhood educator knowledge. This chapter includes interview responses and photographs from classroom environments. The emerging themes from the two protocols were compared to The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) to understand early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013).

"Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing

the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2018, p. 8). An Educational Criticism approach was chosen due to alignment with analyzing curriculum practices used in general early childhood educator classrooms (Eisner, 2017). Eisner (2017) asserts "Educational criticism can be thought of as having four dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics" (chap 5, para 10). These four dimensions were included as an outline for data analysis, which provided accurate description of the data, interpretation of the data, evaluation of the data, and emerging themes that arose from the process of analyzing the data (Eisner, 2017). An overview of the study should be included next before introducing the data.

Overview of Study

Data was collected during the winter of 2020. One school site within the district was chosen for data collection. The researcher was an employee of the school site which allowed for completion of interviews and classroom environment observations during the work week. Upon approval of the University review board, the researcher sent recruitment materials to one community partner, the principal. The principal then sent recruitment materials via email to specific participants. After recruitment materials were sent, the second community partner, the gifted and talented teacher of the school site sent a consent form via email for participants to sign and complete before taking part in the study. The consent form indicated whether the participants accepted or denied their willingness to participate in an interview process and photographs to be taken of their classroom. The study took a Qualitative Educational Criticism approach in research design (Creswell, 2018; Eisner, 2017). "An important step in the process is to find people

or places to study and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide good data. A closely interrelated step in the process involves determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites" (Creswell, 2018, p. 148). Educational Criticism (Eisner, 2017) was chosen as the methodology to gain a better sense of what is being used in the classroom and the connection to general early childhood educator knowledge of giftedness and gifted students of color. The work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Greene (2017) set the framework for understanding theoretically how to approach a culturally relevant education and being culturally responsive for gifted students of color. The purpose of the study and research questions s

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color. The following research questions were used in accordance to the study at hand.

Research Questions

- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?
- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color?
- What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

An in-depth description of the school site setting where the study took place was included to provide for understanding of the setting and participants.should be included next for clarity and study direction.

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- What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

An in-depth description of the school site setting where the study took place was included to provide for understanding of the setting and participants.

Description of Setting and Participants

"Description enables readers to visualize what a place or process is like. It should help them 'see' the school or classroom the critic is attempting to help them understand" (Eisner, 2017, chap 5, para 10). The study took place at a school nestled in an urban neighborhood. Looking at the front of the building, a red brick building with large

archway led to a six double door entrance. As the entrance doors opened, a waft of cleaned carpets from the night before filled the air. A large turquoise staircase greets students, staff and families and separates elementary students from middle school students. To the right of the main entrance, the main office resides where different individuals' offices were kept such as the principal, the school nurse, leadership personnel, and the school secretaries. The bottom floor of the school contains a gymnasium on one end of the building and a cafeteria on the other end. The smell of breakfast occupies the hallways in the morning, and the smell of daily lunch carries from the cafeteria toward the hallways in the afternoon. Students in preschool through fifth grade can find their classrooms on the bottom floor; intervention specialists, specials teachers, and the gifted and talented teacher are also located on the bottom floor. Upstairs, the smell of growing teenage bodies, spritz of cologne and perfume bombard the hallway. Sixth through eighth grade students were found upstairs. Bulletin boards with colorful and thoughtful artwork occupy the hallways throughout the school, which demonstrates student learning. The general early childhood educators who partook in the study as participants, could be found on the first floor of the school. Interviews took place in the "take a break" office space within the main office. The room included many different comfortable chairs to sit in, a table with markers and crayons to color, books, and extra materials for students to use or take home with them. This room was chosen because of the relaxed nature and ability for participants to feel comfortable during the interview. Observations and photographs of the environment took place in each participant's classroom space. "Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative

approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Interviewing participants in their own setting or place of work allowed for participants to feel comfortable.

There were ten total participants included in the study. These participants were chosen because of their criterion being an educator within early childhood, preschool through second grade, and an educator during the 2019-2020 school year. "One general guideline for sample size in qualitative research is not only to study a few sites or individuals but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied" (Creswell, 2018, p. 158). The following table, *Table 5*, outlines the total participants and the activities they participated in for the research study.

Table 5: Participants of Research Study

Educator Position	*Number of Educators*	*Participated in Interview Protocol*	*Participated in Classroom Environment Observation Protocol*
ECE (Early Childhood Education/preschool)	3	3	3
Kindergarten	2	2	2
First Grade	1	1	1
Second Grade	1	1	1
Specials Teachers	3	3	3
TOTALS:	10 Participants	10 Interviews	10 Observations & 96 Total Photographs

After the purpose of the study, research questions, and setting were described, an interpretation of the data followed, to provide an understanding of the data collected through two protocols (Eisner, 2017).

Interpretation of Collected Data

"Educational critics are interested not only in making vivid what they have experienced, but in explaining its meaning; this goal frequently requires putting what has been described in a context in which its antecedent factors can be identified. It also means illuminating the potential consequences of practices observed and providing reasons that account for what has been seen" (Eisner, 2017, chap 5, para 45).

The researcher used two protocols to collect data: an interview protocol collected general early childhood educator responses to seventeen questions, and a classroom environment observation protocol included photographs of ten total classroom spaces, to better understand the environment they were providing for their students. Once each protocol was completed for all participants, the interview responses and photographs of classrooms were coded to recognize similarities and discrepancies within the data, and emerging themes arose. Inferences were made about the answers provided by educators. Data analysis "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them. These steps are interconnected and form a spiral of activities all related to the analysis and representation of the data" (Creswell, 2018, p. 181). The following two sections within interpretation include detailed summaries of general

educator responses to interview questions and detailed summaries of classroom environments through photographs.

General Educator Responses

As data collection began, it was important to ensure all participants felt comfortable in the space and were given time to respond to interview questions so that critical quotations from participants could be gathered. These quotations were interpreted and used to understand general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color. Each interview process was unique and different, and each should be described. The following narratives include various quotations of general educator responses from interview questions.

Participant One Responses. Participant one met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" Participant one replied with "creative curriculum" (personal communication, February 27, 2020). There was not an explanation or further discussion of curriculum used. The next question asked was "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?" The participant responded with a clarifying question, "to the curriculum?" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). To clarify, "just in general is fine" was the

response by the researcher and the participant then elaborated with "they're very responsive" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). Another probing question to gain more insight from the participant was asked, "do you want to elaborate?" To which the participant responded, "because of the strategies of Conscious Discipline, they are all very connected to teachers and each other" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). After the first two questions were asked, it was evident that the participant did not include robust answers from the start. Was this due to the way the questions were asked? As the interview continued similar response types were recorded. The participant continually gave shortened answers, and follow-up questions were continually asked of the participant to gain an understanding of what the participant was trying to respond. One question that stuck out during this interview was, "what does access for gifted students of color look like?" Participant one responded with "I guess in my classroom, they have the same access as everybody else" (personal, communication, February 27, 2020). Another question asked was "how are you helping gifted students of color succeed?" The response was, "well it would be the same" in response to a previous question of "how are you helping students of color succeed in your classroom?" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). In thinking about the differences that occur between being a student of color and being a gifted student of color, the access for each are different. This led to recognizing the discrepancy in knowledge surrounding giftedness and students of color. when asked about access to other materials for gifted identified students, the participant responded with the idea of having a checklist given by the gifted and talented teacher, but did not respond with

actual materials within their own classroom, rather what the school provided to the participant (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). The participant understood, however, in responding to some questions, what the term giftedness meant by replying "I see giftedness in language abilities to problem solve on their own without asking for the teacher" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). When asked about what culturally responsive materials were provided within the classroom, the participant responded with "the district does not provide any" and then went on to expand with "there are many open ended things that you know, kids can use their creativity and resourcefulness to figure out" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020). The discrepancy that existed in the language of "figure out" resulted in uncertainty as an emerging theme from this response, and the majority of other responses. The last two questions were asked, regarding the district, and the participant responded with recognizing the use of a checklist of characteristics for students, and potentially a checklist for parents as well. When asked if the identification process was equitable by the district, the participant responded with "probably not, I know there is a screening in kindergarten. I've had some kids take that screening, and not all kids test well, and they don't react well with a stranger. I'm also guessing the test is not all that multicultural" (Participant one, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

After looking at the responses of participant one, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their answers surrounding giftedness and students of color.

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The emerging themes from this participant's responses will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section.

   Participant Two Responses. Participant two met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, the participant did not agree to being recorded during the interview, therefore notes were taken on a digital version of the interview protocol outline within the online University secure drive. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant responded with "creative curriculum or pull from other curriculums for what is needed for students" (Participant two, personal communication February 25, 2020). The participant did not expand upon this response. The next question asked was "socially and emotionally, how do your students respond in your classroom?" Participant two responded with "age appropriately and some are co-dependent. They struggle with dependent skills. One or two struggles with play and turn taking" (personal communication, February 25, 2020). When asked "what is giftedness to you?" participant two responded with, "Giftedness is a different kind of advanced and it comes naturally, it is beyond advanced, is an interest, they acquire things quicker than others, it does not take as much practice" (personal communication, February 25, 2020). This answer showed some knowledge surrounding giftedness, while some wording proved to be troublesome, such as "it does

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not take as much practice." Another question asked was "how can you implement gifted ideologies into the curriculum you use?" Participant two answered, "seeking resources for additional supports for the needs that are not being met in the curriculum" (personal communication, February 25, 2020). This answer proved to show the idea that the participant was willing to expand upon what they are currently using in the classroom to provide for gifted students. The question "how do you promote giftedness in your classroom for gifted students of color?" Participant two responded with "I'm a strong believer that in early childhood, giftedness needs to be supported. In the experience that I've had, they have lacked in other areas. I have supported and promoted giftedness but also made sure the areas are strong as well, that giftedness was not always the most important aspect of the student" (personal communication, February 25, 2020).

While it was clear that participant two was a strong advocate for giftedness and was willing to step out of their comfort zone to ask questions of others to support their students, there was some uncertainty surrounding the needs of giftedness as well as the district identification processes. The emerging themes from this participant's responses will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section.

Participant Three Responses. Participant three met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, the participant did not agree to being recorded during the interview, therefore notes were taken on a digital version of the interview protocol outline within the online University secure drive. The first

question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant responded with, "I design my own curriculum based on what I have taught in the past" (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020). When the participant was asked the following question, curriculum was mentioned. The question was, "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?" The participant replied with, "pretty well (by this time in the year) we have two different social and emotional curriculums that we use, Second Step and Conscious Discipline" (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020). It was interesting to see curriculum mentioned during the second questions versus the first question, curriculum does support the participant with students. When asked "what is giftedness to you?" The participant responded with, "it is a different way of thinking and an intense focus on something not typical of their peers" (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020). One of the most interesting answers came from the question, "what does access for gifted students of color look like?" to which the participant responded with, "it should be equitable, and I don't think it is in the district. I know it is not" (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020). This was an interesting response because the question asked what access looks like, and the participant responded with equitable, but did not give a specific explanation for their reasoning. Another question asked was, "How are you helping students of color in your classroom succeed? How are you helping gifted students of color succeed?" The participant's response was, "providing them native

language instruction, translating all paperwork home for families, bringing in cultural items, providing windows and mirrors in read aloud, and celebrating in a culturally appropriate way, talking about different celebrations during a certain time such as Christmas" (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020). This quotation and response showed attention to being culturally relevant within the classroom.

After completion of participant three's interview, it was clear that the participant was an advocate for her students. The participant talked extensively about their experience as an educator for several years with different students, and the different trends they have seen. This provided for the strong connection to being culturally relevant when speaking and approaching their own teaching. However, there was some uncertainty among the connection of giftedness and students of color. The participant understood giftedness and providing culturally responsive materials and access to students but intertwining the two was not present.

Participant Four Responses. Participant four met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant responded, "benchmark for literacy, bridges for math, Lucy Calkins for

writer's workshop and conscious discipline for social emotional" (Participant four, personal communication, February 25, 2020). The next question asked was, "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?" The participant responded with "they have grown greatly, there was a lot of dysregulation and heightened emotions when I first began, but since implementing conscious discipline techniques, the kids have learned more problem solving strategies, breathing and calming down strategies, learning systems to help regulate themselves such as like safe place and a lot more understand about helpful and hurtful choices, so they've definitely made a lot of gains" (Participant four, personal communication, February 25, 2020). Another question asked was "what is giftedness to you?" The participant responded with, "heightened aptitude towards different learning styles and abilities" (Participant four, personal communication, February 25, 2020). The participant came to the school site later in the year due to a teacher leaving. The participant took on this classroom. Socially and emotionally the participant made gains with students and was able to provide a general definition of giftedness. One of the more interesting answers given was to the question "what does access for gifted students of color look like?" To which the participant responded with, "I think it's just a teacher realizing that different cultures have different ways of demonstrating their knowledge and different like whether it's more linguistic or more artistic or more social just, you know, being able to identify these cultural strengths the student brings in and not just expecting that child to fit the norm. And then also just realizing that with their background there might be areas where they don't have as much background knowledge in" (Participant four, personal communication, February 25,

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2020). This response slightly touched on the intersection between giftedness and students of color. The answer was well thought out and presented to show understanding of the two concepts.

After participant four's interview, it was clear that the participant understood giftedness, the participant even disclaimed during one of the questions, that their background was in gifted education. The participant was an advocate for their student's growth. The participant responded extensively to questions. The in-depth responses provided for depth in understanding of ideas presented through interview questions. However, there was some uncertainty among the connection of giftedness and students of color. The participant understood giftedness and students of color but intertwining the two could be improved.

Participant Five Responses. Participant five met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant responded with, "benchmark for reading and Lucky Calkins for writing" (Participant five, personal communication, February 25, 2020). A short response was given in terms of curriculum, however longer and more thought out answers were included in following questions. When asked what access looks like for gifted students of color, the participant

responded with, "I would say that it would look the same for any student, meaning that all students have access to rigorous tasks where they're able to explore. Not only a talent that may be there. They demonstrate regularly. I think its access to materials, I think its access to advanced curriculum and beyond scaffolding curriculum that is more difficult or challenging or level up in some way. And yeah, just the ability to explore in one way or the other" (Participant five, personal communication, February 25, 2020). This response showed the understanding of giftedness, and in some way how to provide access for gifted students, but not necessarily for students of color. When asked the next question, "how are you helping students of color in your classroom succeed?" The response by the participant was long and extensive, here part of the response, "kind of like before I mean giving access to all students. The same access and ensuring that you know the way that student groups are paired and especially when you're looking to pair students, they can challenge each other. Just being mindful and thoughtful of who students are and what they need, but not, not, I guess. I guess in another way in that too is I tried to keep a really open door policy and involve the families as well because I'm a person from one area of the country you know with one background" (Participant five, personal communication, February 25, 2020). This quotation showed the depth to which the participant thought about the answer and continued to speak on the answer until they arrived at their conclusion.

After participant's interview, it was clear that the participant understood giftedness and was able to provide an explanation of gifted students of color. The interview answers seemed to show the participant was an advocate for students of color.

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The participant responded extensively to questions. The in-depth responses provided for depth in understanding of ideas presented through interview questions. However, there was some uncertainty among the connection of giftedness and students of color. The participant understood giftedness and students of color but intertwining the two could be improved.

   Participant Six Responses. Participant six met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant answered, "I use benchmark for reading, and bridges for math" (Participant six, personal communication, February 27, 2020). The next question was, "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?" The participant responded with, "well I use the no nonsense nurturing, most of them seem to respond to that. There are some that are more challenging that I have to use other methods for social emotional," the participant was asked to expand upon their answer and proceeded with "usually it's more individualized like a behavior plan or a contract between myself the student and the parents" (Participant six, personal communication, February 27, 2020). This additional response showed attention to meeting the needs of students. When asked "what is giftedness to you?" The participant responded with, "a gifted student would be a student

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who learns a different way, maybe thinks outside the box, maybe in a particular area" (Participant six, personal communication, February 27, 2020). Then, when asked "what does access for gifted students of color look like?" The participant answered with "I would say being able to work with the GT teacher" (Participant six, personal communication, February 27, 2020). Another question asked was "how do you help students of color in your classroom succeed?" The participant responded, "you know, I'm not sure that I can differentiate between my students of color, like the expectations are the same no matter what their race or ethnicity is" (Participant six, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

It was clear that there were levels of uncertainty when interviewing participant six. The participant, several times, used language within their answers that described their hesitancy in responding to the question. The level of knowledge supported by each question was minimal and the language used per response also indicated uncertainty. The participant did not seem to understand giftedness entirely, nor did they understand students of color.

Participant Seven Responses. Participant seven met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The

participant responded with "for literacy we use benchmark and for math we use bridges" (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020). The next question asked was "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your classroom?" The response of the participant was "I feel like they at the beginning of the year socially and emotionally were lacking a lot, to where I thought they should have been. So, we've had to implement a lot of strategies in the room like, you know, how do we solve problems, how do we apologize, learning self-apology. And they've gotten to the point where I feel like they're a lot stronger socially. And now we're working on the emotional part and how we can deal with our emotions" (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020). The participant was then asked, "what is giftedness to you?" and the participant responded with, "giftedness to me is the ability to think outside the box and think differently than your peers" (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020). When asked what access looked like for gifted students of color, the participant responded with, "I do not know what access looks like for them" (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020). When asked how to implement gifted ideologies into curriculum currently used, the participant responded with " I think you can implement just by having critical thinking questions for those students, and you don't even need to limit it to just gifted students because sometimes especially you don't even know necessarily who all is gifted in your class but planning, critical thinking questions so that your students are given the opportunity to think outside the box and share their ideas in a confident way" (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020).

The responses of participant seven were extensive at times and provided a lot of

insight in recognizing culturally responsive teaching as well as social emotional needs

(Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020). The participant spoke to

how to incorporate critical thinking questions into their own curriculum use, but also

provided a suggestion that curriculum should provide these questions for educators to use

while planning lessons (Participant seven, personal communication, March 3, 2020).

With a lot of insight, there still seemed to be misunderstandings around how to

implement giftedness within the classroom for gifted students of color.

Participant Eight Responses. Participant eight met the researcher at the

designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the

researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The

researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the

interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To

ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the

first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" When the

participant responded, they did not remember what the curriculum was called at that point

in time, then resumed back to the question with the answer "Spark" (Participant eight,

personal communication, February 28, 2020). When asked "what is giftedness to you?"

The participant responded with, "I would say above and beyond, consistently in their

production of, thinking or classwork, physical activity" (Participant eight, personal

communication, February 28, 2020). When participant eight was asked "what does access

for gifted students of color look like to you?" the participant answered with, "I think it

would be the same for anybody. If they're producing, and their thinking, like writing and reading, there's activity that we look to and should be accessible to all" (Participant eight, personal communication, February 28, 2020). When asked, "how are you helping students of color in your classroom succeed?" the participant answered with "we're all colors, so it's to treat everybody equally. And, you know, and keep giving those opportunities to excel and keep that consistent" (Participant eight, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

With the provided responses of participant eight, it was evident that the participant knew some ideologies surrounding giftedness, but also could not articulate how giftedness and students of color intersect. The participant was adamant in that we all should be treated equally, no matter how we identify. The responses of participant eight were rather short and to the point, there was not much room for elaboration of responses (Participant eight, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Participant Nine Responses. Participant nine met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant clarified the question, then answered the question with many different curricula that was used by the individual. One of the next questions asked was "what is

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giftedness to you?" To which the participant answered, "I would say honestly probably just more prepared for school than other guys, I really do think that because I don't mean to say why but I'll just say more prepared for school like their parents have taught them before, or maybe, maybe they went to preschool or something before, and they're just more ready to be in school they might have more knowledge than the other kids" (Participant nine, personal communication, February 27, 2020). When asked more in-depth questions such as "what does access for gifted students of color look like?" the participant asked a few times to repeat and re-phrase the question for understanding. Part of the answer to that question was, "[I] wouldn't even call it giftedness but I'm looking for when I know kids get it" (Participant nine, personal communication, February 27, 2020). This occurred again when the question "how can you implement gifted ideologies into the curriculum that you use?" the participant included a long response, but part of the response was "I think it's really hard to find gifted kids. At least if I mention I don't think I've seen any gifted kids in that age" (Participant nine, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

The responses of participant nine were rather short and to the point. The responses displayed uncertainty about many topics discussed during the interview, especially giftedness and students of color. The participant, seemed to not understand giftedness, and ignorant toward identification of students who could portray gifted characteristics.

Participant Ten Responses. Participant nine met the researcher at the designated interview space at the time agreed upon to meet. The participant and the researcher each chose a spot to sit within the room, and the interview process began. The researcher

began by introducing the topic to the participant, then started recording the interview. The first question was asked and continued through to question seventeen. To ease the participant into the interview process with the level of knowledge needed, the first question asked was "what curriculum do you use in your classroom?" The participant answered with various information for the first question, of which included using different curriculums tied together and creating own lessons for students. Later on in the interview, the participant spent a lot of time speaking about one curriculum in particular and how that has been implemented into the space and how that affects gifted students and the access they have in their classroom. The next question asked was "socially and emotionally, how do students respond in your class?" The participant answered with, in my class "its ways for them to express their emotions but I have the flexibility to allow experimentation I feel like that for the most part, allows for a lot of freedom of expression. Generally, that makes kids feel more comfortable" (Participant ten, personal communication, February 28, 2020). When asked "what is giftedness to you?" the participant responded with long quotation explaining that giftedness was something that they looked for in the process of discovery in their classroom. Another question asked was, "what does access for gifted students of color look like to you?" the participant responded with "I think access is about showing gifted students of color other [people] who are similar to them. So like in my room I have a bunch of different posters in my room of people alone, I think, are a good representation, like you're supposed to be in this space, it's a safe space" (Participant ten, personal communication, February 28, 2020). When asking about access for gifted students of color and promoting giftedness in

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the classroom, the responses were similar in that the participant wanted to keep their classroom "open" for interpretation, which allows students to navigate and create on their own (Participant ten, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Participant ten had many explanations and thoughts regarding giftedness and students of color. Participant ten was able to provide responses to how their attempts in the classroom contributed to providing for students of color and students who identified as gifted, through keeping lessons and the classroom open for interpretation. However, when asked to define giftedness as it related to them, the participant tried to describe giftedness as seen in their classroom but did not give a more concrete definition. There was some level of uncertainty with participant ten's ideas regarding giftedness and students of color (Participant ten, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Interesting Interpretation. Examining interview responses and body language of the participants, there was an interesting interpretation of body language presented by participants. One of the interview questions was "how do you define students of color?" As the researcher identifies as a person of color, physically, when the question was asked, participant reaction most times seemed hesitant to respond. Many speculations were made based on this reaction. Were participants intimidated to respond to this question? Was it because the person asking the question was a person of color? Have participants had the opportunity to think about this question before? Therefore, the responses by most participants were short and relative to the question, including specific cultural groups mentioned, rather than a concrete 'definition.'

The thought processes and voices heard regarding giftedness and students of color, pertaining to general early childhood educator knowledge, provided for a robust interpretation of definitions, instruction practices, and experiences. These responses provided for increased awareness of giftedness and students of color in the general early childhood classroom and will be compared to The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) within the evaluation section. The next section includes narratives about the classroom environments observed.

Classroom Environment Observations

The second protocol used to understand general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color was the Classroom Environment Observation Protocol. This protocol was necessary to witness learning environments inclusive to material access for students. Photographs were taken of different areas in the classroom. Photographs were then inputted into the classroom environment observation protocol and notes were taken about the photographs to aid in the process of coding and recognizing emerging themes within the classroom environments. The following narratives include descriptions of each classroom as it related to the interpretations of photographs taken of each classroom.

Participant One Classroom Environment Observation. Walking into the space provided by participant one, there was an immediate joy that filled the space. Bright colors splash upon the walls in the classroom, and bulletin boards filled with kid friendly language and pictures. A large kid-made tree greeted the entrance of the classroom, which changed as the seasons changed. Colorful area rugs occupied different areas of the

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classroom, promoting connectedness and culturally responsive learning. The size of furniture in the classroom was rather small, depicting the size of the children who learn in the space. Vibrant, colorful and tactile toys filled the shelves in the room. An area for dressing up, playing kitchen, and putting on a puppet show were to the left of the entrance of the classroom. A large green area rug with leaf design was the large center time rug, a blue rolling chair with book stand next to it provided for the central area of teaching. There were two kidney shaped tables in the classroom teachers used in the classroom, and a large area in the back of the classroom that was tiled and had three small tables for children to use during various times of the day. The back corner of the classroom had a bathroom for children to use and leading up to the bathroom were shelves filled with blocks and a cart that held mats for rest time. Next to the mats, was a bulletin board with family pictures, including all families represented in the classroom, this was titled "Family Board." The back-left corner of the classroom included a sink area, one low sink and one high sink, for washing hands, and direct access from the art area as well. A back door to the playground was near the sinks. Two different sensory tables were placed on the tile floor for student use as well. The front right corner of the classroom included the participant's desk, including a computer, papers, and colored pens. The bulletin board above the participant's desk hung many different accolades of the participant and favorite pictures of memories. Along the wall leading to the participant's desk was a wall of windows and in front of the window was a string that held student artwork with clothes pins. Along the wall of windows was a reading area and a cube which students could use to take a break in, it seemed.

Photographs of the participant's classroom showed different areas of learning for students. The overall feel of the classroom was very welcoming and provided a love of learning. The organization of the classroom along with colorful aspects allowed for understanding where everything was in the classroom, which provided for better understanding of what was included as far as student learning goes and curriculum provided for students. After observing the classroom environment of participant one, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix A.*

Participant Two Classroom Environment Observation. Before walking into participant two's classroom, there was a small bulletin board outside the classroom highlighting the student of the week with pictures of the student and a description of the student submitted by parents and families. Upon walking into participant two's classroom environment, a doorbell sound greets guests. Many colors are throughout the classroom. A Denver Broncos themed bulletin board was immediately to the right of the entrance door, which student work was presented on. To the left of the entrance door, a bright square colored area rug was placed in the middle for students to sit on and have their own square to sit on. A promethean board was in front of the area rug, for participation in digitally presented material. A large computer chair was at the bottom right corner of the area rug for the participant to sit in and instruct lessons. A book cart with the days of the week and weather chart were attached to the book cart for students to engage with every

day. Beyond the book cart was a corner desk area for the participant, which had a bulletin board above the desk with numerous photos showing family, important individuals and furry friends of the participant. Next to the participant's desk were large cubbies, like lockers, for students to keep all their belongings. Student-made artwork hung on the outside of the cubbies for decoration. Continuing along the wall of the cubbies was the bathroom inside the classroom for children. A short green curtain covered the entrance of the bathroom, allowing easy access for students to use the bathroom. The back corner of the classroom had a back door to the playground area and a sink area for washing hands, a large and small sink. Along the wall of the back door, was a wall of windows which provided natural light to the classroom at times. A cart for rest time mats, and various toys lines the wall of windows, and toward the end of the wall, a reading area was present with numerous books to choose from and comfortable seating options for students. The middle of the room included shelves with hundreds of different colorful toys to use during center time or for curriculum use. Each shelve was labeled with different labels indicating which toys belonged on each shelf.

Photographs of the participant's classroom showed aspects of learning for students. The overall feel of the classroom was welcoming. The organization of the classroom allowed for understanding where everything was in the classroom, which provided for better understanding of what was included as far as student learning goes and curriculum provided for students. After observing the classroom environment of participant two, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The

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emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix B.*

Participant Three Classroom Environment Observation. Walking into participant three's classroom, there were colorful dots on the carpet in front of the promethean board at the front of the classroom. These dots served as spots for students to sit, creating a large circle for all students to be part of the group. However, beyond the dots on the carpet, there was little to no engagement or aspects that showed student engagement. The corner across from the front door included the participant's desk, which was covered in papers, office supplies, and other materials. Next to the participant's desk was a playhouse for center time which included many different dolls and toys for students to use during center time. Along the same wall of the playhouse was cubbies for student use and storing belongings. Next to the cubbies was the back door leading to the playground. A counterspace with sink area was perpendicular to the back door. A nice corner to store nap mats was next to the sink area, which led to two bathrooms in the classroom, one boy and one girl bathroom. Little to no student work was displayed within the classroom, which provided for many bare walls. Within the center of the classroom were shelves that held various toys for center and curriculum use. The one aspect of the classroom that stood out, was the bulletin boards to the right of the entrance. The bulletin boards included Spanish and English titles with some student work included. The titles provided for a sense of what was being presented to students in the classroom, as far as instruction goes.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed multiple aspects of various learning for students. However, overall feel of the classroom was not welcoming and did not portray engagement. The inorganization of the classroom allowed for not understanding where things were in the classroom, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. After observing the classroom environment of participant three, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix C.*

Participant Four Classroom Environment Observation. The entrance to participant four's classroom opened to an engaging space. The space included multiple different colors, artwork around the classroom and posters, were seen immediately. The front of the classroom was to the left of the entrance which included a colorful area rug with multiple squares for students to sit on during a whole group lesson. The corner across from the entrance of the classroom was the participant's desk with multiple papers and office supplies on the desk, in an organized fashion. One thing to catch the eye in the classroom was hanging words from the ceiling. These words were high frequency words or words used often in the classroom. Along the wall of the participant's desk was a wall of windows which included posters about students. Moving along the wall perpendicular to the wall with windows was a bulletin board used for math, and another dry erase board which housed a "word wall." Above the dry erase board was an alphabet for students to see. In front of the dry erase board was a colorful area rug with color splashes, circle with

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numbers and an alphabet border. This area served as a second area used by the participant during whole group lessons. All student desks were in the middle of the classroom. The wall to the right of the entrance included a sink area with water fountain, and cabinet storage. On one of the cabinets, there was a large tree made from brown butcher paper with colorful hearts on and around the tree. This showed connectedness among all students and the participant.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed multiple aspects of various learning for students. The feel of the classroom was welcoming and inviting due to the different colorful areas for student engagement. The organization of the classroom allowed for understanding where things were in the classroom, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the classroom environment of participant four, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix D.*

Participant Five Classroom Environment Observation. The entrance to participant five's classroom was from what seemed to be the back of the classroom. From the entrance of the classroom, to the left of the door was the sink area with cabinets above the sink. Student work was displayed on these cabinets, and snacks were stacked on top of the cabinets. Moving along the wall, there were hooks for students to hang their belongings. Near the hooks was the area for the participant to read stories aloud to students. A large wooden rocking chair was near a book card, which at this time, held a

large book about influential individuals in society. The bulletin board behind the rocking chair included typed sight words for students to see and recognize. A colorful square patterned area rug filled the space between the promethean board and student desks. This area was used for student whole group time. The corner diagonal from the entrance of the classroom was the participant's desk area. There was a smaller desk that was flush against the wall and included minimal items, but had many papers scattered. Next to this desk, was a large kidney table which was used for small groups. The American flag hung above the smaller desk. There was a lot of clutter among the two desks. There were large student posters describing students of the classroom along the top of the wall where the promethean board was and by the participant's desk. The wall behind the kidney table was a wall of windows. Along this wall was several different posters describing how to complete different tasks within the classroom. These posters were hand-made and not visible for students to see immediately. The back of the classroom, the wall to the right of the entrance, included a dry erase board and multiple charts for students to engage with for student work groups. There was a large stand-alone chart in the middle of the back of the room, which included student jobs. The pictures used for the student job chart as well as all other charts, were printed in black and white and did not include colored photos.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the classroom was somewhat welcoming and inviting due to the limited engagement through resources presented. There seemed to be some consistent organization of the classroom which allowed for understanding of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after

observing the classroom environment of participant five, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix E.*

Participant Six Classroom Environment Observation. The entrance to participant six's classroom seemed to be toward the back of the classroom setup. When walking in, there was a bulletin board immediately to the right of the entrance that was titled "Fantastic Kids" and included student self-portraits surrounding the title. Walking further into the classroom, there was an instant feeling of chaos. There was no organization to the room, papers were everywhere, which provided an overall feeling of disarray and lack of engagement for students. Looking toward the middle of the classroom, the student desks filled the center of the room. The wall to the left of the door entrance included a sink area with water fountain. Above the sink were cabinets and posted to the cabinets were pictures and student writing about their families. There was not title indicating what this student work included. The amount of student materials scattered about the classroom provided for distraction while walking through the classroom. One wall in the classroom, included wooden bookshelves with various book options. Along the ledge of the dry erase board, which was the backdrop of the bookshelves, was different culturally appropriate books for students to choose from. An interesting shaped corner of the classroom included student work "all about me" posters made by students describing who they were. These were posted rather high on the wall,

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which did not allow for active engagement for students or others to see. All other bulletin boards in the classroom had random papers stapled to each, which distracted from the student work or information included on the boards. One curriculum used object in the classroom was a chart labeled "Non-fiction text features" which included small print-out photos representing the text features listed. The chart was not necessarily eye-catching but provided an enhancement for curriculum use. The participant's desk was no where to be found, due to the large mound of papers covering what seemed to be a workplace for the participant.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the classroom was not as welcoming or inviting due to the limited engagement through resources presented. There seemed to be no organization of the classroom which allowed for misunderstandings of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the classroom environment of participant six, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix F*.

Participant Seven Classroom Environment Observation. Upon entering the classroom of participant seven, the room was dark and twinkling lights glimmered and stretched across the top of the promethean board in the classroom. The classroom lights were then turned on, and the entire room flowed. The color scheme of the room was immediately noticed, black and white with hints of color throughout. The organization of

the classroom was evident and provided understanding of certain areas of the classroom. Walking into the room, there was a bulletin board that greeted everyone, which was titled "Home sweet classroom" and featured pictures of students surrounding the bulletin board title. Continuing along this wall there was a bulletin board that included multiple items for curriculum use. Most of the items were hand-made posters, that were colorful, appealing and organized. All bulletin boards were used in the classroom and presented in a way that allowed for understanding by students. One bulletin board included learning targets to be accomplished and achieved depending on different domains. These learning targets were near one of the desks the participant used to store paperwork and other necessities for students. The reading corner, complete with a turquoise lounge chair and buckets of books, was near one of the participant's desk. Behind the turquoise chair was a black and white word wall with several words listed under each letter of the alphabet. Next to the small teacher desk was the promethean board with sparkly lights, and a colorful square pattered area rug was placed in front of the board. The bottom of the promethean board included a poster of children of different backgrounds describing social and emotional needs. A feature of the room was the class contract which was scribed by the participant and included inclusive language as to how students would treat each other and themselves. Another reading corner in the classroom included tall wooden bookshelves and the phrases, "be kind" and "be brave" above the shelves. The positivity within the room provided for a welcoming and comforting feel.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the classroom was welcoming and inviting due to the engagement

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through resources presented. There seemed to be consistent organization of the classroom which allowed for understanding of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the classroom environment of participant seven, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix G.*

Participant Eight Classroom Environment Observation. Walking into this space, the space was expansive and was a space where students could participate in physical activity. The large space included one wall of bleachers for spectators during middle school athletic events. When walking into the space, the walls that were perpendicular to the entrance doors included posters hanging on either side, describing healthy options for students to recognize and implement into their daily life. Colorful dots were placed near the entrance to include spots for students to sit as a whole group while the participant gave instruction for the activities of the day. The wall that faced the colorful dots included a large white board with all objectives handwritten by the participant. The participant's office was located across from the entrance door, and in the middle of the boy and girl locker rooms. Two other side entrances were on either side of the locker rooms, and a large storage closet for equipment was near the girl locker room. A focal point of the space was two flags that hung on a wall. One flag was the Mexican flag and the other was the American Flag. This provided inclusion of the majority demographic of the school.

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The photographs of the participant's classroom space showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the space was open, welcoming and inviting due to the space being clean and large. Since limited items were presented in the space, this allowed for understanding of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the environment of participant eight, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their space and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix H.*

Participant Nine Classroom Environment Observation. When entering into the classroom of participant nine, a large space with various aspects was seen. Upon walking in, the first thing noticed was a colorful area rug in the center of the classroom for the youngest students who visit the classroom. There were maroon student chairs that bordered the large space in the middle, creating three sides of a square, with the fourth side open where the participant sat and instructed class. There were many posters that were posted near the entrance of the classroom, and all included positive phrases and ideas. The front of the classroom included a promethean board that was used for digital purposes during lessons. The participant's desk was tucked away in a corner across from the entrance of the classroom with many objects on the desk. There was a back door in the classroom, which led to a stage in the cafeteria. Along the back wall of the classroom were large, deep shelves that held various instruments for students. A bulletin board near

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the front of the room included objectives for students and musical notes for students to practice.

The photographs of the participant's classroom space showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the space was open and welcoming due to the space being large. Since limited items were presented in the space, this allowed for understanding of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the environment of participant nine, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their space and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix I.*

Participant Ten Classroom Environment Observation. Participant ten had a creative and colorful space that was presented upon walking into the classroom. The classroom included many different aspects that were intentional for students to see and access. Upon walking in, lights hung above the dark black work desks, and stools under each desk. Splashes of color were everywhere. Every wall had some form of art inspired poster or art inspired vocabulary. Art supplies lined the walls for students to easily access. Along the wall when walking into the classroom, hung flags from every country. As the wall came to a stop, a large sink was within the space for cleaning of materials and messy hands. Large cabinets were along two walls which stored many materials for creative use. On one set of cabinets, there were large posters with the title "Future" and different identities were represented among the individuals on the posters. The front of

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the classroom, which was next to the entrance of the classroom included the participant's desk and a promethean board with a large colorful square designed area rug in front. Art inspired books lay across the bottom of the promethean board for student inspiration. The back corner of the classroom included a kiln for ceramic making and a large storage closet in the back.

The photographs of the participant's classroom showed different areas of the classroom. The feel of the classroom was welcoming and inviting due to the multitude of colors and engagement through resources presented. There seemed to be consistent organization of the classroom which allowed for understanding of where things were, as it related to student achievement and curriculum provided for students. However, after observing the classroom environment of participant ten, it was clear that there were some uncertainties found within their classroom and photographs taken surrounding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes from this participant's photographs will be further discussed within the Emerging Themes and Evaluation section. *See Appendix J.*

Interpreting the data collected allowed for recognition of emerging themes. The discussion of emerging themes and the way in which they were evaluated should be provided next.

Emerging Themes and Evaluation

"For that form of qualitative inquiry called educational criticism, the evaluation of what is seen is vital. To describe students' work, or the processes of classroom life, without being able to determine if this work or these processes are mis educational, noneducational, or educational, is to describe a set of conditions without knowing if those

conditions contribute to a state of educational health or illness" (Eisner, 2017, chap 5, para 62).

Themes emerged from the interview responses as well as the classroom environment observations (Creswell, 2018). All photographs taken of classroom environments as well as interview responses were looked at and were highlighted based on key words or information included, then assigned a letter(s) or "codes" to each highlighted section. Themes emerged based on commonalities between the highlighted areas and codes created. Emerging themes were coded using letter(s) representative of the emerged theme, and a key was included as the themes correlated to their respective letter(s) (Creswell, 2018). In general, the responses of participants were relatively short, which provided the realization that some participants may or may not connect or incorporate gifted aspects in their teaching. The themes that emerged included giftedness, understanding of culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, social emotional awareness, compassion/access, advocate, and uncertainty. *Table 6* includes the participant and the emerging themes that were represented for both interview and observation. A discussion of emerging themes found in general educator responses follow the table.

Table 6: Emerging Themes from Data Collection Protocols

Participant	Activity	Emerging Themes from Interview Responses	Emerging Themes from Classroom Environment Observation	Short/Long Answers
1	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, U	CR, C, SEA, CA, U	Short
2	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, A, U	CA, A, C, CR, U	Short
3	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, C SEA, A, U	CR, SEA, CA, A, U	Long
4	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, C, SEA, CA, A, U	CR, C, SEA, CA, A, U	Long
5	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, CA, A, U	A, C, CA, U	Long
6	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, U	C, CA, CR, U	Short
7	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, SEA, U	CR, C, SEA, CA, U	Short
8	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, A, U	CR, C, CA, A, U	Short
9	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	U	C, CA, SEA, U	Short
10	Interview Protocol + Observation Protocol	G, CR, C, SEA, CA, A, U	CR, SEA, CA, A, U	Long
Themes Key: G = Giftedness; CR = Understanding of Culture (Culturally Responsive); C = Curriculum; SEA = Social Emotional Awareness; CA = Compassion/Access; A = Advocate; U = Uncertainty				

General Educator Response Emerging Themes

The responses provided during individual participant interviews provided varying responses regarding curricula for gifted students of color, social and emotional needs of gifted students of color, and culturally relevant teaching practices. Among these answers

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was uncertainty in varying degrees, regarding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes seen per participant are outlined next.

Participant One Response Emerging Themes: After looking at the responses of participant one, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, curriculum, and uncertainty. Even though questions were asked about the curriculum used and the response seemed short, the participant mentioned curriculum throughout the interview process. While giftedness was a theme that emerged from the interview, it was evident that uncertainty could be intertwined within understanding giftedness and being culturally responsive. This was due to lack of knowledge surrounding culturally responsive materials used for students of color and the ineffective connection made between students of color and gifted students of color, being that "they are the same" (Participant one, February 27, 2020).

Participant Two Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant two, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, advocate, curriculum and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to the participant being passionate and wanting to include giftedness into their own curriculum. Some uncertainty was present in connecting giftedness to students of color when answering certain questions (Participant two, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

Participant Three Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant three, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, advocate, understanding of culture (culturally

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responsive), social and emotional awareness, curriculum, and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to the participant actively responding to interview questions as an advocate. The participant was passionate about inclusion and culturally responsive techniques used in their teaching. While the participant did not specify curriculum used immediately, different curricula was mentioned throughout the interview. The participant was able to provide a definition of giftedness and understood culturally responsive techniques, the level of uncertainty connecting giftedness and students of color was present (Participant three, personal communication, February 24, 2020).

Participant Four Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant four, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, understanding of culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, social and emotional awareness, compassion/access, and uncertainty. These themes were prevalent in interview responses due to the participant being able to give examples of giftedness, understanding that culture plays into the education realm, knowing the curriculum used on a daily basis and seeing how curriculum implementation provided for social and emotional growth in the classroom, and providing different modes or access points for students. However, a level of uncertainty existed when comparing giftedness and students of color, in providing students of color the access necessary (Participant four, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

Participant Five Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant five, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, understanding culture (culturally responsive),

compassion/access, advocate and uncertainty. Giftedness was evident in the responses provided due responding with a gifted rationale. The participant showed culturally responsive teaching by incorporating families within certain facets of teaching, as well as being an advocate for access of materials for students. There was, however, a level of uncertainty when understanding giftedness and students of color. the participant could articulate giftedness and students of color separately, but when intertwining the two, there seemed to be lack of understanding.

Participant Six Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant six, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, social emotional awareness, and uncertainty. These emerging themes were present due to the participant giving a brief definition of giftedness and being able to describe how they attained to the social emotional needs of students in their classroom. A level of uncertainty was present however, due to the participant not being able to recognize giftedness as it related to students of color.

Participant Seven Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant seven, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, understanding culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, and social emotional awareness, and uncertainty. These emerging themes were recognized because of the participant giving a broad definition of giftedness, the participant spoke about how they include students in their classroom and spoke to the growth their students had socially and emotionally. There was a level of uncertainty when it came to recognizing access for gifted students of color, they did not know what access

looked like, therefore, a level of uncertainty was present regarding giftedness and students of color.

Participant Eight Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant eight, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, understanding culture (culturally responsive), social emotional awareness, advocate and uncertainty. These emerging themes were present due to the participant giving a general overview of giftedness, providing a definition from their perspective of students of color, using their knowledge of social emotional skills within their space, and advocating for giftedness in their classroom space. Uncertainty existed due to the lack of knowledge surrounding gifted students of color.

Participant Nine Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant nine, and going through the coding process, the emerging theme that arose from their responses was uncertainty. This theme was present because throughout the entire interview, it was clear that the participant did not understand or have the background knowledge of giftedness and students of color, due to the length of their answers and constant wonderings about the interview questions being asked.

Participant Ten Response Emerging Themes. After looking at the responses of participant ten, and going through the coding process, the emerging themes that arose from their responses were giftedness, understanding culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, social emotional awareness, compassion/access, advocate, and uncertainty. These themes emerged from this interview because of the participant giving in-depth

answers. The level to which the participant was willing to provide, showed compassion for their students and the constant push or advocating nature of the participant. The participant was aware that their space allows for creativity which enhances the student experience from a gifted and socially emotionally perspective. The educator mentioned providing a space for students to "see themselves" which was culturally responsive (Participant ten, personal communication, February 28, 2020). A level of uncertainty existed among the responses however, in ensuring access for gifted students of color.

The general early childhood educator themes that emerged were indicative to the responses that were given by participants. The responses provided insight as to what general early childhood educators previously knew about giftedness and students of color, and the applications of which they believed were applicable to their teaching. Nine of ten (9:10) participants were able to speak to giftedness and provide an example or definition of giftedness, while ten of ten participants (10:10) showed uncertainty as it related to the district policy interview questions. The following section will discuss and include the emerging themes for the classroom environment observation

Classroom Environment Observation Emerging Themes

The photographs taken during classroom environment observations provided varying ideas and teaching strategies regarding curricula for gifted students of color, social and emotional needs of gifted students of color, and culturally relevant teaching practices. Among these photographs was uncertainty in varying degrees, regarding giftedness and students of color. The emerging themes seen per classroom are outlined next.

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Participant One Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant one's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding of culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, compassion/access, social emotional awareness, and uncertainty. These themes emerged as a result of the participant including social and emotional curriculum aspects throughout the classroom, including several areas depicting students of color, providing an engaging space which showed compassion and access. Uncertainty was present due to not providing access to gifted materials in the classroom. *See Appendix A.*

Participant Two Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant two's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding culture (culturally responsive), compassion/access, advocate, curriculum and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to incorporating culturally responsive toys for students, including expectation signs as a form of curriculum, showing compassion by advocating through positive influence posters. Uncertainty was present due to not providing access to gifted materials in the classroom. *See Appendix B.*

Participant Three Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant three's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding culture (culturally responsive), social emotional awareness, compassion/access, and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to the participant

recognizing the language necessities in their classroom and providing supports and access

for these students and their families. The participant had visual representation of social

emotional cues and curriculum in the classroom as well, which showed their awareness of

social and emotional needs of students. However, there was a level of uncertainty when

being able to recognize how giftedness could be intertwined with students of color,

within the realm of the classroom environment. *See Appendix C.*

      Participant Four Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of

participant four's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in

the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation:

social emotional awareness, understanding culture (culturally responsive), advocate,

compassion/access and uncertainty. These themes emerged because the participant

attended to social emotional needs by including curriculum in different areas in the room,

the participant included student background with posters of children in the classroom,

and a tree which showed compassion and access as well as connecting the students in a

culturally responsive way, the participant was an advocate for student learning and

growing through the presentation of the whole classroom. The level of uncertainty

existed in providing clear gifted accessible material and connecting to students of color.

See Appendix D.

      Participant Five Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of

participant five's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in

the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation:

understanding culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, compassion/access, advocate

and uncertainty. These emerging themes were found based on the participant advocating and including student work within the classroom showing different cultures, including posters that were related to curriculum and instruction, including charts that were accessible for student work groups. A level of uncertainty was present in providing gifted accessible materials for students of color. *See Appendix E.*

Participant Six Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant six's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding culture (culturally responsive), compassion/access, curriculum, and uncertainty. These emerging themes were present due to the participant including culturally responsive books in the classroom and providing access to charts that enhance the curriculum. There was a level of uncertainty however in providing supports and materials for gifted students of color within the classroom environment. *See Appendix F.*

Participant Seven Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant seven's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, social emotional awareness, compassion/access, and uncertainty. These themes were present in the classroom due to the participant including photographs of children of different backgrounds portraying social emotional actions used in the classroom, as well as pictures of the students themselves on a bulletin board labeled "home sweet classroom." Curriculum-based posters were seen throughout the classroom in support of students, providing access.

There was a level of uncertainty in providing accessible materials for gifted students of color in the classroom. *See Appendix G.*

Participant Eight Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant eight's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: understanding culture (culturally responsive), curriculum, compassion/access, advocate, and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to the participant being compassionate and culturally responsive by including the Mexican flag in their classroom space, representative of the demographic of students in the school building. Posters portraying different curricula aspects hung on the walls, which advocated for a healthy lifestyle. There was a level of uncertainty in providing different areas for gifted students, or portraying giftedness in the space, for students of color. *See Appendix H.*

Participant Nine Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of participant nine's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation: curriculum, social emotional awareness, compassion/access, and uncertainty. These themes emerged due to the participant providing limited curricula aspects on dry erase boards and bulletin boards but showed compassion and access to these ideals. There were some signs of social emotional awareness posted within the room. There was a level of uncertainty regarding giftedness by not providing accessible materials for gifted students as well as not including culturally responsive materials in the classroom. *See Appendix I.*

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Participant Ten Observation Emerging Themes. After taking photographs of

participant ten's classroom and coding the photos to understand what was included in the

classroom, the following emerging themes arose from the classroom observation:

understanding culture (culturally responsive), social emotional awareness,

compassion/access, advocate, and uncertainty. These themes emerged for this participant

due to several factors. One being, the inclusion of different posters within the room that

were representative of different cultures, races, religions background and lifestyles.

Providing helpful signs that increase knowledge of social emotional tools, advocating for

differences seen between one another through using cultural flags. However, there was

uncertainty in portraying gifted aspects within the classroom and relating to gifted

students of color. *See Appendix J.*

Upon recognition of emerging themes seen within general early childhood

educator responses and classroom environments were classrooms with varying emerging

themes. Zero of ten (0:10) participants provided gifted aspects or materials within their

classroom environments, which was directly correlated to ten of ten (10:10) participants

being uncertain regarding inclusion of giftedness and students of color in their classroom.

These two emerging themes could be connected due to the uncertainty of identification

processes in the district therefore there was a lack of materials visible for students in the

classroom.

Looking at both general educator responses and classroom environment

observations, most participants were able to give a giftedness definition during

interviews, however, the theme of giftedness did not appear within classroom

environments. Participants also did not typically mention culturally responsive aspects used or displayed in their classroom, but upon observing classroom environments, more participants did include culturally responsive aspects within their classrooms. This showed that interview responses did not always include what was used or displayed in classrooms, and what was displayed in classrooms did not meet the needs of gifted students of color.

Emerging themes that were more prevalent within classrooms, were highlighted next. The description of the photographs follows, along with figures including the selected photographs.

Explanation of Photographs. The figures below include various classroom environments. Each figure depicted an area of which was conducive to this study and what was being presented to students in classrooms. Narratives of each figure are presented next.

Figure 3: Students of Color Representation in Various Classrooms includes four photographs from four different classrooms. Two of the photographs depict country flags which showed unity among differences. One picture included Spanish as a language that is spoken in the classroom as part of their bulletin board, and one picture showed dolls that students can play with, which are shown to have different backgrounds and look different. Races and cultures were present in each of these photos.

Figure 4: Culturally Relevant Access for Students in One Classroom included five photographs from one classroom. These photos were chosen to show culturally relevant

access for students because of the presentation of the posters. Each poster resembles a different person, a different identity. Recognizing different identities in classrooms provides students with a sense of hope in the classroom and in their future. The posters were large and visible for all students or guests who visit the classroom, to see and recognize acceptance among the classroom culture.

Figure 5: Social and Emotional Curriculum in Various Classrooms included three photographs which showed different social and emotional materials. One photograph depicted a book about feelings and included different ways that students could breathe to calm down or become aware of their surroundings. Another photograph included a large wooden cube with hole cut-outs on the sides of the cube. This cube was used as an area for students to take a break from the classroom routine. And finally, the last picture included smaller posters of which the different tenets the school strived to achieve, socially and emotionally students responded to these tenets.

Figure 3: Students of Color Representation in Various Classrooms
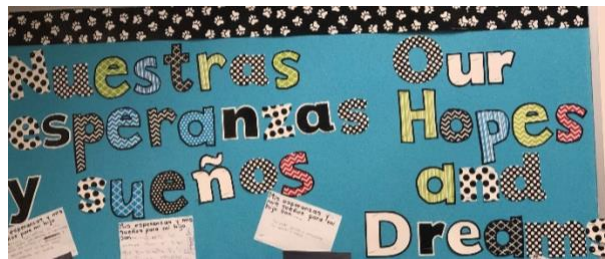
Figure 4: Culturally Relevant Access for Students in One Classroom

Figure 5: Social Emotional Curriculum in Various Classrooms

After evaluating the emerging themes found within the general early childhood educator responses and the classroom environment observations, further evaluation should take place using The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) to compare results from data collection, to the relevant literature. The following section utilizes the literature-based guide to evaluate and compare to collected data findings.

Relevant Literature Evaluation

After collecting data, the connections made between the two protocols: Interview Protocol and Classroom Environment Observation Protocol with The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was of importance. The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) was created to showcase the relevant literature and compare general early childhood educator knowledge surrounding giftedness, students of color, access to gifted services, social emotional needs, and early childhood curriculum and instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Kingore, 2008; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning; 2013). When making comparisons from the literature-based guide to the data collected, the essential components within each of the overarching themes, were the factors utilized in deciding whether general early childhood educator responses and classroom environments showed or included these aspects. An evaluation using the overarching themes and essential components within each overarching theme of the guide

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will be used to compare to general early childhood educator knowledge regarding

giftedness and students of color. These comparisons should be found next.

Students of Color. Comparing the relevant literature that supported students of

color (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018)

to general early childhood educator responses and classroom environment observations,

included few participants incorporating some of the essential components as part of their

teaching, as explained during interviews, or seen within the classroom environment.

These essential components were not completely included as a response to interview

questions or seen in a classroom. One part of an essential component that was seen or

included by participants was using student cultural backgrounds within their own

classroom to incorporate culturally responsive practices, however it was unknown if the

student's cultural background helped lead or guide lessons. One participant mentioned,

allowing students to use the free space of their classroom to explore and experiment,

which connected to allowing students the ability to conduct their own authentic

independent research or project true to who they were as an individual. While these were

the only two essential components that were relatively close in representation of general

early childhood educator responses and classroom environments, this led to recognizing

discrepancies between the relevant literature and general early childhood educator

knowledge of *students of color*.

Giftedness. Comparing the relevant literature that supported giftedness

(Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Cash, 2017) to general early childhood educator

responses and classroom environment observations, included few educators who included

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parts of the essential components within giftedness. These essential components were not

completely included as a response to interview questions or seen in a classroom. Using

creative activities and lessons to engage student learning could be seen within multiple

classrooms as different pieces of student artwork or classwork was visible. However,

participants did not include these ideas when responding to interview questions. Having

appropriate high expectations of students which are known and posted in the classroom,

was seen within some classroom environments with specific expectations posted within

the room, specifically when students were in a whole group lesson. While these were the

only two essential components that were relatively close in representation of general

early childhood educator responses and classroom environments, this led to recognizing

discrepancies between the relevant literature and general early childhood educator

knowledge of *giftedness* and students of color

      Access to Gifted Services. Comparing the relevant literature that supported

access to gifted services (Kingore, 2008; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Callahan &

Hertberg-Davis, 2018) to general early childhood educator responses and classroom

environment observations, included a couple intentions by participants when responding

to interview questions, but no responses indicated participants were already including

these aspects into their own instructional practices. These essential components were not

completely included as a response to interview questions or seen in a classroom. One

participant mentioned providing curriculum access for students, while another mentioned

providing access to the gifted and talented teacher. While only two essential components

were relatively close in representation of general early childhood educator responses and

classroom environments, this led to recognizing discrepancies between the relevant literature and general early childhood educator knowledge of *access to gifted services* for gifted students of color.

Social and Emotional Needs. Comparing the relevant literature that supported social and emotional needs (VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011) to general early childhood educator responses and classroom environment observations, included few participant responses that incorporated some of the essential components. These essential components were not completely included as a response to interview questions or seen in a classroom. Some of the social emotional materials provided in classrooms, provided for a new frame of mind, and in-class support was mentioned by one participant, which allowed for more student needs to be met. While only two essential components were relatively close in representation of general early childhood educator responses and classroom environments, this led to recognizing discrepancies between the relevant literature and general early childhood educator knowledge of *social and emotional needs* of gifted students of color.

Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction. Comparing the relevant literature that supported early childhood curriculum and instruction (Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012, Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014) to general early childhood educator responses and classroom environment observations, included the one essential component of promoting a diverse classroom climate, as seen through some individual responses and some classroom environments. While only one essential component was relatively close in representation of general

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early childhood educator responses and classroom environments, this led to recognizing discrepancies between the relevant literature and general early childhood educator knowledge of *early childhood curriculum and instruction* for gifted students of color.

Using a culturally responsive lens while looking at the emerging themes from data collection in comparison to overarching themes included in The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020), discrepancies existed among general early childhood educator knowledge and overarching themes within the guide and allowed for connections to be made to the research questions of the study.

Connections to Research Questions

With the research questions in mind and reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators, the researcher dove into each question and described considerations and connections to the literature (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Cross, 2011; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018). The research questions were as follows:

- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?

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- How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color?

- What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?

The following connections were made to the research questions, in terms of supports and impediments from the data collected, emerging themes and theoretical frameworks (Eisner, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

First Research Question

"*How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color*?" This question was chosen to understand whether the curricula provided for gifted students of color by general early childhood educators supported or impeded upon academic success, in terms of a multicultural inclusive education (Gay, 2018), based on general educator responses and classroom environment observations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto- Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018). "Gifted education is built upon the principle of individual differences, that some learners demonstrate outstanding performance or are capable of elite levels of performance compared to their peers. Moreover, these differences require modified approaches commensurate with ability and aligned with goals of superior performance" (Kettler, 2016, chap. 1, para. 14).

It was imperative to understand curricula general early childhood educators were using. The interview responses of general early childhood educators and photographs of classroom environments were used to recognize whether educators were supporting or

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impeding upon academic success for students of color. "Educational systems are built on laws, policies, and folkways requiring macrolevel analyses that overlap with microlevel issues such as curriculum and pedagogy. Thus, the need to build on and expand beyond the theoretical tenets associated with multicultural classroom practice is a paramount consideration for scholars interested in equity related research" (Tate, 1997, p. 227). Using a Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ theoretical lens (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Greene, 2017), academic success (Gay, 2018) was interpreted and evaluated (Eisner, 2017) using The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide to compare to general early childhood educator responses and classroom environment photographs.

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) general educator responses, the general curriculum used in classrooms varied. Three of ten participants (3:10) *elaborated* on the curriculum used and its offerings through a culturally responsive lens, which showed depth of knowledge in recognizing academic success for students. Seven of ten participants (7:10) answered with just the curriculum title without a rationale or giving further detail about the curriculum used. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching theme of Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of mentioning curriculum-based performance measures to modify instruction and measure progress as well as scaffolding through questioning and thinking models (Peralta, 2020). More participants did not explain further how

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curriculum was being used in their classrooms, showing a lack of knowledge in terms of culturally responsive teaching; this impedes upon academic success of students of color (Gay, 2018).

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) photographs of classroom environments, some curricula materials were in place for general education students. Two of ten (2:10) participants provided some culturally relevant curriculum materials such as native language displayed on bulletin boards and posters recognizing different backgrounds supporting intentional classroom behaviors. Eight of ten (8:10) participants only included minimally visible curriculum supports for general education students. Of those eight participants, five (5:8) included explicit curriculum support displaying hand-made charts, sight word walls, books for student use, and student writing samples. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching theme of Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of promoting a diverse classroom climate and evidence of using student backgrounds in lessons (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012, Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018). Therefore, the curricula used in general early childhood classrooms impedes upon gifted students of color academic success due to not recognizing students of color through a culturally responsive lens for a multicultural education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018). It should be necessary that classroom

offerings build upon the needs of gifted students of color to provide appropriate and accessible content (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Green, 2017; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012, Johnsen, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Gay, 2018).

Using Eisner's approach to thematics (2017) in recognizing larger themes from the data collected, four themes emerged from the first research question including *curriculum*, *understanding of culture (culturally responsive), compassion/access* and *uncertainty*. These themes emerged due to, while it be minimal, participants mentioning how curriculum was being used in the classroom in a culturally responsive way as well as providing examples in classrooms of curriculum supports, some of which were culturally responsive, which showed compassion for students while providing some access to materials. However, there was some uncertainty in being able to speak to the curriculum as it related to gifted students of color as well as providing curriculum materials for students in the classroom. The emerged themes connect to Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ through recognizing academic success of students of color using a multicultural inclusive education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995: Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018). A supportive multicultural education includes curricula aspects that portray curriculum-based performance measures, scaffolded questions and thinking models, diverse classroom climates, and lessons incorporating student cultural backgrounds, for students of color to be academically successful (Peralta, 2020).

Table 7 and *Table 8* outline connections to research question one in terms of supports and impediments from the data collected from the interview protocol and

classroom environment observation protocol, emerging themes and theoretical

frameworks (Eisner, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Table 7: Research Question One Connections from Participant Interview Responses

Research Question 1: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?*	
Supports	Three participants mention how their curriculum is culturally responsive, and one of the three also mentions the need to understand the curriculum further as well.
Impediments	Seven participants only mentioned the title of the curriculum and did not go in depth or mention how the curriculum reached students of color.
Emerging Themes	Curriculum and Understanding Culture (Culturally Responsive), Compassion/Access, Uncertainty
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	Incorporating a multicultural education using a culturally relevant and responsive lens when speaking of curriculum used in classrooms.

Table 8: Research Question One Connections from Classroom Environment Observations

Research Question 1: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede academic success for gifted students of color?*	
Supports	Two participants included some form of curriculum relevant to students of color with different languages on bulletin boards and small posters of different children recognizing behaviors in the classroom.
Impediments	Five participant included minimally visible curriculum supports for general education students. In total, eight participants did not provide adequate, if any curriculum supports visible to students in the classroom.
Emerging Themes	Curriculum, Compassion/Access, Uncertainty
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	Of the two participants who included some form of curriculum relevant to students of color, they incorporated a multicultural education using a culturally relevant and responsive lens when providing materials for students.

Second Research Question

"*How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color*?" This question was chosen to understand whether the curricula provided for gifted students of color by general early childhood educators supported or impeded upon social emotional learning (Cross, 2011), based on general educator responses and classroom environment observations "Understanding what giftedness actually is and is not and how to identify it, moving from an entity model of giftedness to an incremental model, continuing to strive to be as effective a parent as one can be, and understanding the needs of authenticity enable adults to assist in the social and emotional development of students with gifts and talents" (Cross, 2011, p. 26). Connections to students using social emotional curriculum was an area to recognize general early childhood educator impact on gifted students of color. As Cross (2011) described, being able to identify giftedness was the first step in incorporating aspects into a daily routine or curriculum, which then translates to social and emotional needs being met through specific curricula use.

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) general educator responses some social emotional support was in place for general education students. Four of ten (4:10) participants mentioned approaches to solve and promote social emotional needs of general education students. participants mentioned how they would help students socially and emotionally, gains made by the students socially and emotionally, and allowing freedom of expression in the classroom, as an outlet for students. Six of ten (6:10) participants briefly mention students responding well or not responding well in the

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classroom socially and emotionally, and educators struggled with providing supports socially and emotionally in the classroom. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching theme of Social Emotional Needs of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of ensuring in-class support for intellectual needs and social emotional needs and encouraging personal interests throughout lessons and activities (Peralta, 2020). More participants did not explain further how curriculum was being used in their classrooms, showing a lack of knowledge in terms of social emotional learning; this impedes upon the social and emotional needs of students of color (Cross, 2011).

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) photographs of classroom environments, some curricula materials were in place for general education students. Five of ten (5:10) participants included social emotional supports for students in their classroom such as having books, posters, large social emotional cards, spaces for students and school resources. Of the five who had visible resources for students, only one (1:5) used at least one resource that was relevant for students of color, in recognizing students of color with social emotional behavior cards. Five of ten (5:10) participants did not include visible resources in classroom for social emotional needs of gifted students of color. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching theme of Social Emotional Needs of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of visibility of student interest led work and

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lack of growth mindset thinking strategies portrayed (VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011). Therefore, general education curriculum does not support social and emotional needs of gifted students of color; and social emotional curricula used in general education classrooms impedes upon gifted students of color social emotional needs.

Using Eisner's approach to thematics (2017) in recognizing larger themes from the data collected, five themes emerged from the first research question including *social emotional advocacy*, *curriculum*, *advocate, compassion/access* and *uncertainty*. These themes emerged due to, while it be minimal, participants mentioning how social emotional needs were resolved or looked upon in the classroom as well as providing examples in classrooms of curriculum supports, some of which were social emotional, which showed compassion for students while providing some access to materials. The emerged themes connect to Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ through recognizing social emotional needs of students of color using an inclusive lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995: Greene, 2017). In order to recognize gifted students of color social emotional needs an inclusive lens was needed, to recognize what students may need dependent upon cultural background (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). A supportive social emotional education includes curricula aspects that provide a growth mindset, encourage personal interests, incorporate heterogeneous groups, ensure in class support for intellectual and social emotional needs (Peralta, 2020).

As seen in educator responses and photographs taken during the classroom environment observation protocol, it was evident that few educators used and provided readily accessible tools for their students, based on the curriculum they were using. If an

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educator mentioned using a specific curriculum for social emotional needs, it was seen in their classroom. If an educator did not mention a social emotional curriculum during the interview process, it was not seen in the classroom environment; this was a linear connection between the interview responses and classroom environment observations. "The social and emotional development of students with gifts and talents lasts a lifetime. We have learned many important lessons about how to help them develop during their school-age years and with this newfound knowledge have a corresponding responsibility to act" (Cross, 2011, p. 26). It should be the responsibility of general early childhood educators to understand and provide the appropriate foundation for a caring environment that allows students to grow and succeed, no matter their needs.

Table 9 and Table 10 outline connections to research question two in terms of supports and impediments from the data collected from the interview protocol and classroom environment observation protocol, emerging themes and theoretical frameworks (Eisner, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017).

Table 9: Research Question Two Connections to Participant Interview Responses

Research Question 2: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color*?	
Supports	Four participants included mentioning approaches that supports social emotional needs of students such as how to help students, gains made in their classroom, and providing space for freedom of expression in the classroom.
Impediments	Six participants briefly mention students responding well or not responding well socially and emotionally in the classroom, as well as educators struggling to recognize and help students socially and emotionally.
Emerging Themes	Social Emotional Advocacy, Advocate, Curriculum, Compassion/Access, Uncertainty
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	In order to recognize gifted students of color social emotional needs an inclusive lens is needed, to recognize what students may need dependent upon cultural background.

Table 10: Research Question Two Connections to Classroom Environment Observations

Research Question 2: *How does preschool through second grade curricula support or impede social emotional learning for gifted students of color*?	
Supports	Five participants provided visible social emotional curricula for general education students, minimal in recognizing gifted students of color. One participant included recognition of students of color with social emotional behavior cards.
Impediments	Five participants did not provide visible social emotional support in their classroom for gifted students of color.
Emerging Themes	Social Emotional Advocacy, Advocate, Curriculum, Compassion/Access, Uncertainty
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	In order to recognize gifted students of color social emotional needs an inclusive lens is needed, to recognize what students may need dependent upon cultural background.

Third Research Question

"*What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula*?" This question was chosen to understand general early childhood educator perspectives and

knowledge of inclusive practices as it related to the curricula used in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017), based on general educator responses and classroom environment observations. This question tied in the theoretical frameworks of the study (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017), to better understand gifted students of color and closing the opportunity gap for gifted students of color. Tate (1997) asserts, "that educational research concerning children of color should include (a) pertinent historical and legal background, (b) the ideology of racism, (c) a continuing reexamination of prevailing views of the role of race and social class in learning, and (d) the influence of minority communities on schools" (p. 199). The data collected was purposeful in wanting to understand general early childhood educator's knowledge regarding students of color and how gifted students of color were included in their classroom. During interviews, some educators became uncomfortable and hesitant when asked to define students of color. Identifying individual bias as it related to the term "students of color" was the start. As Tate (1997) mentioned above, it is through the different facets of students of color in research that researchers should consider and use to understand different perspectives of educators in the field.

Incorporating different techniques, strategies, tools, and resources for gifted students of color to see themselves in content provided should be necessary as an approach by the educator. After interpreting the interview responses and photographs of classroom environments, there were educators who knew immediately what they provided for students was culturally responsive to who the students were. Some educators did not know if they were being culturally responsive, but when further investigating the

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classroom environment, it was evident they had culturally responsive materials available for students. This led to the belief that some terms used during the interview process were not understood in the correct context and did not translate when interview questions were asked.

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) general educator responses some inclusive practices were in place for general education students. Four of ten (4:10) participants mentioned examples of culturally responsive practices in their own practice. This includes participants talking about their own biases, believing in their students, potential curriculum bias, using student's culture in the classroom and recognizing students for who they are individually. Six of ten (6:10) participants did not mention culturally responsive practices in their own practices. These individuals did not believe they had supports for their students in the classroom and seemed to be unaware of what culturally responsive materials entailed or included. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching themes of Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction, Access to Gifted Services, and Students of Color of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of promoting a diverse classroom climate, incorporating individual cultural contexts for students, and using student cultural backgrounds to guide lessons (Peralta, 2020). Most participants did not mention examples of culturally responsive practices, impeding upon inclusive practices for gifted students of color to succeed in their classrooms.

After interpreting and evaluating (Eisner, 2017) photographs of classroom environments, some culturally responsive curricula materials were in place for students of color. Seven of ten (7:10) participants provided inclusive practices in their classrooms. These supports included different posters with different individual identities displaying different backgrounds, dolls of different backgrounds for students to play with, job charts that use different background represented for student jobs, books of different cultural backgrounds for students to read, flags of different countries, a class contract with inclusive language, and pictures of students and their families. Three of ten (3:10) participants did not provide or include any culturally responsive materials within their classrooms. While it seems as though the majority of participants included culturally responsive materials for students, the items included were very minimal, but should be included to show attempt of including culturally responsive materials. Upon evaluation (Eisner, 2017), a lack of connection to the essential components under the overarching themes of Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction, Access to Gifted Services, and Students of Color of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide showed the lack of knowledge of general early childhood educators in terms of promoting a diverse classroom climate, incorporating individual cultural contexts for students, and using student cultural backgrounds to guide lessons (Peralta, 2020). However, not all participants included culturally responsive support within their classroom or interview responses regarding visibility of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018). Therefore, curriculum used for general early childhood educators did not support students of color in

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their classrooms. The minimal inclusion of culturally responsive materials by each educator, not collectively, does not support students of color in general early childhood classrooms, impeding upon their education.

Using Eisner's approach to thematics (2017) in recognizing larger themes from the data collected, four themes emerged from the first research question including *understanding culture (culturally responsive)*, *curriculum*, *advocate, compassion/access* and *uncertainty*. These themes emerged due to, while it be minimal, participants mentioning some culturally responsive practices in the classroom as well as providing examples in classrooms of curriculum supports, some of which were culturally responsive, which showed compassion for students while providing some access to materials. The emerged themes connect to Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ through recognizing the needs of students of color using an inclusive lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995: Greene, 2017). In order to recognize gifted students of color and their own needs an inclusive lens was needed, to recognize what students may need dependent upon cultural background (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). A supportive culturally responsive education includes curricula aspects that promote a diverse classroom climate, incorporate individual cultural contexts for students, and using student cultural backgrounds to guide lessons (Peralta, 2020).

Greene (2017) asserts, "the field of gifted education needs researchers who use CRT or GiftedCrit™ to examine current problems of practice; because without this research, an argument can be made that the field of gifted education is being complicit with the mechanisms of racism that exist" (p. 218). Using Critical Race Theory and

GiftedCrit™ as a lens when creating research questions, interview questions, and observing classroom environments was essential to gain an understanding of general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions regarding giftedness and access for students of color.

Table 11: Research Question Three Connections to Participant Interview Responses

Research Question 3: *What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?*	
Supports	Four participants mentioned examples of inclusive practices within their own practices.
Impediments	Six participants did not mention examples or recognize inclusive practices within their own practices.
Emerging Themes	Understanding Culture (Culturally Responsive), Curriculum, Advocate, Compassion/Access and Uncertainty.
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	Using the theoretical frameworks allowed for the recognition of gifted students of color and recognizing the education for these students.

Table 12: Research Question Three Connections to Classroom Environment Observations

Research Question 3: *What are the perspectives of educators regarding inclusive practices including Critical Race Theory, within a preschool through second grade gifted curricula?*	
Supports	Seven participants provided some culturally responsive inclusive practices within their classroom.
Impediments	Three participants did not include any culturally responsive materials within their classroom.
Emerging Themes	Understanding Culture (Culturally Responsive), Curriculum, Advocate, Compassion/Access and Uncertainty
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	Using the theoretical frameworks allowed for the recognition of gifted students of color and recognizing the education for these students.

After interpreting, evaluating, and themes emerging (Eisner, 2017) from the research questions as they related to the relevant literature and analysis of the data collected there were some interesting findings. One interesting finding was the same three participants continually were recognized in terms of the research questions, in support of academic success, social emotional needs, and inclusive practices. One of the three that typically was represented in connection to the research questions, showed the most knowledge of giftedness, and was the only individual to speak of a gifted background. On the other hand, another participant was on the opposite end of the spectrum and did not seem to advocate for giftedness nor understand the implications of gifted education as it related to students of color. Interesting findings based on the demographic of participants, showing the variety of knowledge levels regarding giftedness and students of color.

Conclusion

Upon data collection and analysis of the data, emerging themes arose from data collected within the two protocols: interview protocol and classroom environment observation protocol. The data collected was described, interpreted, and evaluated for emerging themes (Eisner, 2017). The emerging themes found were further analyzed to understand what general early childhood educators knew regarding giftedness and students of color. The evaluation process continued and was compared to The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) in recognition of relevant literature. Upon comparison, it was found that discrepancies existed among general early childhood educator knowledge regarding students of color,

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giftedness, access to gifted services, social and emotional awareness, and early childhood

curriculum and instruction.

Chapter Five: Implications and Discussion

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible." – Walt Disney

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the implications placed on the study and discuss the connections to relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, and current curriculum and instruction practices in general early childhood education classrooms. In reviewing the literature and national data concerning representation of identified gifted students of color; two aspects were apparent: the lack of general early childhood educator's voices explaining what he or she understands about gifted students of color and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogical professional learning opportunities for general early childhood educators. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of curricula relevant for early childhood gifted students of color.

This study was inspired by wanting to understand general early childhood educator knowledge and perceptions of giftedness and students of color. General early childhood educators were chosen as a demographic population because of the need to identify gifted students at a young age in order to provide appropriate access and opportunity for these students (Webb, 1994; Cross, 2011; Tomonari, 2019).

The theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ (Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017), served to provide a culturally relevant theoretical lens in

understanding the lack of developed research of general early childhood educator

knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color.

To compare what educators knew regarding giftedness and students of color, The

Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta,

2020) was created based on the literature, and compared to data collected (Ladson-

Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012;

Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Eisner, 2017;

Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson,

2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Creswell, 2018). Comparisons were made between

participant interview answers and classroom environment observations to The Culturally

Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Eisner, 2017;

Creswell, 2018; Peralta, 2020). The theoretical frameworks allowed for an inclusive

culturally responsive lens to be used in terms of recognizing students of color and being

able to connect to different practices within general early childhood classrooms (Ladson-

Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017). The limitations to the study can be found next.

Limitations of the Study

Through this experience there were limitations when proceeding with the study.

These limitations included time constraint, research site, and a lack of general early

childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color. One limitation

dealt with timing. Gaining approval from the Internal Review Board of the University as

well as District Review Board prolonged the original timeline to gain approval and begin data collection. Once approval was gained, the researcher had limited time to collect data and succinctly organize the data (Creswell, 2018).

Another limitation to this study included that of only collecting data from one school site (Creswell, 2018). The researcher only included one school site due to time constraint, being an employee of the school site, and schedule conflict. "In a narrative study, one needs to find one or more individuals to study—individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" (Creswell, 2018, p. 152). While the researcher interviewed more than one person, it was desirable to interview at more than one school site. Had the researcher included more than one school site, the plethora of data collected would have been beneficial to making larger assumptions based on the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2018). The researcher cannot make a generalized assumption to be addressed as a larger concern when only one school site was chosen, interviewed and observed. While this was a limitation, a concise outlined document informing of findings concerning general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color at one school site, should be sent to the district (Creswell, 2018).

The largest limitation to this study was the lack of knowledge by general early childhood educators regarding gifted education, the process for identification, and access for gifted students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash,

2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011;

Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). Part of the discrepancies that existed could have been

due to the fact that there were misunderstandings of questions, and the language used

within questions, such as culturally responsive and not distinguishing the difference

between students of color and gifted students of color. While these discrepancies could be

used to further next steps for general early childhood educators, it was evident that based

on interview answers and classroom environment observations, there was a lack of

understanding gifted education and gifted students of color which did not allow for a

robust response from most participants. Thinking of this limitation, culturally responsive

teaching (Gay, 2018) comes to mind and the facets that are intertwined with

understanding students in the classroom.

> "It is inconceivable how educators can recognize and nurture the individuality of students if they do not know them. Ignorance of people different from us often breeds negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn them into images of ourselves. The individuality of students is deeply entwined with their ethnic identity and cultural socialization. Educators need to understand very thoroughly both the relationships and the distinctions between these to avoid compromising the very thing they are most concerned about— that is, students' individuality" (Gay, 2018, p. 30).

Through the recognition of uncertainty when it comes to gifted education, the

identification process and gifted students of color, it should be evident and necessary that

educators need additional support with gifted students of color and the identification

process. The potential ignorance by educators was creating a block between opportunity

and reality (Gay, 2018).

The limitations of the study proved to show growth for the future. Insight was

gained regarding different review board processes and inclusion of more school sites

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would provide a more in-depth narration of general early childhood educator knowledge and the potential to incorporate further learning for educators.

Personal Lessons Learned

Through this process, the researcher personally grew in knowledge surrounding the persistent problem of practice and gained a better sense of next steps. The researcher learned that the research process can take a very long time, with different steps that can inhibit the process from continuing. As the researcher has embarked on this journey to study and provide data collected, it was critical for the researcher to reflect and ground themselves in knowing who they were as a scholar, researcher, and individual. Personally, the researcher identified as a first-generation Latinx scholar. Through their own lens of understanding and experience, it was critical for them to recognize their own stance and viewpoint when portraying the preliminary information as well as the data collected. With their experience as a first-generation student of color, their natural tendency was to advocate for students of color, and gifted students of color. The gifted student of color demographic IS one that needs continual support from all perspectives. This study taught the researcher that through different perspectives and knowledge, there needs to be different avenues or methods for educators to understand the severity of inclusion and access for gifted students of color.

Lessons After Implementation

After implementing this study at the designated school site, the researcher learned new lessons as it pertained to future data collection. The recruitment process was one that seemed rushed due to the timeline of data collection. Scheduling interview times for

individuals also posed as a difficulty to ensure that the intended demographic was being represented. In the future, the researcher would interview multiple individuals from multiple schools who qualify and fall into the demographic range of early childhood educators. The researcher learned through this process that being persistent was key to ensure all steps of the process were completed, such as participants responding to being part of the study, paperwork being filled out prior to interviewing and scheduling interviews.

One aspect the researcher wanted to be sure of when collecting data next, was proper wireless connection. When collecting notes via the digital copy of the interview outline document, the wireless connection was sporadic where interviews took place. It would have been beneficial to look at the wireless connection beforehand to ensure all resources were adequately used. The wireless connection did not pose as an immediate threat to data collection, due to being able to record via a voice recording application. Had the wireless connection been tested beforehand instead of assuming the connection, this could have prevented issues to arise and cause minor conflict when starting the interview protocol with participants.

Another lesson learned was the organization of the classroom environment observation protocol and The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide. While collecting this data I found myself either taking random photographs of the classroom to gather evidence or specifically looking for certain areas in the classroom, as it related to the overarching themes within the study. It was a challenge to take photographs of anything and everything in the classroom, rather than

looking for something specific in a classroom environment. I was hesitant when creating

this observation protocol to include certain criteria because I did not want that to hinder

or distract from potential newfound ideas or items in a classroom environment. After

using the classroom environment observation protocol, the protocol could be enhanced

for the future, by including specific criteria based on preliminary research results of this

study. The creation of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and

Instruction Guide was also a learning experience in recognizing best practices as essential

components of the guide as they related to students of color and specifically gifted

students of color. Creating The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum

and Instruction Guide and the experience of re-working and improving the guide format

as well as providing a title that was easily understood and recognized took time. I would

like to implement the guide further within general early childhood classrooms and use the

guide as a stepping-stone in recognizing young gifted students of color.

After implementation of this study, learning opportunities arose from conducting

the study, and should be used as opportunities for growth for future studies regarding

giftedness and students of color.

Implications for Practice

Through completing this study, there were many implications for practice that

extend across the school site, district, state, and national level. "As such, teaching is most

effective when ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural

backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students, are included in its

implementation. This basic fact often is ignored in teaching some Native, Latino, African,

and Asian American students, especially if they are poor" (Gay, 2018, p. 28). These implications can be seen through Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018). Gifted students of color exist in our classrooms (Johnsen, 2012).

Identifying gifted students of color was crucial in recognizing the potential impact educators can have on each of these lives. General early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color was essential in the identification of this study demographic, and the service that schools, districts, and states should be providing. "Decontextualizing teaching and learning from the ethnicities, cultures, and experiences of students minimizes the chances that their achievement potential will ever be fully realized" (Gay, 2018, p. 30). Providing professional development regarding giftedness, students of color, gifted students of color, culturally responsive practices as seen through Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and social emotional professional learning could enhance the learning opportunities and access to materials for gifted students of color in general early childhood classrooms.

While this study was only conducted at one school site, as the researcher embarks on future research, this study should serve as a study to guide future research. The format of this study will expand across the schools in the district. The data gathered for the district can lead to further implementation in other districts within the state, and research results can be distributed among the Colorado Department of Education for a full state analysis. The goal of study expansion should be to determine the discrepancies that exist between general early childhood educator knowledge and current instructional practices

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in the classroom. These practices can be enhanced by using statewide results to create curriculum and instruction that could be implemented in classrooms to impact gifted students of color.

Theoretical Frameworks in Use

As theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory and GiftedCrit™ (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017) serve as thought processes and lenses when looking not only at research and literature, but critically at educators and their approach to teaching. An educator's approach to teaching can be examined and their approach is of their own knowledge. Therefore, if their knowledge lacks in response to giftedness and gifted students of color, there is a demographic being missed when identifying.

> The "inability to make distinctions among ethnicity, culture, and individuality increases the risk that teachers will impose their notions on ethnically different students, insult their cultural heritages, or ignore them entirely in the instructional process. Teachers don't seem to realize that the declaration, 'It's treating students as individuals that counts,' is a cultural value, or that culture, ethnicity, and individuality are not mutually exclusive. In reality, ethnicity and culture are significant filters through which one's individuality is made manifest" (Gay, 2018, p. 30-31).

This can be changed or impacted through training and using a Critical Race Theory lens to promote equitable teaching and advocation for early childhood gifted students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Greene, 2017; Gay, 2018). "With shifting demographics in the nation (Bureau, n.d.) from predominately White to predominantly Hispanic and African American, the field will need to use a GiftedCrit™ lens to understand how to reverse disproportionality and develop talent systemically" (Greene, 2017, p. 195). A GiftedCrit™ lens (Greene, 2017) in conjunction with a Critical Race Theory lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) "should also actively critique the

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multicultural education practices and multicultural curriculum that may or may not exist within classrooms" (Greene, 2017, p. 195). These developed theoretical frameworks were chosen to understand inclusive curriculum for gifted students of color, which could increase identification rates among historically marginalized populations. "GiftedCrit must be used to analyze gifted culturally linguistically diverse learners' ability to obtain property and the system-wide mechanisms that support or hinder access. Once the field has begun to uncover those mechanisms, then research-based recommendations can be made so as to change the practice of teachers and administrators; thus impacting the learners" (Greene, 2017, p. 196).

In the Field

There were impacts to the field of gifted education when looking at this study. Current curricula used in some general education classrooms at one school site, were not inclusive to culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) or use culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) and may not use an equitable lens (Greene, 2017). To accomplish providing a more equitable approach, the standards to which general early childhood educators use, could be enhanced and inclusive to the NAGC standards Pre-K through 12 (Johnsen, 2012). If gifted standards were present for general early childhood educators among the plethora of standards they must incorporate, differentiation for gifted students of color could be accomplished. This study examined the perspectives of preschool through second grade educators. While most districts do not identify students at a very young age, it was critical to understand the perspectives of preschool educators because the district does not identify students as gifted in a preschool setting. This was an

interest area of the researcher because they are passionate about increasing awareness of potential gifted students at a young age. Through this study, the researcher would like to advocate for preschool students to be identified in the future (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014)

Another implication to the field included the impact of district implementation. This was interesting when looking at the educator responses to the two district specified questions. Most educators did not know how the district identifies students as gifted, which led me to recognize that information was limited to general early childhood educators. Communication should be key among all stakeholders. Within the field, how information should be communicated seems to lack thereof. Implementing a system of communication that is directly communicated to general early childhood educators would benefit the process of identification and identify more students due to a linear chain of communication. Through this study and findings, it can be inferred, although only for one school, that further information should be explained to general early childhood educators.

School Site

One of the community partners was the gifted and talented teacher of the school site. This individual has advocated for their students and has been inclusive to identifying students of color. For the school site, it is an interest of the researcher to continue working closely with the community partner to understand next steps for the gifted and talented teacher. Through study findings, the gifted and talented teacher could

incorporate potential trainings to implement and increase communication techniques so that general early childhood educators of the school site can be informed and understand the processes of identification.

Implications for Research

As the researcher reflected upon the process of this research study, it was critical to think about how future research could impact across the board: district, statewide and nationally. This research was grounded in the belief that gifted students of color were not being seen or afforded the appropriate education due to the lack of knowledge surrounding what giftedness looks like and the access to materials that could be included in the classroom environment. Relevant literature can be used to compare what is being used in classrooms across the district, state, and nation to provide critical feedback to schools, which translates to change among identification practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). This research increased efforts in understanding general early childhood educator knowledge regarding giftedness and students of color, to begin identifying at a younger age and providing students with a robust education.

Future Research

In order to increase awareness in the field, further research should be imperative within the district so that a better grasp of general early childhood educator knowledge regarding gifted students of color be achieved. Further research would include visiting all

schools in the district that have Early Childhood classrooms (either preschool through second grade, or kindergarten through second grade). The researcher would follow the same protocols as outlined above and find trends within the district. This preliminary study was used to understand the discrepancies of general early childhood educator knowledge of gifted students of color and what was being provided for gifted students of color in classrooms.

Implementation of The Culturally Relevant Early Childhood Gifted Curriculum and Instruction Guide (Peralta, 2020) in the future should include the researcher developing additional understanding of gifted curriculum and instruction used in general education classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013). Curriculum and standards evolve. It is essential that the researcher stay current with trends and research to be able to provide accurate and impactful curriculum changes. The development of the guide (Peralta, 2020) will be used in the future to develop or enhance current curriculum and instruction, potentially by the start of the 2021-2022 academic school year (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). The researcher would like to conduct further research in the next academic year (2020-2021) using the guide as a tool to recognize general early childhood educator knowledge regarding gifted students

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of color in schools of the district and provide an opportunity of growth for educators (Peralta, 2020).

While the researcher could see expanding this research to the entirety of one school district, it is also beneficial to expand to different districts as well (ie: rural, a similar sized district). The researcher would like to expand and use the guide in multiple districts beginning the academic year 2022-2023 (Peralta, 2020). The researcher could also expand their research to include different sub-groups to be part of the study and determine how instruction can drive a general early childhood education classroom. The sub-groups would be control vs. experimental, where the control group would be the general early childhood classroom with no guide, and the experimental group would use the guide for instructional purposes (Peralta, 2020). After a set amount of time with classroom instruction, with or without the guide, the researcher would compare the results of educators effectiveness and growth for gifted students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Kingore, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Stambaugh & Chandler, 2012; Kettler, 2016; Cash, 2017; Greene, 2017; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2018; Gay, 2018; Sousa, 2011; Kingore, 2013; Erickson, 2014). Based on the results from the sub-group participation, it would be beneficial for the researcher and other personnel of each school to provide extensive and potentially necessary professional development for early childhood educators.

Conclusion

Through the experience of formulating a problem of practice, identifying a target demographic, recruiting participants, creating protocols, collecting data, and analyzing

data, it was essential that this information was shared to advocate for students of color who may identify as gifted. While these students may have been considered historically marginalized, through a culturally responsive lens, we can begin to make gains in support of their education. This can be accomplished through the continual effort of leaders who believe in change and incorporating research to fulfill the needs of students and their families. The researcher sees themselves as a leader and force to incorporate this knowledge into everyday work and practice as an educator. The actions taken to utilize multiple voices and perspectives will lift the voices that may be silenced right now.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant 1 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 1	Open, engaging. compassion		Whole classroom picture, from entrance of classroom.	
	Students of color, culturally responsive		Posters of children from different background near sink where kids wash hands.	Posters were placed rather high; can all students see these?
	Students of color, culturally responsive		Another child, in a different setting.	
	culturally responsive		Groups of kids together, showing teamwork.	

	Students of color, connectedness culturally responsive	Rug in center time area, has children from different backgrounds		
	Access	Area rug of the globe with letters around.		
	Social and emotional	Social Emotional book for feelings	Social emotional items were only in a couple spots, could be more throughout classroom?	
	Different books, comfort, access	Reading area with various books, comfortable looking spot, stuffed animals		
	toys for various needs, differentiation, access	American flag is present, back area of classroom with various toys for students	Could the American flag be where students recognize it on a daily basis?	
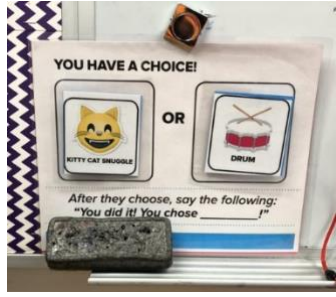
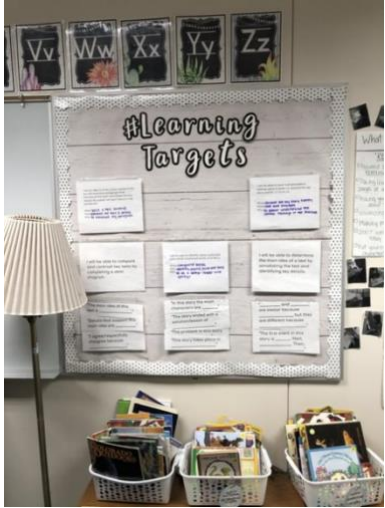|				
	Students of color, connectedness culturally responsive		Back of classroom wall with student made paper dolls, holding hands	
	Take a break spot, social and emotional, access		Area for students to go in, comfy spot	
	Students of color, culturally responsive, access		Dolls of different background to play with	

Appendix B: Participant 2 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 2	Uncertainty		Teacher seat/corner with American Flag, for circle time	
			Student work displaying "dreams" like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	Include a title to describe why this is important to the class
	Positive influence, advocating, compassion		Small posters with positive affirmation words	Posters are hiding behind things, bring them out for kids to see
	Students of color, culturally responsive		Dolls for students to play with, displaying different backgrounds	

	Various books, comfort, access	Reading area of the classroom with various books and spots to read	
	Availability, differentiation. Various toys, access	Whole classroom from the back of the room, includes most toys available for students	
	Expectation, curriculum	"Magic Five" sign showing expectations while in the classroom with noise levels, near teacher corner, on board	Larger poster for students to see and recognize, include different backgrounds of individuals for display
	Uncertainty	Positive affirmation poster	"Fair" or equitable? A different way to describe "equitable" to younger students

Spread out the cards to |
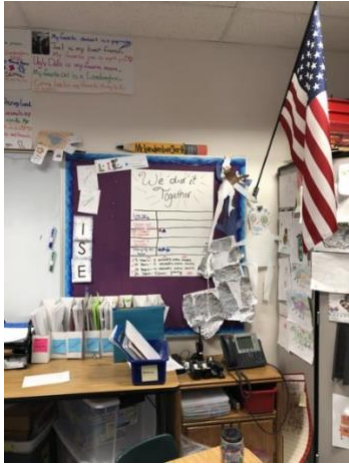
			show how social emotional needs are supported
Social emotional		Social Emotional cards to show "how to treat" others in a stack	
Positive influence, advocate		Positive affirmation poster	

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Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 3	Social emotional		Social emotional mini posters for feelings	
	Language enhanced, students of color, culturally responsive, curriculum		Bulletin board with Spanish and English words	
	Language enhanced, students of color, culturally responsive, curriculum		Bulletin board with Spanish and English words	
			Class schedule with different backgrounds	
	Students of color, culturally responsive		Shelf with various toys	Displaying different children using these toys through pictures
	Various toys, differentiation, access		Shelf with various wooden blocks	

	Differentiation and access	Larger Legos	
	Various toys, differentiation, access	Structure with different toys	
	Various toys, differentiation, access	Different angle for structure above	
	Students of color, culturally responsive	Play area with different background baby dolls	Showing different children playing with these toys

Appendix D: Participant 4 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 4	Students of color, culturally relevant		Job chart for students with different backgrounds represented	
	Expectation, curriculum		How to respond chart, for different instances in the classroom	Different backgrounds could be represented
	Positivity, advocate		Positive poster	Poster is very high, need to bring it down for students to see more
	Connected, compassion		Tree with hearts for each student	

	Social emotional		Social emotional check-up chart	Have different check-up options displaying different students
	Social emotional, students of color, culturally relevant		Social emotional chart with different activities to do	
	Expectation, curriculum		"Magic Five" sign showing expectations while in the classroom	
	Expectation, curriculum		Expectation chart while reading books and discussing	
	Social emotional		Social emotional cards	Cards could be placed lower to be able to see

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	Group work, teamwork, curriculum		Workstation group chart, pictures are in black and white	Pictures could be in color depicting students of color
	Differentiation, social emotional		Choice chart for decisions, social emotional	Have different charts for different choices available and visible
	Open, engaging, access		Whole class picture from front door	
	Open, engaging. access		Whole class picture from front of the room	
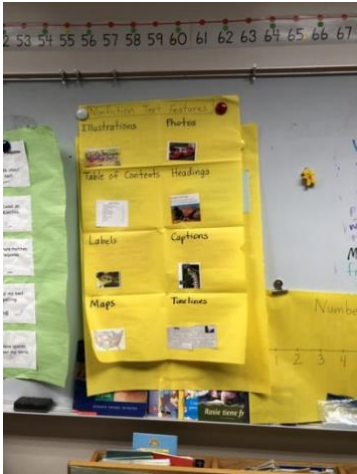
Appendix E: Participant 5 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 5	Uncertainty		Part of whole classroom, including teacher desk/corner	Needs more invitation or welcoming
	Culturally responsive		Student made alphabet	Alphabet could be displayed lower for kids to see
	Compassion and advocate		A closer look shows teacher desk and corner with American Flag, "we did it together" chart	Could be more engaging area for students, together chart could have students of color represented

Inclusion, access		Math corner chart, numbers with fingers, rotating groups	
Inclusion, access, curriculum		Sight word bulletin board with area for teacher to read aloud	Include a challenging word, variety of different words
curriculum, access		Large book celebrating well known public figures	Show importance of the book on the board or near the book
Compassion access, advocate, curriculum		Student work hanging above sink area	Include title of why this is important, what this work shows

	access		Rotating group chart with pictures showing where to go, achievement chart	Pictures could be in color to show student of color
	Curriculum, access		"Parts of a Story" hand-made chart	Add how a student can enhance their story further, sign was hiding in a corner
	Expectation, curriculum		"Class rules" hand-made chart	Sign could be lower and include culturally responsive visuals to help understand
	Access, curriculum		Student classroom jobs with black and white pictures of jobs	Include color pictures of student jobs to show students of color

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Appendix F: Participant 6 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 6	Inclusive, culturally responsive		Bulletin board with student made self-portraits around "Fantastic kids"	
	curriculum, access, uncertainty		Non-fiction text features on chart paper with small pictures describing the feature	Could include how to use text features with larger photos for students to understand
	Uncertainty, chaos		Part of classroom including the American Flag, bulletin board with random papers attached	Papers on the bulletin board make for "chaos" need organization

				Papers everywhere gives a chaotic feel, needs organization
	Uncertainty, chaos		Picture of classroom, with various pieces of paper around the room	
	Student work, culturally responsive, uncertainty		"All About Me" posters made by students	Posters are great, need to be lower for students to be able to read and see
	Inclusion, culturally responsive, access		Reading area featuring cultural books	
	Uncertainty, chaos		Picture of whole room from the door of the classroom	Chaotic feel as you walk in the door, organization and flow are needed

	Inclusion, culturally responsive, uncertainty		All about student families, family pictures and student writing sample	These could be displayed on a bulletin board showcasing importance

Appendix G: Participant 7 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 7	Inclusive, culturally responsive, social emotional, curriculum		Pictures of different students showing how to act in the classroom	
	Access, compassion		Reading corner with positive words, organized books	
	Curriculum, access		Standards and objectives to be met and posted for student learning	

	Culturally responsive, compassion		Bulletin board with student pictures, showing a "family" aspect in the classroom
	Curriculum, access, uncertainty		Word wall with various words
	Open, engaging, access, compassion		Picture of whole classroom from the front/board of the classroom
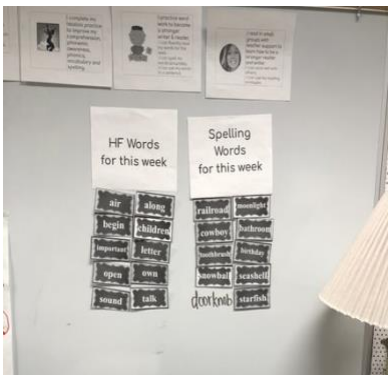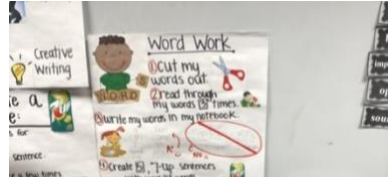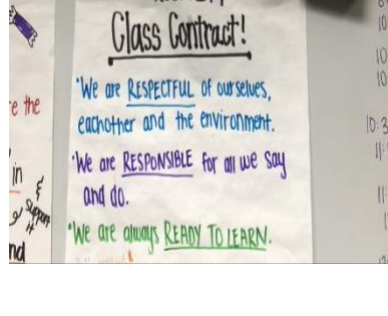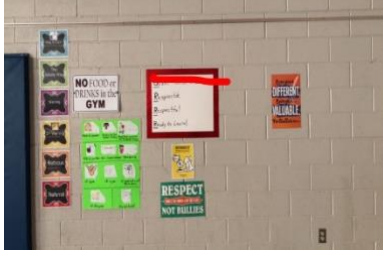
	Curriculum, access		Spelling words and high frequency words are posted for students to see	
	Curriculum, access		Guided reading purpose with pictures describing purpose	
	Curriculum, access		Poster describing word work and the procedures used in the classroom	
	Culturally responsive, compassion		Contract for the classroom showing what they will do as students	

Appendix H: Participant 8 Classroom Environment Observations
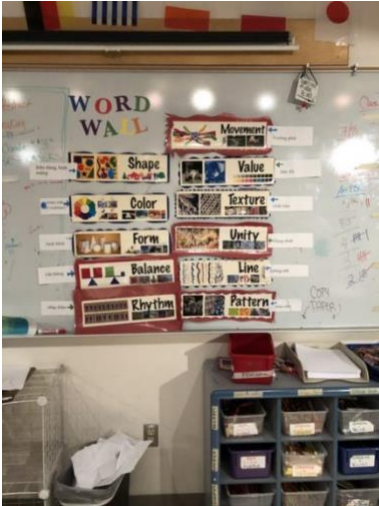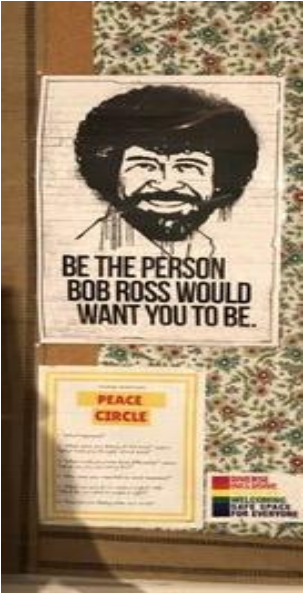
Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 8	Culturally responsive, access, advocate		American flag and Mexican flag hung	Inclusion of other flags to be hung representing other countries
	Clean, open, uncertainty		Picture of whole space from the back corner	
	Compassion access, advocate		Posters representing respect and manners to use in the space	Maybe larger posters since it is a large space
	access		Poster describing heart health, with visuals	More posters about health could be included throughout the space

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Appendix I: Participant 9 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 9	Curriculum, access		Board describing different things to know by students	Could include areas for all students to excel
	Compassion /access		Colorful carpet for students to sit on	
	Curriculum, access		Items to be used by students, organized in shelves	To be culturally responsive, label the different items with the origination location
	Compassion access		Poster providing influence and positivity	Poster was the only thing on a bulletin board, include more information or appeal to the board

	access		Poster describing how to act and respond in the classroom	Poster could be lowered to allow for all students to see and recognize
	Access, compassion		Positive posters, influential, as students leave the classroom	

Appendix J: Participant 10 Classroom Environment Observations

Classroom	Emerging Themes	Photographs	Classroom Comments	Areas of Growth
Participant 3	Culturally responsive, access, advocate		Picture of whole classroom, including flags hung from different countries	
	Access, curriculum		Word wall showcasing different vocabulary words	
	Advocate, social emotional		Posters for influence, a social emotional chart "peace circle" used within the school	

	Advocate, compassion		Influential posters	
	Advocate, compassion		Influential posters	
	Access		Chart showing how to behave in classroom	
	Access		Chart for different ways for students to engage with one another	

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	Culturally responsive, access, compassion, advocate (for all pictures on this page)		Posters showing different influential persons throughout time (this entire page of pictures)	

	Social emotional, access, advocate		Social emotional cards hanging on doors at the front of the room	

Appendix K: Recruitment Flyer

UNIVERSITY of DENVER

MORGRIDGE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

ATTENTION EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE - 2ND GRADE)!

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY! "EARLY CHILDHOOD GIFTED STUDENTS OF COLOR"

After School Individual Interviews – One hour per interview – Classroom Environment Protocol

By Stephanie Peralta M.A.

<p style="text-align:center">Appendix L: Participant Consent Form</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Doctoral Research Consent Form</p>

Title of Research Study: Early Childhood Educator Knowledge: An Exploratory Study Regarding Giftedness and Students of Color

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Peralta M.A., University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Norma Lu Hafenstein
IRBNet Protocol #: 1495208

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

<u>**Study Purpose:**</u>
If you participate in this research study, you will be invited to participate in an interview process. This interview will be one day after school hours. The purpose of this interview process is to gain more knowledge surrounding teacher perspectives of gifted students of color in the general education classroom. You may choose not to participate in the interview process for any reason without penalty.

There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study.

<u>**Procedures:**</u> If you agree to be a part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in one interview session, as well as an observation protocol. The interview and observation process should not take any longer than an hour.

> **Interviews:** Your interview will include 17 questions on the basis of early childhood gifted students of color. These questions are intended for the researcher to understand the background knowledge of general education teachers in reference to gifted education.

> **Observations:** The researcher would like to observe the classroom environment of each participant. Observations will include pictures of the classroom and notes as to how the classroom is inviting to gifted students. Observations should take place after school as well, while there are no students in the classroom. There should be no information given to families in regards to the observations. The researcher and the participant should be the only persons involved during observations.

Before you begin, please note that the data (interview answers) you provide may be collected and used by **Otter** (digital app to transcribe interviews) as per its privacy agreement. This research is only for U.S. residents over the age of 18. Please be mindful to respond in a private setting and through a secured Internet connection for your privacy. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

You will be audio/video recorded during the time of the interview via Otter. If you do not want to be audio/video recorded, please inform the researcher, and only hand-written notes will be taken during the interview.

> **Coercion:** This consent form should be distributed by the Gifted and Talented teacher of the school site in order for no coercion to take place. The researcher wants to ensure every invited participant is comfortable with the participation procedures.

> **Secure Data Server:** The researcher will store all data on a secure server within the University of Denver to ensure safekeeping of each participant.

> **Member Checking:** Upon data collection and compilation, the researcher will provide all participants with findings based on the collection of data. 1-2 weeks after interviews have taken place. This should be distributed from the researcher via email to participating participants.

Participant Consent:
□ I have read and understand the above descriptions of how my recordings will be used, I consent to be recorded for these purposes.
□ I do not give consent to be recorded.

Data Sharing
De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact the researcher or faculty sponsor. Contact information is listed below:

> **Researcher:** Stephanie Peralta at 720 345 2929 or Stephanie.Peralta@du.edu
> **Faculty sponsor:** Norma Lu Hafenstein at Norma.Hafenstein@du.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Denver's Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is minimal risk and is exempt from full IRB oversight.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____   _____

Participant Signature   **Date**

Appendix M: Community Partner Letter

October 14, 2019

To whom this may concern,

      I am willing and able to be a community partner for Stephanie Peralta, as she conducts a study at our school. I understand that as a community partner I will not be partaking in the research portion of the study, rather I am solely supporting Stephanie Peralta through recruitment efforts. The role of the community partner would be to help the researcher recruit participants for the study (ECE-2nd grade teachers). These recruitment efforts should include distributing a recruitment flyer to specific participants. Should the participants have questions, they will reach out to the researcher, Stephanie Peralta.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to supporting Stephanie Peralta this school year.

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix N: Community Partner Letter

October 14, 2019

To whom this may concern:

I am the Gifted and Talented teacher and Equity Specialist. I have accepted the role of community partner for Stephanie Peralta. As Ms. Peralta's community partner, I will be sending a letter on her behalf to participants asking them to fill out and return the letter in order to participate in data collection. As her community partner, I also understand I will not be partaking in any data collection that Ms. Peralta needs to gather. My role as her community partner will be that of recruitment for the data collection process.

Sincerely,

Gifted and Talented Teacher

Appendix O: Acknowledgments

As this study was wrapping up, so was daily life as we knew it. Mid-March of 2020 I, the researcher, am told as an educator that I will be working from home for the next three weeks due to a worldly crisis: COVID-19 (Corona Virus). With this news, comes uncertainty, anxiety, and pressure. As the virus spread quickly among our nation, the fear and anxiety experienced as a daughter, sister, aunt, granddaughter, cousin, niece, friend, educator and scholar was something I never thought I would experience. Fast forward a few weeks later and a new term would become my reality: remote learning. We connect with our students through a screen now, and not a physical hug. The little smiles, laughter, jokes, and voices have become silent. One word during this time of crisis describes my outlook: hope.

As the researcher, I would like to take this time to acknowledge the individuals who have helped, pushed, and inspired me to continue down this path of furthering my education. There are not enough words to express the gratitude I have for the journey and for the people who truly stood by my side and cheered me on.

To my mother, thank you for being my rock. Thank you for inspiring me to become an educator. Do you remember when I would meet you at school and volunteer in your classrooms with your students? Your passion to advocate for students with Autism truly inspired me to be an advocate for students, and now gifted students of color. Thank you for continually giving me ideas in my pursuit to provide students with a creative outlook on education. You have been one of my biggest cheerleaders, and I can't wait to make you proud. Te amo, mama bear.

To my father, thank you for my "brain power." Ever since I was a little girl, I will never forget before going to school, you would say "brain power." All of the power over the years has landed us here. Thank you for always being a listening ear when times get tough. Thank you for showing me what strong looks like in the face of adversity. And most importantly, thank you for being my Bronco buddy. Te amo, Papa Georgio.

To my lovely sister, thank you for always dealing with my crazy shenanigans and being there for me to vent at any given time. Thank you for giving me two of the greatest joys in my life, the cutest nephews you will meet! I am not sure where I would be without my partner in crime. You give me hope, and being an auntie is the greatest blessing I could ask for. Te amo, sissy.

To my extended (large) family and friends, thank you for all the laughs when I needed them, for the shoulders to cry on, and for embracing me with countless hugs. Thank you for keeping me awake during late nights writing and researching and thank you for rooting for me along this journey.

To my advisor, Dr. Hafenstein, thank you for pushing me beyond my limits, and for encouraging me when I was "under my rock." THANK YOU for believing in me, when I did not believe in myself. I cannot believe the journey we have been on thus far, and I am incredibly excited to call you my colleague. I look forward to many conferences and opportunities to collaborate in the future.

Lastly, to my cohort pals. We made it. Thank you to each of you for helping your fellow classmate out during tough times, for being great group project teammates, and for providing me with a sense of hope during this entire process. Let's celebrate!