

WHY DO GIFTED AND TALENTED MINORITIES OPT OUT OF GIFTED AND
TALENTED PROGRAMS?

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To my parents, Maureen and Frank, for their love, support, and help in everything I do; to my friend, Michelle, for her help transcribing interviews; to my boyfriend, Jim, for his patience and confidence in me throughout this process; and most of all to Dr. Kramer, who has tirelessly challenged my writing and thinking with the patience of a saint.

WHY DO GIFTED AND TALENTED CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
STUDENTS OPT OUT OF GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS?

by

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Abstract

This study analyzes why gifted and talented culturally and linguistically diverse students opt out of gifted and talented programs. The participants were all 8th grade students in the Frontera School District (a pseudonym) in West Texas who chose to exit a gifted and talented classroom sometime during the 2003-2004 school year or the 2004-2005 school year. Participants were asked why they entered the gifted program in the first place, how they felt during their participation, and why they decided to leave. This qualitative multiple case found that students left the gifted and talented program for many reasons. The type of work, the amount of time, teacher conflicts, peer pressure, and a lack of resources were major factors in students' decisions to leave. The data strongly suggest that alternative gifted programs, emphasizing other intelligences besides verbal ability, should be created. In addition, the curriculum must become more multicultural and teachers should attend more diversity training to make teachers aware of the culturally and linguistically diverse students' needs.

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Why Do Gifted and Talented Minorities Opt Out of GT Programs?

Introduction

Growing up, I spoke English with my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Although three of my grandparents spoke Spanish during their childhoods, I was not challenged beyond my elementary school classrooms to speak the language of my elder family members. My father is White, my mother is Hispanic and has light skin, and the older members of my family divorced themselves as completely as possible from our Spanish and Mexican heritage before I was even born.

I was an English-speaking, White-looking little girl, and I excelled at an early age during my elementary career at two small, parochial, private schools just outside of El Paso, Texas. One of the remaining cultural bonds that did exist in my family was a persistent, devout fascination with Catholicism. Even then, we were careful not to miss the English service.

In school, many of my friends were White and many of my Hispanic friends chose to pronounce their names without the proper Spanish pronunciation their parents would use. Most of the children in my small elementary schools were White, and once I entered public school, I was immediately tracked into the gifted and talented (GT) program. Almost all of my classes were

with the same group of students. Almost all of these students looked White, spoke only English at least at school, and behaved in ways that were sanctioned by the teachers and administration of the school. Furthermore, we all spoke perfect, accent-free English. The majority of the books we read were by White, male authors and all of our teachers were White. It is no wonder that part of being smart for me meant being, or at least acting, White. Although I never would have stated it that way, the impact of the constant physical demonstration of "Whiteness," being equated with intelligence, cannot be underestimated.

As a child, I internalized a snobby attitude regarding my lack of proficiency in Spanish. Why should I learn to speak Spanish when the only people I could then speak to were those less intelligent than myself? Surely, those *others* were not capable of challenging me—after all, I was *gifted* and they were, at best, *regular*! Although I maintained a casual academic interest in the Spanish language, I refused to cultivate my fascination with my own culture that surrounded me. I was not interested in the Mexican culture, my own heritage, or the unique blend of cultural flavor ever present in our border town. I knew that I was gifted and this label made me *feel White*.

Now I am a 27 year old scholar who has returned to her community after study elsewhere. Knowing myself now, I am

appalled at the messages, overt and subconscious, that were sent to me in a very subtle way through my participation in GT programs in El Paso, Texas. I know now I was internalizing the inequity that still exists in our society. This disenfranchisement is mirrored in our educational system. I lacked examples of successful Mexican-American teachers and students.

Where are the culturally and linguistically diverse children in our gifted and talented programs in El Paso, Texas? Why haven't we successfully fused our children's cultural and academic identities to include aspects of their culture as well as their academic prowess in the formation of their self-concepts? Why are the majority of children in our gifted classrooms affluent, English-speaking White children?

The answers for many of these questions will require more research than I can undertake, especially in my initial study. There are a host of important variables that could be fruitfully analyzed when considering these questions. Although many can agree that gifted programs severely underrepresent children living in poverty and children who are linguistically and culturally diverse, few can agree on exactly *why* these programs fail to represent students equitably. Even fewer can agree on how to fix this inequity. Since gifted and talented programs

are not specifically mentioned in federal mandates, the way to accommodate those students who are not challenged within the context of the regular education classroom is quite unclear.

Some states, like Texas, have opted to implement self-contained gifted education classes for children who achieve at high levels and show academic promise based on standardized testing. However, a uniform definition of a qualifying "gifted and talented" student does not even exist. In fact, even though certain states mandate that gifted education must be offered for accelerated students, there is not a statewide definition of "gifted student" in many states (Renzulli, 1999). Even in Texas, some school districts with a large Latino, heavily bilingual and Spanish-speaking population still administer qualifying GT tests solely in English (Anguino, 2003). Further evidence of this trend is found in teacher recommendations (Plata & Masten, 1998) and scholastic achievement (Vanderslice, 1998). Often, the scholastic achievement is based solely on how the children perform in English classes where teaching and assessment takes place in English only. This issue would certainly benefit from an agreement on the many different terms used to describe the dilemma facing educators regarding how to educate those students who are not being challenged in regular education classroom settings.

In this study, I will explore why GT CLD students opt out of GT programs. I want to understand, by interviewing students who choose to leave these programs, why they choose to return to a less-rigorous academic setting.

After reviewing the literature in the field, I feel this is the next logical line of inquiry. A proliferation of research has been done with respect to understanding under-identifying non-mainstream groups. Many theories (Renzulli, 2002; Ford, 2003; Robinson, 2003a) have been espoused about the conceptions of giftedness and which talents to develop. However, we fail to fully address the issue of underrepresentation if we ignore why CLD students exit these programs. That is, why do students, who were referred, passed tests, received favorable teacher ratings, and started the program, leave the setting that was designed to optimize their ability to learn meaningfully and wholly? To answer this question, I will explore why gifted young learners decide that the class for gifted young learners just isn't for *them*.

Review of Literature

Gifted education has been extensively studied in the last thirty years. Gifted students need to be challenged to perform at their capacity. Their needs are not often met within the context of the regular education classroom:

Academically gifted children are those who *need* educational services not usually (or easily, even feasibly) provided in regular education classrooms.

These students are not just learning machines, rapidly acquiring skills (although they do that). Their reasoning and insight are like those of older students (Robinson, 2003a, p. 253)

Although this may be the most comprehensive definition of what it means to be "gifted," this definition is not practical for use in their identification and inclusion in gifted and talented (GT) programs due to its lack of pragmatism. Stemming from this theoretical definition, several systems of identification have been proposed over the years. Terman (1926) proposed a strict definition relying solely on testing as an indicator. Robinson (2003b) proposes a more varied approach, using performance, testing, and teacher recommendations to identify students who meet the definition of GT. Renzulli (1999) suggests a revolving door method of identification which places

students in situations where they can be identified as they continue to acquire skills that could eventually help them qualify for GT programs.

Most GT programs rely on the use of parent or teacher nominations, national standardized achievement and/or intelligence tests, teacher recommendations, and academic achievement as the criteria for entrance into the programs (Anguino, 2003). It must be noted that whatever definition we use, the definition of "gifted" is a subjective construction of *something* exceptional (Morris, 2002). However, exactly what skills, potential, intelligence, and aptitude we are hoping to identify and hone remain subjects open for debate (Callahan, 2003).

Which definition of gifted education is used becomes one of the central questions when analyzing why there is a discrepancy in representation among CLD students. Robinson (2003a) maintains that CLD and/or students from a lower socio-economic status (low SES) students have less developed verbal and logical reasoning abilities than do their White, affluent counterparts. Hence, a lower identification rate is natural according to her viewpoint. Unless we change gifted programs to develop other talents such as spatial reasoning, we are setting CLD students up for failure if we select them for high levels of spatial reasoning ability

and send them into programs that rigorously develop verbal ability (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003).

Early in the field of gifted education admission was based solely on the score cutoff method of identification. Generally, a single criterion, usually an IQ test, was used for the qualification of students into special classes, supported by the work of Lewis Terman. Terman (1926) defined *giftedness* as "the top 1% in general intellectual ability, as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or comparable instrument" (p. 43)

Many scholars have decried using a single criterion for identifying GT students because such tests fail to identify non-mainstream kids and those who may have potential to develop high specific abilities if challenged. Renzulli (1999) developed the Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness as a way to describe the qualities that gifted children possess including: above-average ability, creativity, and task-commitment. Similarly, Howard Gardner (1999) identified nine different talents that people possess to varying degrees. Exceptionality in any one area might be evidence of "giftedness" in that particular intelligence. The word "intelligence," however, is typically applied to logical-mathematical intelligence and verbal reasoning, resulting in an undervaluing of the other types of

intelligences (Fasko, 2001).

Sarouphim (2000) conducted a study to analyze alternate assessments and their implication for multiple intelligence theory. She found, consistent with multiple intelligence theory, that students identified as exceptional in one area of their assessment were not rated equally high across all disciplines. By using multiple assessment instruments rather than a single score on an achievement test as the qualifier, she identified students as exceptional in several different areas. This method could be used to help identify gifted CLD students (Sarouphim, 2000).

Several variables must be considered to understand why some students are underrepresented in GT programs today. Even varying definitions seem to favor some groups over others (Rogers, 2003). Rogers argued that traditional assessment techniques have focused on achievement rather than viewing identification as a dynamic process, which may not correlate with prior work.

I will discuss the many factors that impact how minorities are represented. Racial prejudice, low cultural expectations, negative self-image (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003), preservation of cultural identity (Morris, 2002), unfair testing procedures for identification (Vanderslice, 1998), low teacher ratings (Plata & Masten 1998), and social inequity (Robinson, 2003a) have all

been cited as possible reasons for low minority representation in GT programs.

In addition, there is limited federal funding for specialized instruction opportunities (Baker, 2001). Thus, many rural, poor districts do not offer specialized instruction to GT students because they cannot afford to offer separate classes. These districts tend to have more culturally and linguistically diverse students, and therefore, these students are less represented on a national scale due to their geographic location as well (Baker, 2001). Kozol (1991) exposed how poverty affects educational opportunity. In many of the schools contained in his descriptions, there was a high minority population. Because of the frequent co-occurrence of cultural/linguistic diversity and poverty, the poorest students also speak the least English in the home. This confounds all aspects of their participation in GT programs—access or lack thereof, availability, and the quality of their experiences in the classroom.

Each of these aspects of CLD student access to gifted and talented programs will be addressed. In turn, I will discuss the programs, teachers, curriculum, and GT students themselves. Finally, I will present a review of the literature with respect to CLD student retention in these programs. Due to the paucity of literature about retention in these programs, I will discuss

the retention of underrepresented groups at the level of higher education.

Identification of the Gifted

In every case when a child was placed in a GT program, the student was identified as gifted and/or talented by the school prior to placement. The identification process varies from school district to school district and from state to state, but there are many components commonly used during the process. Testing, for example, is accepted as an almost universal requirement for admission into GT programs. In order to take the test, a referral must be made by a teacher, parent, or administrator. Grades are often one of the factors considered, and in some cases portfolios of work are reviewed for consideration. Teacher ratings are often used as another factor, and similar parent questionnaires and rating forms are used for evaluation as well.

The literature addresses each of these aspects. These will be discussed in turn in this section of the review of literature. Studies have been conducted regarding each of these aspects of identification of GT students, and there is evidence to suggest that CLD students are selected at a lower rate than their White peers in part for several reasons. First, CLD students are nominated for testing less often than their White

counterparts (Ford, 2003). Second, they score lower on the particular tests that are administered (Anguino, 2003). Third, they receive lower teacher ratings on behavior scales (Plata & Masten, 1998). Fourth, their grades from regular education classes are often lower than the requirements (Vanderslice, 1998). Finally, their parents have less cultural capital to insist that their children be tested for or admitted into these programs (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003).

I assert that in almost every case, the same type of social, cultural, and institutional forces exert pressure on CLD students both during the admission process and during their participation in these programs. Furthermore, I feel that the intersection of giftedness, race, and identity is worthy of further study because this affects access to premium educational opportunities.

Nomination of the Potentially Gifted

Another barrier exists because CLD students are nominated less and receive lower ratings on teacher rating scales. Many reasons have been suggested regarding why minority students are nominated less and receive lower scores on teacher ratings. Reasons include cultural disparities, institutionalized racism, and low expectations for minority children (Plata & Masten; 1998). Plata and Masten (1998) found that teachers nominate

Hispanic students less frequently than their White peers. They found that this difference in nomination rates occurred despite the use of four Scales for Rating Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS). Nomination of CLD students was lower than that of the White counterparts even though no significant difference between the White children's ratings and those of the Hispanic children was present in the data.

Racism or cultural differences seem to be some of the possible reasons for the discrepancy, but either way, this gap in perception between Hispanics and Whites could account for part of the underrepresentation in GT programs. Furthermore, the values reflected by the dominant, White culture are often different than those most valued by minority students and students from low SES. This can be problematic when teachers from the dominant culture are used to identify and/or nominate potentially gifted students from other cultures (Peterson, 1999).

Testing

In addition to the problematic nature of relying on teacher nominations and the conundrum facing educators who use academic achievement in regular classes, there is also the matter of unfair testing to complicate the identification process.

Anguino (2003) contends that many of the tests for use in identifying gifted populations are culturally biased. Because they are often normed on a different population and administered to CLD students *in English*, their validity is questionable. “[Masten] advises using the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Cartoon Conservation Scale, Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, and the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment” (Vanderslice, 1998, p. 20) to identify gifted Hispanic children. Another useful test for identifying CLD students is the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). This test has shown predictive validity, specifically with respect to Hispanic and African-American populations of students (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003).

In addition to IQ tests and other standardized achievement tests, some school districts and/or schools choose to use other methods of gifted and talented identification. Renzulli (2002) stresses the importance of using other data, especially to help identify underserved populations. He admonishes educators to realize that there are not always numerical values for a child’s intelligence, and that we must broaden our notion of giftedness beyond the paltry amount that we can numerically measure. He offers a justification for a more revolving method of identification to recognize potential as well as current

displays of excellence:

Many young people who have not had appropriate educational opportunities may not perform at superior levels through no fault of their own. Therefore, a good gifted program should be responsible for providing underidentified students with challenging and stimulating opportunities, resources, and experiences that will serve as vehicles for transforming potential into performance" (p. 72)

Possibly, a redefinition and push toward alternate assessment could lead us towards partially acquiring more equitable cultural and linguistic representation in GT programs.

Other Cultural Forces

The conception of giftedness ascribed to by most educators reifies the hegemonic order imposed on our society by those in power and social momentum since White, English-speaking middle to upper class men have traditionally been in charge of education in this country. Their cultural values cannot help but be reflected in the educational system, and since these are often in opposition to the cultural values of non-mainstream cultures, there is an inherent contradiction of identities for those minorities who excel in the educational system (Peterson, 1999).

Certain attributes necessary or at least helpful for individual advancement are actively discouraged by some cultures. Anzaldua (1999) discusses the importance of kinship relationships in the Mexican American culture and the relative downplaying of individualism:

The welfare of the family, the community, and the tribe is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin—as sister, as father, as *padrino*—and last as self. In my culture, selfishness is condemned, especially in women...If you don't behave like everyone else, *la gente* will say that you think you're better than others, *que te crees grande* (p. 40)

Cultural forces impede participation by CLD students in GT classes because of their cultural values which are sometimes at odds with maximizing achievement (Vanderslice, 1998).

Cultural differences can obscure identification and sabotage CLD participation in GT programs. To ameliorate this, at one southwestern school, a community project, funded with a Javits grant, was used as a more holistic attempt at gifted identification (Belcher, 1999). Other instruments were created with input from parents and teachers to achieve a more equitable racial representation within the programs. When data were analyzed from several multiple sources rather than a mere cutoff score, Belcher concluded that representation was more diverse. She offered several possible reasons that identification may be more difficult with CLD students:

Characteristics associated with cultural diversity may obscure giftedness and prevent identification. For example, Hispanic children may be less familiar with the English language. They may tend to be less competitive, and their families often place more emphasis on the family than on achievement and individual development (p. 18)

Minority parents may be less inclined to nominate their children due to cultural factors. Rogers (2003) asserted that cultural dictates can prevent parents from advocating for their children to be placed in programs that could develop their children's talents more fully. "Evaluations showed,

unfortunately, that many ethnic groups were reluctant to self-select, and, thus, programs tended to be White and Asian in composition" (Rogers, 2003, p. 315) This is another example of a cultural difference translating into a barrier against participation in an advanced program. This parental attitude can hamper the student's participation if the parent does not emotionally support the child in the more rigorous environment (Vanderslice, 1998).

The effect of culture on GT participation is showcased once again in what some have termed the overrepresentation of Asian and Pacific Islanders in GT education. Although preliminary data make it difficult to disaggregate out the specific subgroups that are particularly represented in GT programs, Kitano and DiJiosia (2000) suggest that parental attitudes towards education and cultural values supporting education account for some high rates of representation and high achievement. The similar cultural values placed on education could account for some of the Asian and Pacific Islander's success in education in general and GT programs. "The 'cultural compatibility' hypothesis suggests that even though family structure and religious beliefs might differ, Japanese and White Americans share some cultural values, especially a strong valuing of achievement" (Kitano & DiJiosia, 2000, p. 78) A cultural value

placed on individual achievement seems to translate into success in these programs, yet differing cultural values can limit access and success in these same programs.

Further evidence of cultural differences that affect GT participation are found in character traits displayed to different degrees in different cultures. For example, Hispanic students tend to respond to academic situations and specifically underachievement with "worry" as opposed to "self-blame," which is the preferred coping method for their White counterparts (Plucker, 1998). This is illustrative of one of the many cultural differences that manifest within the classroom and affect children's performance and achievement. This simple behavioral difference can account for a large discrepancy in assessment within classes in gifted programs and largely alter the tangible success of some of these students.

Clearly, another barrier to minority participation in GT programs is the perception of loss of cultural ties (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003). Furthermore, there is a system of negative peer pressure limiting some students' participation in these programs. Rather than run the risk of cultural isolation, identity fragmentation, or censure from their cultural group, many students opt out of participation in these programs (Morris, 2001).

However, Rowley and Moore (2002) argue that this issue is not fully addressed when we look at participation in GT programs as an automatic cultural loss. Rather than focus on a dualistic approach to racial identity as it relates to achievement, there should be greater focus on identifying successful coping strategies of gifted minorities. This revisioning yields an alternative to the dualistic notion of race and offers a slippage between racial identities rather than strictly one or another. These successful types of coping strategies, called pathways to resiliency, often result in examples of how CLD students can navigate these complex identity issues (Rowley & Moore, 2002). Rather than conflating White and success on one hand, and Black and underachievement on the other, we should view the ways that CLD students cope with their success while embracing their culture.

In addition to the peer pressure to not participate in GT programs, numerous studies have shown that Black and Hispanic students learn in environments with fewer resources and less experienced teachers. Teachers assume that students are only capable of minimal progress. These contemporary social ills may lead to students who are less stimulated during their stay in school, which in turn, may lead to lower identification of minorities for GT program participation. Their gifts are being

wasted because racism exists in our society and our schools (Ford, 2003).

The pressure of cultural forces manifests in several important ways that affect the success of even the smartest CLD students. Vanderslice (1998) contended that parents who do not speak English in the home or who do not have enough time to converse in Spanish may delay their children's development of conversational skills. She further posited that many Hispanic children may have to assume mature roles in the household such as caring for younger siblings which detracts from the time they can spend pursuing individual educational advancement. Morris (2002) and Steele, Perry, and Hilliard (2003) argue that racism affects how students perceive themselves and impacts their self-esteem. All of these forces exert pressure on CLD students before they are nominated for testing, while they test, when they enter GT programs, and during their experiences in these programs (Ford, 1995; Vanderslice, 1998; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003).

Steele et al. (2003) maintained that minority status, specifically with African-Americans, alone inhibits virtually all aspects of a student's education:

Virtually all aspects of underperformance—lower standardized test scores, lower college grades, and

lower graduation rates—persist among students from the African-American middle class. This situation forces on us an uncomfortable recognition: that beyond class, something racial is depressing the academic performance of these students (p. 111)

I agree with Steele et al. that CLD students suffer from stigma that pervades every aspect of their identities, experiences, and performance as students.

Although it seems tests that identify minority students at a higher rate appear to move us toward equitable representation, some argue that tests that identify more CLD students will lead to improper placement of students in GT programs. For example, Nancy Robinson (2003a) contends that if we identify more students via nontraditional testing methods, we risk placing them in an environment where their particular gifts will not foster their academic success. She maintains that current GT programs emphasize verbal intelligence whereas many of the tests that identify larger numbers of CLD students emphasize nonverbal abilities. When students then enter these programs they will be ill-equipped to meet the standards that the rest of the class can uphold (Robinson, 2003b). To some researchers, this merely proves that GT programs must be reengineered to meet a more diverse population of GT students rather than nurturing one type

of "gift" (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003).

Armenta (1999) asserts that overemphasis on the "identification" aspect of "gifts" undermines the transformative power of education. By ignoring the fact that these gifts must be nurtured in order to develop, we undermine the philosophy of education. When we underidentify students or fail to provide them with the scaffolding necessary to achieve success, we further the disenfranchisement of underrepresented groups. This happens because their talents are being underdeveloped due to their cultural beliefs which may be at odds with the mainstream culture. The same unjust result occurs when we favor students' current achievement as an indicator irrespective of the possibility of growth towards high achievement (Armenta, 1999).

Underachievement

Ironically, low achievement is one characteristic which displays itself across racial lines among gifted children. It is often thought of as a social coping strategy to avoid ostracization. "One of the most detrimental coping mechanisms academically gifted students employ is underachievement" (Cross, 1997, p. 189)

High aptitude cannot, however, make up for low performance in the academically adept:

It is not intelligence that seems to play the most important (and direct) role; rather, it is the actual achievement level. If an adolescent is an underachiever and does not use his or her academic gifts, then intelligence potential will not boost the self-concept. One needs to use what one has in order to achieve, and this will be reflected in the self-concept (Dixon, 1998, p. 86)

Academic and social self-concepts should not be conflated in discussing gifted adolescents. In other words, female gifted adolescents may feel one way about themselves as students. On the other hand, they may feel quite another way about themselves as social beings rather than as learners. These two constructs vary greatly in their degree of esteem in gifted populations, and within-group and without group differences exist (Manor-Bullock, Dixon, and Dixon, 1993).

Peer Pressure

According to Kitano (2003), race has a deep impact on participation in gifted programs. Minorities, she contends, participate less and achieve lower on standardized tests and traditional tests of scholastic achievement. "Both economic status and racial/ethnic bias affect services to gifted students, and reform efforts require recognition of both" (p.

294)

Fries-Britt (1998) conducted research about feelings of black achiever isolation. The author found isolation occurs frequently in the gifted Black population. The author asserted that minorities need more chances to network with one another and move beyond the experience of isolation. Participation in a race-specific organization was found to be an effective means of support in the same study. The researcher suggested such participation could lessen the problem of underrepresentation and help CLD students feel more camaraderie in class. Cross (1997) echoed the same wish for CLD GT children to interact. She maintains "it is important for teachers and counselors to create opportunities for gifted students to spend time together" (p. 196)

Social Class/Cultural Capital

Annette Lareau (1987) contends that social class position determines the amount and quality of parental involvement at schools, which in turn affects the worth of the education that children are able to construct. Middle and upper class parents have valuable resources at their disposal in contrast to those available to working class parents. Middle and upper class parents have more time as well as the inclination and an open invitation to participate in their child's education because of

the values that their culture reflects (Lareau, 1987).

In some ways, social class and parental attributes are greater determinants of school success than is race. "Poverty and parental characteristics play a greater role than race or ethnicity in determining students' achievement" (Robinson, 2003a, p. 252) Robinson maintains that these factors should be analyzed rather than changing the programs to more closely mirror social demographics. According to her, the deficit facing some children—making them ineligible for participation in GT programs—is a direct result of having lived in poverty. Yet, Robinson continues, this should not be the field of education's problem to fix.

Other researchers have said that race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are both important variables to consider in gifted education (Callahan, 2003; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003). In many cases, their arguments continue, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse also feel the effects of poverty, and thus it becomes difficult to separate the effects of the two.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) contend that the deference that White, middle class parents show toward educators is received as further evidence of cooperation, yet minority parents approach educators with a greater degree of skepticism in acknowledgement of the history of institutionalized racism. Not all parental

behaviors are welcomed and those parents who display open negativity or have a confrontational attitude towards educators are not welcomed into the educational setting by teachers in the same way as those who do not (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Many of these differences in parental behavior occurred along cultural lines. "Educators selected a narrow band of acceptable behaviors. They wanted parents not only to be positive and supportive but to trust their judgments and assessments" (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 42) This is another example of the way cultural differences lead to the exclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

This legacy of distrust is further heightened because of phenomena such as the overrepresentation of minority students in special education (Arnold & Lassmann, 2003). This unfair treatment results in further cynicism toward the educational system and reinforces an antagonistic paradigm between these community members and the school.

Teacher Attitudes, Bias, and Training

Harmon (2002) conducted a study about effective and ineffective teachers of minorities. She found that low teacher expectations, a combative classroom environment, a feeling of isolation from the other students and the teacher, and a lack of focus on multicultural issues lead to underachieving gifted

minorities. The results suggest another reason that teachers must be trained to deal effectively with the needs of gifted culturally and linguistically diverse students. "A multicultural gifted curriculum provides the challenge and the affirmation that gifted African-American students need, integrating the goals and philosophies of both multicultural education and addressing issues of diversity" (p. 74)

Teacher attitudes that undermine or devalue students' cultures are still pervasive in the field of education (Kunjufu, 1986). He argues the overt racism of segregated education has been replaced with many negative attitudes toward low-performing students that do not take into account the cultural gap between White teachers and CLD students. Teaching styles are rarely adapted to meet the needs of a particular "subgroup" of the population and this leaves minorities underserved in the current educational system (Kunjufu, 1986).

Needs of Gifted Children

Lewis (2002) discusses the needs of gifted children beyond mere acceleration. First, she argues that they need to be properly assessed for the types of intelligence in which they display exceptionality. Next, she continues, they must be allowed flexible scheduling to focus on moving ahead and studying in greater depth when the regular curriculum has been

mastered. Finally, she asserts, gifted children must be provided with counseling to help them deal with the unique emotional demands of being exceptionally smart.

Summary

Based on the research presented, it is clear that minority underrepresentation in GT programs is a complex issue. From the outset, CLD students are nominated less frequently for testing (Ford, 1995). They score lower on qualifying exams, which limits their entrance into programs (Anguino, 2003). GT CLD students and their parents may be reluctant to recognize their talents due to cultural dictates (Anzaldua, 1999). Furthermore, students may fear losing ties to their culture by being placed in special programs away from their cultural peers (Morris, 2002). In addition, CLD students in these programs may have less social support for navigating these systems than their White peers (Lareau, 1987). Teacher attitudes toward CLD students and their bias can translate into negative experiences within the GT classroom (Bernal, 2000). Finally, GT CLD students have needs even more complex than those of their White GT peers who also require extra attention because of their gifts (Cross, 1997). It is evident from the literature that CLD students face a host of obstacles barring their participation in GT programs. For all of these reasons, GT CLD students are underrepresented in our GT

classrooms today.

Statement of the Problem

In order to understand one aspect of why CLD students are underrepresented in GT programs, I will examine why minority children who gain admission to GT programs and begin study in the GT programs eventually opt out of these programs. The participants in my study will be students who were nominated, passed required testing and "recommendations" and entered the programs. Participants in this study then exited the GT program prior to completion.

Research Question

Why do gifted and talented culturally and linguistically diverse students opt out of gifted and talented programs?

Research Sub-questions

In order to fully understand that question, there are several other questions which I will also seek to answer to help me understand why CLD students leave these programs. First, why do these students enter GT programs in the first place? Second, what factors influence their decisions to alter their course of study from that of "regular education"? Third, how do they feel when they are in these GT programs? Fourth, what eventually causes these children to leave the program of study that they embarked upon?

Definition of Terms

Since many of the terms in my main research question are subjects of heated debate within the academic community, I will define them to ensure clarity. *Gifted and talented* (GT) will mean those students that have been identified as gifted by the Frontera Independent School District (FISD). The process of identification in the FISD includes a parent or teacher nomination form (Frontera Independent School District, 2004). After parent permission is obtained, district policy requires that the child be given an intelligence test. In kindergarten, the Raven Matrices Test is used to determine eligibility for entrance into GT programs in the FISD (Frontera Independent School District, 2004). However, district policy continues by stating that in grades 1-12, the Test of Nonverbal Intelligence 3 (TONI-3) is used as one of five components to determine eligibility for entrance into GT programs. The child must score in the top 5% of test takers on the Raven Matrices or TONI-3 to qualify as GT (Frontera Independent School District, 2004).

In addition, the parents are asked to fill out an evaluation form discussing the student's behaviors and abilities. Students must score 80 points out of 100, as rated by parents, to qualify for entrance into the GT programs in the FISD. Students must also have a grade point average of 85% or

better, and they must score 24 out of 36 on the behavior log filled out by teachers in order to qualify for the program in the FISD.

In grades 6-8 in the FISD, students can qualify for admission into Humanities or Science Technology classes. These classes were the only classes designed specifically for gifted and talented students. Starting in the 2004-2005 school year, GT Math is now offered to foster the transition into algebra in the 8th grade.

These classes serve only the special populations of students who qualify for admission to GT programs according to process outlined above. Humanities is a block of three classes: English, reading, and social studies. The curriculum is interdisciplinary and organized into thematic units. Science Technology is taken in place of regular science and is aligned with the regular curriculum, but it is taught differently than mainstream science classes. Students are required to extend the knowledge that they would be exposed to in the regular curriculum, but there are notably more projects, labs, and a considerably larger amount of work to be done at home (Frontera Independent School District, 2004).

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students will be defined in this context as those students who are not White

and/or those who do not speak English as their first language. According to Academic Excellence Indicator System managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the overall make-up of the school in my investigation is 24.3% White, 73.1% Hispanic, and .9% African-American and 1.1% Asian/Pacific Islander (TEA, 2005). Approximately fifty percent are classified by the Texas Education Agency as economically disadvantaged and 17.9% are classified as Limited English Proficient (TEA, 2005). In this study, I am focusing on why CLD students opt out of GT programs to gain further insight about why CLD students are underrepresented in GT programs. According to statistics kept in the Frontera Middle School information management system, the student demographic, classified as GT, was as follows in May 2005: 1% are African-American, 1% are Asian-American, 50% are Hispanic, and 48% are White. This inequity limits not only Hispanic participation in GT classes in middle school but also effects Hispanic placement in the most rigorous academic tracks for entrance into and success during college. In other words, misplacement and underrepresentation affect students in ways far beyond the middle school classroom.

I expect to discover that CLD students opt out of these programs for several reasons. The work required of these children is extremely demanding and the programs are quite

rigorous. Much of the work must be completed at home, and there are often significant investments of resources required for the students to attain success. Parental involvement may be of a different type than that received by their White counterparts, or parents may not have as much time to spend helping their child finish assignments at home because of other temporal issues such as child-rearing, working, and the like. I expect that familial factors, self-esteem, peer perceptions, cultural identity, and teacher attitudes played heavily into students' decisions to opt out of these programs.

Methodology

Introduction

In this section, I will first discuss how I chose the participants for my study. Next, I will briefly describe the instrumentation I used to collect my data. Then, I will detail the process I used to extract meaning from the data in the interviews. Finally, I will discuss the nature of my involvement in this project and disclose my own connections to this topic of study as well as the site of the study.

Participants

All of the participants selected were currently enrolled at the school where the study was conducted. The participants were selected from a list of students who exited Humanities in the same school year as the study or the previous school year. All participants were in 8th grade.

The first qualification for participants was to have switched their schedule from a Humanities block of gifted and talented English, reading, social studies to regular classes of English, reading, and social studies. Similarly, I was initially interested in Science Technology students who opted into regular science, but there were far fewer of those students and less who were culturally and linguistically diverse than those who opted out of Humanities classes.

The second qualification for participants concerned access. Although the students were coded as GT or not GT according to their participation in the program, once the switch was made, there was no list kept of students who change coding from GT to regular education. For the last three years, the gifted and talented coordinator (i.e. Listkeeper) at Frontera Middle School has changed. The principal, assistant principals, counselors, and registrar could not produce a list of GT eligible students or those formerly enrolled in GT classes.

Because of the initial resistance by school administrators, I started asking students and teachers if they knew of anyone who fit the primary descriptor. When I received names, I spoke directly to those students and gave them permission forms to fill out and have signed by their parents before I would interview them. At the end of the interviews, I always asked the students to identify others who might fit the description of possible participants. The sampling group snowballed from there. After I had identified and interviewed about 70% of my sample, the assistant principal in charge of GT coding (Listkeeper) gave me a list of students who had exited any GT program this year.

Although I sought to illuminate the reasons that CLD students opt out of GT programs, I chose to include three White students to offer a comparison and help test my findings with

CLD students. In the beginning, because the Listkeeper did not cooperate with my requests to provide a list of students who exited GT programs, I relied heavily on snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I began by asking students that I interviewed to refer me to other students who had been in Humanities programs and eventually got out too. In a sense, I also used convenience sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) since I chose to interview students who returned their permission forms as opposed to pursuing those who did not initially return their permission forms. Logically, the students who returned their forms first also displayed an eagerness lacked by those who did not return forms. My purposeful sample turned out to be combination or mixed sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The participants were selected for many reasons. In every case, I thought that they could offer insight toward answering my research question and helping me understand why CLD students opt out of GT programs. The students were narrowed because they had to opt out of a GT program this or last year. I approached students who I heard had exited Humanities this year or last year before I procured a list of exitees. At the end of the first interview, I asked the students to identify other students who had chosen to leave Humanities.

Once the list of candidates was obtained, the students were

asked to take home and return informed assent/consent forms. Those who returned these forms were eligible to be included in the study. Throughout the study, I chose to interview White and Hispanic students, athletes and non-athletes, and students who left because they wanted to exit versus those who left involuntarily. All of these aspects of the situation began to surface as important throughout the interview process as I began to contextualize the phenomena within this "bounded system" (Creswell, 1998). Here, "bounded system," means that the particularities of this situation pointed toward considering several important factors. I tried to select participants who felt could confirm each others' experiences as well as those who felt differently.

Instrumentation

To investigate why CLD students opt out of GT programs, I designed my study as a multiple case study. I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with students who exited Humanities during the 2003-2004 school year or the 2004-2005 school year. I used a semi-structured interview to alleviate the problem of co-opting their voices and inserting my own voice. I did this by predetermining, to some extent, what the students were asked to comment upon. However, since I am a novice researcher, I needed a research protocol that would mollify my nerves during the

interview and ensure that I asked about at least a few things I felt were important to understand the phenomena in play. In this case, I felt that the best way to ensure I could compare the interview cases was to ask the same questions in the same order with each participant. Therefore, the semi-structured interview offered the proper balance between ensuring that I asked for the same information from each participant without rigidly defining their experience on my terms. This ensured that I covered the same information during all of the interviews while letting the participants guide how specific and detailed my questions needed to become. "The term instrumentation may mean little more than some shorthand devices for observing and recording events—devices that come from initial conceptualizations loose enough to be reconfigured readily as the data suggest revisions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 35)

The semi-structured interview was divided into several major parts. In the beginning of the interview, I asked the students about when and why they decided to enter these programs. I asked them to describe their experience during the programs, and what sort of goals they had for their performance while they were in these classes. I asked them to characterize how they felt in these classes and to explore their relationship with their classmates and their teachers. Then, I asked the

students why they decided to get out of Humanities and to describe the surrounding circumstances. Finally, I asked them what they thought of their new classes after they had switched.

I structured the interviews to illuminate the reasons, motivations, and contexts of the students' lives and the factors contributing to their eventual decisions to opt out of Humanities. During the interviews, it was often necessary to ask many other intermediate questions and implore the students to "tell me a story" to substantiate their assessments of their experiences. This method seemed to work best for this particular population because the students interviewed were young and less likely to fully explain the context of their impressions and decisions. Students may require more sub-questions to fully explain their experiences in terms that presuppose very little. For the full research protocol, please see Appendix A.

Procedures

Following the interviews, I transcribed each interview and thematically analyzed the data to arrive at my assertions. Creswell (1994) describes the natural course of a multiple case study which proceeds in the following manner. "Through data collection, a detailed description of the case emerges, as do an analysis of themes or issues and an interpretation or assertions about the case by the researcher" (p. 63). Throughout the

interview process, I attempted to make meaning out of the emergent themes from my discussions with these students while honoring their voices. I tailored my follow-up questions to their answers so I did not lead them to say anything specifically. Once I understood what they were trying to say in a general sense about their experiences, their classes, their teachers, and their impressions, I almost always asked for a story to describe why or how they felt the way they did. During the process, I triangulated with teachers at the middle school to verify some of what the students conveyed in their interviews. Following the interviews, I transcribed them, summarized each one, and began a thematic analysis of each interview. During that process, I began coding for common elements across the cases until I arrived at verifiable assertions (Creswell, 1994).

Self-Referential Perspective

I became interested in this subject in large part because of who I am and the experiences that I have had. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of my analysis, it is necessary to illuminate the parts of my identity that motivate me to study these phenomena that could potentially bias my results. By pointing out the aspects of my identity that lead me to this point, I hope to disclose the major experiences that have shaped

my perspective leading up to this study.

As I mentioned earlier, I am part Spanish- and Mexican-American. Despite this fact, I look White. I attended middle school at a school similar to where I teach today. I participated in a similar Humanities program to my participants. I had most of my classes with almost all White students, although the school was over 80% Hispanic. Most of my friends were White, and of those who were not, most spoke accent-free English and pronounced Spanish words without a Spanish accent, including their last names!

Countless times, people have assumed that I am White and made disparaging remarks about Hispanic people in front of me. Because of my participation in gifted and talented education and continuing onward, I was tracked into all Honors and Advanced Placement classes, I subconsciously associated being academically successful with being White.

When I left for college in Hanover, New Hampshire, I stepped into a world that was markedly "more White" than my hometown. I missed El Paso. I missed the rich border culture that is in my veins as an Ortiz. Even though people who did not know my mother's family had often mistaken me for White, I did not realize how subtly I was connected to my culture until I was no longer surrounded by it. I craved Mexican food. I missed

listening to Spanish being spoken and laughed in my classes at Dartmouth over the anglicized version of Spanish that many White people spoke. I realized that I took for granted my love of my family and my assumption that I would return to my hometown after graduation to be near my large, extended family. I learned how much simple things like these are important to me. I finally recognized certain aspects of myself partially as products of my culture.

In college, I was a women's studies major. This prompted me to reflect on my own perspective as a necessary point of departure through which I come to know things. As a result, I considered my family, my community, my culture, and my home as elements of who I am as a person; all are necessary to other aspects of my personality. They form my foundation for understanding how I think about the world in which I live.

Throughout this process of self-discovery (that continued while I have been a graduate student at the University of Texas-El Paso and while teaching at a middle school similar to the one I attended as a child) I began to realize that part of my dissociation with my culture early on was attributable to my experience in a class like Humanities. Without any examples of successful Latina students, it was hard to celebrate or even recognize that aspect of my identity.

Over time, I walked into Humanities classes at my school and realized that they were comprised almost completely of White students. Special education classes, on the other hand, were predominantly CLD students. As I continued working and studying, I heard two stories from girls on my track team (I am the track coach) who exited Humanities classes. I knew from coaching them that these young women were exceptionally driven and exceptionally gifted in many different ways.

Both of these Latina girls were deferential and respectful. They behaved appropriately and smiled constantly. They never boasted of their success and were self-effacing in every situation. They were the epitome of motivation and dedication. One of them ran so hard on a pulled muscle that she almost tore her left quadricep muscle, but she would not yield to the pain until I had a physical therapist examine her. Why did these tenacious girls get out of GT classes, causing the scales to be further tipped away from equitable representation? I began to wonder.

During that season, I took an introductory class to educational research and decided to research why minorities are underrepresented in GT classes. This was an especially interesting question in the context of my predominantly Hispanic school. How could the scales be tipped so unfairly when the

faculty and student populations were overwhelmingly Hispanic?

As I pondered this question and began reviewing the literature, I wanted to analyze the data in our school district to understand this phenomenon. However, as I sifted through the research about representation in GT programs, I realized two important things. First, there is a paucity of literature examining why students exit these programs. This may also partially account for lower representation. Second, I found that I am more interested in how the students' feel and how their experiences impact their identities than I am in the particular number of students enrolled in these programs.

Once I began designing my study, I realized I wanted to conduct interviews to investigate students' feelings as expressed from the students themselves. I chose to conduct this study at my school because I thought it would be easier to gain access and establish rapport with participants and administrators alike. I also thought that I would get more candid responses from students because they already felt comfortable with me as a teacher. During the analysis process, I took great pains to triangulate my findings and asked open-ended questions to mitigate my own voice in the research and honor the students' perspectives.

Results

Introduction

This section of my thesis begins with a brief description of the participants. Then, I pose the research question for my study. Finally, I will discuss the results that I found after my analysis.

Participant Description

All of the students in this study were enrolled at a middle school in a large border city in the southwest during the 2003-2004 school year as well as the 2004-2005 school year. All of the participants attended the same middle school and participated in the Gifted and Talented program. They were all enrolled in Humanities during one or both of these years and opted out of the program after at least six weeks of participation.

All of the students were 8th graders when I interviewed them. With the exception of one student, all of the participants had taken Humanities in 6th grade and for at least a portion of 7th grade at the same school. The remaining student attended a private school until 6th grade and then she moved into the school in 7th grade.

Six of the participants in the study are female and four are males. Of the females, five are Hispanic and one is White.

Three of the males are Hispanic and one is White.

Five of the students attended one elementary school in the feeder pattern. Two students attended another elementary school in the feeder pattern. Two students attended yet another elementary school in the feeder pattern. Only one student attended a private elementary school through the 6th grade. For a more thorough description of participants, please see Appendix B.

Research Question

Why do gifted and talented culturally and linguistically diverse students opt out of gifted and talented programs?

Individual Case Summaries

Case 1.

Susana Norte is an eighth grade student who exited Mr. Smith's humanities class during the second six weeks of last school year, 2003-2004. She had conflicts with the teacher, a busy schedule due to participation in sports, and the sense that participation in Humanities was "uncool" in contrast to the opposite feeling she had had in elementary school. Furthermore, she did not have the time necessary to complete the many projects and all of the assigned reading.

Regular classes, however, were paced far too slowly for her taste. She often referred to them as "mostly review." She

did, however, feel that extra explanation from the teacher was helpful in these settings. However, she felt superior to her peers and even perceived that her teacher thought of her differently because she was more able than other students and more motivated to succeed. The teacher, Mr. White, made her feel as though she was extremely intelligent and helped repair her academic self-confidence after her struggle in Mr. Smith's class.

Case 2.

Blanca Nava is an 8th grade student who exited Mrs. Reid's humanities class during the second six weeks of last school year, 2003-2004. She liked the teacher, respected her, and loved Humanities. She had trouble with the reading and the many outside assignments. Blanca does not have a computer and her father took her to a community center in the area several times. The community center has computers, but it was not always possible for her to use the computers. Mrs. Reid told her that she was failing and would have to leave Humanities if she did not bring up her grades. She and her mother had to sign a contract for her to complete the 2nd six weeks. Even now, almost a year later, her eyes well up with tears when she describes how much she did not want to leave the class or abandon the tougher work. She stated that her difficulty with the work was partially

because she did not have a computer.

Blanca liked her regular teacher, Mr. White, who was careful about explaining things and helped her find ways to understand and remember things. However, she did not feel he had control of the class because so few kids really wanted to learn. Blanca felt she learned more in Humanities and craved the stimulation of that environment. Forces beyond her control, such as a lack of technological resources directly interfered with her ability to comply with the teacher's rule that all work must be typed before it was turned in.

Case 3.

Bonita Urbina is an 8th grader who exited Humanities out of Ms. Jones's class after three days because "I know what I'm capable of and that's just not it." Due to her participation in extra-curricular activities and her desire to socialize, Bonita opted out of the class because she did not want to invest the time, money, or resources in the class when she could easily pass and maintain eligibility in regular courses all year long. Her participation in cheerleading took up a lot of time and directly contributed to her decision to leave.

After participating in regular classes, Bonita feels more at home with the students in regular education and seems to excel in this crowd. She likes the pace of the regular education

classes and the relaxed atmosphere. Rather than a totally self-directed learning environment as in the case of Humanities, the regular class allows Bonita to receive extra direction and scaffolding to help her conceptualize what she learns.

Case 4.

Olivia Baraq is an 8th grader who dropped out of Humanities after three weeks during her 8th grade year. She exited out of Mrs. Barnes's 8th grade class before the first six weeks was over. She did not understand the way that social studies was being taught in that class, and although students did not have any projects, she did not have enough time to invest in mastering the course. As with Bonita, Olivia's participation in cheerleading is time consuming and was part of her impetus to leave.

In regular classes, Olivia feels like the teacher in her regular education class "teaches" the material in more depth than her Humanities teacher. Rather than expecting the students to comprehend material, read on their own, and memorize for tests, the material is explained in detail and the teacher helps students find ways to remember the material discussed in class. This class is much less overwhelming and more fun. Olivia feels more at home with the students in regular education classes because they are focused on other things besides learning, such

as their appearance, something important to Olivia.

Case 5.

Carlos Martinez is an 8th grade student who plays competitive soccer in a junior league that requires several hours of strenuous practice each day. He took Mr. Smith's class in the 8th grade, but soon opted out of the class because he could not keep up with the reading or the constant time-consuming projects. Carlos felt disliked by the teacher and picked on due to his asthma. His asthma made him miss a great deal of school.

In the regular class, Carlos took heart in the fact that the teacher, Mrs. Gonzalez, explained the reading and reviewed the information prior to giving tests. Because of the structure, pace, and sequencing of material, Carlos was able to comprehend the material to a greater degree and experience a deeper level of mastery. He feels that he is able to remember the information a lot longer because of the way that the material is taught in regular classes.

Case 6.

Nancy Daniel is an 8th grade student who left Humanities during the 1st six weeks of her 8th grade year. She wanted to have more time to socialize and not appear overly bookish to become more popular. She stopped doing her assignments if they were

time consuming and failed the 1st six weeks of Humanities. She likes reading and suggested that more and better reading would make Humanities even better. She has trouble making friends and considers herself different and more of a loner or a rebel than most of her peers.

When Nancy exited the GT class, she entered Ms. Lopez's class. She considered the work to be too easy in the regular classes, and she expressed her desire to have a more intermediate class that was less demanding than Humanities, but faster-paced and more demanding than the regular classroom. Nancy felt more comfortable with the people in the regular classes very shortly after she opted out of the GT program and got away from the GT students.

Case 7.

Timothy Ingle dropped out of humanities during the 1st six weeks of the 8th grade. He could not keep up with the reading in Mr. Smith's class and was passing with just over a "70." He got the feeling that Mr. Smith did not like him. He also thought Mr. Smith viewed him as "kind of stupid." The reading, the time investment to complete numerous ongoing projects, and the enormous investment in school supplies were all factors that led Timothy to his eventual decision to opt out of the class. He could not balance his class work and the time necessary for

class preparation with his rigorous competitive sports schedule.

Timothy thrived in the regular classroom setting. He felt that his teacher, Ms. Woods liked him. He had a delightful time making videos as end of novel projects whenever he could, which was quite often. Timothy had friends in the GT classroom, but he also had many friends and made more friends when he transitioned to regular education. Timothy felt the Humanities class covered more material, but he liked the reinforcement and elaboration he found in the regular education setting.

Case 8.

Nayeli Nunez is an 8th grader who got out of Humanities during the 7th grade in Mr. Smith's class. She did not feel part of the group, and she had major conflicts with Mr. Smith, who did not seem to like her or her friends Daniela, Concha, and Maria. She felt that, in some cases, she and her group of friends did not receive the same consideration as the rich, White kids in the class whom Mr. Smith seemed to have more in common with. Mr. Smith's refusal to explain the material in varied ways and more than one time were also highly influential factors in her inability to keep up with the class.

After exiting the Humanities class, Nayeli entered Mrs. Gonzalez's class, where she received more help understanding concepts. Although they covered less material which frustrated

Nayeli, she preferred the lesser amount as a more manageable amount to actually absorb. She relates much better to the people in regular classes and only felt comfortable around three girls in Mr. Smith's class, who were the only other Latinas in that class.

Case 9.

Mario Tarin is an 8th grade student who exited Mr. Smith's class in the 7th grade. He does not own a computer and finds it difficult to find the peace and quiet necessary to complete assignments outside of school. Although he was the only student he knew of who did not have a computer, he was not given any preference for using the class computer that had internet access. The students were required to read long assignments on their own time. Mario found it difficult to find a space in his house quiet enough to read and he could not get research done for the projects because he did not have a computer. Even the school library was not open during the right times to allow him to use these facilities during the school day. He did not want to leave the Humanities class, but he was failing because of circumstances he felt were out of his control.

Mario entered Ms. Lopez's regular education class during the second six weeks. He liked the new class and made friends easily. He felt that the class moved at a better pace because

the teachers took class time to explain concepts and go over assigned reading. He also felt more a part of the group because the class was not required to use computers, so it did not matter that he didn't actually have one.

Case 10.

Kiki Oeste is an 8th grade student who opted out of Humanities at the beginning of 8th grade. He plays competitive sports and must maintain eligibility as a condition to play. He recognized that most of the other students in Humanities are White, and he felt different from the other students because he is not White. In addition to huge time commitments because of the sports he plays, he struggled in Mr. Smith's class because the work was difficult and there was a lengthy amount of reading.

Kiki has done well and feels at the top of his class now that he is in regular education. He feels like his teacher really likes him and notices that he is a much more serious student than many of the students that are in the regular classes. He did not know many of these students before he got out of Humanities this year because he was always in classes with many of the same students in the GT program. Although he felt like part of the group in Humanities, he feels much more at ease with many of the regular students because his main passion

is playing sports. Many of the players are enrolled in his regular education classes with him this year.

Cross-Case Summary

Several overlapping themes and common elements emerged during my analysis of the cases. In each case, there were several factors articulated by participants as influential in their ultimate decision to opt out of these programs. I will discuss influential factors according to the frequency of the response. All students' grades diminished prior to their exit. Many students complained about the amount and selection of reading as well as the number of projects. Several students felt that they needed more explanation, as they received in their regular classes, in comparison to their Humanities class. Some offered the lack of explanation as a reason for their eventual departure. A number of participants mentioned that they spent a lot of time in athletic endeavors, which left them unable to complete all of the Humanities work. Many of the students spoke about a conflict with the teacher or had the perception that they were thought to be incapable or disliked by the teacher. Some students mentioned that it was "uncool" to be in Humanities. A few of the students discussed how a lack of resources contributed to their failure in GT classes.

The most influential factor for students leaving these

programs was a decline in their ability to earn high grades. Although the definition of "success" varied from student to student, every student said a diminished performance was one of the reasons they opted out of the program. In every case, the students noticed before they left the Humanities program that they were getting lower grades than they had received in the past.

In many cases, this meant the students were failing. In the failing cases, the students' teachers suggested or required that they exit the program. However, many of the students' progress was less than they had made in prior courses. However, they were still passing or even earning Cs.

In nine out of ten cases, the participants stated that the amount of reading was a huge obstacle for them to overcome in these classes. Two students grew up speaking Spanish only. Three students grew up speaking Spanish and English in the home. Three of the participants spoke mostly English, but spoke Spanish a limited amount growing up. The remaining two participants spoke only English.

Four students mentioned that they did not enjoy the type of reading that was selected, and they indicated that the reading would not be so troublesome if they enjoyed the books more than the ones they read as part of the Humanities curriculum. One

student mentioned that in 7th grade they read books almost exclusively from a male perspective. She remarked that "every book would be about guys" in Humanities.

In addition to the reading, eight students discussed the amount of time that projects took to complete as a major impediment to their success. They explained that projects were often a major time commitment and almost always had to be completed out of school. The projects were open to ridicule not only from the teacher but also from the other students and many students felt a lot of pressure to perform well. All of the students also mentioned the projects as being a wonderful way to learn and very fun until they became overloaded with many projects. Several students also remarked that the projects required lots of extra supplies. Many students said paying for the extra supplies was a problem to pay for as well as procure on time.

In addition to declining grades, too much reading, and too many projects, seven students mentioned that the pace of the class and a lack of explanation were also difficult to overcome. Most of the students who mentioned this noticed a stark contrast between the type of instruction and help offered in the GT class versus the regular class. These students remarked that the explanation, review, and reinforcement in the regular classes

helped them learn the material. This was very different, according to the students, when compared to how the GT teachers taught GT classes.

Another influential factor in students' decisions to leave was based on the amount of time that it takes to successfully participate in the program. Six students said that sports or cheerleading took too much time out of their evenings and weekends to allow them to complete the required projects and reading for Humanities. The students expressed that the reading and the projects were the most demanding aspects of the course to fit in because of long practice hours and the need for sleep after strenuous activity.

Possible teacher conflicts with students contributed heavily to six students' decisions to leave. Seven students mentioned they felt less liked by their teachers than their peers. Two of them suggested that the teacher did not like girls. Three of the students felt that the teacher did not like Hispanic students as much as White students based on how the teacher treated groups of students within the class. The students perceived that Mr. Smith felt Hispanic students were less capable than their White counterparts because he called on them less and refused to explain or even repeat directions to particular students, all of whom were Hispanic. Two students who

expressed affinity for their teachers also felt that they were not liked as much by those teachers and that the teachers were "mean" to them at times without cause.

Four students discussed the negative implications for their social standing because of their participation in Humanities. All four of these participants were female. These students discussed the negative impact on their popularity because of their participation in Humanities. They did not want to be perceived in the same manner that they perceived the "real nerds" in the school. This was a contributing factor to their ultimate decision to leave. All of the participants commented on how they felt within the context of the GT group as well as the regular group, and many of them preferred to be in the regular group because they felt smarter than their peers. This was not the case during their participation in Humanities.

Three of the students discussed their discomfort in the context of the group of Humanities students. They expressed their feelings that they did not "fit in" with the rest of the group. These students felt that they did not have similar interests as the other GT students, and they felt their peers far outstripped them in terms of intelligence. They wanted to focus on other areas and expressed that they relate well to peers who are less academically inclined.

Two students were unable to thrive academically because they did not have computers. These students described their difficulty in finding computers to use before and after school in the library or at the public library. Both students recalled how angry their teachers were when they turned in a hand-written copy of the final draft or failed to complete the research for a project because they did not have a computer or internet access. These same students discussed the lack of time in their school day to complete these tasks. The participants mentioned that they were extremely stressed out about trying to find time on their own to complete these tasks, for which they did not have the proper materials.

In the classroom, apparently no priority was given to these students for using the classroom computers. Furthermore, no preference was given to these students for using the *one* classroom computer that had internet access. Perhaps most remarkably, the two students lacking computers were the only students in my study who expressed that they did not want to exit the program; they were not given a choice. Their teachers told their parents on conference day that they were not allowed to stay in Humanities any longer.

In both cases, the parents were presented with a "solution" to help their child pass by allowing their child out of the

program. One of these students started crying during her interview when she discussed the particulars of how and why she exited the program. The other student got choked up and said "it made me mad" not to be given priority to use the internet-ready computer in the classroom even though he told his teacher, Mr. Smith, several times that he did not have a computer.

One student mentioned the disparate resources that students in the class had with which to complete their work. She wished that she had more money to buy the "cool" erasers, pens, and a backpack. She also realized that many of the supplies they used for their projects cost more than she could spend for the entire year. Several of the students did not cite this as a reason they had departed, yet many of them did comment on how expensive supplies were for this class. One student offered the investment in supplies as a reason that she opted out of the program after only three days, in her 8th grade year. She did not want to spend the money on all of those things if she was incapable of meeting the class demands.

In summary, there are many reasons that these students opted out of Humanities. In every case, students had lower grades immediately prior to their departure. Many of the students felt that there was an excessive amount of reading and/or that the selection of reading was unappealing. Several

students decried the number of projects, the pace of the class, and the lack of explanation about the material. Many participants also had large extra-curricular time commitments such as cheerleading, football, volleyball, and basketball. Some of the students felt that it was "uncool" to be in Humanities, and they wanted to be "cool." Finally, a lack of resources was a main reason two students left the program.

Discussion

Introduction

In this section, I will relate the existing literature to my findings. I will discuss my results in the same order that they were presented in the cross-case analysis. At the end of this section, I will discuss the implications of my study and make recommendations for the future.

Finding Number One

All of the participants I interviewed mentioned their grades declined prior to their departure. Almost all of the participants classified the last grades they received in Humanities as "low" or "bad." However, when they quantified these grades, their numbers varied greatly. In some cases, students were actually failing with a grade lower than 70%. In other cases, the students were making Cs or even low Bs. They all seemed to classify "good" grades differently. This is consistent with the findings of Manor-Bullock et al. (1993), who stated there are several within group differences among GT students. In other words, some of them defined success as passing while others were expected to maintain As and Bs or even all As. It is worthy to note that the three students from the lowest SES (two of whom spoke Spanish-only in the home growing up) had goals of merely passing. Most of the students who spoke

only English in the home expected to get As and Bs.

Almost all of the students remarked they had trouble with the amount and/or selection of reading. In the Frontera Independent School District the TONI-3 test is used to qualify students for entrance into the GT program. This is a nonverbal intelligence test. However, the curriculum in these classes emphasizes verbal skills to a large degree. That is, students are selected for these programs using a nonverbal intelligence test and admitted into a rigorous program that demands well-developed verbal ability.

Robinson (2003b) discussed the implications of mismatching students to programs for which they are not thoroughly prepared. She warned that students' perceptions of themselves can be severely damaged if we admit them into these programs based on their academic potential yet they may not have honed the necessary skills to succeed. Robinson argues that we cannot continue to select students as the Frontera Independent School District does, using nonverbal intelligence tests, if the programs themselves are geared to make use of well-developed skill sets that these students do not have. I think it is very possible that this is what has happened in this school district. These students seemed genuinely frustrated with the selection and amount of reading.

Olszewski-Kubilius (2003) discusses the dilemma facing educators with GT representation. She concluded that new programs should be created for students who show academic promise but do not have the high verbal skills necessary to survive in traditional GT programs. She adds that the verbal skills of these identified children should be rigorously developed while they are in these programs. In addition to cultivating the students' verbal skills, she suggests, we should change the programs to better fit the students who are gifted but may not have advanced verbal abilities.

Recommendations

These recommendations seem appropriate since almost all of these students entered the program late in elementary school, which means that they took the TONI-3 as a requirement for their admission into the program. This test may not have the predictive validity to accurately determine which students can achieve success in the current Humanities programs. Several participants mentioned the amount of reading as problematic, and this finding is corroborated by the literature.

Finding Number Two

The second major finding in my study was that students felt that they had too great a quantity of work, specifically, they had too many projects. Anguino (2003) asserted that GT students

grow bored with work that is not appropriately challenging for them.

Although I did not find literature referencing how many projects are appropriate in GT classes, I think this consistent comment from students demonstrates that one huge demand in Humanities classes is temporal rather than purely cognitive. The scope of my study does not allow me to comment on the type of work and its quality versus the quantity assigned. However, several of the students consistently echoed one another with two significant critiques. First, they mentioned that Humanities should be a class where they had more difficult work rather than simply more work. Second, many students said they remember things better in regular education classes because the teachers explained the material, reviewed it, and re-taught concepts prior to testing. It is also remarkable that some students who mentioned "fun" Humanities' assignments, such as making world maps or contests to memorize the presidents, could not recall that information during our interviews.

The other reason these students did not fare well in the GT classrooms with regard to teacher explanation may be attributable to cultural differences with the all-White GT teaching staff during the years in question. These students act deferential toward adults and deeply respect authority. If they

don't understand something after explanation, they are not always comfortable inquiring further. They do not seek to correct adults who may be saying something in a confusing or unclear way. This was directly observable during interviews as I attempted to verify what they were saying. I have also seen evidence of this behavior in other areas of their lives such as coaching them in sports participation. Teacher attitudes, cultural insensitivity, preferential treatment based on gender, and the implicit message of an all-White GT teaching staff have far-reaching implications on CLD GT students.

Harmon (2002) discusses the need for teachers to have cultural competency to work with populations of CLD students successfully. In order to develop cultural competence, teachers must be exposed to diverse groups of students in the context of teacher education settings. Teachers must be taught the importance of developing a multicultural curriculum and how to proactively eliminate biased actions and assumptions. In addition, according to Harmon, students must be taught material that is relevant to them in a way that validates and strengthens their identification with their culture. Parents and teachers must become aware of the role they play as community involvement liaisons, encouraging parents to become involved in their child's education and advocate for her needs (Harmon, 2002).

Bernal (2002) concurs largely with Harmon's analysis. He argues that it is necessary to recruit minority teachers. Further, the curriculum must become multicultural in order to support the CLD students' participation. In many instances, this could mean creating an authentically bilingual GT program. By authentically bilingual, Bernal explains that both English speaking GT students and Spanish-speaking GT students would learn all academic subjects in both languages. This would accommodate the gifts of these learners, help them reap the benefits of a bilingual environment, and provide each set of students with culturally-specific knowledge about which they are "experts" (Bernal, 2002).

Recommendations

I have several recommendations for the FISD in light of this evidence. First, more minority teachers should be actively recruited to GT teaching positions. Second, there should be an overhaul of the present curriculum to be diverse and multicultural, at the very least. In some cases, it would be far better to create bilingual GT programs offering two diverse populations the chance to learn from one another and become culturally accepting in the context of a challenging academic atmosphere. Finally, teacher training is necessary to help the teachers assume culturally responsive and responsible approaches

to their diverse classrooms where their overriding goal is to support and promote the success of every student no matter what their subset of skills or cultural differences may be.

Finding Number Three

Several students said they did not feel they had time to achieve success in the rigorous academic setting of the GT classes while they were participating in other activities such as cheerleading or sports. This finding is related to my next finding that several of these students believed they did not fit in with the rest of the Humanities students or that it was "uncool" to be in Humanities.

The students said it was much "cooler" to participate in sports and have the positive social standing of an athlete or cheerleader rather than staying in a rigorous academic setting which left them less time to pursue their extra-curricular activities as well as less time to socialize. I will discuss this particular phenomenon in greater detail in my next section. The finding that they did not have enough time to complete their assignments is also related to the finding that these teachers are culturally insensitive at times.

Often GT CLD students have more responsibilities in the home than their White counterparts. Therefore, the demands of an extra-curricular activity are intensified in the cases that CLD

students are expected to help with child-rearing and chores around the house (Vanderslice, 1998). She details how CLD students often have mature responsibilities in the home which require that they attend to immediate needs rather than focus on their educations. Vanderslice goes on to discuss how limited out-of-school opportunities leave them with less experiential knowledge to support their education in the classroom.

In addition to helping with household responsibilities, these findings are not surprising in light of the research conducted about gifted children's proclivity to exhibit multipotentiality (Cross, 1997). Cross describes the tendency for high-achieving, intelligent children to be interested in several different activities and strive for excellence in each endeavor. This requires large amounts of time to complete the preparation necessary for each of the different activities.

Multipotentiality describes how many gifted students show great promise and interest in numerous areas. Being successful in numerous areas is very difficult and requires vast amounts of time and commitment to each area...Multipotentiality often becomes problematic in the lives of the gifted students, as it can lead to higher levels of stress and emotional upset (p. 185)

Recommendations

GT curriculum is currently fixed for each participant in the Humanities program. Students occasionally have individual reading choices to make and often decide on the specifics of their projects. However, more flexibility within the curriculum for these students to develop their interests and engage in higher order thinking during the school day could only support their growth more fully in these other domains. Second, students who show potential but may not be able to have out-of-school experiences and schools, should be kept in mind in schools' efforts to develop talent by attracting and retaining CLD students. Finally, these programs can be improved not only from a multicultural perspective as I already discussed, but also from a multiple intelligences perspective. The FISD might make these programs more appropriate for identified CLD students as well as identified White students at the same time by focusing on developing other intelligences besides verbal skills (Fasko, 2001). Fasko argues that Gardner's conceptions of multiple intelligences could very appropriately be applied to the field of gifted education, thereby making GT classrooms more responsive to a wider range of students.

"According to Gardner's perspective, however, most Western societies continue to emphasize linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences in their formal education curricula, thus bypassing and undervaluing individuals with dominant abilities in the remaining six, and now seven categories" (p. 127) This relates to my earlier finding and recommendation that the nonverbal tests used by the Frontera Independent School District do not necessarily select students who will be successful in highly verbal programs.

Finding Number Four

Four of the girls in my study indicated they felt it was "uncool" to be in Humanities. They indicated that this perception was part of the impetus for them to leave. Three of the students indicated that they did not feel comfortable in the context of the class because they did not think "they fit in." This is consistent with the literature about adolescent girls and specifically those that are capable of achieving highly.

Dixon (1998) found that girls with higher IQs often suffer from lower self-perceptions. She mentions that girls and minorities are often fearful of stigmatization by their peer groups because they are able to achieve highly. These students, she argues, often sabotage their own education and make choices

to actively appear less smart to avoid this rejection:

It is ironic that the peer group, a force that generally encourages academic achievement among high school students, also works against academic excellence. It is worrisome that women and blacks (groups relatively more likely to deny being brains) appear especially vulnerable to peer pressure against achievement. And it is frightening that many of the most intellectually capable high school students strive to be less than they can be in order to avoid rejection by peers (p. 88)

Morris (2002) also found the loss of cultural ties is one reason that more CLD students choose not to participate in GT programs. He asserted these students do not want to appear different from their own cultural groups. The lack of multicultural curriculum and inadequately trained culturally insensitive teachers also contributes to the underrepresentation of CLD GT students in GT programs. The findings of Bernal (2002) and Harmon (2002) are relevant in this case as well because teacher training and multicultural curriculum could help increase the number of GT CLD students which would mitigate these students' feelings that they do not fit in with the rest of the class.

Recommendations

GT students would benefit from mentoring and being paired with successful adults who may be of similar cultural backgrounds to provide them with an example of success. In addition, these students may feel more comfortable in the GT setting if there were a more equitable racial and socio-economic representation of students in these classes. Once again, it seems that minority teachers could further support CLD GT students bringing cultural sensitivity that would support CLD GT student participation.

Finding Five

The last major finding in my study was that CLD students were the only ones I interviewed who seemed to lack the resources to achieve academic success in Humanities classes. These students did not have places to study, could not compete with the type of supplies other students had for projects, and did not have computers to use for research or word processing. These students were the only ones who expressed that their departure from the programs was involuntary.

These students discussed the difficulty of completing work because of the limitations of their homes. They did not realize that they could appeal their teachers' decisions that they could no longer stay in the Humanities program. They expressed a wish

to merely pass the class. One of them said that they learned more in the GT classroom, and she described the regular classroom as one filled with reluctant learners who misbehaved and refused to complete school work. The other one said he learned more in the regular classroom, but I was his regular classroom teacher, which means he had a conflict of interest in answering the question. He admitted that he did not want to leave Humanities because he is shy and was worried about making new friends.

Lareau (1987) discusses the varying amounts of cultural capital that people have and their likelihood to be able to use it in certain social situations. She urged researchers to pay careful attention to the amount of cultural capital that individuals have in particular social settings and attend carefully to how adept people are at activating that capital. In this situation, it is clear that these two students and their parents did not realize that they could appeal the decisions of these teacher conferences. They also did not understand how to support their children's academic growth by discussing possible avenues their children could explore to bypass the obstacle imposed by their lack of access to technology. In other words, the parents did not ask for help, nor did they appeal the school's decision that their children must leave the more

rigorous academic setting.

Olszewski-Kubilius (2003) also discussed the importance of weighing students' support networks when deciding if they have the resources to achieve success. She argues that we have been too entrenched in viewing disadvantage in monetary and cultural terms rather than evaluating how effectively students can cope with obstacles because of how much help they receive from their social network. She explains this view of disadvantage, which is in line with the findings in this study for the students who were forced out of the programs:

Researchers have primarily defined disadvantage in economic and cultural terms. The concepts of social support networks and structures provide a far more useful view of disadvantage. They allow us to see disadvantage as a discrepancy between an individual's capacity for development in a socially valued area and the social supports needed to achieve that potential" (p.307)

Furthermore, as Peterson (1999) argues, there is often less cultural emphasis on schooling in minority culture. This, she asserts, can lead parents to advocate less frequently for their children when it comes to issues such as testing or achieving academic success. When this happens, students and their parents

are less likely to activate their cultural capital and successfully advocate for the student's best interests.

In many school districts, the disproportionality of CLD students is attributable to the successful advocacy of White parents in appealing decisions against qualification of their children for GT programs. Parents see the GT program as offering the most rigorous environment to challenge the child intellectually, and the parents vehemently fight for their child to be included in that classroom and gain the benefit of the "best" education choices leads to underrepresentation of minority students (Bernal, 2002). Rogers (2003) also discussed the tendency of some minorities not to self-select thereby creating programs that were largely White and Asian in composition.

Recommendations

Bernal (2002) suggested possible remedies in this situation through radical re-conceptions of existing GT programs. First, programs must become truly multicultural in terms of curriculum and in many cases become bilingual GT programs. Second, it is imperative to recruit authentic members of the minority groups to teach these programs in order to facilitate these classrooms becoming multicultural. Finally, he maintains, teachers must be sensitive to the variety of cognitive needs within the GT

classroom.

Manor-Bullock (1993) et al. found that many within group differences exist among GT students. These students, they argued, must be treated individually because their needs are so varied.

These suggestions seem appropriate for the Frontera Independent School District to help resolve these problems of inequitable cultural capital. In addition, Bernal (2002) discusses one school district that recognized that Hispanic parents are less likely to appeal decisions that their children cannot participate. Because they recognized this phenomenon, the district used a handful of GT coordinators to review the cases of Hispanic students' applications before they were turned down as an internal appellate process for these students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study echo much of the literature on CLD GT students. First, these programs should focus on skills beside simply verbal abilities since nonverbal intelligence tests are used to qualify students into these programs (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003; Robinson, 2003).

Second, there are an overwhelming number of projects and teachers who are not steeped in the cultural differences that make students learn differently in the classroom. A

multicultural curriculum and diversity training would help ameliorate some of the problems students face with respect to their work (Bernal, 2002).

Third, many students complained that they did not have enough time to complete the number of assignments because of their extra-curricular assignments. GT students often exhibit the phenomenon of multipotentiality, which means they may excel in many different areas (Cross, 1997), and these programs should develop other intelligences besides just verbal ability (Fasko, 2001).

Fourth, many of the girls, in particular, do not feel like they fit in. This is consistent with the findings of Manor-Bullock et al. (1993). These researchers found that adolescent, high-achieving girls are often likely to have lower self-conceptions than those who do not achieve highly.

Finally, disparate resources and cultural capital result in some students' failure in these programs. Lareau and Horvat (1999) and Rogers (2003) found that many CLD parents are not able to activate the cultural capital that they do have to help their children succeed in school.

All of these are significant findings because gifted and talented programs in middle school are premium educational opportunities. These programs were created to help students with

increased cognitive abilities to develop those talents more fully and deeply. Students tracked into these programs are expected to produce “products and performances of professional quality” (Frontera Independent School District, 2004). Thus, in examining the question of access to these programs in the middle grades, we are also analyzing the achievement gap that surfaces in later grades. This leaves Hispanic students with fewer rigorous options for post-secondary study because they are not challenged in the middle grades to qualify into challenging high school programs, which also prepare students for college study as well.

Recommendations to the Frontera Independent School District

The FISD could do many things to retain CLD GT students and facilitate their academic success. First, the existing verbally-focused curriculum must become truly multicultural. Second, the school district must recruit more minority teachers into GT classrooms. Third, new classes focusing on the development of other intelligences in addition to verbal ability should be sought to support the needs of those gifted in other areas besides verbal intelligence. In addition, bilingual GT classes should be created in many instances where the focus is on both English speakers and Spanish speakers becoming equally fluent in both languages. Fourth, the teachers need multicultural and

diversity training to become culturally-responsive within the classroom. Fifth, teachers must actively support their students' acquisition of academic skills needed for academic success in these classes. In many cases, identification focuses on potential and there is still a need to develop specific academic skills necessary for success. Sixth, teachers must have appropriate training to appeal to the particular learning styles of middle school students. Cultural factors, such as deference toward authority figures, and psychological factors, such as striving for perfection, can surface in gifted classrooms. Teachers should be able to alleviate student concerns and support their increased cognitive ability without leaving students to "teach" themselves. Seventh, in order to fully understand this phenomenon and ensure that gifted students who do not thrive in Humanities maintain positive academic self-concepts, there should be an exit evaluation system focusing on why student left the program and how they feel in both environments. Finally, we must recruit, support, and retain more CLD students so that these students feel more comfortable in these classes. In short, these classes must become more multicultural, train more effective teachers, develop a broader range of talents, and continue to develop specific academic skills if the FISD hopes to retain more CLD GT students.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, future research should be done in this area to inform several key aspects of educational practice. An analysis of the curriculum may demonstrate to many the academic reasons students struggle. Second, the content of the programs should also be analyzed to determine the skill set needed for student academic success. It should also be determined how much these programs focus on students' verbal abilities versus developing other types of intelligence. Third, the curriculum should be analyzed to determine whether it is multicultural.

In addition to a focus on the curriculum, more research should be done about students' self-concepts and their emotional and psychological needs. Moreover, a study of this type could shed light on students' need to fit in. By conducting a more thorough study with several different sources of information and more detailed observations, we could possibly discover why some students, especially girls, think it is "uncool" to be smart. Students' emotional states during participation in the program could also help us understand how they are affected by these programs.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

I am a master's student at UTEP, and to graduate, I am doing a study about GT programs in the Frontera Independent School District. You do not have to participate, you can decide not to answer any of my questions, and nobody will ever know that you answered these questions for me unless YOU tell them. Do you have any questions before we get started? I just ask that you be honest and as specific as you can about your answers. If you don't know or don't remember, it is okay to say that. Are you ready?

Why did you enter the Humanities or Science Technology program?

How did you first become interested in Humanities or Science Technology?

Who suggested that you should try to be in the program?

What did you have to do to enter the program?

What did you think of Humanities and/or Science Tech?

What did you think about the program when you first signed up?

How many, if any, of your friends were in Humanities or Science Technology?

Did you feel like you fit in or didn't fit in with the other kids in these programs? Why or why not?

Did you feel like you stood out for any reason in these classes?

Did you get along with your teacher? Why or why not in your opinion?

Did you feel able to do the work in these classes?

How hard did you consider these classes to be?

If you could change anything about these classes, what would it be?

Explain how you think your teacher thought of you in class.

Explain how you think your classmates thought of you in class.

What was your favorite thing about Humanities or Science Technology?

What were your goals in these classes?

What was your definition of success in these classes?

Who helped you set your goals?

How did you do in Humanities or Science Technology?

Academically? Socially? Emotionally?

Why did you decide to leave?

Who thought of the idea to change classes?

What were all the factors that led you to switch classes?

What was your least favorite thing about Humanities or Science Technology?

How was your new class?

What did your new teacher think of you?

What did you think of your new teacher?

What did you think of your new class?

How did you feel after leaving your other class?

Did you know any of the students in your other class?

What do you think that the new students in your class thought of you?

Did you feel like you fit in better with the Humanities/Science Technology students or the students in your new class?

What would you have changed, if anything, about your new class?

Did you ever miss Humanities/Science Technology?

What did you think about what you were learning in Humanities/Science Technology versus what you learned in your new class?

Where did you learn more?

In which place do you think that you learned more or better? Why?

Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your experiences in Humanities/Science Technology or your new class that might help me understand all of the reasons that you left?

Protocol Number # _____

Institutional Review Board
Research Protocol for Projects Involving Human Subjects

Please refer to the Procedures for Review and Approval of Research Using Human Subjects including the University Assurance of Compliance statement (available from the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects [ORSP]) in completing all parts of this form. Sign completed form and return to ORSP.

To be completed by ORSP. This research project involves humans as subjects in research.

ORSP has determined initially that the research proposed (check one) ___ is ___ is not ___ exempt from coverage under CFR 46.101.

The project is exempt under category _____.

Expedited _____ or full _____ committee review.

1. Describe the proposed research, including statement of the problem, rationale, who the subjects will be, how they will be solicited and venue, methods and data analysis strategies.

Gifted education has been extensively studied in the last twenty years. Gifted students need to be challenged to perform at their capacity and their needs are not often met within the context of the regular education classroom:

Academically gifted children are those who *need* educational services not usually (or easily, even feasibly) provided in regular education classrooms. These students are not just learning machines, rapidly acquiring skills (although they do that). Their reasoning and insight are like those of older students (Robinson, 2003, p. 253).

Many possible barriers face gifted students, limiting their participation in GT programs. Since a more rigorous learning environment is crucial for them to realize their "gifts," we should consider why students exit these programs even after they are successfully identified. Racial prejudice, low cultural expectations, negative self-image, preservation of cultural identity, and high-pressure environments lead some students to exit these programs before they complete middle school. This issue requires more research. The research would possibly unearth different findings if conducted in a community where GT programs *do* exist *and* the population is predominantly comprised of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Participants in this study will be selected from the pool of students who exited a middle school GT program (Humanities or Science Tech) during the 6th, 7th, or 8th grade at Lincoln Middle School during the 2002/2003, 2003/2004, or 2004/2005 school year. The GT programs, Humanities and Science Tech, are the only programs in the E.P.I.S.D. designed specifically to meet the needs of the gifted student population in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade.

Approximately 50% of the students will be male and 50% of the students will be female. Regarding cultural background, about 80% of students will be Hispanic, and the remaining students will be White.

2. Explain whether and how women, minorities and children under 21 will be included as subjects in this study.

Children between the ages of 11 and 15 will participate in this study, but only after they have signed an assent form, their parents have signed an informed consent form, and they will be interviewed with their parents present.

All participants will be former or current attendees of Lincoln Middle School, and the interviews will take place on school property before or after school hours.

I believe that many of the participants will be women and minorities since I seek to determine what factors led to their departure from these programs, which could include parts of their identity such as their gender, race, or primary language.

3. Describe provisions to adequately protect the rights and welfare of prospective research subjects.

Each potential participant will be given an informed assent form and their parents will be given an informed consent form to review before making a decision about participation in this study.

All participants in this study will be informed that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that they may end their participation at any time for any reason, stated or otherwise, with no penalty.

Participants' responses will be coded using a randomly-generated number to identify their responses but not their true identities.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be maintained. Data will be collected and maintained in a password-protected file. Only the Principal Investigator and her Thesis Committee Members will have the password.

4. Describe provisions to insure that pertinent laws and regulations are observed.

I agree to comply with all federal laws. I have reviewed the written expectations of the ORSP and IRB regarding the protection of human subjects. OSRP and IRB comply with all rules, regulations, and policies of The University of Texas System regarding compliance with relevant local, state, and national policies and procedures of related research agencies. Further, the statement of Informed Consent that will be provided for each research participant's review is consistent with expectations for compliance with required practice.

5. Attach samples of proposed informed consent forms and questionnaires to be used in research projects.

6. Proposed research period:

Contact possible participants: October 2004

Data collection: November-December 2004

Data Analysis: January-March 2005

Report: April-May 2005

7. Funding source (if applicable) None

This entire research protocol has been reviewed by the supervising professor (if applicable) and the department head (or equivalent) for ethical considerations and merit.

Department Chairperson (signature)

Date

Department Chairperson (printed name)

Title

Principal Investigator

Date

Submit completed form, with any appropriate letters of consent/approval from other institutions, tests or questionnaires to ORSP, Administration Bldg. 209 or call the Institutional Coordinator for Research and review at 747-7939 for additional information.

The University of Texas at El Paso
Teacher Education Department
Informed Consent for Research

Parent Consent Section:

My signature on this form will confirm my understanding and agreement with Amanda Keton with respect to my child's participation in a taped voice and/or video recordings done for research purposes by Amanda Keton.

The purpose of the project is to discover why children who qualify for participation in Gifted and Talented Programs choose to exit these programs before the end of 8th grade.

I understand that my child, along with approximately fifteen other students, will be interviewed for not longer than forty-five minutes regarding the subject matter, and I may be present during the interview process if I choose.

My child will receive no financial benefit from my participation, and there will be no penalty to the child or their grades for their participation in this program. You or your child may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

My child's name will be made known only to Amanda Keton and her thesis advisor at UTEP, Dr. Philip Kramer. No other people within the district will ever know the identity of those who choose to participate in this study.

There are no known risks to this study, and this will benefit the entire district by adding to our understanding of GT student participation.

I volunteer to have my child's interview recorded and transcribed by Amanda Keton. She will handle the tapes and transcripts and will keep them anonymous. At the end of the study, they will be destroyed.

If any questions arise, I may contact Amanda Keton at (915) 274-6359, her thesis advisor, Dr. Philip Kramer at (915) 747-7591, or UTEP's Office of Research and Special Projects at (915) 747-7939.

_____ Date: _____

Amanda Keton, Principal Investigator

Name of Parent: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

The University of Texas at El Paso
Teacher Education Department
Informed Assent for Research

Student Assent Section:

This form gives my permission for me to participate in Ms. Keton's study about Gifted and Talented Classes at Lincoln.

I understand that I do not have to participate in this study, and I can decide not to answer any questions that she asks me during our interview.

I can choose not to let her use my answers or not to interview at any point with no consequences.

I know that I will not be paid for this, and my grades will not be affected at all.

The interview will take place before or after school and my mom, dad, or guardian can be in the room while Ms. Keton interviews me.

I also know that she will tape these interviews so that she does not forget any of my answers.

This research will help my school district make Humanities classes and Science Tech Classes better for future students.

My name will be kept secret from everybody, and my answers will also be private.

Eventually, Ms. Keton will write a report of her findings, but even then nobody but me and my parents will know that my answers were used for her final report.

_____ Date: _____

Amanda Keton
Principal Investigator

Name of Student: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The University of Texas at El Paso
El Departamento de la Educación de Maestros
El Consentimiento Informado Para la Investigación

Carta del Consentimiento del Padre:

Mi firma en esta forma confirmará mi comprensión y el acuerdo con Amanda Keton con respeto a la participación de mi niña/o en una voz grabada y/o grabaciones de video hechos para propósitos de investigación por la Srita. Amanda Keton.

El propósito del proyecto debe descubrir por qué niños que califican para la participación en Programas Talentosos escogen salirse de los estos programas antes del fin del grado octavo.

Entiendo que mi niño, junto con aproximadamente quince otros estudiantes, serán entrevistados no más de cuarenta y cinco minutos con respeto al tema, y yo puedo estar presente durante el proceso de entrevista si deseo.

Mi niña/o no recibirá beneficio financiero por su participación, y esto no afectara al niña/o negativamente, ni sus grados serán afectados por la participación en este programa, tampoco.

Yo o el/ella decidimos retirarnos del estudio en una fecha posterior.

El nombre de mi niño se hará conocido sólo a la Srita. Amanda Keton y su consejero de la tesis en UTEP, Dr. Philip Kramer.

Ningunas otras personas dentro del distrito sabrán jamás la identidad de los que escogen tomar parte en este estudio.

No hay riesgos en este estudio, y esto beneficiarán el distrito entero añadiendo a nuestra comprensión de la participación del estudiante del programa GT.

Yo me ofrezco a que mi niño sea sometido a una entrevista grabada y transcrita por la Srita. Amanda Keton.

Ella manejará las cintas y expedientes y los mantendrá anónimos.

A fines del estudio, las cintas y los documentos serán destruidos.

En caso de preguntas puede contactar la Srita. Amanda Keton al numero (915) 274-6359, su consejero de tesis, Dr. Philip Kramer al numero (915) 747-7591, o la Oficina de UTEP de Investigación y Proyectos Especiales al numero (915) 747-7939.

_____ Fecha: _____

Amanda Keton, Investigadora Principal

Nombre del Padre: _____ Firma: _____ Fecha: _____

The University of Texas at El Paso
El Departamento de la Educación de Maestros
El Consentimiento Informado Para la Investigación

Carta del Asentimiento del Estudiante:

Esta forma da mi permiso para que yo tome parte en el estudio de la Sra. Keton acerca de Clases Talentosas en Lincoln.

Entiendo que yo no tengo que tomar parte en este estudio, y yo puedo decidir no tomar parte en cualquier momento antes, durante o después de la voz grabada.

Puedo decidir no permitir que se usen mis respuestas ni entrevistarse en cualquier momento con ningunas consecuencias.

Sé que yo no seré pagado por esto, y mis grados no serán afectados.

La entrevista sucederá antes o después de la escuela y mi mamá, papá, o mi guardián pueden estar presente en el cuarto mientras la Sra. Keton me entrevista.

Sé también que ella grabará estas entrevistas para que ella no se olviden ninguna de mis respuestas.

Esta investigación ayudará las clases de Humanidades y Ciencias Técnicas mejor para estudiantes futuros.

Mi nombre se mantendrá secreto de todos, y de mis respuestas serán también privadas.

Eventualmente, Sra. Keton escribirá un informe de sus inclusiones, pero aún entonces nadie pero yo y mis padres sabrán que mis respuestas se utilizaron para su informe final.

_____ Fecha: _____

Amanda Keton, Investigadora Principal

Nombre del Estudiante: _____ Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

CURRICULUM VITA

Amanda Maureen Keton was born on January 17, 1978 in El Paso, TX. The first child of Maureen Ortiz Keton and Frank William Keton, she graduated from Coronado High School, El Paso, Texas, in May of 1996. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies from Dartmouth College in June 2001. She worked as a college counselor in Glen Cove, NY, at Solomon Schechter High School of Long Island for one year before moving back to El Paso in 2002. She has since been teaching at the middle school she attended for 7th-9th grades. In December of 2002, she began studying at The University of Texas at El Paso in the Alternative Certification Program. Subsequently, she pursued a Master of Arts in Education degree and will graduate in May 2005.

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This thesis was typed by the author.