“THEY BELIEVE OUR CHILDREN ARE SMART . . .
JUST NOT SMART ENOUGH TO BE IN A GIFTED
PROGRAM”: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION
OF PERCEIVED DETERMINANTS & PROCESSES IN
THE IDENTIFICATION OF BLACK STUDENTS FOR
GIFTED EDUCATION

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED ON THE 26TH DAY OF
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BY

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Abstract

Gifted Education (GE) stands as an area with clear underrepresentation and disproportionality of Black and/or African American students (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018). Underrepresentation and disproportionality of Black students indicate that the racial demographics of GE programs often (1) do not accurately reflect student and local Black populations and/or (2) differ substantially in comparison with other groups (Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Wright, Ford & Young, 2017). Researchers have proposed that these issues may be an outcome of systemic and proximal barriers and biases impeding successful GE program access and entry for Black students (Ford, 2013, 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Ford et al., 2018, 2020; Grissom & Redding, 2016). This study implements mixed methods to better understand the current phenomena of disproportionate underrepresentation in the New Orleans Metropolitan area.

Using public demographic data from the Louisiana Department of Education and Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, descriptive statistical analysis was used to determine the current racial demographics of GE across the eight parishes that comprise the Greater New Orleans metropolitan area. Subsequently, thematic analysis was used to explore the factors that may impact GE determinations for Black students in New Orleans Metro area schools, and generate themes that explain common barriers and supports for Black students. The study implements a mixture of focus groups and individual interviews with local school stakeholders to understand their perceptions, knowledge and training in the evaluation of Black students for GE programs. Overall, the data provides information on (a) culture-specific social, cultural and economic determinants, as well as (b) how the skills and perceptions of school-based stakeholders may impact the determinations for the identification of Black students for GE.
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Dedication

it isn’t blood that makes you my sister
it’s how you understand my heart
as though you carry it
in your body
– Rupi Kaur

To Melissa:

I had the opportunity to experience your sisterly love, care, empathy and advocacy for twenty-eight years, seven months and fourteen days. From my earliest memories, you modeled the ideals of a responsive, empathetic and caring soul through the many different roles you occupied: a determined nurse, advocate, mother, daughter, sister; etc.

You demonstrated this through your path as a Registered Nurse, serving at a community trauma center and the VA for over fifteen years. Selfless as ever, you went back to school to further pursue for your education in Nursing, so that you had the tools to give back and nurture others.

When you became a mother to a child with special needs, being able to witness you morph into a fierce advocate for my nephew, was the catalyst for my interest in Developmental Psychology, prompting me to seek out School Psychology programs to continue my doctoral studies.

It is incredibly hard to believe you are not here, watching the seeds you so delicately planted bloom into our collective joy in this accomplishment. As you modeled for me over the last twenty-eight years of life, our legacies are forever intertwined through our sisterhood and shared experiences: as you told me one day, “delayed does not mean denied”, and that eventual win for one of us, is a win for us all.

In this dedication and in my heart, you will always be an integral part of my legacy, because an accomplishment of mine, is yours as well. Thus, I dedicate the body of this work to you, my beloved sister: Melissa Angelique Wing (February 24th, 1982 – November 15th, 2021).
Acknowledgements

This accomplishment and milestone is not just for myself; it is not just décor for the walls of a professional office, a title that slips proudly from lips, or a journey that I will regale well into my old age. This accomplishment is for all the those whose hands pushed me towards my path, and guided me along – even in moments where I doubted if my legs could carry the weight forward.

I appreciate and thank my academic team, including my committee members. I am especially thankful to have been guided through this process by my academic advisor, Dr. Cunningham, and lab-mates in the Lion’s Story Lab. I am also extremely thankful for the countless friends and chosen family that has rallied around me in support of my studies.

I would not be here in this monumental moment without the immense love and joy that family has given me. My siblings (Sarah, Buddy, Mallory, Melissa, Maria and Josh) have all been monumental in my journey – where their selfless acts of kind words, proofreading papers and occasional braggadocious about “future Doctor Wing” have demonstrated that blood is absolutely thicker than water. I also am thankful for the various cousins, aunts, uncles and all of my kin who have strengthened that sentiment.

That familial love all goes back to my parents, Denise and Lloyd. There are no words that can sum up the appreciation and undying love I have for you both. Every day, I am in awe and appreciation of the determination and drive you have poured into me and my accomplishments. As the creators of my life, I’m in awe of how you both wholeheartedly allowed and supported me in being an architect of my own life.

You both were behind every decision I made to carve out how I want this life to be. Thank you for gifting me with the tenacity, curiosity and thirst for knowledge, life, love and laughter. I love you both, because without you, the road to this accomplishment would not have materialized.

Lastly, I would like to thank God and my ancestors. I am proud and inspired to be the granddaughter, great-granddaughter and more of Black, Indigenous American and Cantonese pioneers, healers, revolutionaries and survivors. This course of my doctoral training has been deeply informed by their intergenerational dreams and resilience: My “ancestors’ wildest dreams” culminate in my scholarly endeavors and the transliteration of stories and narratives. Without their dreams and faith in God, I would not be here.
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I. Introduction

“They Believe Our Children Are Smart...”

Just Not ‘Smart Enough’ To Be In A Gifted Program”:

A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Perceived Determinants & Processes

In the Identification of Black Students For Gifted Education
What is Gifted Education?

Gifted Education, or GE, is defined in federal educational policy as any educational program for students who demonstrate Giftedness, which is defined as “…evidence of high achievement… who need services…not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities” (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC § 7801). Because federal language does not set any criterion for defining and identifying Giftedness, national governing bodies, such as the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), have taken on the role of providing national standards and definitions of GE programs and gifted students.

Thus, identification practices and determination processes for GE may vary across states and local educational agencies, or LEAs (Ford, Wright, Washington & Henfield, 2016; Hodges, Tay, Maede & Gentry, 2018; NAGC, 2019). Ultimately, Gifted education is presented on a continuum of service delivery, ranging from classroom accommodations, advanced academic tracks, pull-out services to grade acceleration and advancement (NAGC, 2019). Nationally, Gifted students represent a small minority of the total student population in the United States, where only approximately 6.4% of all students enrolled in public and charter U.S. schools are in Gifted Education programs (NCES, 2018). Traditionally, scholars have pointed towards this small number as evidence of the statistical bell curve, where students with high intelligence will be statistic outliers, and thus rare (Fischer et al., 2020). However, current paradigms in Gifted education urge stakeholders to reconceptualize their historical perceptions of

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1 In alignment with presented language and data from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2015), the term gifted student(s) reflects federal definitions, as students identified as locally-recognized students enrolled in Gifted Education programs. The term can be used interchangeably with gifted students/scholars.
Giftedness, as a vehicle to allow historically and traditionally marginalized populations access to programs and their life-long benefits (Ford et al., 2020; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Lo & Porath, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Stephens, 2020).

Gifted education has been demonstrated to be advantageous for increasing likelihood of successful academic outcomes and development of skills. A few of these positive student outcomes associated with GE programming are high achievement in math, literature and science (Bui, Craig & Imbermen, 2014; Delcourt, Cornell & Goldberg, 2007; Kim, 2016; Vialle, Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2007; Young, Young & Ford, 2017), higher performance on national, state and curriculum-based measures (Bui et al., 2014; Kim, 2016), and enhanced functional reasoning skills and mental flexibility (Barfuth, Ritchie, Irving & Shore, 2009). These relative academic achievements often implicate success in post-secondary education (Allen, McLewis, Jones & Harris, 2018; Ford & Whiting, 2016; Makel, Kell, Lubinski, Putallaz & Benbow, 2016) as well as reported positive career and life outcomes (Gross, 2006; Lubinski, Benbow & Kell, 2014; Makel et al., 2016; Robertson, Smeets, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2010; Rudasill & Callahan, 2010).

Underrepresentation and Disproportionality in Gifted Education

Gifted education programming stands as an educational area with a clear dearth of students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds, such as Black and/or African American students (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford et al., 2016; Grissom &

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2 The term “historically marginalized” refers to people who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups that currently and historically experience sociocultural, socioeconomic, and other systems of marginalization and inopportunity in the United States. This typically refers to African Americans, and Native and Indigenous Americans, but also includes other Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander groups.

3 The term African Americans specifically refers to the American-born descendants of formerly enslaved African people of sub-Saharan African descent found across West, Central and South Africa. The term Black represents an encompassing term for individuals of sub-Saharan African descent and can be used interchangeably with person(s) of African descent and African American(s).
Researchers have often characterized Gifted education programs as completely under-representative of traditionally and historical marginalized groups with current demographic trends indicating that the majority of the 3.2 million identified Gifted scholars in publicly-funded school systems are White American or of Asian descent (Callahan, Moon & Oh, 2013).

The concept of underrepresentation refers to insufficient or low representation of a given population participating in a phenomenon; within the structure of GE, underrepresentation has been illustrated as a noticeable dearth of Black American faces as well as the critical aftermath of traditional and historical conceptualizations of giftedness as a trait of Whiteness, wealth and privilege (Fish, 2001; Hatt, 2016; Mansfield, 2015). However, as definitions of Giftedness transcend early foci on intelligence quotient (IQ) and traditional modes of achievement, contemporary scholars and stakeholders alike point out that aptitude is not quite uncommon nor limited to specific populations (Ford, Dickson, Davis, Scott & Grantham, 2018; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Lo & Porath, 2017) and thus, should be identified and cultivated with appropriate educational programming (Ford et al., 2018; Mansfield, 2015; National Association for Gifted Children, 2019).

These foundational shifts have launched efforts to ensure that Gifted children from all backgrounds and circumstances are identified accordingly, a move that encourages holistic representation and less emphasis placed on the exact numeric values of identified students (Ford et al., 2016, 2020; NAGC, 2019). However, despite paradigm shifts in Gifted Education – such as reimagining definitions of Giftedness and pushes for
diversity, there remains a vast underrepresentation and disproportionality of Black American students in GE. When examining the national population of gifted students, scholars have estimated that Black students only represent between 8.4% and 9.8% of all identified Gifted students in states that offer Gifted Education (Frye & Vogt, 2010; Grissom & Redding, 2016); in comparison to a total student population, the National Center of Education Statistics (2018) indicate that Black American students comprise approximately 16% of all students enrolled in K-12 public and charter school systems.

Scholars illustrate this underrepresentation as a problem of disproportionality, where there the numerical proportion of Black students in GE is grossly dissimilar to the proportion of Black students in the general population (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford, 2014; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Peters et al., 2019a). Together, the issue of underrepresentation and disproportionality, or disproportionally representation (Peters et al., 2019) posits that the racial demographics of students identified and enrolled in GE programming (1) do not accurately reflect student and local populations (also known as disproportionality) and/or (2) differ substantially in comparison with other groups (Ford, 2013, 2014, 2016; Ford et al., 2016; Wright, Ford & Young, 2017).

This problem of disproportional representation often begets further solutions for increasing the number of Black students in Gifted Education. These solutions have posited a line of inquiry that focuses on “how many more Black students need to be identified as gifted” to promulgate equity. While scholars address the belief that one to one (1:1) representation to be equitable (Dai, 2020; Ford et al, 2018, 2020; Peters et al., 2019a, 2019b; Stephens, 2020), scholars illustrate the goal of alleviating racial and ethnic disproportionalities in GE are simply to bring representation as close to the general
student population as possible (Ford, 2016; Ford et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019a, 2019b). For example, one simple solution has been to long increase the number of Black students in Gifted Education to be more representative of state demographics (Ford et al., 2020).

**Understanding Why Disproportionality Occurs**

Researchers have proposed that issues of disproportionality and underrepresentation may be an outcome of different barriers that prevent successful GE program entry for Black students (Ford, 2013, 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Ford et al., 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Subsequently, scholars have called for the investigation of the general underlying processes and associated factors that drive disproportionality and exclusion of Black American students from Gifted programs. Scholars have posited that systemic issues of inequities and challenges that Black students and their families often experience, often serve as barriers to Gifted education: scholars name these as sociocultural and economic barriers that limit family knowledge of and ability to financially participate in Gifted evaluation processes (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Crabtree, Richardson, & Lewis, 2019; Ford et al, 2020; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020; Sewell & Goings, 2019). Additionally, criticisms illustrate factors such as local and/or state Gifted eligibility criterion (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; NAGC, 2015), as well as standardized practices and procedures for determining eligibility (Ford et al., 2016; Ford, Wright & Trotman Scott, 2020; Jolly, 2018; NAGC, 2015).

Across different LEAs and states, scholars continue to point towards the evaluation processes, illustrating a pattern of practices that may entail under-identification: (1) over-emphasis on scores produced from standardized cognitive and
achievement assessments (Hodges et al., 2018; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; NAGC, 2015),
and (2) subjective referral and identification practices from school stakeholders (Bonner,
2000; Edwin & Worrell, 2013; Ford, 2016; Ford et al., 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; McBee,
Peters & Miller, 2016). Although the emphasis on standardized cognitive and
achievement assessments aligns with traditional definitions of Giftedness (Dai, 2020;
Jolly & Warne, 2019), there is widespread criticism of the rigid adhesion to scores from
standardized cognitive assessments. These criticisms largely stem from the reconciliation
of historical racial biases (Fish, 2001; Ford, 2005; Franklin, 2007; Jolly & Warne, 2019;
Suzuki & Quizon, 2016; Yakushko, 2019) and existent cultural and linguistic biases
(Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Melikyan, Agranovich & Puente,
2019) in cognitive assessment tools, prompting a paradigm shift to conceptualize of
Giftedness as more than IQ scores (Ford et al., 2020; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Lo & Porath,
2017; Robinson, 2017; Stephens, 2020).

Within this evaluation process for Gifted determinations, the professional
practices of school stakeholders – such as teachers, school psychologists, educational
diagnosticians and administrators – have been implicated as another area of impact for
observed disproportionality: in many areas, teachers are often implicated as being the
primary source of referrals and/or student nominations to the Gifted evaluation process,
while school psychologists, educational diagnosticians are often identified as qualified
school-based personnel for conducting gifted evaluations and administrators are
responsible for over-seeing compliance to these processes (Allen, 2017; Crabtree,
Richardson & Lewis, 2019; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford et al., 2016; Frye & Vogt,
2010; Stephens, 2018, 2020). School stakeholders are often held responsible for
integrating cultural responsiveness into their roles, conceptualizing and applying “worldviews and sociocultural histories” (APA, 2017c, p. 31) to their respective engagement and delivery of Gifted evaluation practices for students from historically marginalized backgrounds (Ford et al., 2018, 2020; Stephens, 2020).

For example, school psychologists are expected to acknowledge and unpack potential biases, conflicts of interest, gaps in competency, or other problems that may impede their ability to accurately select, understand and administer assessments, and interpret results (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014; APA, 2017a, 2017c; NASP, 2010). Thus, both researchers and practitioners have demonstrated a need for school stakeholders to acknowledge and discuss their own experiences, knowledge and formal training on culturally-responsive gifted identification practices, as well as potentially Eurocentric value-laden perceptions and judgements of giftedness in Black American students (Bonner, 2000; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Proctor, Guttman-Lapin & Kendick-Dunn, 2019; Proctor, Williams, Scherr & Li, 2017).

The Need for Local Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Overall, the existent literature demonstrates the phenomena of underrepresentation and disproportionality of Black students in Gifted Education as a multi-layered process, citing barriers such as the lack of Black family and student access to GE programs (Ford, 2014; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Grissom & Redding, 2016), suboptimal identification, and evaluation processes for gifted Black students (Allen, 2017; Erwin & Worrell, 2013; Ford, 2005; Ford et al., 2016; Franklin, 2007). Existent research has politely characterized the role of these barriers for enrollment as a filtration process, where Black American students are systematically filtered from Gifted
scholarship through the above cross-cutting systemic biases and inequities (Allen et al., 2018; Bonner, Hicks & Pennie, 2019; Ford et al., 2016, 2018, 2020).

Thus, stated factors such as the practices and procedures of school stakeholders, systems of educational racism and biases, and sociocultural and socioeconomic family characteristics may even function as determinants for Gifted education. To make local Gifted education more accessible to marginalized populations, scholars have illustrated that it is necessary to (1) identify racial underrepresentation and disproportionality in the school population and then (2) better understand associated barriers, prior to finding ways to ameliorate them (Ford et al., 2018, 2020; Peters et al., 2019a). This means that it is necessary to establish an issue of disproportionate representation, substantiated both quantitative and qualitative evidence in the form of statistical data, and publicized expressions of lived experiences.

However, this evidence may be difficult to establish in a metropolitan area that does not readily have these data available. Although diverse metropolitans like New York City have successfully demonstrated disproportionality and underrepresentation using quantitative and qualitative data (and thus, advocated for equitable opportunities for Gifted identification), scholars present a quagmire in describing the issue of underrepresentation and disproportionality in geographical locations and regional areas when both numerical data and qualitative perspectives are not well-documented. The metropolitan area of New Orleans\(^4\) illustrates this difficulty in the dearth of numerical data available.

\(^4\) The New Orleans Metropolitan Area (also referred to in this document as: New Orleans MSA, New Orleans Metro) refers to metropolitan statistical area designated by the US Census Bureau to refer to New Orleans and surrounding satellite cities and towns within a 20 mile radius. This includes the following parishes: Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany.
data and publicized qualitative perspectives on the disproportionate representation of Black students.

As the largest city in the state of Louisiana – a state with mandates to identify Gifted students (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010; NAGC, 2019), the cities encompassed in the New Orleans MSA have a unique, storied history over equality, racial distribution and disruptions to the public school system; thus, it is imperative that local data⁵ is available to better understand issues of disproportional representation in schools. Scholars have pointed out that these while these issues of disproportionality are often obviously visible for individuals who may interface with school systems but remains difficult to track within numerical data (Ford et al., 2018; Hodges et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019b). Additionally, even when anecdotal data is apparent, stakeholders may not readily share or publicize these lived experiences, thus increasingly difficulty to transliterate into publicly available information. Ultimately, accessible and organized quantitative and qualitative data from New Orleans MSA is necessary to better understand the issue of disproportionate representation of Black students identified for, and subsequently present within Gifted education.

**Significance of Study**

The current study explores the existing state of racial disproportionality in Gifted education for Black American students in the New Orleans MSA. Within this investigation, the goals of this study are to understand the locality’s current demographic data of Gifted students and identify determinants that may impact Gifted identification processes and subsequent program entry for Black students at the local level. Through an

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⁵ References to local data refer to data that is reflective of the New Orleans MSA
exploratory sequential mixed methods research design, the study examines existing
publicly-available state and local demographic data to (1) provide current data on racial
proportionality of gifted students in New Orleans metropolitan area public schools and
(2) help formulate questions and theory for stakeholders to discuss; subsequently, this
quantitative data was used to (3) elicit the perspectives of school-based stakeholders —
who are often involved in the identification, referral and assessment of potential Gifted
students— on factors impact trends of disproportionality and subsequent
underrepresentation.

Guided by Critical Race Theory, this study elevates the voices and perspectives of
African American-identified stakeholders to understand how systems of sociocultural
racial inequities and oppression may impact the student demographics of GE programs,
as well as the perspectives and practices of stakeholders within the GE student
determination process. With pre-existing qualitative data demonstrating clear
underrepresentation of Black students in Gifted Education, this study focuses on the
exploration of qualitative data to understand why and how school stakeholders perceive
their own roles, practices, and procedures for impacting outcomes for Black students. The
following literature review further examines the aforementioned topics, highlighting
existent literature and gaps in knowledge around how these factors may influence GE
eligibility and determinations for Black students across the nation as well as within the
state of Louisiana and local New Orleans MSA.

**Theoretical Framework for Literature Review**

The literature review incorporates a critical race theoretical perspective to
determine what factors have and continue to proliferate disproportionality and
underrepresentation of Black students in GE. Specifically, the literature review is informed by Critical Race Theory (CST; Gillborn, Dixson, Ladson-Billings, Parker, Rollock & Warmington, 2018; Parker, 2019; Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009), while the data collection and analyses are informed by Thematic Analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, asserts that (a) race is foundational in the creation and maintenance of all Western institutions and systems. CRT builds upon tenets of ecological system models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), proposing that race permeates all ecological systems for phenomena in America; for example, race could be salient from a personal level (microsystem) to large-scale events, traditions, and histories (chronosystem). Thus, from the perspective of CRT, the institution of GE is impacted by systems of sociopolitical, economic, and educational policy (Ford et al., 2018; Jolly & Warne, 2019; VanTassel-Baska, 2018), sociocultural values and beliefs about race (Dumas, 2016; Ford, 2013; Hatt, 2016; Kohn, 1998; Robinson, 2017), and individual-level and community experiences (Robinson, 2017).

Secondly, CRT posits that these (b) systems and institutions are maintained on a hierarchical racial system of White supremacy and Anti-Blackness (Dumas, 2016; Gillborn et al., 2018; Parker, 2019). Anti-Blackness does not simply describe racism against Black people, but rather a hierarchical, deficit-based racial belief system that effectively denies Black Americans of positive personal attributes, such as high intellectual ability (Dumas, 2016; Franklin, 2007; Valencia, 2010). Theorists point out that this deficit-oriented ideology has long extended into GE, which impacts and
promulgate beliefs and perceptions of lack of giftedness and academic ability among Black American students (Ford, 2013, 2014; Ford et al., 2016; Franklin, 2007; Graves Jr, 2009).

The theoretical assumptions concluded in Critical Race Theory indicate that concept of maintaining White supremacy is integral to the foundations of Gifted Education (Ford, 2013; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Robinson, 2017). Thus, CRT is used to acknowledge (a) contemporary underrepresentation and disproportionality in GE, and other related phenomenon that further marginalize and oppress Black American students, and (b) biased theories, perspectives and phenomena, as well as prepare to (c) establish alternative foundations for concepts and phenomenon that are rooted in the perspectives of communities and their voices.
II. Literature Review
The literature review examines data and findings from publications that explore relevant issues in Gifted Education; specifically, the selected literature can be conceptualized as providing context to the landscape of the identification of Black American students for Gifted. Using a critical race theoretical framework, the literature review explores the empirical literature for contemporary processes for student determinations, as well as factors that may impact Black students’ success for referrals to, identification, and enrollment into Gifted Education programs, and the role of educational stakeholders in the entry process.

The structure of the literature review examines (1) contemporary definitions and practices for Gifted identification and determination in the United States and Louisiana, (2) existing data for national and local racial student demographics in Gifted education and ways to examine disproportionality, (3) contemporary identified determinants and barriers for Black students, and (4) roles of school stakeholders and their perceptions, knowledge and experiences about Gifted student identification and evaluation processes.

**Gifted Determination Processes: How are Students Defined and Evaluated?**

Much of the inquiry and criticisms of current disproportionate representation of Black students in Gifted education, have highlighted issues in the definitions of Giftedness and subsequent determination processes. Although contemporary paradigm shifts acknowledge the Eurocentric foundations of Gifted education and advocate for more diverse definitions, perspectives and modalities for assessing Giftedness (Dai, 2020; Ford et al., 2020; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Lo & Porath, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Stephens, 2020), primary criticisms still point back to Giftedness continuing to be defined by rigid
academic achievement and intelligence assessment outcome scores (Ford et al., 2016; Ford, Wright & Trotman Scott, 2020; NCES, 2015).

Traditionally, the primary determination process has been based in a two-step procedure, where gifted students are (1) referred and (2) evaluated; often these processes use both a mixture of standardized tools that align with LEA and/or state-mandated criterion (McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016; NAGC, 2019) as well as subjective measures, such as qualitative information on the student. Despite the conversation on changes, both of these quantitative and qualitative ways of evaluating a child for Gifted education remain as remnants of early practices (Ford et al., 2018). These existent definitions of Giftedness lend to evaluation practices that place an emphasis on subjective definitions of intelligence and using outcome data from academic and cognitive assessments (Ford et al., 2016; Jolly, 2018; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Robinson, 2017).

Definitions of Giftedness

As previously illustrated, federal law does not have set criterion for defining and identifying Giftedness, leaving this as the responsibility of states and LEAs to set their identification practices and determination processes (Ford, Wright, Washington & Henfield, 2016; Hodges, Tay, Maede & Gentry, 2018; National Association for Gifted Children, 2019). Thus, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has taken on the role of providing national standards and definitions of Gifted Education, including definitions Giftedness and subsequent typical profile Gifted students. The NAGC (2019) has taken an idiographic approach to their provisions to states, no longer providing a singular definition of Giftedness, but rather emphasizing diverse, multimodal ways of defining and assessing students as Gifted, as illustrated by the following:
Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Students with gifts and talents come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata; require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential; can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation; and need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent (p. 1).

National Definitions and Identification Practices. There have been several descriptive and empirical studies that have examined state-wide trends and data on determination processes and procedures. Two descriptive, national studies released by the NAGC in 2015 and 2020 stand as the most comprehensive evaluations of the current state of Gifted education within the United States, in the 2020 descriptive study funded by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). In their respective studies, the NAGC’s Policy and Practice Data (2015) and Rinn, Munn and Hodges (2020) examined state data from the 2014-2015 (N = 40) and 2018-2019 (N = 44) academic yeas to better understand definitions and practices for identifying Gifted students.

An examination of the data demonstrate that described paradigm shifts in definitions of Giftedness have gained traction: In 2020, majority of the participating states defined Giftedness as high intellectual (n = 36) and/or creative thinking and innovation (n = 31). In comparison, the previous study in 2015 demonstrated that the
participating states defined Giftedness as high intellectual abilities \((n = 34)\) and/or academic abilities \((n = 34)\) (NAGC, 2015). Remnant of an ideological shift may be evident in further comparison to other state surveys: McClain & Pfeiffer (2012) demonstrated that in 2010, majority of surveyed states \((N = 48)\) indicated definitions of giftedness as being high intellectual \((n = 45)\) and/or academic ability \((n = 39)\). Ultimately, it is plausible that these shifts reflect a change in state definitions, which have likely molded to remain compliant with strong advocacy for diversity and subsequent recommended best-practices of flexible, idiographic definitions of Giftedness\(^6\) (Dai, 2020; Ford et al., 2018, 2020; Peters et al., 2019a; Stephens, 2020).

However, it is within the purview of many LEAs and states that mandate that Giftedness must still be systematically defined and evaluated using standardized benchmark data (Hodges et al., 2018; NAGC, 2019; Peters et al., 2019a; Rinn, Munn & Hodges, 2020). While more recent information is not readily available on specific, state-wide practices, contemporary information indicate that these benchmarks often rely on quantitative measures of high intellectual aptitude, and academic achievement (Hodges et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019a; Worrell et al., 2019). Previous descriptive data a national study on evaluation practices and procedures, McClain and Pfeiffer (2012) demonstrated that fourteen states out of fifty states reported using a singular cutoff score on one measure in the determining giftedness. Although many states require an integrated evaluation of different domains, national data and observations from practitioners supports a heavy reliance on IQ and/or achievement scores to make determinations for GE (Ford et al., 2016; NCES, 2015; Stephens, 2020).

\(^{6}\) See Definitions of Giftedness for more information
However, many LEAs and states have shifted towards multimodal means of
determination for students. For example, NAGC (2015) descriptive study demonstrated
that nineteen states out of 32 respondents indicated that they use a model examining
multiple criteria, while thirteen states indicated the use of IQ scores and/or academic
achievement data, and twelve states reported using nomination/referral data. McClain and
Pfeiffer (2012) demonstrated that out of fifty states, over half ($n = 27$) indicated the use
and integration of score outcomes from multiple assessment tools. While there have been
some attempts to assess and integrate data on creativity, the focus on assessment outcome
scores often overshadows the importance of other qualitative and quantitative data points
(Dai, 2020; Ford et al., 2016, 2018; NAGC, 2019; Stephens, 2020).

**Giftedness in Louisiana and New Orleans MSA.** Louisiana stands as one of the
few states that mandate identification and educational services for Gifted students across
all sixty-four parishes within the state, including the eight parishes that comprise the New
Orleans Metro area (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010; NAGC, 2019). The
mandate for identification and services derives from the adoption of federal law, namely
the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), a federal law
that guarantees “access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least
restrictive environment (LRE) to every child with a disability” (P.L. 94-142 § 1400).

With the complete adoption into Louisiana state laws, this entails those students
who are “deemed to be gifted or talented” are also classified as a protected
“exceptionality” under Special Education, and “as a result requires special education and
related services” (LA Rev Stat § 17:1942). The Louisiana Department of Education
(2010) fully abides by this right, indicating that:
“A Gifted . . . student is entitled to receive a free appropriate public education. Special education and related services must be available to meet the unique needs of your child and must be specifically designed for the individual student. The following Federal and State laws or regulations guarantee that a [Gifted] student . . . has a full educational opportunity to benefit from a free appropriate public education (FAPE).” (p. 4)

State-Mandated Evaluation Process. Because identification is mandated by state law, the process for identifying and evaluating for students for Gifted exceptionalities, is provided structure by Louisiana Pupil Appraisal Handbook (also known as Bulletin 1508), a document that serves as a “the regulatory guide for pupil appraisal personnel when conducting individual evaluations of students suspected of being exceptional” (Bulletin 1508 § 101.A). Originally drafted to reflect laws and language stemming from IDEA, the document was last revised in December 2017, and continues to provide in-depth structure for school personnel who are responsible for identifying students for Gifted education programming.

Within the scope of Gifted education, Louisiana state law defines Giftedness as students that “…demonstrate abilities that give evidence of high performance in academics and intellectual aptitude” (Bulletin 1508 § 901.A), falling in alignment with the less recent pattern of definitions seen in other states (Hodges et al., 2018; NAGC, 2015; Peters et al., 2019a). Using these definitions to guide evaluators, the identification of Gifted students initiates with a discretionary screening process, that includes a health screening and a screening process; Typically, the multidisciplinary team involved in the referral and screening process must be two “regular school members” or qualified
professionals, who are able to review, administer and interpret the data; however, the law indicates that these individuals may vary, including “…principal/designee, teachers, counselors, pupil appraisal personnel, or other professional staff” (Bulletin 1508 § 901.A).

Ideally, if a student passes the criterion put into the screener, students will be forwarded to the special education evaluation team where “a student suspected of being exceptional receive a comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation conducted by qualified examiners”. Qualified examiners are professionals who are certified by the state Department of Education, and can include “…Professional members of a pupil appraisal system include certified Assessment Teachers/Educational Consultants/Educational Diagnosticians, Certified School Psychologists, Qualified School Social Workers; Speech/Language Pathologists, Adapted Physical Education Teachers; Audiologists; Certified School Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Hearing Therapists, and Speech/Hearing/Language Specialists” (Bulletin 1508 § 107.A).

Criterion for Gifted Exceptionality. Because Louisiana law defines Giftedness as “high performance in academic and intellectual aptitude”, the criterion for Gifted has been primarily operationalized as using students’ outcome scores from cognitive and academic assessments. Though there is slightly different criterion for younger children (preschool and Kindergarten) and older children (grades 1 through 12), they both indicate the requirement to use data from “…an individual assessment of intellectual abilities…using instruments appropriately standardized for students of this age” as well as assess “reading and mathematical skills using an achievement test” (Bulletin 1508 §
901.D); ultimately, this undoubtedly reflects traditional attitudes and conceptualizations of Giftedness.

With primary criterion focus on using standardized assessments, this component requires certified School Psychologists and licensed Psychologists – who are deemed qualified professionals – to administer, score and interpret these core pieces of the evaluation. Specific scores are not recommended; rather, students’ outcome scores must fall two to three standard deviations above the standardized mean score for their age and gender. While there is an overall emphasis on these scores, the evaluation also asks for multi-modal means of assessment, such other scores demonstrating reading and mathematics aptitude (e.g., GPA) or an interview with students’ parents and/or teachers. However,

*Service Delivery: Inconsistencies in and Louisiana and NOLA MSA.* Louisiana’s incorporation of IDEA (2004) into state law promulgates that students identified as Gifted are entitled to an educational experience that supports their unique learning needs (P.L. 94-142 § 1400). Thus, in Louisiana, this adoption of FAPE (IDEA, 2004) indicates that students designated as Gifted should be entitled to receiving free and public education services that would fit their advanced aptitude and learning style. While there exists state documentation on how to define and evaluate students as Gifted and a mandate to educate these students, there is *no* set state nor local definition for how said services should be structured and distributed.

In Louisiana and across the New Orleans MS, Gifted Education services could be best characterized as unstandardized and may vary across local educational agencies (LEAs), such as parishes and even school-to-school within a parish. The Louisiana
Department of Education (2022b) characterizes Gifted educational services in public schools as a “continuum”, ranging from enrichment activities in the general education classroom to specialized classrooms and academies; this range of services reflects the variation in school resources to accommodate students’ needs. Ultimately, the services that a Gifted student receives is up to the discretion of the school’s resources and determination of a student’s needs (LADOE, 2022b).

Due to this non-standardized definition of Gifted Education service delivery, there is a varied spread on the extent of documented information for service delivery: using the keyword ‘Gifted’ on parish school board websites, a brief literature search on parish school board websites demonstrated that there was a varied range in online, publicly-available parish-specific information on Gifted Education services.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Is there a parish school board website for Gifted Education services?</th>
<th>Is there any available information about specific services?</th>
<th>What services are available?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Accelerated classrooms, extracurricular opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Accelerated classrooms, extracurricular opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Specialized academy, accelerated classrooms - Gifted and Scholastic Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this search, only five of the eight parishes in the New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area – Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, and St
James – had publicly available, online information about Gifted services. Of these parishes, only three provided some detail on possible available services. For example, the Gifted and Talented Education Department in Jefferson, St. Charles and St. James Parish all mentioned Gifted services primarily being presented as specialized, accelerated classroom, courses and participation at each appropriate grade level; there are also opportunities for enrichment, such as participation in academic competitions (e.g., Quiz Bowls) and other educational opportunities. Overall, while all parishes uphold the right of Gifted students to receive an equitable education, there is still some variability in the ways Gifted services are delivered in Louisiana and the New Orleans Metropolitan area and would require more in-depth knowledge to inform the literature.

**Existing Data on Racial Demographics within Gifted Education**

**Using the Representation Index to Demonstrate National and State Disproportionality**

Scholars, including Peters and colleagues (2019) have acknowledged that a comparison between aggregate numbers and percentages will not easily nor adequately capture disproportionality and underrepresentation. Subsequently, scholars have turned their focus on a *representation index (RI)*\(^7\) (Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019a). Peters and colleagues (2019) used Representation Index provide more contemporary, state-by-state information on representation data and racial demographics for students identified as Gifted in the United States. The study used publicly available data sets from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Data Collection project, the data sets

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\(^7\) Originally developed by Yoon & Gentry (2009, as cited in Peters et al., 2019), a Representation Index (RI) provides a static ratio to assess whether a target population is underrepresented or overrepresented in Gifted Education. It is calculated as: \(RI = (\% \text{ Gifted from Target Group} \div \% \text{ Total Population of Target Group})\)
were based on enrollments from the 2016-17 academic year and included state and district aggregate number of identified gifted students by race/ethnicity.

Using the representation index, findings at the national level indicate Black students have the smallest proportion of students (.57) enrolled in GE programs (NCES, 2018; Peters et al., 2019a), indicating that Black students are 57% less likely to be represented in Gifted student populations in comparison to other education settings. A comparison across all the reporting states (N = 49; excluding data from Missouri) indicated a wide spread of representation indices for Black students, ranging from 1.68 in Massachusetts to 0.0 in Rhode Island, implicating that Black children in Massachusetts are almost twice as likely to be represented in Gifted educational programs than general education; this compares to Rhode Island (0.0), which would indicate no students identified as Black enrolled in their Gifted programs nor General Education program.

When examining the states that require identification for Gifted, New Mexico has the highest RI for Black students (.96), indicating almost a 1:1 even ratio of representation in Gifted and general education, while Ohio and Pennsylvania have the smallest ratio at .27.

In comparison, other historically marginalized groups such as Latinx (.70), and Native American (.87) students have a higher likelihood in comparison to Black American students, indicating more proportionate Gifted enrollments compared to general education. White (1.18) and Asian (2.01) students present the highest proportion of enrollments, indicating that White students are nearly evenly represented in Gifted, and Asian students are nearly twice as likely to be enrolled in a GE program than any other education program (NCES, 2018). These data indicate a disproportionate
overrepresentation of White and Asian students, and underrepresentation of traditionally marginalized racial minoritized groups (e.g., Black/African American).

Specifically, the findings for the state of Louisiana mirror the same disproportionate racial representation: Black students ($RI = .54$) are also half as likely to be in Gifted education than to be in general education, compared to other marginalized groups, such as Hispanic/Latinx (.87) and Indigenous Americans (.98), who both have near proportionate representation in Gifted educational programs. However, White American (1.35) and Asian (3.56) students are also disproportionately represented within Gifted educational programs, indicating that Asian students are almost four times as likely to be enrolled in Gifted rather than general education.

Out of the states that mandate for Gifted identification, Louisiana has one of the more median representation indices, with higher proportionality of Black students in Gifted education than states in other geographic regions in the Deep South, such as Florida (.43), as well as the Northeast (e.g., Pennsylvania with an RI of .27). However, additional analyses examining racial representation for states that have Gifted mandates and Gifted as an exceptionality under IDEA indicated that Black students were more underrepresented in the states that mandated Gifted identification (.60) compared to those that did not (.79); similarly, authors pointed out that states that have Gifted as an exceptionality under IDEA had less proportional representation of Black students (.64) than those that did not (.71).

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8 These states include Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming
Overall, the current findings still lend evidence to the growing inequity in Gifted education. The authors were able to demonstrate the utility in the Representation Index as a statistical tool in determining proportional representation in Gifted education, ultimately computing and providing descriptive statistical data for the representation of Black students across the United States. However, even as a study that only provided descriptive statistics, the authors acknowledge the study sole focus on providing measures of central tendency, recognizing the utility of further analyses of variability that could illustrate the spread of data – as illustrated, the representation indices across the represented 49 states varied ($R$: 0.0-1.68).

While measures of variability could provide more descriptive information, such additional statistical data does not uncover the processes behind the phenomena, Peters and colleagues (2019) indicated the wide range of representation indices across the states implicate that the problem of disproportionality may be regional, where numbers are highly dependent on state and locality demographic changes, educational policy and goals of LEAs. Despite unknown variables, the authors point out that current descriptive statistical data “. . . warrants additional, in-depth . . . research to better understand why some states are doing better while others have faltered” (p. 22), implicating the need for more detailed investigation and case study of the Gifted education demographics, policies and practices of localities. The next two subsections provide context to two different localities

**NYC Public Schools as a National Example**

A closely studied example of underrepresentation and disproportionality has been highlighted within New York City public school system, the nation’s largest public
school system (New York City Department of Education, 2021). With over 1 million students in a large, racially and ethnically diverse metropolis, the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (2017a) demonstrated that in 2017, Non-Hispanic White ($n = 5,429$) and Asian ($n = 6,478$) students comprise the majority (73%) of the total enrollments in Gifted program scholars ($N = 16,298$), in comparison to Black ($n = 1,608$) and Hispanic students ($n = 1,878$). Yet, New York City Department of Education (2021) indicated that as of Fall 2017, Non-Hispanic White ($n = 170,417$) and Asian ($n = 182,282$) students together only comprise approximately one-third of total public school enrollments for the 2017-18 academic year ($N = 1,135,334$); in comparison, Black (26%) and Hispanic (40.5%) students comprise the majority of NYC public school enrollments.

Although data trends suggest that gifted identification in New York City Public Schools is low across the entire population – where in 2017, gifted students from all backgrounds only comprised 1.4% of the total student population, the data clearly demonstrates that White and Asian are more likely to be identified as GE scholars compared to the primarily marginalized Black and Brown student body (OCRDC, 2017a). Similarly, empirical research within the literature base has also indicated similar findings of underrepresentation and/or disproportionality in large school districts across large, culturally diverse metropolitan areas (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; Jefferies & Silvernail, 2017; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020).

With the numerical data from the nation’s largest school district demonstrating a clear picture of underrepresentation and disproportionality, this further substantiates the available qualitative data: lived experiences from parents, children and school
stakeholders that indicate a system of barriers and discrimination. For example, in a series of cases filed against the city for civil rights violations, concerned parents retold their stories in the predominantly minority New York City public schools, noticing that “. . one of the classrooms is almost entirely white . . [and] told that this is the gifted class, and that admission to it is based on scoring above the 95th percentile on an IQ test” (New York City Bar Association, n.d., p. 1).

Using both the quantitative and qualitative data from school enrollment data and lived experiences from school stakeholders, there has been a substantial overhaul to discriminatory practices for Gifted education in NYC: contemporary plans from the newly-elected mayor indicated adding more seats to gifted Kindergarten and 3rd grade classes, and discontinuing the unfavorable citywide Gifted admissions test (which is administered once to students, at age four), and replaced “by a screening process in which pre-K teachers will nominate students” into a lottery system (Fadulu, 2022).

Orleans Parish as a Local Example

Recent reports from the New Schools for New Orleans (2022) indicate over ninety percent (92%) of students in Orleans Parish schools (charter and public) are students of color: further exploration of data provided by the Louisiana Department of Education (2022) demonstrates that Black students comprise the majority of the enrolled student populations across the Greater New Orleans area (see Table 1).

Table 2
Racial Demographics of New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, Spring 2022 Enrollments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total Student Population</th>
<th>Population of Students Enrolled identified as Black</th>
<th>% of Student Population identified as Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>47,648</td>
<td>16,604</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>43,875</td>
<td>33,962</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plaquemines 3,819 963 25.2%
St. Bernard 7,891 2,395 30.4%
St. Charles 9,478 3,061 32.3%
St. James 1,093 993 90.9%
St. John the Baptist 3,479 2,082 59.8%
St. Tammany 4,931 3,627 73.6%
Total 122,214 63,687 52.1%

Source: Enrollment Data: Student Attributes Feb 2022 Multi stats (Total by Site and School System). (Louisiana Department of Education, 2022)

As of date, there is no aggregate data examining the total population of Black American students identified for Gifted across the eight parishes that comprise the Greater New Orleans Area, nor data that demonstrates racial proportionality in comparison to total student populations. A brief 2017 report from the US Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection, or OCRDC (2017b) on Orleans Parish School District (OPSD) demonstrate that over half (68%) of the total number of identified Gifted students (N = 569) were identified as Black (n = 389); in comparison, nearly a quarter (n = 132; 23%) were identified as White, 3.8% Hispanic or Latinx (n = 22), 1.9% were identified as Asian (n = 11), , and under three percent for students identifying as Native American (n = 1), Multiracial (n = 14) or Pacific Islander (n = 0).

**Qualitative Perspectives on Underrepresentation in Orleans Parish.** On first glance at these numbers, it may appear that there is no issue of disproportionality, because almost all Gifted students are Black. However, the lived experiences and qualitative perspectives from school stakeholders differ greatly: much like New York City, there is a storied history of discrimination, barriers and inequities that openly contradict the numerical data. Yet, these stories remain largely unpublicized, spoken in
the shared knowledge and beliefs from residents, parents and students alike, that top-performing public schools with gifted education programming in New Orleans also happen to have large White student populations, which are only accessible through rigorous testing with exceptionally high standards. Even the testing process has been influenced by power and privilege, where gifted education is accessible via “two separate testing tracks [where] one is free, but more . . . difficult [and] the other operates on money and insider knowledge and offers a much greater chance of success” (Carr, 2008, p. 3).

Despite these conversations remaining private, there has been some documentation of these anecdotal experiences –indicating the dearth of Black faces present in gifted education– in academic spaces as well: in a qualitative study of past sociocultural experiences of three Black women enrolled in Gifted Education programs in Louisiana in the late 2000’s, Hayes-Wilson (2014, published dissertation) illustrated that the racial makeup of classes was a salient theme for these women. One participant recounted that the racial composition of her Gifted programming was “just very, very white. The few Black people . . . came out to maybe twenty [20]. . . And there was about a class of about roughly eight to one hundred per grade level of gifted students. It was majority White and we had a lot of Asian and Indian students as well . . .” (p. 83), pointing to a phenomenon of visible overrepresentation of White and Asian students, and underrepresentation of Black students; however, without quantitative data from this participant’s local school district, it is undetermined if any visible representation was disproportional.
Although the above participant experience shines as an exemplar of a commonly discussed national and local experiences, there is a lack of documented voices and perspectives from stakeholders; unlike New York City and other diverse large metropolitan areas, these lived experiences only live within private, or at least unpublicized conversations. In conjunction with the lack of recent aggregate data from New Orleans Metro area public schools, the available local quantitative and qualitative data of Black students in Gifted Education does not fully capture the degree of underrepresentation and disproportionality, where there is a lack of comparative, public quantitative data as well as qualitative data. This signals the need for researchers to better understand the current data, including proportionality data and relationship between the data and visible outcome of underrepresentation.

Factors That Impact Gifted Education Identification

The clear and continued disproportionality and underrepresentation of Black students in Gifted education has naturally prompted researchers to identify factors that either support or undermine successful entry into Gifted Education (Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Winsler et al., 2016). This section evaluates the literature base for identifying and exploring barriers and challenges, as well as determinants for successful Gifted Education entry, for Black students. Researchers emphasize identifying and describing factors and their impact on whether or not Black students can successfully enter Gifted Education programs (Ford, 2013, 2014, 2016; Ford et al., 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; Jolly, 2018; Winsler et al., 2016).

Recently, Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf and Winsler (2020) explored the relationship between various school-based variables (e.g., teacher ratings) and individual (e.g.,
academic performance, race) characteristics, and their impact on subsequent Gifted education identification for students. Using data from a large-scale longitudinal, racially diverse national study \((N = 39,213)\) of children enrolled in subsidized preschool programs between 2002 and 2006, the researchers examined the contemporary educational and life outcomes of the cohort. The sample was majority Hispanic, with over one-third of the participants identifying as Black/African American \((36.1\%)\). The longitudinal study demonstrated long-held observations of the disproportionality of Black students identified and enrolled GE, where nearly the majority \((89.2\%)\) of Black participants had not been identified as gifted between grades K-5, compared to Hispanic \((85.2\%)\) and White/Asian students \((71.2\%)\).

Analyses of the different variables indicated that GE entry skewed for female, higher SES, White and Asian participants, implicating those determinants for successful GE entry were related to participant race/ethnicity \((\Phi = 0.131, \ p < .001)\), and poverty status \((\Phi = -0.145, \ p < .001)\) and gender \((\Phi = -0.051, \ p < .001)\). When not controlled for race, effect sizes for the data and outcomes on teacher rating scales \((d = .50)\), measures of early school performance and readiness \((\text{ranging from .32 to .91 on various measures})\), standardized tests on reading \((d = .89)\) and math \((d = .72)\), and GPA \((d = 1.25)\), were also significant \((p < .001)\), implicating these distal and proximal factors of performance may be important for GE student determination and entry.

Other previous literature has also identified similar determinants, such as: parental income and involvement, community access, external recommendations, as well as individual academic success and score outcomes on academic achievement and IQ measures \((\text{Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Graves & Mitchell,})\).
2011; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Siegle et al., 2016; Young, Young & Ford, 2017). However, these different variables cut across different ecological systems, and have relationships with other variables (Ford et al., 2020). Thus, these variables prompt discourse around larger, systemic issues of access to gifted programs, identification for gifted programs, and attrition in gifted programs.

**Access for Black Students and Families**

Underrepresentation and disproportionality have been implicated as an outcome of the degree of access that Black American students and their families have towards gifted educational placements (Ford, 2010; Ford et al., 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Grissom & Redding, 2016). GE has often been characterized as a predominantly White space that is dominated and gate-kept by White, upper-middle class suburban families, some of whom may even seek to “preserve…system[s] that keeps virtually every child of Color out of advanced [gifted] classes” (Kohn, 1998, p. 570). The illustrated perspective demonstrates that access is limited to children and families from economically and socially marginalized and disenfranchised backgrounds (Grissom & Redding, 2016; Kohn, 1998). Determinants that can impact access has been implicated to cut across social, economic and cultural arenas, such as limited parent information and knowledge on gifted identification processes (Grissom & Redding, 2016), and lower likelihood of attending schools with gifted programs (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford, 2010; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Some researchers believe that historical biases in the foundation of Gifted education – where Giftedness is associated with Whiteness, privilege and access (Dai, 2020; Hatt, 2016; Jolly & Warne, 2019) – continue to exist in contemporary Gifted
education, thus limiting socioeconomic, sociocultural, and even physical access for Black families seeking for their children to be enrolled into Gifted programs (Bonner, 2000; Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2016). The inequity in access is apparent: for example, Crabtree, Richardson and Lewis (2019) demonstrated that Black students in a Southeastern school district were less likely to attend schools with Gifted programs, indicating a lack of physical access and proximity to Gifted education programs. Ultimately, researchers have considered the impact of sociocultural knowledge about Gifted programs. These factors may impact parental support and access, and subsequent successful GE eligibility and enrollment of Black students (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford et al., 2016; Goings & Ford, 2018; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020).

**Family Socioeconomic Status.** Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined as a family’s social class that is determined by household financial wealth and income, education, and parent(s) marriage status (APA, 2017b). Researchers posit that systemic inequities prompted by income and socioeconomic status (SES) are inevitably tied and confounded with racial inequities, bounded by histories of marginalization and oppression (Adams et al., 2015; Dai, 2020; Ford et al., 2020; Gillborn et al., 2018; Parker, 2019; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Stephens, 2020). General data examining the interplay of income and racial disparities demonstrate that Black families are often disparate in wealth, income, and educational experiences (APA, 2017b; Noel, 2018).

**Income.** Crabtree, Richardson, and Lewis (2019) conducted a descriptive, correlational study to understand how income impacted trends around racial disproportionality for Black students using archival data from a school district in
Southeastern United States ($N = 149,270$). The authors used free and reduced lunch (FRL) as criterion to categorize school populations as either having low prevalence (25% or less of students were identified as FRL) or high prevalence of poverty (> 75%). Within this study, authors concluded that Black students were less likely to be enrolled in Gifted education programs within the school district, where only approximately 3% of students at the elementary school level in enrolled in Gifted education were Black; this compares to demographic findings where 40% of gifted students were White.

The findings illustrate some relationship between indicated a clear spread of Gifted programs and identification for Gifted education available in low-poverty schools, with 18% of the student population at low-poverty schools being identified as Gifted; this compares to high-poverty schools, where only 2.4% of the student population was identified as Gifted. Demographic data indicated that Black students comprised over a third (39.6%) of the school districts’ student population, with majority attending high poverty schools, while a small population of Black students (11%) comprised the population at these low-poverty schools. The findings indicated a negative association between student SES (e.g., poverty level) and the number of available AP classes ($r = -0.61$) as well as Gifted education enrollment and participation ($r = -0.73$).

While the results identified a clear relationship between the socioeconomic status of a student population and enrollment in Gifted education, the authors recognize the limits of their descriptive study in understanding the relationship between race, socioeconomic status and subsequent disproportionality. Although implications from the above study implicate income as potential variable (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2020), Goings and Ford (2018) suggested that that there has been little examination of the
interaction of income and race on Gifted eligibility and enrollment, portrayed as “[minimal] discussion about the intersection of race and poverty” (p. 31). Despite historical and contemporary systemic inequities that often bind the relationship between race and income, the authors urged scholars to better understand the complexities of the relationship, to explicitly understand if racial background and socioeconomic status directly impact Gifted enrollment.

In an attempt to better understand this relationship and impact on Gifted enrollment, Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf and Winsler (2020) employed a hierarchical logistical model to provide predictions on the impact of different racial, educational and financial variables on the likelihood of Gifted identification and enrollment. For Black students, the findings indicated that higher SES was a significant determinant ($p < .001$), nearly increasing the likelihood of identification by 40%. While higher performance on school readiness motor, language and cognitive tasks were significant determinants ($p < .001$), they only marginally increased likelihood of identification between 1.2 and 1.4 percent. While this may implicate the role of socioeconomic status, an examination of moderation effects demonstrated that controlling for socioeconomic status (as well as academic success and language ability) did not increase the likelihood for Black students successful identification and entry into Gifted education programs; overall, authors demonstrated that family income may indirectly impact decisions around Gifted education, but do not mitigate whether or not a Black child is identified as Gifted.

**Parent Involvement & Knowledge.** Qualitative studies have illustrated strong relationships between dimensions of family income, subsequent access and knowledge of parents, and the impact these have for Black students navigating processes for Gifted
identification (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Sewell & Goings, 2019). Within the discourse of disproportionality and underrepresentation, researchers have been called to utilize of qualitative methodology to capture the perspectives and lived experiences of Black students and families with Gifted education (Ford et al., 2016, 2020). In a case study approach, Jeffries and Silvernail (2017) interviewed Black students at a geographically suburban high school in southeastern United States ($N = 1,975$). Demographics of the school indicated that approximately half of the student population was Black ($n = 1,030$), and about one-third received free and reduced lunch (36%); although the school was nationally recognized for their AP courses, at the time of the study, only 28 Black students (2.7%) were enrolled in AP classes, while 134 (13%) others were in honors classes. Considering the dearth of Black students involved in GE programming at the school, interviewed students were asked to report rationale behind their decisions to not participate; students were identified as being previously eligible for, and declining, participation in their school’s GE program.

One male Black student, Aaron, identified parental involvement as a significant factor that “[matters] all the time” (p. 64). Aaron illustrated parent involvement as a key factor for guidance on academic courses, indicating that he was often lost, and looked towards the parents of friends who characterized as being “…up here every week trying to make sure that they doing stuff, so I started listening to them, and they started telling me…this, this, and that. It was the first I’d heard of that…” (p. 64). Similar qualitative exploration of Black GE students demonstrated similar experiences of parent involvement, where Alex, a former GE student in New York City indicated that despite little knowledge, her parents demonstrated confidence in her abilities: “…[and] my
parents were like, Oh, you can test into this program and it’s an opportunity, so do it, and it worked out” (Sewell & Goings, 2019, p. 25).

Similarly, Tim, another Black, male student who previously declined AP courses but intends to re-enroll, indicated that his parents and family were major sources of support for continuing to pursue GE after a hiatus; he stated that “…everybody in my family has either gotten their diploma or worked on it. That’s my goal – to keep the tradition in my household going…” (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017, p. 70). Particularly, Tim named his father as an “indirect influence” (p. 70) who modeled behavior through “…working on his college degree…In my junior year, he finished, and I was like, if my dad could go to get a degree after he was out of the military, I could go ahead in high school and get my thing done…” (p. 70). Although previous studies demonstrate Black parents’ direct preference and influence for high educational attainment (Spera, Wentzel & Matto, 2009), Tim’s statement indicates the impact of parents’ indirect influences.

Although student Aaron indicated that lack of parental involvement spurred his own decision to not participate, he illustrated his own mother as only uninvolved due to job demands, indicating that “…my mom worked [a lot] at the time” (p. 64). This statement is poignant, in that it highlights the demands that income inequality and jobs may have for Black mothers, who bear the responsibility of being more likely to be source of primary household income while making lower wages than their White and Asian peers (Glynn, 2019). Generally, research has gleaned that parental involvement may mediate the relationship between family socioeconomic status (income, parent educational attainment) and academic outcomes and opportunities for their children (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010; Spera, Wentzel & Matto, 2009).
Gordon and Cui (2012) posit unique socialization practices around education that spur parent’s own educational attainment and beliefs about education (Gordon & Cui, 2012). However, some researchers challenge the assumption that Black American families are inherently unable to provide socioemotional support and enrichment for their children’s academic success, where Goings and Ford (2018) indicated that nearly forty percent \((n = 9)\) of the studies in their content analysis made:

“…recommendations [that] point…to factors related to students’ home lives, which perpetuates a deficit narrative about the families and communities…[they] come from rather than acknowledging that schools are often spaces where students of color are subjected to racism and racial microaggressions” (p. 32).

Latunde and Clark-Louque (2016) explored Black parents’ engagement with their K-12 children’s education \((N = 130)\). The findings indicated that between a sizeable minority of respondents indicated high engagement with school weekly (30%) or monthly (40%); over half of the respondents (60%) indicated they engaged in weekly educational activities outside of school, such as Girls Scouts, or going to the zoo or local museums. When asked why parent involvement mattered, one student reflected on teacher perceptions of Black families, stating that:

“…the more your parents are involved, the more your teachers take you seriously...When your parents are involved, your teachers want to take you more seriously, and you get into less trouble. When your parents are involved, everybody works with you more” (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017, p. 64).
This insight supports researcher perspectives around deficit-based assumptions that teachers may hold about the perspectives and choices made by Black families, implicating those teachers, parents, and many other stakeholders have on-going roles in the way Black students are identified and supported in navigating GE (Goings & Ford, 2018; Ford et al., 2020; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016).

Overall, discourse on disproportionality and underrepresentation has demonstrated that Black American students unequivocally experience difficulties with navigating successful entrance into Gifted education programs. Within this entrance and determination process, the existent literature has identified two distinct areas, or steps, that Black students must navigate for successful entrance: (1) access to GE programs, and (2) proper identification: in addition to high academic and cognitive ability, Black students must first be able to have social, economic, and/or cultural access to local gifted programs (Ford, 2010; Ford et al., 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Access to Gifted education not only requires students to meet Gifted criteria, but also for families to be knowledgeable of Gifted education benefits and eligibility criterion, as well as indirectly and/or directly involved and supportive in increasing their child’s eligibility (APA, 2017b; Goings & Ford, 2018; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010): Parent involvement (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017) and family income (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020) were identified as impacting Black students and their families’ ability to accurately navigate and initiate identification processes for Gifted education. The above literature demonstrates a frequent, strong association between the parent’s involvement, support, knowledge and
familiarity, and subsequent outcomes for student access to Gifted education, even when race is held constant. However, researchers have pointed out that there is a dearth of recent studies that explicitly examine the relationship between parent support and racial disparities in access to Gifted Education (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Goings & Ford, 2018).

**Evaluation Practices & Tools with Black Students**

Overall, the existent literature demonstrates that Black students unequivocally experience lowered likelihood of standardized identification for Gifted across both recommendations (Allen, 2017; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016) and evaluations (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Hodges et al., 2018; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020). Contemporary state trends define the Gifted identification process as having two relevant phases, with (1) recommendation, where nomination of gifted students are made within schools, by teachers and other school-based stakeholders, and (2) evaluation, where data on a students’ cognitive and academic abilities are collected, and triangulated by school psychologists, educational diagnosticians and other school stakeholders involved in the special education evaluation process (Bonner, 2000; Edwin & Worrell, 2013; Ford, 2016; Ford et al., 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016). These above processes of recommendation and evaluation also entail the involvement of school-based stakeholders, particularly teachers and school psychologists9 (Whiting & Ford, 2009; Ford et al., 2016; Stephens, 2020).

Practitioners have continued to advocate for multimodal Gifted evaluations for Gifted Education – such as classroom observations, multiple teachers, students and other

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9 See section **Role of Stakeholders in Gifted Determinations** for in-depth coverage of roles of school professionals
adults as sources of information, and review of academic history (Dai, 2020; Ford et al., 2018; McBee & et al., 2016; Worrell et al., 2019). However, the predominance of this two-step process has demonstrated subjective nominations and evaluations that (a) overemphasize scores and (b) reflect biases about Black students’ aptitude and intelligence (Ford et al., 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; NAGC, 2015; Robinson, 2017; Stephens, 2020). Researchers have identified potential biases in the recommendation and evaluation process, pointing towards the overreliance on cognitive and achievement scores, and errors and biases of school-based recommenders and other informed administrators, such as teachers and school psychologists (Bonner, 2000; Ford et al., 2016; Ford & Whiting, 2008; Grissom & Redding, 2016).

**Use of Cognitive and Achievement Tools.** For Black students, discrepancies for Gifted identification demonstrated deficits when using traditional models of identification: Hodges and colleagues (2018) performed a meta-analysis of existent literature that explored identification rates of underrepresented, marginalized racial and ethnic minorities, as well as methodologies for identifying students in GE ($N = 54$). The authors identified risk ratio ($RR$) as the most appropriate way to identify effect sizes, where the value $RR$ compares the number of identified Black Gifted students to White and Asian students, and an averaged risk ratio is interpreted as the statistical probability that Black students had for Gifted identification. Significant findings ($p < .001$) indicated that Black students were nearly a quarter ($RR = .28, SE = 0.03$) less likely to be identified as gifted in comparison to White and Asian students, regardless of the identification method used.
The findings demonstrated that the use of IQ scores lowered Black students’ likelihood of GE identification to 21%, and on achievement measures, to 16%. In comparison to the overall likelihood (28%), this demonstrates a lowered likelihood of gifted identification for Black students when specifically employing cognitive and achievement models of identification. The implication is that traditional measures of giftedness may not appropriately capture the abilities of Black students, indicating an overreliance on potentially biased verbal cognitive (Ford, 2005; Franklin, 2007; Graves & Mitchell, 2011; Suzuki & Quizon, 2016), and standardized academic (Ford, 2016; Ford et al., 2016, 2018; Siegle et al., 2016) assessments in the decision-making for Black students’ identification for GE.

Cognitive and intelligence assessments have been identified as biased; historically, IQ and achievement scores have been employed to make unfair educational assessments and placements for Black students (Fish, 2001; Ford, 2005; Ford et al., 2016; Franklin, 2007; Graves Jr, 2009; Jackson & Jackson, 2005; Jackson & Weidman, 2004). The underperformance of Black students on standardized measures is well documented in the literature with many researchers pointing towards inherent biases in standardized cognitive and educational assessments (Ford, 2005; Graves & Mitchell, 2011; Turkheimer, Harden & Nisbett, 2017; Valencia, 2010). Some psychologists posit that the exclusion of culture-specific definitions of intelligence and achievement in gifted evaluation may partially explain these persistent score gaps for Black students (Ford, 2005; Hodges et al., 2018).

The prevalence of standard cognitive and achievement assessments in gifted evaluation processes is indicative of the lack of cultural-responsiveness in tool use for
educational purposes (Cao, Jung & Lee, 2017; Ford, 2016; Ford et al., 2016, 2018; Hodges et al., 2018; NAGC, 2015). Suzuki, Short and Lee (2011) posit that conceptualizations of intelligence overemphasize “value laden[ed]” (p. 274) executive functioning skills and ignore alternative definitions of intelligence. In this perspective, concepts of intelligence vary from culture to culture: using static definitions based on one culture may increase likelihood of measurement invariance, where measures are not accurately measuring the same concept across different groups (Byrne et al., 2008; Greenfield, 2000; Hall-Nagayama, 2017; Perry et al., 2008). Researchers often have proposed that elimination of verbal items may help to ameliorate the impact of sociocultural and environmental factors, such as language and learned knowledge (Ford, 2005; Melikyan, Agranovich & Puente, 2019; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013; Suzuki, Short & Lee, 2011; Suzuki & Quizon, 2016).

However, non-verbal assessment tools produce similar racial and sociocultural score outcome gaps produced by verbal measures. For example, when controlling for income and education, Central African schoolchildren performed poorer on non-verbal attention and executive functioning tasks compared to White peers in the United States (Rosselli & Ardilla, 2003); authors illustrate that non-verbal measures are not free from the load of culture and context in gestural instructions and students’ ability to engage with examiners. Similarly, even when Black students were assessed using non-verbal estimates of cognitive ability, Hodges and colleagues (2018) found that Black students’ likelihood of identification either stayed the same on the Raven Matrices ($RR = .21$) or marginally increased on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test ($RR = .23$) when compared to verbal measures of cognitive ability ($RR = .21$). Thus, the above data clearly indicates
that disproportionality of Black students in GE may be linked to the identification process, where Black students are severely impacted by common frameworks and methods for gifted identification (Ford, 2005; Ford et al., 2016; Graves & Mitchell, 2011).

The under-identification of Black students continues to proliferate, as contemporary frameworks for identification still emphasize intelligent quotient scores as proxy for cognitive ability and achievement scores (Ford et al., 2016; NCES, 2015; Stephens, 2020), and rely on teachers and school psychologists that may lack of adequate knowledge on gifted student identification and rely on personal judgements (Allen, 2017; Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford, 2016; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016).

**Impact of Eurocentrism.** Even more troubling, researchers have illustrated that the current demographics of school-based stakeholders are overwhelmingly White. The Pew Research Center (2021) gleaned that approximately 79% of elementary school teachers and administrators identified as White American in the 2017-2018 school year. For school psychologists, these figures are similar: Walcott and colleagues (2021) conducted a national survey of members of the National School Psychologist Association (NASP) and found that majority of respondents \( N = 1,308 \) identified as White or Caucasian \( n = 1,123 \). Particularly in Louisiana, the presence of teachers of color varies from parish to parish: New Schools for New Orleans (2020) demonstrated that in the 2018-19 school year, Orleans Parish boasted an educator workforce was majority teachers of color (61%), a close fit for a diverse student population that primarily is made of BIPOC children (91%). However, neighboring Jefferson Parish too has a diverse
student population where three-quarters of students identify as students of color, but nearly a third (37%) of the educator workforce identifies as such.

The illustrated disparities have prompted scholars to ponder the implications of primarily White authority figures making these decisions about students of color: While this may not imply some intentional exercise of biases among these school-stakeholders, Proctor and colleagues (2017) indicated that the impact of Eurocentric privilege and dominance on stakeholders’ positioning and power often goes unnamed and unchallenged. Using Critical Race Theory and other theories that call for understanding the foundations of education, researchers purport that White stakeholders may lack awareness in how their Eurocentric, culturally-biased values and judgements may impact students (Bonner, 2000; Ford et al., 2020; Proctor, Williams, Scherr & Li, 2017), where some may bring their own subjective values, beliefs and experiences into their objective assessment of Black students for Gifted identification. Bonner (2000) described this phenomenon as a performance of Eurocentric values and norms: in addition to demonstrate academic rigor and aptitude, Black students are additionally tasked with performing in alignment with “…subjective parameters of White, middle-class society” (p. 647), where visibly Black students who do not fit the cultural standards of their “[White] teachers will go unidentified, regardless of their intellectual abilities” (p. 647). Thus, the described phenomena entails that a student’s Blackness and performance of Eurocentric standards – not their academic ability – is evaluated and cannot be mitigated by navigating socioeconomic and sociocultural barriers.

Additionally, the literature demonstrated proper student identification as another step for successful GE entry. Existent literature evidence that disproportionality and
underrepresentation of Black students at the local, state and national level may be due to practices of under-identification (Bonner, 2000; Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018). Under-identification has been characterized as occurring at two junctures, where Black students are not (1) receiving adequate and fair recommendations and referrals (Whiting & Ford, 2009; Ford et al., 2016; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016; Stephens, 2020), and/or (2) are subjected to formal gifted evaluation practices that over rely on IQ and achievement scores (Ford et al., 2016; Franklin, 2007; Hodges et al., 2018; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020).

Within the two steps of the identification process, both teachers and school psychologists are implicated as having roles: teachers are usually responsible for referrals and nominations (Allen, 2017; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016), while school psychologists are trained clinical administrators of psychoeducational evaluations (APA, 2014, 2019; Canter, 2003; Ford et al., 2016; NASP, 2010). Within the purview of both school-based stakeholder roles, researchers have indicated that lack of knowledge and formal training on gifted Black students, and reliance on subjective, personal beliefs, may introduce biases to the identification process (Allen, 2017; Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ford, 2016; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016).

With racial demographics of teachers and school psychologists’ skewing overwhelmingly White (Department of Education, 2016; Walcott, Charvat, McNamara & Hyson, 2016), researchers have called for these stakeholders to be aware of their own Eurocentric value-laden perceptions and judgements, and the potential damage this
may have for Black students (Bonner, 2000; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Proctor et al., 2017). Additionally, for school psychologists, there is the added layer of engaging with potentially biased tools and theory. Often mandatory employment of biased cognitive and achievement measurement tools also is deemed to have potential impact on Black students’ identification (Ford, 2005, 2016; Ford et al., 2016, 2018; Graves & Mitchell, 2011; Siegle et al., 2016; Turkheimer, Harden & Nisbett, 2017; Valencia, 2010).

While teachers and school psychologists have been implicated for their respective roles in GE identification for Black students, researchers often point out a continued need for literature that examines stakeholder roles and perspectives, specifically around their biases and judgements. Although researchers have stepped up to meet previously indicated literary dearth on the impact of teachers and school psychologists (Ford et al., 2016), there are continued calls to now integrate their qualitative perspectives in order to understand how they conceptualize, engage and assess Black gifted learners (Ford et al., 2020; Stephens, 2020).

Thus, research must acknowledge this gap through continued qualitative study of how biases, judgements and training may impact how teachers and school psychologists engage in the identification of gifted Black students. In understanding the engagement of school stakeholders in GE evaluation processes, the following section explores existent literature on where and how teachers and school psychologists are implicated as distal variables in the GE identification process with Black students.

**Roles of Stakeholders in GE Identification**

Existent findings have persistently indicated that Black students face barriers in the pursuit and navigation of GE: they face a lowered likelihood of proper identification
for GE from teacher recommendations and nominations (Allen, 2017; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016) and psychoeducational evaluations (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Hodges et al., 2018; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020). Louisiana law indicates that referrals, screenings and evaluations for Gifted must be conducted by a multidisciplinary team of qualified professionals (Bulletin 1508 § 901.A), which indicates the salience of other school-based professionals in their role in Gifted evaluations, such as administration, educational diagnosticians, and social workers. However, current literature has mainly focused on the roles of teachers and school psychologists: as school-based stakeholders, their capacity and power to nominate and evaluate potential gifted students is often recognized by evaluation teams (Whiting & Ford, 2009; Ford et al., 2016; Stephens, 2020). The following sections examines empirical studies that have discussed how teachers and school psychologists, and the abilities and tools that they employ, have impacted outcomes the identification of Black students for GE.

**Role of Teachers**

With evidence that outcome scores from standardized measures of cognitive ability and academic achievement may not be the best indicators of giftedness for Black students (Ford, 2005; Franklin, 2007; Graves & Mitchell, 2011; Hodges et al., 2018;), researchers have encouraged discourse on alternative sources of data for gifted identification, such as qualitative reports and referrals from teachers (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Ford et al., 2018, 2020; Winsler et al., 2013). Using descriptive statistics of archival data from the College Board, Whiting and Ford (2009) demonstrated that Black students’ navigation of the GE process may be heavily reliant on teachers, where
over half of respondents (58.7%) indicated AP participation relied on teacher recommendations. Under many state and local agency special educational mandates, teacher referrals and recommendations are preferred, and even required for student nominations for GE (Bonner, 2000; Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019).

Researchers point out that lack of equitable access and knowledge may prevent families from exercising their executive power (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Given this power of nomination and referrals, researchers have illustrated a common thread among qualitative studies on gifted Black students: under-referral and lack of support from teachers (Ford et al., 2008; Sewell & Goings, 2019). In order to explore the impact of teacher nominations and referrals for the identification of gifted Black students, Grissom and Redding (2016) used data from a nationally representative, longitudinal data set tracking children’s educational outcomes from Kindergarten to 8th grade ($N = 14,280$). Using a logistical regression model, the authors demonstrated that when controlling for scores on standardized achievement measures of reading and math, Black students with Black teachers were predicted to be three times more likely to be nominated and/or referred for GE ($OR = 3.02$, $p < .001$). In comparison, Black students with non-Black teachers were only nearly 25% as likely as their White peers to be nominated when controlled for scores.

These inequities in Black student nomination and referrals have led researchers to examine what prompts under-referrals: some researchers theorize that teachers inexperienced with established gifted criterion often rely on personal knowledge, which may include potential implicit cultural and racial biases (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford, 2016; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008).
Researchers have explored the role of teachers’ epistemology of intelligence, cognitive ability and race, examining for potential implicit and explicit biases. Some researchers have theorized that biases often remain implicit, where teachers may explicitly endorse diversity and cultural responsivity in gifted assessment, but still express problematic sentiments, such as colorblindness (deWet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford et al., 2016; Graham, 2016; Graves & Mitchell, 2011).

Ford and colleagues (2016) posit that implicit prejudices, microaggressions and micro-invalidations regarding intelligence and cognitive ability may influence decision-making for GE nominations. In a qualitative study, Graham (2016, published dissertation) demonstrated that teachers commonly indicated “[only] an experienced teacher can tell if a child is gifted” (p. 81), underscoring sentiments that teachers need specialty training to in order to briefly assess children for nomination. However, over half of teacher participants indicated they themselves had no formal training for gifted assessment and relied on personal beliefs for decision making.

Similarly, approximately three-fourths of the teachers indicated (1) personal belief of existent cultural biases on cognitive/intelligence measurement tools, and subsequently (2) using cultural responsivity to define and examine students for giftedness. However, one teacher participant expressed implicit expectations for students from specific socioeconomic backgrounds, expressing that student with more risk factors should not be considered; this teacher stated that:

If you have...a student of low socioeconomic status that does not turn in their homework...[doesn’t] perform well, and [has] an IQ test [that] is average....I just...do not believe that child should receive gifted education.
Because they are not showing...that they can [even] perform within our system (Graham, 2016, unpublished dissertation, pp. 75-76).

deWett and Gubbins (2011) found that majority of White teachers (<75%) explicitly expressed beliefs in the presence of cultural biases in gifted identification tools, the need for expansion of definitions of giftedness, and culturally responsive tools and techniques. However, diversity of school context ($F = .654, p = .058$) and teacher experience ($F = 1.83, p = .059$) were not found to be statistically significant factors in teachers’ beliefs. Similarly, Allen (2019) demonstrated that majority of teachers indicated issues with evaluation tools, narrow conceptualizations of giftedness and limited access to information on gifted programming. Ultimately, these mixed findings point towards potential biases teachers may have for Black students and require additional exploration through both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

**Role of School Psychologists**

School psychologists have also been identified as responsible for evaluating nominated students for special education programming, including GE (Ford et al., 2016); for example, a descriptive study from Rossen (2019) revealed that approximately 90% of full-time school psychologists spend “quite a bit” of time administering psychoeducational evaluations. Generally, school psychologists are an integral part of educational systems that often make lasting educational decisions for all youth (APA, 2020; NASP, 2004; NASP, 2010). With trained knowledge of psychological assessment tools and cognitive theory, school psychologists are mandated as qualified examiners for special education evaluation, including evaluations for GE (Ford et al., 2016; NASP, 2010).
Similar to teachers, researchers indicate that school psychologists can also be susceptible to implicit biases and clinical judgement errors that may impact outcomes for Black students nominated for GE; particularly, school psychologists’ language, perceptions of examinees and other biases can impact the validity of scores (Ford et al., 2016; Hall, 2015; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013). Generally, school psychologists as test administrators are expected to use their clinical judgement and other professional skills to appropriately query, probe, score, interpret and disseminate information on needed assessment tools. Even within standardized training, test administrator errors can occur and impact the validity of scores: in a descriptive study, Kaufman, Raiford & Coalson (2016) found that most common administration errors are failure to query and failure to award appropriate points to an examinee’s response on the cognitive assessment measure the *Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fifth Edition (WISC-V)*. However, there is limited research on test administrator skills and use of cultural competency, and score outcomes and practical implications.

Researchers have posited that shifts in clinical practice paradigms for school psychologists may impact the knowledge base and training opportunities in gifted evaluations (Ford et al., 2016; Worrell & Erwin, 2011; Robinson, Pfeiffer & Taylor, 2011): particularly, school psychologists have moved away from “test and place” paradigms to provide school-based mental health services for students’ experiencing academic, socioemotional and behavioral deficits (NASP, 2010; Rossen, 2019; Wright et al., 2017). However, this lack of focus on GE may leave school psychologists without adequate formal and informal experiences and training for assessing gifted students, as well as identifying giftedness in a culturally responsive way.
In a national sample of school psychologists ($N = 300$), Robinson, Pfeiffer and Taylor (2011) found that over one-third of respondents (37%) reported no formal training in the theory, assessment, identification and characteristics of gifted and talented students. Almost all respondents (94%) indicated that their training programs spent “little to no time” (p. 790) training them for GE assessment and evaluation. Additionally, majority (75%) of the school psychologist respondents were non-doctoral level, including masters-level and specialist-level. Despite little focus in training, over a quarter of respondents (29%) indicated opportunities to complete a psychoeducational evaluation for potential GE, where nearly a quarter of respondents (23.7%) indicated high frequency of evaluations, completing at least one gifted evaluation per month.

Chi-square analyses revealed that masters-level and doctoral-level school psychologists participated in GE evaluations in the same frequency ($\chi^2 = 1.372, p > .05$); however, there were statistically significant differences in the level of knowledge and training between non-doctoral and doctoral-level school psychologists ($\chi^2 = 8.938, p < .05$), indicating that doctoral-level school psychologists posit greater familiarity with theory and concepts related to GE. The findings largely demonstrate that majority school psychologists are largely non-doctoral level and have received little to no training and learning opportunities for GE, yet a sizeable minority participate in GE assessments and evaluations.

Researchers illustrate the ethical implications for school psychologists’ engaging in gifted evaluation practices, where inadequate training opportunities and knowledge may implicate inappropriate and inaccurate administration, scoring and interpretation of data (APA, 2017a; Ford et al., 2008). This would implicate that inadequate training may
have adverse impacts on score outcomes for Black students in gifted evaluations, where unfamiliarity with theories of giftedness, and standard assessment tools, as well as implicit biases can impact score validity (Ford et al., 2016; Hall, 2015; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013). However, there is a dearth of empirical literature that explicitly examine school psychologists’ purported test administration skills, perceptions and knowledge of cultural responsiveness in gifted evaluations (Ford et al., 2016).

**Summary of Literature Review**

There are multitude factors that impact Black American students’ navigation of GE, where various barriers inherently filter Black students and their families from attaining (1) proper access, knowledge, and support, and (2) equitable student identification through fair recommendation and evaluation. Some barriers can be conceptualized as distal, systemic factors and family characteristics that impact Black youth, such as: foundational racial biases in Gifted evaluation practices (Ford, 2013, 2014; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Robinson, 2017), subsequent student performance on measures of IQ (Hodges et al., 2018), as well as parental financial resources (Crabtree et al., 2019; Goings & Ford, 2018; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Ricciardi et al., 2020), and knowledge and support (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010; Sewell & Goings, 2019).

Many of the other factors were related to field paradigms and school stakeholder decision-making, such as the procedural focus on IQ and achievement scores (Ford et al., 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; NAGC, 2015), teacher recommendation and nominations (Grissom & Redding, 2016; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler,

Overall, the discourse largely places the focus of disproportionality on issues related to family access, referrals and subsequent successful GE program entry; with this narrow focus, there may be less critical understanding of the additional ways in which Black students encounter systemic barriers, particularly within the identification process. The literature also demonstrates a relative lack of (a) in-depth data that examines descriptive data (e.g., correlational relationships) of the identified variables for gifted Black students in school districts (Ford, 2013), as well as (b) explicit focus on the roles of teacher and school psychologist knowledge, training and biases, and (c) the practices that the above stakeholders employ in gifted student identification.

While the reviewed literature provided a wealth of descriptive, quantitative data on racial proportionality and underrepresentation, the descriptive data can only represent the specific district in which the sample was pulled; this lack of national and regional data was apparent in the lack of literature examining Louisiana and New Orleans MSA. With a unique, storied history, this gap in the literature requires an examination of the demographic data across eight parishes in the New Orleans MSA. Additionally, the reviewed empirical literature lacks appropriate qualitative inquiry on the practices of school stakeholders, and other determinants. Additionally, the empirical literature also does not take explicit theoretical frameworks to address the sociocultural history and
traditions. The dissertation research seeks to address these gaps through a mixed-methods approach.
III. Methods
Considering the gaps in the existent literature, this study sought to further explore the national trend of continued disproportionality and underrepresentation, through identifying and describing the various factors that may be an impetus for Gifted eligibility for Black students. Specifically, the literature addressed significant gaps in describing the phenomena of underrepresentation within Louisiana and the New Orleans metropolitan area; with a history as one of the few states that mandates the identification of Gifted students using IDEA (2004) criterion, the collection of quantitative and qualitative data about Gifted Education demographics, practices and concerns stands as an area of interest.

In this study, three primary research questions were formulated: (1) what is the current representation of Gifted students who are identified as Black/African American in the New Orleans metro area, (2) what factors describe and impact Gifted identifications for Black families, and (3) how does the knowledge, experiences and practices of school personnel impact the eligibility and outcomes for Black students? The dissertation incorporates a mixed sequential qualitative dominant design across four major phases (see Figure 1): public, demographic data from the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (OCRDC) was analyzed to produce local, descriptive data (quantitative) on the representation of Black students enrolled in Gifted education across the New Orleans metropolitan area. In examining parish trends, quantitative data was used as a guide for participant selection as well as to inform questions for focus groups and individual interviews. Both focus groups and individual interviews examined the practices, knowledge and perceptions of local school personnel who participate in the recommendation and evaluation of students for Gifted programs.
Rationale for Mixed-Methods Design

Recommendations from previous literature have demonstrated a need for research that: (1) identifies novel and/or confirms previously identified factors (e.g., SES, cognitive and achievement outcome scores) that may impact GE determination outcomes for Black students (Crabtree et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2016, 2020; Goings & Ford, 2018), and (2) explores the perceptions and practices that school stakeholders’ employ in gifted identification processes for Black students in school districts (Whiting & Ford, 2009; Ford et al., 2016; McBee, Peters & Miller, 2016; Stephens, 2020).

Although the literature describes a breadth of potential proximal and distal factors, the different practices and demographics across the LEAs in previous literature samples may differ in their criterion for defining and evaluating giftedness. With such a unique educational context, previous quantitative and qualitative literature may not accurately depict gifted Black students in the New Orleans Metro Area: the review of literature demonstrates a dearth of quantitative data demonstrating racial disproportionality, and qualitative literature that describes the experiences and practices of school-based personnel and other stakeholders. Thus, solely using *a priori* assumptions from previous literature may not appropriately capture the phenomena of disproportionality of gifted Black students across the New Orleans Metropolitan area.

Considering these gaps in the literature, the research questions seek to identify and understand these distal and proximal factors through integrating descriptive statistics of the local data and qualitative inquiry on teachers and school psychologists’ practices. Ultimately, the use of a mixed-methods design would provide data that may generate theory for *what* factors impact student identification, as well as information on *how* and
why these factors may impact the identification, eligibility and final GE determination for Black students in New Orleans Metropolitan area public schools.

**Research Design**

The research utilized a mixed sequential qualitative dominant design, which describes a study where either qualitative or quantitative data “...[is] collected in each phase...[and is] used in the planning of the following phase[s], with the qualitative phases carrying the most weight” (Leech & Onwuegbunzie, 2009, p. 272). Thus, the following phases of the research design examines quantitative data to better understand the racial demographics and potential disproportionality within the public school systems contained in the New Orleans metropolitan area, with a sequential qualitative component to better understand perspectives on disproportionality.

Statistically significant findings from these quantitative data informed the recruitment and selection of participants, as well as standardized questions for both qualitative data collection (focus groups and interviews) with stakeholders. Subsequent focus groups and interviews with identified participants provided qualitative data on the experiences of identified school personnel. Together, all the elicited data was be analyzed and interpreted for the discussion.
**Qualitative Methodological Framework**

The qualitative research used a Thematic Analysis framework to conduct qualitative inquiry within the focus groups and interviews, as well as analyze the elicited data. Braun and Clarke (2006) summarized some of the key assumptions of thematic analyses where: (1) participants are selected based on their knowledge, expertise and experiences with a target phenomenon, and then (2) data is elicited from identified individuals. Once data is elicited, (3) meaningful descriptions of data are generated through inductive coding of participants’ narratives, called open coding. Then, (6) researchers identify relationships between themes and patterns from the inductive codes, and begin to generate (6) subsequent theory on a phenomenon is generated. Thus, this research framework used elicited data (using focus groups and interviews) from stakeholders who have experiences in Gifted identification to inform data interpretation, and derive theory for the existent phenomena of disproportionality and underrepresentation of Black students in Gifted education.
**Data Collection Tools.** Qualitative data was collected from school personnel (participants) using two methods: focus groups and interviews. Both methods were conducted to elicit novel data on the specific perspectives and practices of stakeholders, allowing participants to provide information on the contextual and cultural beliefs and practices associated with Gifted Education (Mayoh & Onwuegbunzie, 2015). Because recruitment was envisioned to entail diverse, multidisciplinary school personnel from different parishes, school systems, and backgrounds, the ideal goal was that open-ended discussion would elicit organic answers and perspectives, and potentially reach additional topics that the research did not originally formulate; in this case, the focus group interviewer appropriately probed and allowed more discussion of these topics.

Within these small, ninety minute (90) sessions, participants were given broad questions that are aimed to elicit thoughts, experiences, and beliefs around Gifted Education at the national, state, and local level, potential biases, identification practices, and profession-specific training and experiences. In order to capture the raw perspectives of participants, broad opening questions, questions targeting concepts from the literature, and targeted culture-specific questions would be employed for data saturation (see Appendix A for examples). Originally, individual interviews were planned to follow up on specific perspectives, experiences, and beliefs brought up by participants; however, due to low participant attrition during focus groups, the researcher converted two focus groups to individual interviews with respective sole participants that attended. The same questions that were used in the focus groups, were also used for individual interviews.

**Participants**

*Recruitment*
Overall, nineteen individuals were recruited to be participants in the study, through various forms of recruitment, including Louisiana School Psychology Listserv, emails to school communities, as well as the researcher asking participants directly for their participation. Based on the targeted criterion for enrollment, participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling, where all interested individuals who (1) completed a brief, online interest form (see Appendix B) and (2) met eligibility criterion were automatically enrolled into the potential participant pool, where they were informed of upcoming focus group dates and times. In total, four \((N = 4)\) participants were enrolled into the study and participated in the qualitative portion of the study.

**Phases of Recruitment.** According to best practices in qualitative data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 1984; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Gueterman et al., 2019), participant recruitment in this study was a flexible, iterative process informed by data saturation – or if data does not elicit any new codes. Although some scholars indicate a preference for focus groups and interviews having a set number of elicited voices (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016), data saturation is lauded as the ideal indicator for sufficient participant selection, and thus was used within this study.

Three distinct phases of recruitment and enrollment were conducted over the period of the study: (1) September through November 2021, (2) December 2021 through February 2022, and (3) March 2022 through April 2022. These recruitment periods reflected the need for more data to reach saturation; for example, in phase one and two, several participants indicated interest but did not attend focus groups (see Attrition section for more information on total number of enrolled participants). Overall, nineteen individuals were either directly or indirectly (via advertisement, listserv or flyer)
identified by the researcher for potential enrollment as participants. Enrollment was not verified until an individual attended a focus group session and provided written consent to participation in the study; based on this definition, four (n = 4) individuals were able to enroll and participate in the study.

Attrition. There were multiple ascribed difficulties with the attrition of interested individuals, and their subsequent enrollment in the study. Participants were asked about their general availability and best times to participate in the focus groups; due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, focus groups were offered via a virtual format on the HIPAA and IRB-compliant platform WebEx to increase interested individuals’ ability to engage in focus groups.

To maintain flexibility, interested individuals were invited to the focus group calendar event and asked to respond with their attendance (RSVP if they could attend, or decline the invite if they were unable to attend). Interested individuals were alerted of focus group dates and times a week prior, and were sent reminders three days prior. In total, six focus groups were offered throughout the September 2021 – April 2022 time period, with three groups resulting in no-shows of all confirmed interested individuals, and two groups having incomplete enrollment of all confirmed attendees; only one group had both confirmed individuals attend and enroll in the study.
Eligibility Criterion. Eligibility criterion was established to solicit a wide range of participants with diverse expertise, knowledge, familiarity with the different New Orleans parish schools as well as Gifted education. Potential participants must have been (1) eighteen years or older, and possessed (2) experience working at a public school in one of the eight New Orleans Metro area parishes. Additionally, potential participants were asked to submit their contact and demographic information, detailing their identified race, gender, age, years of experience, educational attainment, if they had formal training for their role.

Participant Demographics and Information

Of the nineteen individuals who were directly or indirectly recruited for the study, nine individuals indicated interest through the online demographic and contact form, which included a vast representation of identified school personnel, including educators and teachers. Although many indicated their interest, ultimately four individuals (N = 4) were enrolled into the study. Two participants attended and engaged in a focus group with each other, while the other two participants engaged in individual interviews.
All participants indicated relevant experience conducting and participating in Gifted evaluations \((n = 4)\). In terms of roles, three participants identified as professional health service psychologists \((n = 3)\), with two identifying as school psychologists and one as a clinical child psychologist; one participant identified as an educational diagnostician \((n = 1)\). In terms of experiences and training, all participants \((n = 4)\) indicated receiving formal educational training for their role and indicated some level of post-baccalaureate education for their role holding doctoral degrees; the median time spent in their professional roles was five years..

Unique to this study, is the represented identity diversity that lends these traditionally marginalized and underrepresented voices to the qualitative data: all participants identified as femme-presenting individuals (e.g., ‘Female’) \((n = 4)\) – which reflects current demographics in the above represented fields. However, all of the participants identified as Black and/or African American \((n = 4)\): within this racial identity, participants openly discussed their strong cultural background and identity as Black women who are tied to the New Orleans metropolitan area. For example, three participants \((n = 3)\) indicated being a native to New Orleans, and former pupils of Orleans and Jefferson Parish public school system.

One participant indicated being a native of Baton Rouge, but having immense professional and personal experience living, working and raising a family in the New Orleans metro area for over a decade. From this perspective, all participants indicated thus having both intimate \emph{and} professional knowledge of the cultural history and nuances of education in the New Orleans MSA from their own experiences navigating the system. Additionally, all four participants stressed the importance and cultural ties to their
heritage, with all participants indicated that they received part of their secondary education at a local Historically Black College and/or University (HBCU), where they were involved in campus life, and volunteer service to the local Black religious, social and educational communities.

**Data Analysis**

**Quantitative Data**

As previously stated, there is a lack of organized, quantitative demographic data identifying current racial representation of Gifted students, as well as have acknowledged that a comparison between aggregate numbers and percentages will not easily nor adequately capture disproportionality and underrepresentation (Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019a). Subsequently, scholars have turned their focus on a *representation index (RI)*: Originally developed by Yoon & Gentry (2009, as cited in Peters et al., 2019a), a Representation Index (RI) provides a static ratio to assess whether a target population is underrepresented or overrepresented in Gifted Education. It is calculated as:

\[
RI = \frac{\% \text{ of Gifted from Target Demographic in District}}{\% \text{ Total Population of Target Group in District}}
\]

Representation Index provides more contemporary, parish-by-parish information on representation data and racial demographics for students identified as Gifted in the United States.

This study used publicly available data sets from two sources: the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Data Collection (2017) and the Louisiana Department of Education (2018). The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Data Collection (2017) is a federal project that contains district total numbers of students identified for gifted, and is organized by race/ethnicity,
including Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous American, Non-Hispanic White, and Multiracial (two races or more); researchers used the recently available data set (data collected in Fall of 2017-18 academic year) for the eight parishes within the New Orleans Metropolitan area. The Louisiana Department of Education provides updated figures on demographics of school enrollments across all parishes within the study; this study examined the October 2017 enrollments to coincide with 2017 enrollments counted by the OCRDC.

In order to calculate the ascribed formula for representation indices, the researchers compiled the following available parish data from above sources by: (1) total school enrollments, (2) total school enrollments for students who identify by race (Black, Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous or Native American, Multiracial, and White), (3) total number of identified students enrolled in Gifted programs, and (4) number of Gifted enrollments by race.

**Qualitative Data**

The focus groups (n = 1) and individual interview sessions (n = 2) provided approximately three transcripts that were then transcribed and coded and qualitative analysis. Following thematic analysis, the data elicited from focus groups and interviews was analyzed through the following process: (1) transcription, (2) initial open and secondary focused coding, (3) categorization, and (4) axial coding.

**Transcription.** All qualitative inquiry sessions were recorded via the IRB-compliant platform WebEx; using the platform’s auto-transcribe feature, available chat transcripts were saved. To account for any inaccuracies in the automatic transcription, a
trained research assistant reviewed all recordings to provide an accurate transcription of the sessions, as well as de-identified the participants.

**Coding.** Coding is a process for narrating and describing qualitative data, where researchers use words or short phrases that “symbolically assigns” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3) or summarizes a meaning to transcribed data. In other words, codes are short-hand form for describing salient events, thoughts, beliefs and other descriptions of the phenomena that came from participant responses to focus group and interview questions. Ultimately, researchers used coding to build a coherent narrative among the different elicited data, allowing for more concrete comparisons and conceptualizations of the existent phenomena of disproportionality in Gifted Education.

*Open and focused coding.* Open coding was the initial step for analyzing each transcript. Open coding is a process in which transcripts are read line-by-line, or paragraph-by-paragraph, and the researcher generates an open code that summarizes or captures the intended meaning of the words. Once all transcripts had undergone initial coding by the primary researcher, both researcher and a research assistant used focused coding as a secondary coding process: in this process, the researcher and assistant refined and condense similar codes within the transcript. Focus codes provided each transcript with a finalized list of codes identified within the data.

*Categorization.* For this study, categorization included a comparison of all the focus codes across all transcripts. In this step, the researcher and research assistant identified similar codes across the data, and placed them within broad categories. For example, codes like “*School doesn’t have resources for GE*” and “*We don’t have the...*
money for it” may belong to a similar category that focuses on system-level fiscal issues for supporting GE in general10.

**Axial coding and thematic analysis.** Following initial (open) and secondary (focused) coding of all transcripts, the categories and codes were organized further using axial coding to identify which codes (and subsequent categories) belong to themes – axial codes could be thought of as sub-themes that link together the different categories of codes. Ultimately, axial coding aided in making meaning of codes and categorized data, helping the researcher build relationships and generate theory into what impacts the core phenomena, what occurs after, and how does this process occur. At this stage, axial coding was used to identify themes present in the data. A theme represents higher-level organization of categories, providing a composite or broader meaning to categories, or groups of codes, which are useful for triangulating data. Themes were then organized into broad patterns of data.

**Reliability and Validity in Data Analysis**

Lincoln and Guba (1994) posit the concept of Trustworthiness as the qualitative alternative for establishing reliability and validity of data collection and analysis. The following sections will detail specific dimensions and corresponding techniques for establishing trustworthiness in the proposed study. Credibility demonstrates researchers’ confidence in the accuracy and truthful representation of the data, similar to validity. The analysis used multiple data collection methods to elicit data; participant criterion had been set to attract and identify qualified stakeholders who are able to provide

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10 These codes are just examples for the reader; these may not represent codes that will be elicited from the data.
comprehensive information and perspectives on GE identification practices within their LEAs.

Confirmability refers to neutrality and identifying potential researcher biases in data collection, analysis or research purpose. To limit researcher biases, a consensus building process was used with research team, promised of one other qualified research assistant: this research assistant is an upperclassmen undergraduate at Tulane University and self-identifies as a Black cis-gendered woman. This research assistant has been a partner on the project for two years and contains a sufficient knowledge base of the phenomena and background literature.

Consensus building involved a research team of the primary researcher and research assistant, who (1) individually created open codes for each transcript; following this step, (2) each member collaborated in a joint focused coding session, where they read the others initial open codes and discussed the relevance and salience of the codes. Once a final list of codes was compiled from all of the transcripts, the two team members categorized, created axial coding and larger themes from the different transcripts. Throughout this consensus building process, coders discussed and present their rationale for coding, in order to come to agreement for identified coding.
IV. Results
Three primary research questions were used to guide data collection and analysis:

(1) what is the current representation of Gifted students who are identified as Black/African American in the New Orleans metro area, (2) what factors describe and impact Gifted identifications for Black families, and (3) how does the knowledge, experiences and practices of school personnel impact the eligibility and outcomes for Black students? The findings from this study provide more information and enhanced descriptive, quantitative and qualitative data for understanding contemporary demographic representation and disproportionality, and what perceived factors may impact eligibility and determinations for Black students. In alignment with the mixed sequential design, the following results is organized by quantitative and qualitative data components.

**Quantitative Data: Examining New Orleans Metro Demographic Data**

The first goal of the study was to better understand contemporary racial representation of students in Gifted, particularly for representation and disproportionality of Black students in the New Orleans metropolitan area. As previously stated, there was no available data examining whether there is disproportionality in the New Orleans metro area, thus this quantitative portion was integral to understanding the first research question: (1) What is the current representation of Gifted students who are identified as Black/African American in the New Orleans metro area?

In this information, this included compilation of static demographics – total district enrollment, and number of enrolled students by race– using Louisiana Department of Education (2017) K-12 public school enrollment data from the 2017-2018 academic year. Based on this available data, Orleans ($n = 43,875$) and Jefferson Parish ($n = 47,648$)
were identified as the largest school districts, encompassing approximately half of all enrolled students ($N = 165,425$) across the Greater New Orleans Metro area; this trend reflects relative centrality to populous urban cities and towns (e.g., City of New Orleans, City of Metairie). In comparison, the six other school districts may reflect rural, smaller populations.

### Table 3

**Racial Demographics of New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, 2017-2018 Academic Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total Student Population</th>
<th>Racial Majority (&gt;50%) of the School</th>
<th>Black/African American</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latinx</th>
<th>Indigenous/Native American</th>
<th>Multiracial (Two or more Races)</th>
<th>White/Caucasian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>49,328</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>19,236 (39.0)</td>
<td>2,267 (4.6)</td>
<td>13,694 (27.8)</td>
<td>201 (0.4)</td>
<td>1,393 (2.8)</td>
<td>12,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>46,080</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>38,518 (83.6)</td>
<td>789 (1.7)</td>
<td>2,985 (6.5)</td>
<td>91 (0.2)</td>
<td>535 (1.2)</td>
<td>3,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>4,085</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,156 (28.3)</td>
<td>245 (6.0)</td>
<td>278 (6.8)</td>
<td>63 (1.5)</td>
<td>150 (3.7)</td>
<td>2,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>7,753</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2,353 (30.3)</td>
<td>196 (2.5)</td>
<td>993 (12.8)</td>
<td>42 (0.5)</td>
<td>287 (3.7)</td>
<td>3,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>9,653</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3,346 (34.7)</td>
<td>134 (1.4)</td>
<td>645 (6.7)</td>
<td>27 (0.3)</td>
<td>238 (2.5)</td>
<td>5,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>3,891</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2,406 (61.8)</td>
<td>9 (0.2)</td>
<td>74 (1.9)</td>
<td>5 (0.1)</td>
<td>16 (0.4)</td>
<td>1,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>6,086</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4,740 (77.9)</td>
<td>19 (0.3)</td>
<td>442 (6.7)</td>
<td>3 (0.05)</td>
<td>122 (2.0)</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>38,549</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7,322 (19.0)</td>
<td>534 (1.4)</td>
<td>2,571 (6.7)</td>
<td>130 (0.3)</td>
<td>992 (2.6)</td>
<td>26,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165,425</strong></td>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td><strong>79,077 (47.8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,193 (2.5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,682 (13.1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>562 (0.34)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,733 (2.3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>56,080</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Enrollment Data: Student Attributes Oct 2017 Multi stats (Total by Site and School System).* (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017)  
*Of note, Jefferson Parish was the only parish to not have one racial demographic represent 50% or more of total student population*

**Student Racial Demographics.** In terms of racial demographics, researchers demonstrated that majority of all enrolled students are those who identify as Black and/or
African American: in the 2017-2018 school year, Black students were the most represented in the total student population, comprising nearly half (47.8) of all students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year. The school districts with a majority population (≥ 50 percent or more of population) of Black students were Orleans Parish (83.6), St. John the Baptist (77.9), and St. James (61.8) parishes, where Black students represent over half of the enrolled student population. These numbers may reflect total population demographics, where the cities and towns incorporated in these parishes are majority Black and these parishes range in rurality and population density, with Orleans Parish as the densest. However, even in other suburban and semi-rural parishes, Black students were a sizeable minority of the total enrollments, ranging from one-fifth (19.0) of the student population in St. Tammany Parish to over one-third (39.0) in largely suburban Jefferson Parish.

The second largest racial demographic within the New Orleans Metro, were students identified as Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian, who comprised approximately one-third of student enrollments in the 2017-2018 academic year. Within a majority of parish districts, White students compromised half or more of the total student population, including suburban St. Tammany (69.9), and St. Bernard (50) parishes, and semi-rural St. Charles (54.4) and Plaquemines (53.6) parishes. As one the fastest growing groups in the Greater New Orleans area (Plyer, 2021), students identifying as Hispanic/Latinx comprise the next largest group of enrollments, comprising approximately thirteen percent (13) of all student enrollments; particularly, most of these enrollments were in Jefferson Parish, where Hispanic/Latinx students comprise a quarter (27.8) of enrollments.
Students identifying as Asian American, Multiracial, and Indigenous and/or Native American comprised a small minority of public school enrollments, totaling a little over five percent (5.14) of total student enrollments across the New Orleans Metro in the 2017-2018 year. Asian students were most populous and had their largest percentage of representation in Jefferson (4.6) and Plaquemines (6.0) parishes, multiracial students in St. Bernard and St. Charles Parishes (3.7), and Native American students in Plaquemines (1.5) and St. Bernard (0.5) Parishes. While more correlational analyses would describe the relationship between population spread and existent student demographics, an overall consideration of racial demographics across the metropolitan area may implicate Jefferson Parish as one of the most diverse districts with large representations of students from all racial backgrounds.

**Representation of Gifted Students.** A series of Representation Indices (RI) were calculated parish-by-parish to provide a static ratio on the likelihood that students from a target racial population will be represented in Gifted Education compared to their total representation in the student body. In using RI, the researcher could assess for whether or not there was disproportionality in Gifted Education – either underrepresentation or overrepresentation – within specific racial groups across parishes and the larger New Orleans Metro area.
Identification for Gifted students was relatively low, with under five percent of students of all racial backgrounds being identified as Gifted; this number ranged across parishes, where Orleans Parish had the lowest proportion of students identified as Gifted (1.9), and St. Charles Parish with the highest proportion (7.8). In looking at the range of Representation Indices, Indigenous/Native American students in St. John the Baptist parish had the highest likelihood of representation in Gifted (18.1), compared to Black students in St. Charles Parish (0.13). Across the New Orleans Metro area, Black students had the least average probability of being enrolled in Gifted Education in the 2017-2018 academic year; this indicates that Black students, on average, had a 37.8% likelihood ($RI = 0.378$) of being represented (identified, and thus enrolled) in Gifted Education programs, in comparison to other educational placements.

**Table 4**

*Representation Indices of Gifted Students in New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, All Races*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total # of Gifted Students</th>
<th>% of Students Enrolled in Gifted</th>
<th>Black/African American</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Hispanic/Hispanic</th>
<th>Indigenous/Native American</th>
<th>Multiracial (Two or more Races)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>2,822</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,590</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.47</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.47</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*New Orleans Metro Area.* Across the New Orleans Metropolitan area,
Hispanic/Latinx students also had relatively poor probability of Gifted enrollment, where these students were well over half ($RI = 0.652$) as likely to be represented in Gifted compared to other educational placements. These probability ratios stand in comparison to metropolitan-area wide for other racial and ethnic groups, where Asian American students are nearly three times ($RI = 2.469$) as likely to be represented in Gifted education programs compared to other educational placements; The outcomes are similar for White American (1.839), Indigenous/Native American (1.474) and Multiracial students, whom were all nearly twice as likely to be represented in Gifted programs compared to other educational placements. However, these trends represent an average of all eight parishes, indicating that there is spread across the different parishes. The following sections provides information on each parish.

**Jefferson.** As the parish with the largest, most diverse student population during the 2017-2018 school year, Jefferson Parish encompasses large, satellite and commuter cities outside of New Orleans and Orleans Parish, including Metairie, Kenner and Harvey; based on this population distribution, Jefferson Parish possessed a Gifted enrollment rate of 5.7%, indicating that a small minority of the student body as identified and enrolled into Gifted education programs. However, calculated representation indices demonstrated trends that reflect metropolitan-wide area averages. Despite a diverse student body, where students of color comprise over one-third of the student population, both Black ($RI = 0.52$) and Hispanic ($RI = 0.58$) students were demonstrated as half as likely to be represented in Gifted as other educational placements.

This compares to White American (1.84), Multiracial (1.69) and Asian American (2.58) students, who range from being nearly two to three times as likely to be
represented in a Gifted education program compared to other educational placements one. This data demonstrates that Black and Hispanic students are fairly underrepresented in Gifted Education programs; instead White, Multiracial and Asian children are being identified, and enrolled in Gifted programming at a higher frequency compared to peers from other racial backgrounds. Ultimately, the data demonstrates an overrepresentation of White, Multiracial and Asian students in gifted education programs in Jefferson Parish.

Orleans. Orleans Parish encompasses the city of New Orleans and its’ seventeen unique local authority areas (called wards), or neighborhoods. Within the New Orleans Metro area, Orleans Parish is the largest and most densely populated parish, which is well reflected within the school district enrollments. With a unique history of school choice and recovery following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Orleans Parish schools from the data set reflect both Orleans Parish public schools and schools contained in the Orleans Recovery School district. Orleans Parish had the highest proportion of Black students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year, where over eighty percent of the student population identifies as Black and/or African American; this indicates that small percentage of the study body identifies as White American (6.8), Hispanic/Latinx (6.5), Asian American (1.7), Multiracial (1.2) or Indigenous/Native American (0.2).

Despite being a large district, Orleans Parish possessed the lowest rate of identification in the 2017-2018 school year, where only 1.2% of students were identified; this proportion is significantly lowered than the national figures of 6.4% of students being identified as Gifted (NCES, 2018). Based on population statistics, it is no surprise that Black students have nearly the same representation in Gifted education as well as other educational placements, with an 82% likelihood for identification and thus subsequent
enrollment in the 2017-2018 school year; this parish stands out as one of the few parishes to demonstrate near (1:1) equity in Gifted representation for Black students. Similarly, students identified as Indigenous/Native American experienced near equitable representation \((RI = .89)\). However, for Hispanic/Latinx-identified students, Orleans Parish demonstrates a lowered, but satisfactory likelihood of Gifted enrollments \((RI = .59)\).

Of note, despite a small population of White American, Asian American, and Multiracial students enrolled in Orleans Parish, these students were more likely to be represented in Gifted education programs compared to their peers: while Asian students were close to equal representation in both Gifted and other educational placements programs \((RI = 1.129)\), White American students were demonstrated to be almost four times as likely \((RI = 3.41)\) to be represented in Gifted education program compared to other educational placements, and for Multiracial students, this likelihood reached 2.1 times as likely to be in Gifted education programs. The data demonstrates that there are satisfactory, near equal representation of Black American, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latinx students in Gifted programs; however, the probability indices demonstrate overrepresentation of White and Multiracial students, indicating that these children are being identified, and enrolled in Gifted programming at a higher frequency compared to peers from other racial backgrounds.

**Plaquemines.** Plaquemines Parish is one of the smaller parishes within the New Orleans metro area, encompassing semi-rural, lower population density towns (such as Belle Chase and Port Sulphur) flanking both sides of the lower Mississippi River and inlets into the Gulf of Mexico. Considering the relative spread and rurality of this parish,
student demographics reflect a White American/Caucasian student majority (53.6%), followed by Black/African American students (28.3), Hispanic/Latinx (6.8), Asian American (6.0), Multiracial (3.7) and Indigenous/Native American (1.5). As noted, this parish has the largest proportion of Asian American, Indigenous/Native American as well as Multiracial students; these demographics may reflect current demographics that stem from both past and contemporary history of Atakapa Native American settlements in Grand Bayou, Vietnamese immigrant fishing communities, as well as descendants of multiracial, free people of color communities (Plyer, 2021).

In terms of Gifted enrollment, this parish possessed a proportion of Gifted enrollments of 6.1%, which is comparable to national representation (NCES, 2018); in comparison to other parishes, this figure indicates that there is a higher proportion of students being identified and subsequently enrolled into Gifted programs within this parish. The students with the highest likelihood in being appropriately represented in Gifted education were Hispanic/Latinx ($RI = 0.99$) and Indigenous/Native American students ($RI = 1.03$). For Multiracial students, the likelihood of representation was lowered ($RI = 0.65$). However, Asian-American students were nearly twice as likely ($RI = 1.99$) to be represented in Gifted education compared to other educational placements programs, indicating potential overrepresentation. This juxtaposed by the probability for Black students, who possessed the lowest likelihood ($RI = 0.38$) of being represented in Gifted education during the 2017-2018 academic year; compared to the other parishes, this is the second lowest likelihood, indicating potential underrepresentation of Black students in being identified and enrolled into Gifted education.
St. Bernard. St. Bernard is also one of the smaller parishes within the metropolitan area, with towns of Arabi and Chalmette sharing a city limits border with Orleans Parish’s ninth ward; however, despite proximity to the city of New Orleans, the 2017-2018 student population statistics indicate that White/Caucasian students comprise the majority of the population, followed by Black/African American students (30.3), Hispanic/Latinx (12.8), Multiracial (3.7), Asian American (2.5) and Indigenous/Native American (0.5) students. Again, this parish was noted for having a large Multiracial and Indigenous/Native American student population, which may be attributed to parish demographics and history of multiracial and indigenous communities (Plyer, 2021).

Compared to national representation, the proportion of students identified for Gifted were relatively low, where only 1.9% of the student population was enrolled in Gifted education. Within this parish, Asian American \((RI = 3.17)\) and Indigenous/Native American \((RI = 2.48)\) students were both nearly three times more likely to be represented in Gifted education programs than other educational placements; similarly, Multiracial students were nearly twice as likely \((RI = 1.45)\) to be represented in Gifted programs compared to other educational placements programs. This compares to White (1.17) and Hispanic/Latinx (0.87) students, who were likely to be nearly evenly represented in Gifted education programs as they were in other educational placements programs. However, Black students had the lowest probability of enrollment in Gifted education, with their representation index indicating they were half as likely (0.53) to be enrolled in Gifted education as they were in other educational settings.

St. Charles. St. Charles is a medium sized parish within the metropolitan area, also containing cities and towns that flank the upper portion of the Mississippi River,
such as Destrehan, St. Rose and Luling. Similar to many other parishes, the student demographics reflect a White majority (54.4), followed by Black/African American (34.7), Hispanic/Latinx (6.7), Multiracial (2.5), Asian American (1.4) and Indigenous/Native American (0.3) students. In terms of Gifted identification, this parish had the highest percentage of Gifted enrollments in comparison to other parishes; additionally, this percentage of Gifted enrollments was larger than the national estimate (NCES, 2018).

However, there were gaping inequities in the ways that students from different racial backgrounds were represented, where Asian American, Multiracial and White American students were between nearly twice as likely to be represented in Gifted education programs compared to other educational placements, indicating overrepresentation. While Hispanic students were more equitably represented, Black students had the lowest likelihood of Gifted placement within this parish and outside; compared to all of the parishes, Black American students had only a 14% likelihood of being identified and thus enrolled in Gifted education within St. Charles Parish. Even in comparisons to the national estimates computed by Peters and colleagues (2019a), this representation index is falls significantly below the purported estimate. Of note, these outcomes indicate a severe problem of underrepresentation of Black students within this parish; thus, it was determined to be imperative to understand the factors that may impact the representation.

St. James. Out of all the represented parishes, St. James has the smallest student population, containing the city of Lutcher and Gramercy; although it is included in the New Orleans metropolitan area, the parish is the furthest from the city of New Orleans,
and is geographically close to state capital, Baton Rouge. However, St. James has the third largest proportion of Black students, who are the majority at 61.8% of the student population; this is followed by White/Caucasian (35.5), Hispanic/Latinx (1.9), Multiracial (0.4), Asian American (0.2) and Indigenous/Native American (0.1) students. Parish estimates for Gifted enrollment was smaller than national estimates, where under three percent of the parish student population was identified as Gifted. Of note, this was the only parish to record that no children of Asian American nor Indigenous/Native American heritage were enrolled in Gifted education, thus Representation Indices were not available for these populations.

Based on available data, the representation indices demonstrate significant disproportionality of Multiracial ($RI = 2.34$), Hispanic/Latinx (2.02) and White (1.63) students, whom were all nearly twice as likely to be represented in Gifted education compared to other educational placements. Despite comprising majority of the parish student population, Black students had reduced likelihood of enrollment into Gifted education placements; however, this representation index was much higher compared to the metropolitan area ($RI = 0.38$), state (0.54) and national (0.57) estimate for Black students (Peters et al., 2019a).

*St. John the Baptist.* Located adjacent to Jefferson Parish, this parish contains the primary city of LaPlace and Reserve, and presented with a medium student population in the 2017-2018 school year. Out of the eight parishes, this parish contained the second highest proportion of Black students, where over three-quarters (77.9%) of the student population identified as Black; this is followed by White/Caucasian (12.4), Hispanic/Latinx (7.3), Multiracial (2.0), Asian American (0.3) and Indigenous/Native
American (0.05) students. Similar to Orleans and St. Bernard parishes, the rate of identification was lower than national estimates, where narrowly two percent (1.9) of the student population was enrolled in Gifted education.

Across racial demographics, Indigenous/Native American were significantly ($RI = 18.1$) more likely to be enrolled in Gifted than other educational placements; due to the small population of these students, these figures may overestimate probability of representation when the student population of the target racial demographic is extremely small. For example, two out of three Indigenous/Native American students were identified as Gifted during the 2017-2018 academic year; once positioned in proportion to the larger school population, this provides a sensitive estimate of the likelihood for this small population.

Nonetheless, the representation index still provides more accuracy as population size increases. Similar to other parishes, the results indicate that Asian American ($RI = 2.86$), White American (1.87), and Hispanic/Latinx (1.72) students were between two and three times more likely to be enrolled in Gifted education programs. Again, Black American students had the lowest likelihood in the parish ($RI = 0.77$); however, this representation index was significantly higher compared to national, state and metropolitan area estimates (Peters et al., 2019a).

**St. Tammany.** St. Tammany Parish, also known as the “Northshore” is located across Lake Pontchartrain from the easternmost part of Orleans Parish (“New Orleans East”) and encompasses the cities of Slidell, Mandeville and Covington. This parish is one of the fastest growing parishes within the state of Louisiana, as well as the New
Orleans Metro Area (Plyer, 2021). Thus, as the parish with third-largest student population in the 2017-2018 school year, this may reflect the fast pace of growth.

Despite proximity to the city of New Orleans, the 2017-2018 student population statistics indicate that White/Caucasian students comprise the majority of the population, followed by Black/African American students (19.0), Hispanic/Latinx (6.7), Multiracial (2.6), Asian American (1.4) and Indigenous/Native American (0.3) students. Unlike many of the other parishes, this parish was noted for having a predominately White/Caucasian student population, where this racial group comprised nearly seventy percent (69.9) of the student population. Despite the close proximity to the majority Black Orleans Parish, the answers for this extreme demographic shift has been attributed to parish history as the completion of hard infrastructure (e.g., Causeway) allowed mostly White, middle-class families to move to the suburban towns built in the Northshore, in what most would characterize as “White Flight” (Dickel & Kindinger, 2015; Plyer, 2021).

Compared to national representation, the proportion of students identified for Gifted was relatively high, where 7.3% of the student population was enrolled in Gifted education. Within this parish, Asian American ($RI = 1.79$) and Indigenous/Native American ($RI = 1.68$) students were both nearly twice more likely to be represented in Gifted education programs than other educational placements; despite being the racial majority, White students (1.21) were likely to be more evenly represented, and only slightly overrepresented in Gifted education programs as they were in other educational placements programs. However, Black (0.41), Hispanic (0.46) and Multiracial (0.58) students had significantly lower probabilities of enrollment in Gifted education; for Black
students, their representation index was the lowest, indicating they were less than half as likely (0.41) to be enrolled in Gifted education as they were in other educational settings.

**Summary of Quantitative Data**

Overall, the quantitative data presented multiple patterns. Particularly, the data demonstrated that within the metropolitan area, Black American students possessed the lowest likelihood (RI = 0.38) for Gifted enrollment (as represented by the Representation Index, or RI) in comparison to their peers of other racial backgrounds. In comparison to state (0.53) and national (0.57) estimates calculated by Peters and colleagues (2019a), the metropolitan RI for Black students was visibly smaller.

**Table 5**

*Representation Indices for Black, BIPOC and Non-White Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total # of Gifted Students</th>
<th>% of Students Enrolled in Gifted</th>
<th>Black/African American Only</th>
<th>Black and Indigenous (BIPOC) Students</th>
<th>Non-White Students</th>
<th>Racial Majority (&gt;50%) at School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>2,822</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>None – Even Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,590</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.44</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.55</strong></td>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, Black students’ RI ranged greatly, depending on the parish: for example, in parishes such as Orleans, St. James, and St. John the Baptist, Black students
possessed RIs that were visibly higher than the metropolitan, state and national estimates. This data demonstrates a clear visual trend where Black American students in majority Black school districts possessed higher likelihood for representation in Gifted education placements. As noted, the parish school districts possessed different distributions across student demographics, where three (Orleans, St. James, and St. John the Baptist) out of eight represented parishes possessed predominately-Black American student populations, where fifty percent or more of the population identified as Black.

These indices compares to four parishes that had predominately-White student populations (Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, and St. Tammany). Jefferson Parish was the only parish to have a more equal distribution of racial demographics, where no racial group comprised over fifty percent of the population. While Black students in most parishes had RIs that were above the metropolitan estimate, Black students’ RIs from Jefferson and St. Bernard parish hovered around the state and national estimates. Black students’ RI data from three parishes (Plaquemines, St. Charles, St. Tammany) stood out as being visibly below the state and national estimates; of note, St. Charles Parish ($RI = 0.14$) was visibly below metropolitan, state and national estimates.

The researchers noticed additional, visible patterns within these data, where representation indices for Black American students in parishes with majority Black populations and lower enrollment rates seemed to have higher likelihoods of enrollment: for example, the data demonstrate Orleans Parish as a predominately Black school district with the lowest total Gifted enrollment rate; yet it also possessed the highest Representation Index for Black students ($RI = 0.82$) in comparison to metropolitan (0.38), state (0.53) and national (0.57) estimates for Black students. Similarly, St. James and St.
John the Baptist demonstrated patterns of being predominately Black school districts with representation indices \((RI > 0.6)\) higher than metropolitan, state and national estimates, as well as low rates of overall Gifted enrollment. In comparison,

When examining the data, the researcher observed that parishes with lower RI for Black students, tended to have White students as the total student population’s racial majority – although, it is worth noting that the predominately White school districts possessed sizeable, minority \((\geq 20\%)\) proportions of Black students. Based on these researcher observations, additional descriptive analyses demonstrated significant, strong relationships between parish enrollment rates, the racial composition of district schools and the relative representation of Black students within Gifted education programs. Overall, the data presents Black students as disproportionately underrepresented in Gifted education across the New Orleans metropolitan area, with some variance depending on the racial composition of the school district and existent Gifted enrollment rates.

The apparent data has provoked additional questions that may be unique to the New Orleans metropolitan area, such as detailed information on how the resources for enrollment and racial characteristics of districts may impact Black students’ representation in Gifted education. The presented data may implicate a multitude of factors potentially impacting enrollment, such as identification, referrals and even access; however, these \textit{a priori} assumptions from the literature are not available to explore within the available data, but are important to understanding \textit{how} this phenomenon of disproportionate underrepresentation occurs. Currently, there is no publicly available data demonstrating how students were selected and enrolled into Gifted education during the 2017-2018 school year, and there is no current data for the 2021-2022 school year.
Additionally, while more inferential statistics could provide information on the relationship between the three variables, such data would not reveal why this phenomenon of underrepresentation of Black students is occurring in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

**Qualitative Focus Group and Interview Data**

Because the quantitative data demonstrated the existence of disproportionate underrepresentation of Black American students in Gifted education in the New Orleans MSA (which entails a relationship between underrepresentation, racial composition of the parishes and identification rates), qualitative perspective were explored to understand how and why this phenomenon occurs. In order to answer and understand how and why Black students face disproportional representation in Gifted education across the New Orleans metropolitan area, qualitative methodology was employed to elicit stakeholders’ perceptions and beliefs on the central phenomenon, its’ outcomes and potential solutions.

The use of qualitative methodology was used to answer the following research questions: (2) **What factors describe and impact Gifted identifications for Black families**, and (3) **How does the knowledge, experiences and practices of school personnel impact the eligibility and outcomes for Black students?**

Using a mixture of focus groups and individual interviews, four qualified school stakeholders with expertise in participating and conducting Gifted evaluations provided their perspectives. These individuals all identified as cis-gendered, African American women, who held advanced degrees (e.g., PhD, PsyD), varying years of experience in their positions and experiences across the parishes. The results contain excerpts and quotes elicited from participants’ perspectives and voices.
Within the thematic analysis structure, a total of 205 initial codes were generated from the three transcripts; following secondary coding with the research team, the final list of initial codes was 182. These codes were organized into a hierarchical structure to generate the theory, including four major patterns, eleven themes, twenty-two sub-themes (axial codes), twenty-seven categories, and fifty-four focused codes. Although a breadth of the data was elicited from the participants, the selected results reflect patterns, themes and sub-themes that answer the following research questions: (a) what factors describe and impact Gifted identifications for Black students and their families, and (b) how does the knowledge, experiences and practices of school personnel impact the eligibility and outcomes for Black students?

In addressing these specific questions, three major patterns (“What is Gifted Education in Louisiana?” “Under-Identification and Disproportionate Representation” and “Impact of Biases & Factors on Identification”) and applicable themes and sub-themes were addressed. While the qualitative methodology elicited a multitude of information, the following sections address salient themes and information that directly answer the research questions.

**What is Gifted Education in Louisiana?**

Participants colorfully provided their perspectives on the following themes: *Gifted Identification in NOLA, Benefits of Gifted Education, and Attributes of Gifted Students,* which all served as themes for describing the zeitgeist of Gifted Education in Louisiana. As a state that mandates identification for Gifted education, responses from all participants were largely in alignment with previous data and literature (e.g., Bulletin 1508) demonstrating a standardized process as mandated by state law. Additionally, the
participants indicated that ideal attributes of Gifted students were in alignment with current definitions of Giftedness as high aptitude and academic achievement.

*Benefits of Gifted Education* was a novel, salient theme, where participants indicated Gifted Education as providing a host of current and future academic, psychosocial, and sociocultural benefits for students, and their families. Overall, the primary perspective of Gifted Education was described as an aspirational goal of nurturing and fostering identified excellence. For example, one focus group participant from Orleans Parish also illustrated the core purpose of Gifted education, as nurturing and enrichment for children, indicating:

*...Philosophically, it's the idea that, like, if you've got someone [a child] that can do these things, let's give them every opportunity to accelerate, so that we can see them blossom in future endeavors...*

This aspirational goal lends towards bolstering personal and academic excellence, a responsibility that school stakeholders often are tasked with within the school setting. One individual interview participant – an educational diagnostician whose experience was in Orleans and St. Charles Parish – described this process as school personnel’s ability to “see things and bring a lot of things out of them early”. There was also an emphasis on Gifted education meeting the specific academic needs of advanced children, where one participant from an individual interview – a clinical psychologist from Orleans Parish with expertise in Gifted assessments within private practice and school-based assessments – indicated the purpose of Gifted education as:

*...To nurture the educational talents of those children who have been identified as gifted, and to meet their academic needs by offering them*
material that challenges them, that, you know, helps them continue to
learn and excel and exceed.

Interestingly, much of the conversation in Benefits of Gifted Education focused on sociocultural benefits from students and their families. From the perspective of Black parents, participants’ responses demonstrated that Gifted education provided an advantage for Black students and their families, providing access to opportunities, appropriate preparation for college, and a competitive edge for future success. One focus group participant from Orleans Parish described that within most school systems, Gifted education “opens doors” and “gives access to true college preparation.”

Another individual interview participant from Orleans Parish agreed that parents simply observe the relationship between “elite,” accelerated education and future outcomes, noting that she perceives parents from all backgrounds as:

...believe[ing] that having their children in these programs will offer them more opportunities in the future, and so they're seeking out spaces for their children to...be nurtured as well...

More specifically, this same participant illustrates the long-term potential benefits of access to Gifted education, characterizing it as an experience that prepares students to navigate future success:

Preparation, I mean, again, fundamentally ... we live in a capitalistic hell-scape, so everything is about competition, not cooperation. There’s this perception that you must be exceptional or the best? Right? And so Gifted means extra preparation, which means giving you an edge professionally
and academically, and I think that plays a big factor in why people would want it...

However, particularly for Black families, participants perceived the benefit of Gifted education as deeply mired in joyful pride and celebration of their child’s gifts and abilities. Two participants in the focus group – both who have worked in Orleans and Jefferson Parish – laughed as they described this joy, stating that for Black parents, having a child identified as Gifted was a “flex,” or a “characteristic to boast about”.

One participant from this focus group went on to provide context for this pride, as parents being able to claim positive qualities about their child in a society that does not apply positive characteristics to children of color:

I think for parents – especially [for] minority families – in a world where everybody's trying to put a strike on our back, it's like ‘you can't take this away from my kid’. And there's a sense of pride in that. Like, ‘I have this kid that is smart, and that's my DNA.’

However, participants also expressed belief that the emphasis that Black parents place on Gifted Education is similar to their non-Black counterparts, in that Gifted Education is a point of prestige that can be used in a manner to distinguish oneself. One participant named concept of the Talented Tenth and other elite Black organizations, tying exceptionalism associated with being Gifted to being perceived as superior:

I think, for minority communities, it's like Jack and Jill, right? My kid is in gifted, you know, this, um ...extra layer of superiority.
Lastly, participants agreed on psychosocial benefits from Gifted education for students, characterizing Gifted education as safe space for learning and knowledge. One participant spoke on her own experiences as Gifted student:

...I know we're talking about our roles as school psychologists, but I spent my entire life in the gifted program and gifted high school and...it was substantially less isolating to have groups of kids like me. So, being identified as Gifted, especially in the pull out programs, can be respite for kids where it's like 'I get to be with other kids, like me.'

Ultimately, the benefits of Gifted education were clearly labeled as providing academic, psychosocial and sociocultural benefits from students as well as their families. While many of these may be general benefits, stakeholders were explicit in labeling the culture-specific benefits that might exist for Black families.

**Under-Identification and Disproportionate Representation**

The question of disproportionality and underrepresentation of Black students was inherently salient to the study. Although participants were aware of the topic, participants were apt to identify and refer to the problem of disproportionality and underrepresentation for Black students prior to the interviewer even broaching the topic. Participants characterized this phenomenon as a visible inequity that exists nationwide, with one participant from an individual interview stating that disproportionality has “led to the exclusion of many of our beautiful, brilliant black babies from [appropriate] learning opportunities.”

Considering that there is an acknowledgement of the phenomenon, participants were asked to identify factors that they believe impact this phenomenon and expound on
their beliefs. Through the transcripts, themes related to *Systemic Problem*, and *Risk and Protective Factors That Impact Black Students* represent commonly elicited responses from stakeholders, pointing towards systemic problems of under-identification for Black students.

**Systemic Problems.** Repeatedly, participants identified current and historical systemic, sociopolitical issues and institutions that compound and impact the larger framework of educational institutions that house Gifted Education. An exemplar of systemic issues, is illustrated in the way a focus group participant pointed towards traditional, Eurocentric systems of education being inadequate for students from marginalized backgrounds, commenting:

*We're standing on this education model that was built very Western. It's damaging to the [Black] kids in all kinds of ways and the Gifted program is not exempt from the impact for sure.*

Both focus group participants discussed *Academic Segregation*, illustrating both the historical and contemporary use of Gifted education to racially segregate students within integrated schools. One participant from Orleans Parish described this history as such:

*...Historically, gifted programs have been used as a way to ‘fake’ integration, by enticing majority group parents to bring their kids to certain schools that have high marginalized and minority student populations.*

She continued to present that this academic segregation still exists, in where schools are “integrated on paper, but segregated for real” through the ways different racial groups are supported in enrolling into Gifted education; she characterizes Gifted education often
being used as “…a tool to separate the white kids away from the ‘lower performing’
black kids.” Another individual interview participant from Orleans Parish also named
systemic issues prompting this academic segregation, noting systems such as:

Money. Capitalism. You already know that . . . we live in a very capitalist,
classist, racist society. New Orleans, as beautiful as it is, is still
segregated in a lot of ways.

Although many stakeholders communicated the value of Gifted Education, there was a
common thread of Disdain and Anger at Systems, particularly targeted at the ways Gifted
Education has been utilized. One participant from an individual interview, was clear in
her anger: “When I see the way children is treated, it pisses me off.” Another participant
from the other individual interview, also noted her anger and annoyance with the
inequities in educational access being misrepresented within the New Orleans
metropolitan area, stating:

Miss me with that whole gumbo-pot bullshit, like, you know, the melting
pot stuff. We are, we have a lot of issues when it comes to what black kids
have access to.

Overall, participants agreed that underrepresentation and disproportionality was an
outcome of systemic problems as well as identification, where two sub-themes (axial
codes) were identified: (1) White and Asian Students Are Over-identified, while (2) Black
Students Are Under-Identified. Many used their own experiences and observations within
schools to supplement their beliefs: One participant acknowledged that most of her Gifted
evaluation experiences in Jefferson Parish –one of the most racially diverse parishes
within the New Orleans metropolitan– were with White and Asian students, stating that…,

*When I did the gifted evaluations, typically they were White and Asian kids, despite the fact that Jefferson Parish has a large amount of African American kids.*

When asked to further describe who would primarily be enrolled in Gifted, one clinical psychologist with work experiences in Orleans and Jefferson Parish, simply answered: “White children.” All participants directly named *Black Students as Under-Identified*, pointing towards national statistics: one participant exemplified this, stating that research demonstrates that “*Black kids are identified less nationally*.” Participants also used their experiences and knowledge to supplement their belief in “racial disparities in identification and classification as Gifted.”

For example, one participant characterized the disparity as an issue of “low numbers,” where statistically, there are not enough Black students being referred, identified and thus enrolled into Gifted Education, in comparison to other racial groups. When asked to expound on the contributing factors to the small populations, this participant continued to speak on the lack of advocacy school personnel may have for referring and testing Black students, characterizing school response as:

*...It's never to the point of saying, let's look at some practices or some strategies on recruiting or making sure we're testing enough kids of color to see if they qualify for them to get the program.*

Thus, many relied on their insider knowledge as evaluators to purport trends of under-identification in the various parishes in which they worked.
Factors That Impact Black Students ID. Participants were asked to expound on their experiences and beliefs around under-identification for Black students. From the elicited conversations, there were salient sub-themes (axial codes) of Protective Factors and Risk Factors that impacted how Black students were able to be identified and subsequently enrolled into Gifted education. The following sections identify these distinct factors as both protective, and potentially increasing likelihood, or risk factors that could be barriers for Gifted education entry.

Protective Factors. Participants were able to identify several dimensions of factors that would be protective for Black students within the quest for enrollment into Gifted education. Primarily, participants named Caregiver and Family Support as a dimensional category that increased likelihood of identification for Black students. This subtheme was primarily characterized as parent advocacy and socioemotional support, as well as family access to socioeconomic resources. Stakeholders immediately identified parents of Black students as advocates for their children’s educational progress.

Participants identified parents as primary referral source in their own clinical practice and experiences: from an individual interview, one participant drew upon her practice as an educational diagnostician in St. Charles parish, where she indicated that referral sources “for African American children, it [just] seems to be parents.” When asked why this occurs, participants often referred back to general perceived benefits of Gifted for parents, with one participant indicating that “every parent tend to [make referrals], because every parent thinks their child is smart” and another participant stating “parents always be wanting more” for their children. However, participants specifically linked referrals from Black parents to a form of educational advocacy, with
one stakeholder acknowledging that while “…parents [of Black children] feel their children are smart, and a lot of them know it,” parents are aware and re-affirmed that “the likelihood of some teachers identifying a student of color was zero.” Thus, participants characterized a parent nomination or referral as an avenue to combat these barriers.

Additionally, participants identified Engaged and Supportive Stakeholders as another protective factor for Black students’ identification. Participants referred to evaluation stakeholders at the school – such as the school psychologist, administration team, or teachers – as being positive influences when they are engaged in their student’s futures and culturally-responsive towards their Black students’ needs. For example, one participant mentioned that teachers that learn to culturally engage and “encourage learning…[are] able to see just different aspects of students” that may ultimately “help us find kids” to identify for Gifted education. Specifically, participants mentioned the benefit of having a BIPOC (Black and/or Indigenous Person of Color) clinician or evaluator.

With all of the participants identifying as a BIPOC clinician and/or evaluator, they were asked to expound on their personal rationale for why having a same-race clinician would be perceived as an advantage; answers from participants redefined this “advantage” as an act of equity, in consciously using insider cultural knowledge to make evaluations more equitable. For example, one participant explained it as simply being “intentional…when it’s kids that look like you”. She further explains this intentionality as:
I try to connect with [Black] kids. There's a power to being from the area where you work, there's a cultural knowledge, there's a cultural connectivity.

Although the participants did not have to explicitly name their Blackness as salient to their work, it was clearly understood by the researcher (and other participants, if interacting in focus group) that the idea of having a BIPOC clinician is to alleviate biases that may be present when having a non-Black clinician.

Risk Factors. Conversely, when asked to identify potential barriers for Black students, there was a unanimous identification of the following categories: Lack of Family Resources, Adverse Life Experiences, and Racial Biases towards Black Students. As Caregiver and Family Support was noted as a protective factor for Black students, thus a lack of financial, and other family resources was identified as a barrier for Black students in their pursuit of Gifted education. Particularly, the participants did not mention any lack of socioemotional support (e.g., pride, joy) or desire for advocacy from the parents of Black students. Rather, participants illustrated that a lack of family resources pertained to access to knowledge and other material resources that may aid in Gifted education enrollment. In an individual interview, one participant provided insight on a recent observation she had working within Orleans Parish:

We have a lot of issues when it comes to what black kids have access to and what the white children out here have access to.

Like other participants, this participant questioned the role of resources in the way that others may be receiving Gifted identification, pointing out that additional resources, such
as tutoring and early intervention may play a role in Gifted referrals and identifications.

She illustrated her thought process as such:

... A lot of these [Gifted] kids who are excelling so well, is because from jump they had the advantages to learn and develop the skills that they have acquired. And so when you don't have those resources, when your parents don't have the extra time to do these things with you ...[then] opportunities get missed in the long run for our children who are again also brilliant and gifted in a lot of ways.

When asked to describe the missing tangible resources, participants named parent knowledge and ability to advocate for Gifted education, where another participant commented that:

Something I have noticed with parents...is that they don't know to ask the school for that often times...we have conversations where parents are informed of the power that they hold when it comes to communicating what their child's needs are in the school and what they would like to see happen in the school.

Overall, the participants alluded to family resources, and the impact that a lack of such would have for Black children. One other participant summarized these common sentiments, stressing the importance of resources, and the impact it may have when individuals do not have possess these resources:

...Having the crystallized knowledge, having the family support, having all these social things that, you know, constructs that...were protective factors were important. And so again, kids that who would benefit from
Gifted necessarily won't be included because they didn't have that

[protective factors].

In thinking of additional factors, two participants from the focus group acknowledged that students’ adverse experiences could also impact their probability for Gifted identification. One participant named the *Impact of Trauma* as a potential, novel factor, indicating that Black children in low resource areas may experience more adverse experiences and thus may have a more difficult time demonstrating typical academic behaviors. She recounted her experience working in a low-resource, high-crime area of New Orleans that had a primarily Black student population:

*There are institutional and structural barriers that we have to think
about...They [students] have been exposed to extreme levels of trauma,
where they can't concentrate in class. Then it's not gonna translate
academically, because they're not gonna pick up as much info because
their little brains are pinging with trauma.*

Along the vein of adverse experiences, participants also named negative and uncomfortable educational experiences as potential barriers as well. One focus group participant observed that often students and their families experience negative and uncomfortable situations in testing and assessment, illustrating the power of story-telling in sharing vicarious traumas:

*Because we know that in communities of color, marginalized minoritized communities, people talk about the negative experiences they have with standardized institutional testing.*
This participant continued to hypothesize the outcomes of negative educational experiences of a student and/or family, potentially prompting an avoidance of testing scenarios or mistrust of school testing. One participant recalled helping a mother of a Black student navigate Gifted assessment, where she experienced this parent’s mistrust of the school district:

There’s a child right now that I’m doing an evaluation on as a scholarship. He’s a 4 year old, he’s not even in school for the gifted program, but it [the referral] came from his mother. And so I’m like, ‘well, you know, you can call the district, you can have this evaluation done for free’. And, of course, she don’t trust the district.

Although not explicitly stated, the implication is that this parent does not trust the school district to do a thorough job in evaluating her Black American child. The ramifications for this implication was not explicitly clear until participants started discussing racial biases and thoughts, and perceptions about Black students.

**Racial Biases against Black Students.** Participants often named and alluded to systems of oppression, including racism, as indirect barriers for Black students; particularly, marginalization was elicited when discussing the barriers that impact the family and larger system of resources. However, all participants shared that there were direct, biased beliefs about Black students and Black people that can directly impact students’ likelihood for Gifted identification and enrollment. For example, one participant from Orleans Parish concluded that the problem of under-identification inherently hinges on the making negative, deficit-based conclusions on the abilities of a Black American child, indicating that:
Sometimes those kids get missed because we're so focused again...on...deficit[s]. What is wrong with this kid, instead of actually realizing hey, this kid is really smart...

When asked about these beliefs systems, participants named two categories of systemic beliefs and actions, such as Anti-Blackness and Black Students are Ignored. The category Anti-Blackness contains the belief system that Black students and Black people lack the positive traits associated with Giftedness, namely high intelligence, aptitude and motivation. In an individual interview, one participant captured the essence of Anti-Blackness as a “subconscious bias,” indicating that many unconsciously enact these belief systems around deficits and negative traits:

So I know it's a lot of it is just the subconscious of how we've been trained to think and taught, and so subconsciously, adults, we realize that they're doing it.

Namely, participants spoke about general biased perceptions that impact Black students, capturing the belief that Black people are not perceived as intelligent, and if so, this is a rarity. The same participant from the individual interview referred to the treatment of high-achieving individuals as an example of how high aptitude is viewed as an anomaly, stating:

I would say I'm getting on that...unconscious thinking. Where if an African American child is smart, it's an anomaly like it's, Ooh, this is special.

This participant further illustrates the harmful messaging behind it, such as accompanying microaggressions: “I mean, we saw that with Barack Obama, you know, with ‘oh, he's very articulate’…. When asked to explain how Anti-Blackness happens
within the Gifted identification process, participants mentioned the referral and nomination process, particularly noting how school personnel delineate between smart and Gifted for Black students. One focus group participant characterized it as such: “personnel feel that our children are smart, they’re just not smart enough to be in a Gifted program.”

This belief was present throughout focus group and both interviews: for example, a focus group participant referenced a threshold for Black students, where under-identification happens until “…the black kid was exceptionally smart whereas, like, we have no choice, but to identify them”. Particularly, this belief entails acknowledgement that Black children can be intelligent, and possess aptitude, but it is framed as a rarity; thus, the unspoken implication is that Black children are not inherently Gifted nor intelligent. Another component of this identified Anti-Blackness, is a deficit focus, which is characterized as pathologizing the behaviors, and actions of Black students through a deficit lens.

For example, one focus group participant indicated an immediate focus on deficits for Black students, prompting them to be overlooked for Gifted and referred for a special education evaluation that focuses on a deficit, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Emotional Disturbance (ED). She states:

Whereas most of the time, especially if it was a Black boy…they're jumping to... evaluate for ADHD or ED. And then I test the kid and I'm like, His IQ is 125, [so] let's look at that instead.

Within the excerpt, the participant alludes to her own power as a clinician and evaluator to use data, instead of belief systems to make decisions about students. However, she
makes it clear that biased beliefs play a role, forcing Black children to not only be more academically exceptional than the average student, but more exceptional in behavior, presentation and other parameters that are not inherently evaluated in Gifted evaluations. She concludes her thought process with:

*Like this [Black] kid had to be more smart, more better behaved to get the referral than the other kids typically.*

Throughout the conversations, participants alluded to school personnel as enacting these deficit-perspectives, where a subsequent action that occurs is that Black students are overlooked and under-identified. The category *Black Students Are Ignored* characterizes subsequent aftermath of a deficit-focus, where Black students are systemically ignored and overlooked for Gifted education, particularly by school personnel responsible for their referrals and nominations. For example, a participant in an individual interview questioned whether school personnel are aware of their students, asking the rhetorical question:

*You know, are you even paying attention to them in that way to, to even put them on somebody’s radar for that? And it’s like, [is it that] you can’t, are they not...Why aren't they getting picked or do they not qualify?*

In this statement, the participant challenges school personnel and stakeholders to question their own motives and perspectives that prompts them to under-identify students. Generally, participants named teachers and educators as problematic, entailing that their lack of training and biases and perspectives lead to a lack of referrals and nominations of Black children (see *Problems with Referral Process* for more information). Participants also moved beyond placing the onus solely on individual school personnel, and also
criticized systems of education in the state. For example, one participant from an individual interview pointed out that there is no catalyst nor incentive for changing the amount of attention:

So, I think that there are there is a piece that, you know, that state is trying to bring attention to it . . . but my direct to answer that question: Is it enough attention? No, because with the attention [to identifying Black students] ... you're not requiring your schools to say, 'hey, how can we find more kids to even test that they qualify?'

Overall, participants were able to use their lived experiences, insider knowledge and expertise to identify the racial overtones that hover around Black students, integrating and compounding with separate protective and/or risk factors. The general gist from participants, was that these racial biases about the presence and visibility of intelligence and aptitude among Black children continue to permeate modern Gifted education. Despite this perspective, one participant from Orleans Parish indicated her hope and advocacy for decolonizing education in general as a starting point, empathetically commenting: “We have to un-racialize and remove the broadband racial undertones of Education in order to even start to get at Gifted education.”

**The Impact of Biases & Factors on Identification**

With an omnipotent cloud of unconscious, anti-Black biases, and deficit ideology, the participants concluded that these biases ultimately impact the frequency and quality of school personnel in the Gifted identification process, which is addressed by the themes contained within the pattern *The Impact of Biases and Factors*. This section speaks to a broad pattern that highlight problems within the Gifted identification process that are
both direct and indirect impacted by the systems of biases, protective factors and risk factors. Within this pattern, two primary areas (themes) were salient for participants: 

*Problems with Referral Process,* and *Problems in Assessment.*

Within these themes, participants identified salient stakeholders and personnel, and the processes in which they contribute and support the problem of disproportionate representation. As noted within the previous patterns, participants indicated that biased perspectives and inequitable systems enforce the continued presence of disproportionate representation. More specifically, participants named under-identification as a primary factor. When asked to define the element of under-identification, there was a clear delineation between referrals and nominations, and subsequent evaluations.

**Problems with Referral Process.** When asked to identify an area of concern in under-identification, all participants indicated difficulties and problems in the referral process, demonstrating it as a salient piece of disproportionate underrepresentation. Generally, participants characterize teachers as having a primary role within referrals; for example, one focus group participant stated “*Generally, teachers refer, but teachers or other staff can refer any staff member can refer, including administrators.*” The role of nominator was not just perceived as a task, participants characterized referrals as a serious responsibility of teachers to identify children, requiring diligence and attention to students’ progress and ability. However, as characterized in the category *Black Students are Ignored,* participants indicate that this does not often happen. When asked to explain this inaction from teachers and other school stakeholders, the data elicited from participants demonstrated two areas (categories) of thought in which they believe there is
Despite being in a state with a highly regulated process for identifying Gifted children, participants recognized that schools and districts still possess flexibility within the process in many ways, such as the composition of the team of qualified evaluators and specific methodology used in referrals. However, participants conclude that this flexibility often prompt a less standardized and more subjective process. Inherently, referrals were perceived by participants as being subjective, based off teacher’s thoughts, beliefs and perceptions about a student or groups of students. Participants indicated that such subjectivity could impact the frequency and total amount of referrals; for example, one focus group participant stated:

*I think it can be very subjective sometimes, the referral: You’ll have that one teacher that is referring everybody, and then that one teacher that's totally under-referring.*

Overall, participants highlighted that the referral process as being subjective across the different parishes, with discrepancies between state expectations for methods for referrals and what actually happens. Some participants were strong advocates for abiding by state suggestions, such as using pre-existing universal screeners for students as a way to screen for Gifted. From an individual interview, another participant with experience in Orleans and St. Charles Parish, noted that the state urges districts to use data from a mandatory reading screener to identify children, providing the context for this:

*Um, they they did a, a law where K-3, where you have to screen kids for dyslexia, okay. This came from the big push in the special education*
movement in Louisiana... to do a screener for K through 12, [and] if there are kids who score pretty high in reading, you're supposed to bring a child up to be tested for gifted. And the reason why the state put that into place is because there are these alarming numbers of kids being identified, but it wasn't enough kids being seen to see if they would qualify for a gifted program.

Across the transcripts, it was clear that participants with more integrated knowledge of school systems (two participants in the focus group, and individual interview with educational diagnostician) referred to using screeners. One participant illustrated it as:

*Occasionally, uh, folks will use like your sort of RTI type measures, just for like, a quick and dirty... usually most schools, if they're following any of IDEA [federal law] should be doing some form of RTI data three times a year. So, we should have that...*

However, despite aspirations at the state level to increase identification and subsequent evaluations of Gifted students, participants in Orleans and Jefferson Parish illustrates the variability in this practice. For example, a focus group participant pointed out that the use of screeners “doesn't always happen in Jefferson Parish...because, typically, the work samples or whatever, are already so rich, we're just going to jump into testing.”

Perspectives from the focus group participant currently working in Orleans Parish also highlights this variability as well:

*The policy in Orleans was that you don't need a screener unless they're younger than 3rd grade and [they] don't have standardized tests, like, LEAP and stuff.*
Despite the variable use of screeners, all participants indicated that there was inequity in not having a standardized procedure for referrals, but not necessarily a lack of quantitative data. However, participants did not place the onus on the lack of standardized procedure, but rather on the subjective methodologies employed by teachers, and their training and innovation.

The focus quickly turned to characteristics of school personnel that inform their subjective perspectives, where it was clear that participants believe there is an issue of Lack of Training and Innovation from school personnel. Most participants indicated that teachers and other referral sources lack formal training in identifying Gifted students, specifically those from marginalized backgrounds. For example, an individual interview with a participant illustrated this problem of training as such:

> And the other part is, the teachers are not trained on looking for these [Black and Gifted] students. They're trained on how to make sure the child behaves.

Participants acknowledged that it would be much more difficult to change the referral process from informal to a formal, standardized procedure (as it is with evaluations), and point towards teacher training as an area. One participant from Jefferson Parish offers this solution:

> I think a fairly simpler way would be to better train the teachers on what to look for. I think that...it's already an informal process. So it's much easier for schools, especially ones who are bound by district policies, to informally train their teachers on what an uncharacteristically gifted kid might look like.
Participants acknowledged that this specific training maps on to innovative thinking from teachers and school personnel, to identify other uncommon characteristics of Giftedness. Specifically, participants illustrated that for Black children, there are inherent cultural nuances to definitions and presentations of Giftedness that teachers must be willing to understand and look for, with one participant noting: “...there's so many other things besides cognitive ability that go into high academic achievement.” For example, one focus group participant illustrates this lack of knowledge as lacking cultural responsivity, commenting that stakeholders often “don't understand that cultural piece that we’re discussing.” Another focus group participant also illustrated the unwillingness of the entire team to reconceptualize Giftedness as more than intelligence, indicating the need to continue:

...Tearing down this conceptualization of ...IQ through IQ test, right?

Like, because there are people who can solve problems in a way that is wild, that isn't necessarily captured [by current assessments], right?

We're limited by the tools that we have.

However, while the other three participants did not explicitly name how Giftedness can look different among Black children, they maintained that personnel from other backgrounds often do not catch nor understand cultural nuances. Overall, this problem with cultural responsivity persists through other areas of the identification process.

**Problems in Assessment.** All participants named and acknowledged the inherent difficulties that occur within the evaluation phase. Although this phase is much more standardized, participants possessed the strong belief that this phase of identification is another area impacted by biases and a lack of cultural-responsivity. Participants identify
as having integral roles in this phase, as primary evaluators and administrators of the standardized tools used to assess children, thus many relied on their expertise and insider knowledge to provide this information. Participants unanimously identified two categories of biases during the evaluation process, which were *Assessment Tool Biases* and *Clinician Biases*.

Participants explicitly named that state-law compliant Gifted evaluations required the use of standardized intelligence and achievement tools. However, participants identified the implications of using these historical and traditional standardized intelligence and achievement tools with Black children; ultimately, they posited these tools as lacking cultural responsivity. For example, one participant indicated that her district discontinued the use of some tools because “*they found was [it was] really, um, I don't want to say racist, but not culturally responsive.*”

When asked to name what lack of cultural responsivity may appear like on standardized measures, exposure to mainstream cultural knowledge and language were most salient to participants. Within the focus group, both participants discuss both of these areas of concern, where standardized measures are not accounting for cultural knowledge or language barriers.

**Participant #1:** *When you say language barriers...your mind tends to go to English language learners and that's not the only time that nonverbal measures are useful when you're dealing with kids who are low resource who, maybe they speak the English language for sure, but maybe it's not standard English, maybe it's AAVE [African American Vernacular English].*
Participant #2: ...Or they're in an environment where they're not around certain types of crystallized knowledge where those...heavily verbally loaded indices will be low for them, and they would perform better showing their knowledge in another way.

From this discussion, the onus falls on test developers to create more culturally-responsive items for their measurement tools, indicating a need to revisit norms. Another participant from an individual interview also illustrated this difficulty with testing tools, pointing back to potentially revisiting normalization samples in item construction of culturally responsive tools, commenting:

I think that is in test construction, there has to be more representation of black and brown, Asian, and all kinds of like, just different backgrounds in there when they come up with...[comprehension] items. I think that that is really important, uh, when we go to the drawing board, like, when they come up with the next WJ...there needs to be us in the room. Shoot, we need to come up with our own, truth be told.

While most participants identified the tools as a source of biases, there was acknowledgement that this would be more difficult to change, and instead find that Clinician Biases are salient when thinking about problems in assessment. Participants pointed out that clinician training and clinical judgement are integral areas that lack cultural responsivity, where clinician rapport building, scoring, and interpretation are critical areas to train and build competency when working with children of color.

For example, one focus group participant poised these questions to clinicians should ask themselves when assessing Black children:
Well it is the administration, you have to be aware of like, is the student less comfortable with you because you don't share their cultural background? How do you build rapport? Are you aware of the ways in which the biases can play out in the scoring?

When asked to clarify why these would be questions to ask, the same participant went on to explain that it is not just scoring and interpretation, but rather the ability to build rapport with a student:

*I want to say, I don't know what like a succinct word for it would be, but it's not just interpretation. It's also the interpersonal interaction piece...I mean, I guess fundamentally rapport building, but yeah.*

The other focus group participant added that this presents as Black children being able to perform in the classroom, but struggling with unknown clinicians who do not build rapport:

*They are able to perform in the classroom setting with the teacher with who they're comfortable with, but struggle to demonstrate that knowledge through the testing with this lady, who is unfamiliar, who doesn't look like them, who doesn't share their same language values and experiences.*

Ultimately, the participants thoroughly highlight difficulties and areas that require cultural-responsive practice, but often are not enacted.

**Summary**

Thematic analyses point towards identifying themes to describe *how* and *why* the phenomena of disproportionate representation of Black students may occur within the context of the New Orleans MSA. The examined quantitative and qualitative results work
in tandem to provide a wealth of information on the context of Gifted Education in the New Orleans MSA, specifically on the disproportionate underrepresentation of Black students.

The quantitative data clearly demonstrates that Black students in the New Orleans MSA are less likely to be enrolled in Gifted education placements, establishing that this phenomenon does exists within the New Orleans MSA; the data also demonstrated a relationship between disproportionate underrepresentation, the racial makeup of the school and identification rates. Ultimately, the data raised additional questions on why disproportionate representation was seen more in predominately-White parishes and parishes with large Gifted enrollment rates. Despite the wealth of information, this quantitative data did not provide information on mechanisms that fuel its existence, or simply answer the why and how.

Thus, qualitative methodology was employed to provide that context, and supplement quantitative data with specific information on what factors impact this phenomenon and what are the outcomes. Using Thematic Analysis, the researchers examined qualitative data to identify themes and generate theory for how Black students are disproportionately underrepresented in Gifted education in the New Orleans metropolitan area. The qualitative data supplements the quantitative data through major themes within data, where participants spoke about the sociocultural and academic benefits of Gifted Education being particularly salient for Black families, thus making the topic of disproportionality and underrepresentation salient to participants.

The elicited perspectives within the qualitative data confirmed the salience of disproportionate representation, substantiated by the participants as often not
encountering testing opportunities with Black students, and noticing that Black students are under-identified and under-referred to be evaluated. The data identified themes associated with risk factors, where Black students and their families were recognized as sometimes lacking material resources and access to Gifted education identification processes, as well as encountering biases and deficit ideology, and problems within the cultural-responsivity, structure and overall quality of referrals and evaluations.

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate clear patterns where (1) disproportionate underrepresentation exists within the New Orleans metropolitan area, occurring as a result of under-identification of Black students; this process of under-identification is characterized by (2) systemic issues in education, risk and protective factors, and anti-Black biases and deficit ideology against Black students, (3) problems with a subjective referral process, and (4) difficulties with the evaluation process, where evaluators tools and their clinical judgement can be biased. Together, these data generate rich frameworks for how disproportionality has proliferated, as well as provide new questions to explore in further research.
V. Discussion
The literature base has extensively discussed, and thus framed, disproportionality and underrepresentation of Black students in Gifted Education as a national problem (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford et al., 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Wright, Ford & Young, 2017): previous empirical research has demonstrated that Black students have the lowest likelihood of being identified and subsequently enrolled into Gifted programs (Peters et al., 2019a; Hodges et al., 2018; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020). Previous research has identified different risk factors that may prompt disproportionate underrepresentation to proliferate, such as the lack of Black family and student access to Gifted programs (Ford, 2014; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Grissom & Redding, 2016), and suboptimal identification, and evaluation processes for gifted Black students (Allen, 2017; Erwin & Worrell, 2013; Ford, 2005; Ford et al., 2016; Franklin, 2007).

Although many locales still struggle with implementing change to address this problem, New York City stands as an example of changes. In New York, stakeholders were able to use quantitative and qualitative data from school enrollment data and lived experiences from school personnel and other stakeholders, to successfully advocate for an overhaul to discriminatory practices in Gifted Education. Considering the radical changes brought about by qualitative and quantitative data in another locale, this study sought to use a Critical Race theoretical perspective and mixed methodology to establish the problem of disproportionate representation with quantitative data, and describe and shed light on systems of barriers and areas of growth from the perspective of Black professionals who conduct Gifted evaluations.

The elicited data from the study were able to meet these goals, first with the quantitative data demonstrating (1) disproportionate underrepresentation within the New
Orleans metropolitan area. Similar to national and state statistics presented by Peters and colleagues (2019a), Black students in the New Orleans Metro area possessed the lowest likelihood of all racial demographic groups to be enrolled in Gifted educational placements; the calculated representation index for the New Orleans MSA was found to be smaller than both state and national estimates. This could be attributed to the range of representation indices for Black students, ranging from 0.82 in Orleans Parish to 0.14 in St. Charles Parish. Additionally, there were strong visible patterns Black students’ representation indices and the proportion of Black students in the school district (racial composition of school), as well as rate of enrollment: where the decreased Black student population and smaller rates of Gifted enrollments in the school district were seen with lower Black students’ representation indices. While more inferential statistical analyses would be able to draw more appropriate conclusions about these relationships, these visible patterns may be related to existing trends that demonstrate Gifted education enrollments largely being students from White, high-resource schools and households (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf & Winsler, 2020). Overall, descriptive, quantitative analysis established this phenomenon as a problem, but also raised more salient questions: how and why does the racial composition of the school impact the likelihood of identification for Black students? How are racial composition of the school and current identification rates related? These questions are not explicitly answered in existent literature, but serve as poignant questions to consider in future quantitative research.

Despite the lingering questions, the problem of disproportionate representation was established within the New Orleans MSA. However, the quantitative analyses did not
answer why or how this phenomenon occurs. Thus, qualitative methodology was employed to explore this phenomenon further. Within the qualitative data, present themes identified disproportionate under-representation occurring as a result of under-identification of Black students. Using Critical Race perspectives, the qualitative data characterized this process of under-identification as a mixture of (2) systemic issues in education, risk and protective factors, and anti-Black biases and deficit ideology against Black students, (3) problems with a subjective referral process, and (4) difficulties with the evaluation process, where evaluators tools and their clinical judgement can be biased.

Critical Race Theory frameworks have posited overarching, foundational and systemic issues in education (Dumas, 2016; Gillborn et al., 2018; Parker, 2019), acting as the foundation for how Black children are disenfranchised in all areas of education, including Gifted Education (Ford, 2013; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Robinson, 2017). Voices from participants clearly reflect a Critical Race theoretical lens, in which participants openly acknowledge the foundations of education and Gifted Education as rooted in Western ideologies that were not created to benefit Black children; this is in alignment with previous literature, pointing out that Gifted education, as a practice of academic separation within the larger construct of Education, is inherently impacted by the constructs of White supremacy and anti-Black beliefs (Dumas, 2016; Taylor et al., 2018), where “the existence and reality of this disproportional representation does indeed make gifted education, as a whole, racist—and racist at its core, its founding, and its continuance (Barnes, 2021, p. 119).

In a commentary response to an article’s insistence that disproportionate underrepresentation of Black (and other marginalized communities) does not entail
racism, Barnes (2021) counters this argument indicating that Critical Race Theory “...reminds us that racism is woven so deeply into the fabric of our society that it is often unrecognizable...Why would Gifted Ed[ucation] be any different?” (p. 119) This perspective continues to be highlighted as themes from the qualitative data revealed various direct and indirect ways that systematic marginalization and biases – byproducts of racism and White supremacy– from society, school personnel and the tools they use (and don’t use). The present themes highlight risk and protective factors that could impact Black students’ identification, such as life experiences within systems, family resources and engagement, as well as school personnel’s engagement. Under CRT, the themes identified Black students’ encounters with negative and adverse life experiences as an inherent risk factor, where daily and lifetime stressors of dealing with the conditions of systematic oppression can impact a child’s ability to learn, retain information and engage with school (Peters, 2021).

Additionally, another salient theme captures the anti-Black biases and belief systems that generally impact Black students, but also specifically impact how Black students can be perceived for Gifted eligibility; the participants spoke about anti-Black sentiments around intelligence, aptitude, where it is seen as a rarity among Black students, and thus assumptions to ignore Giftedness in Black students were believed by participants to be enacted. The discourse presented within this salient theme, is possibly the most long-standing discourse within the topic of Black children and Giftedness: since the early 16th century, pseudoscientific, race-based theory maligned people of African descent as lacking positive traits related to intelligence and cognitive functioning (Dumas, 2016; Fish, 2001; Jackson & Weidman, 2004), and there cannot be Gifted.
Strengthened by eugenicists like Sir Francis Galton and Lewis Terman, the paradigm for early Psychology continued to focus on intelligence and cognitive ability, and scientific inquiry of intelligence and cognitive ability remained as an exploration of supposed White superiority and African American inferiority (Chitty & Benn, 2009; Farber, 2008; Yakushko, 2019).

In lieu, scholars have presented evidence that has debunked tenets of race-based theory, finding that IQ score outcomes among African American children can be presumed to exist on the same normal curve as all peers (Helms, 1992; Nisbett et al., 2012; Onwuegbunzie & Daley, 2001; Perry et al., 2008; Turkheimer, Harden & Nisbett, 2017). While APA (2021) has recently acknowledged that the history of Psychology has maligned the cognitive abilities and intelligence of African Americans (Jackson & Weidman, 2004; Fish, 2001), this apology does not negate centuries of ideology that continues to serve as an unconscious bias. The elicited data clearly points towards this past ideology that intelligence and aptitude (as a proxy for Giftedness) is viewed as uncommon in Black students, and thus Black students are questioned as being “smart enough to be Gifted”.

Despite acknowledgement of these biases and systemic factors, the themes also presented salient protective factors. Previous literature demonstrates that engaged and resourced parents of Black students are integral to helping Black students navigate the space of Gifted education. Particularly, the participants stressed the importance of parents having the right sociocultural knowledge to nominate their children and navigate the evaluation process, which is in alignment with previous literature that parental involvement prompt teachers to “take…[students] more seriously” (Jeffries & Silvernail,
The presented themes spoke clearly to parent’s advocacy in the identification of their Gifted Black child that has been documented in previous research (Goings & Ford, 2018; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Huff et al., 2005, Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016).

In a novel qualitative study asking parents of gifted Black children about their experiences, parents spoke clearly about the advocacy and strong sense of stewardship they have in their children’s educational experiences, with one parent commenting that Gifted Education is akin to “a guarded secret” (Huff et al., 2005, p. 219); however, parents also expressed their willingness to forge ahead to get their Gifted children’s educational needs met, including advocating for their referral, a sense of advocacy in which one parent characterized as:

*My thing is even if I don’t have it...I will get it. I will find it. I will take her to the mountain, I will take the mountain back with us if we have to and we’ll dig into the mountain. So my thing is, I will get it.*

Thus, parent as a resource was identified as a clear protective factor for Black children navigating Gifted identification. Additionally, culturally-responsive teachers were found to be protective, posited as teachers who know what to look for and have a generally positive, engaging outlook on their Black students; existent literature stresses the role of school personnel as stakeholders in Black students’ nomination and evaluations for Gifted placements. Particularly, sub-themes related to having BIPOC clinicians and other school personnel were salient, aligning with previous research from Grissom and Redding (2016) demonstrating that Black students with Black teachers were predicted to
be three times more likely to be nominated and/or referred for Gifted in comparison to Black students with non-Black teachers.

These differences in having BIPOC school personnel working with Black children could too be attributed back to Critical Race Theory, where Black school personnel tend to work as “agents of change” to fight for the equality of their Black students (Lynn, 2002, p. 123). The presence of Black teachers may implicate higher likelihood for identification of Black students for Gifted; for instance, the quantitative data out of Orleans Parish demonstrates a high likelihood of enrollment for Black students. Although there is limited data from the other parishes demonstrating the number of Black teachers, New Schools for New Orleans (2020) illustrated that over half of the teacher population identified as Black, compared to only a third in Jefferson Parish. With a breadth of previous literature supporting this link, the predominance of Black teachers in Orleans Parish may account for increased likelihood.

However, the present themes from the data also indicated that this protective factor of engaged, BIPOC school personnel is not typically seen within the New Orleans MSA, potentially due to the lowered numbers of Black teachers and school personnel. Although data from Orleans Parish demonstrate a high number of Black teachers teaching this primarily Black student population, this data is unavailable in the other parishes and thus unknown. However, participants who have experience in Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles and other parishes outside of the New Orleans MSA, have indicated that school personnel have integral roles in nominating/referring students to Gifted, and assessing them for Bulletin 1508-compliant Gifted evaluations. The themes indicate that participants believe both the referral and evaluation processes lack an equitable level of
cultural responsivity, where referrals are too subjective to teacher biases and lack of training, and the evaluation process is also subject to tool and clinician biases. At the referral level, the data demonstrates the belief that referral processes are predominately teacher-led, but lack standardization and thus are overly influenced by teachers own beliefs, and experiences with Black students.

Previously, scholars have indicated that inexperienced teachers may over-rely on personal beliefs when assessing for Gifted, which may include potential implicit cultural and racial biases (Crabtree, Richardson & Lewis, 2019; deWet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford, 2016; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008); this becomes frighteningly evident in a qualitative study led by Graham (2016, published dissertation) where a teacher indicated that they would not recommend a “student of low socioeconomic status that… [has] an IQ test [that] is average” (pp. 75-76). Ultimately, such a loaded statement from an educator makes fears and perceptions of biased beliefs about Black students more of a palpable reality. Although that is an extreme example of overt bigotry, Critical Race Theory hypothesizes that many teacher programs – while well-meaning in their quest for racial equality – have pushed White teachers to inadvertently support ideals of color-blindness (Gilborn et al., 2018; Parker, 2019; Sleeter, 2017).

With the influx of young White American teachers into urban, predominately Black American schools, scholars posit that the integration of color-blind ideals has proliferated the lack of consideration and understanding of cultural-specific dimensions and attributes of Giftedness in Black American students (deWet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford et al., 2016; Graham, 2016; Graves & Mitchell, 2011); with a lack of training, teachers may miss these critical opportunities to evaluate and understand these culture-specific
domains, and do not refer. Thus, the themes of risk factors and the impact of biases imply that without parent knowledge and advocacy, the onus falls on teachers to examine their students, but this often does not occur.

Even when a student is successfully nominated and begin evaluations, the themes from the data also demonstrate criticisms for evaluators and their tools. Most apparent in both the elicited data and literature is the decades-old arguments of using biased, standardized tools that do not take into consideration the language and cultural-laden experiences of Black children. Within the literature, these criticisms largely stem from the acknowledge of historical racial biases (Fish, 2001; Ford, 2005; Franklin, 2007; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Suzuki & Quizon, 2016; Yakushko, 2019) and existent cultural and linguistic biases (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Melikyan, Agranovich & Puente, 2019) in cognitive assessment tools, prompting a paradigm shift to conceptualize of Giftedness as more than IQ scores (Ford et al., 2020; Jolly & Warne, 2019; Lo & Porath, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Stephens, 2020). While the participants may be privy to this academic discourse due to their membership in evaluator roles (e.g., being School Psychologists, Educational Diagnosticians), this was salient for them in their practice, where they found standardized tools to use regionalisms and ask questions that are specific to Eurocentric cultures and language, and thus non-applicable to their Black students.

Interestingly, the theme of problems in assessment also focused on Clinician Biases, but not just perceptions from clinicians, but rather their ability to use their clinical skills and judgement to building rapport with client as well as culturally-responsive scoring and interpretation. Previous literature has implicated evaluators as a potential
source of biases, where test administrators’ language, perceptions of examinees and other biases can impact the validity of scores (Hall, 2015; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013).

Kaufman, Raiford and Coalson (2016) found that most common administration errors are failure to query and failure to award appropriate points to an examinee’s response on the cognitive assessment measure the *Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fifth Edition (WISC-V)*.

However, while limited in the past, there is contemporary burgeoning research on test administrator skills and use of cultural competency in rapport building: in a qualitative study, Ashton, Smith and Woods (2022) interviewed five White school psychologists at predominately Black schools, and found that these professionals reported rapport building as “crucial to the success of White practitioners providing services to Black students” (p. 10). Within the study, rapport building was framed as crucial for gaining the trust of students, potentially ameliorating the tensions and negative experiences Black students have had with systemic and individual biases; one participant in the study framed it as practice of equity as much as building comfort, indicating that they have:

*...found that engaging in a more informal rapport building process has allowed me hopefully to alleviate some of factors that have been found to impact Black students when completing standardized assessments like stereotype threat.* (p. 10)

Thus, the elicited theme has mapped on to a current concern that is reflected in the contemporary literature, and potentially larger discourse within the field. However, although testing standards and multicultural guidelines have prompted evaluators to
cultivate and use cultural humility to guide assessment (APA, 2014, 2017a; Sue & Sue, 2012), these recommendations for cultural competency and reduction of cultural biases may not be fully adopted by training programs and opportunities. Thus, the literature base is still lacking in perspective on the breadth of cognitive assessment training experiences, specifically information on working with diverse groups such as Black students.

In conclusion, the elicited data has clearly demonstrated salient themes of systemic biases within the larger sociopolitical structure that permeates into the lives of Black children, their families, their teachers, the school personnel responsible for their assessments, the tools used, and the legislation and procedure for determining their educational placements. In alignment with the tenets of Critical Race Theory, the participants and the salient themes that were elicited from their perspectives speak to the cross-cutting impact of White supremacy, anti-Blackness, racism and systematic marginalization on Black students and the various ecological systems they navigate (Dumas, 2016; Gilborn et al., 2018; Ford et al., 2018, 2020).
VI. Limitations
Within this study, there were several obstacles that served as limitations and could be addressed in future research. Considering the scope of the study, the quantitative data lacked in-depth analyses to establish causal relationships between the variables: as it is known, inferential analyses not only provide researchers with the ability to predict and make estimates about a population based on the sample, but how changing conditions (variables) impact outcomes (Freedman, 2006; Stapor, 2020). Within this study, the descriptive data suggest that within the New Orleans MSA, there is a relationship between the Representation Index for Black students, the racial composition of the school and total Gifted enrollment rates, demonstrating visible pattern where the Black population of the school and number of gifted enrollments seem to be associated with one another and Black students’ representation indices.

However, without inferential statistical analysis, it is unclear whether there is a mediator or confounding variable to better explain these relationships. The rationale for this lack of further statistical exploration was a conscious decision made by the primary researcher, as a way to contain the study’s focus to the first research question (What is the current representation of Gifted students who are identified as Black/African American in the New Orleans metro area?). While inferential statistics would provide an interesting examination of the descriptive data, the focal point of the initial research question is to provide novel descriptive data on the racial representation of Gifted students in the New Orleans MSA. It is noted that this goal was accomplished through the compilation of population data and calculation of representation indices. Thus, the study’s descriptive, quantitative data is novel and within the scope of the first research question to provide contemporary, descriptive data. However, this does implicate
Another area of limitation was related to attrition and recruitment of participants for qualitative inquiry, impacting both sample size and the breadth of represented voices. In terms of sample size, nineteen individuals were recruited, with nine individuals indicating their interest in joining a focus group. However, only four participants were able to enroll and participate in the study, with one focus group and two in-depth individual interviews. In alignment with proposed practices for qualitative inquiry, the discourse on sample size has been heavily debated and refined over the years. While traditional qualitative inquiry reflects earlier paradigms that focus on sample size, more recent literature reflects this paradigm shift: for example, Creswell (2013) indicated the standard number of focus groups to be around five or six, however in a few short years, Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that there is no set number and depends on the research questions, target population and topic.

Thus, contemporary scholars have recently agreed that there is no set sample size needed to ensure accurate data analysis, with more emphasis on data saturation in which “issues begin to be repeated and further data collection becomes redundant” (Hennink, Kaiser & Weber, 2019, p. 2). Despite the difficulties with attrition within the study, the research team found after six hours of qualitative data collection with participants, and eighteen hours of coding, that no novel themes were being generated from this specific group of participants. Hennink and Kaiser (2021) indicated that data saturation often is reached rather quickly and with limited numbers, when participants represent a niche or homogenous group of individuals: within this study, all participants represented a homogenous group, with all identifying as Black, cis-gendered women with advanced degrees in Psychology and/or Education, and at least five years of in-depth training and
knowledge in psychoeducational assessment within the various parishes within the New Orleans MSA. Based off these participant similarities (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021), the data reflects a high level of congruence and saliency of particular topics elicited from these participants. Thus based off of this high level of saliency, data saturation was concluded to be met and no additional data collected.

However, the limitation of attrition is still relevant to this study, in which potentially valuable perspectives from educators and other school personnel (e.g., administrators) were missing. One explanation for this dearth of other voices may be related to external factors shaping the landscape of the participant pool. Of note, this study was initiated and conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic; although video-conferencing was used to increase access, the demands of the pandemic on educators and school personnel may have reduced the availability of interested individuals to participate in the study. Although a wealth of qualitative data was elicited from only four homogenous participants, the circumstances imposed by the global pandemic may have limited the inclusion of new, novel ideas from school personnel. However, this may point towards future directions for research to include these voices.

Overall, limitations related to quantitative analyses, sample size and participant pool may serve as viable feedback to guide future direction. While typical conceptualizations of limitations implicate a negative impact on the quality and breadth of the research, it is evident that these limitations did not impede the presentation of strong, novel data that provided cogent answers to the research questions. Using neoteric methodology, the quantitative and qualitative data presents a wide expanse of (1) descriptive data on racial representation of students in New Orleans MSA’s Gifted
education programs, which demonstrates clear patterns of disproportionate under-representation of Black students in several parishes and across the New Orleans MSA. Additionally, qualitative data demonstrates (2) a clear thematic pattern of systematic, sociocultural biases against Black students that impact the referral and assessment practices employed by teachers, school personnel and psychoeducational assessment clinicians. Ultimately, the current data within the study provide a strong foundation for future directions in this area of research, using the same methodology and thematic analysis to further understand Gifted education in the New Orleans MSA, as well as other localities.
VII. Future Directions
With a host of elicited data and previous literature pointing towards clear inequities caused by systems of racism and oppression, questions (that has been asked by both participants, and scholars alike) center the proposed relevance and importance of Gifted Education – *what is the point of Gifted Education and do we even need it?* Despite scholars and even participant’s acknowledgement of racism and systemic biases, the elicited data demonstrate that Black families value Gifted education for that very same reason: as an avenue to escape and potentially lessen the systematic obstacles of oppression and marginalization. Poised as “playing the game”, it is equally important to acknowledge that until general education can fully serve all populations in an equitable way, Gifted Education is perceived as one many modalities to enforce and build that equity for Black students, especially those within the New Orleans MSA. Thus, scholars must continue to consider the salience of Gifted Education to Black American families in the New Orleans MSA as well as other localities, by continuing to produce future research on this topic.

There were a few areas not addressed in this study that would serve as excellent content area for future research. As stated in the limitations, the current study possessed a dearth of perspectives from school personnel within the topic of racial under-representation. Although the discourse may be occurring between professionals, in both informal conversation and formal praxis, this data has limited transliteration into empirical research (Carr, 2008). Thus, the genre of research would undoubtedly benefit from an exploration of standard practices and perspectives from school personnel, particularly their own perspectives and beliefs on why and how Black children continue being under-identified. Although the same qualitative methodology could be employed,
future research must be mindful of the circumstantial barriers that impact school personnel interest and attrition. Thus, more meaningful strategies for ensuring participation must be employed, such as limiting the time expectation; this could look like limiting school personnel using their personal time to participate, and rather coordinating with local schools to potentially use scheduled professional development days to recruit and conduct the study.

An additional concern from the limitations, is the concern for building upon the quantitative data with inferential analyses. As previously indicated, the focal point of the quantitative data in this study was to provide novel, descriptive data on the racial representation of Gifted students in the New Orleans MSA. However, there were prominent relationships between three variables pulled from the quantitative data; however, without inferential statistical analysis, it is unclear whether there is a mediator or confounding variable to better explain these relationships. Future research could continue to build upon the descriptive analyses to understand the presented correlational relationships between racial composition of schools, enrollment rates and Black American students’ representation indices across the different parishes. This may look as providing multiple regression models or other advanced hierarchical models of prediction. Also, as the literature and elicited data suggests, the racial composition of teachers may also play a role in Gifted enrollments; because this data may be publicly available, it would be informative to understand the role teachers have as well on current statistics of Gifted enrollments. Again, this may appear as compiling 2017-2018 teacher racial composition for each parish, and including it any regression or predictive statistical analyses.
Lastly, the elicited data also captures a broad scope of data, including more in-depth technical information on special education in Louisiana, clinician training processes for psychoeducational assessments and Gifted assessments, as well as potential solutions for ameliorating disproportionate representation for Black students. Although this data was independently elicited from participants, this data was not fully addressed within the scope of this paper, due to its’ relevance to the research questions. Thus, future research could focus on analyzing this available data, and generating theory of progress and change within Gifted Education. Since this data has already been transcribed, and coded, future research would be a description of these results and implications for the literature base within a discussion. Overall, the potential future directions for this research builds upon the foundations of the current study, utilizing solid methodology and already compiled and collected quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the problem of disproportionate representation within the New Orleans MSA.
VIII. Appendix A:
Tables and Figures
Table 1

Systematic Literature Search for Information on Gifted Services, by Parish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Is there a parish school board website for Gifted Education services?</th>
<th>Is there any available information about specific services?</th>
<th>What services are available?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Accelerated classrooms, extracurricular opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Accelerated classrooms, extracurricular opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Specialized academy, accelerated classrooms - Gifted and Scholastic Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Racial Demographics of New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, Spring 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total Student Population</th>
<th>Population of Students Enrolled identified as Black</th>
<th>% of Student Population identified as Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>47,648</td>
<td>16,604</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>43,875</td>
<td>33,962</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>3,819</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>7,891</td>
<td>2,395</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>9,478</td>
<td>3,061</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>3,479</td>
<td>2,082</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>4,931</td>
<td>3,627</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122,214</td>
<td>63,687</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Enrollment Data: Student Attributes Feb 2022 Multi stats (Total by Site and School System). (Louisiana Department of Education, 2022)
### Table 3

**Racial Demographics of New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, 2017-2018 Academic Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total Student Population</th>
<th>Racial Majority (&gt;50%) of the School</th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Hispanic/ Latinx</th>
<th>Indigenous/ Native American</th>
<th>Multiracial (Two or more Races)</th>
<th>White/ Caucasian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>49,328</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>19,236 (39.0)</td>
<td>2,267 (4.6)</td>
<td>13,694 (27.8)</td>
<td>201 (0.4)</td>
<td>1,393 (2.8)</td>
<td>12,528 (25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>46,080</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>38,518 (83.6)</td>
<td>789 (1.7)</td>
<td>2,985 (6.5)</td>
<td>91 (0.2)</td>
<td>535 (1.2)</td>
<td>3,135 (6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>4,085</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,156 (28.3)</td>
<td>245 (6.0)</td>
<td>278 (6.8)</td>
<td>63 (1.5)</td>
<td>150 (3.7)</td>
<td>2,188 (53.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>7,753</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2,353 (30.3)</td>
<td>196 (2.5)</td>
<td>993 (12.8)</td>
<td>42 (0.5)</td>
<td>287 (3.7)</td>
<td>3,877 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>9,653</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3,346 (34.7)</td>
<td>134 (1.4)</td>
<td>645 (6.7)</td>
<td>27 (0.3)</td>
<td>238 (2.5)</td>
<td>5,254 (54.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>3,891</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2,406 (61.8)</td>
<td>9 (0.2)</td>
<td>74 (1.9)</td>
<td>5 (0.1)</td>
<td>16 (0.4)</td>
<td>1,381 (35.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>6,086</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4,740 (77.9)</td>
<td>19 (0.3)</td>
<td>442 (7.3)</td>
<td>3 (0.05)</td>
<td>122 (2.0)</td>
<td>755 (12.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>38,549</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7,322 (19.0)</td>
<td>534 (1.4)</td>
<td>2,571 (6.7)</td>
<td>130 (0.3)</td>
<td>992 (2.6)</td>
<td>26,962 (69.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165,425</strong></td>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td><strong>79,077 (47.8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,193 (2.5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,682 (13.1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>562 (0.34)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,733 (2.3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>56,080 (33.9)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Enrollment Data: Student Attributes Oct 2017 Multi stats (Total by Site and School System). (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017) * Of note, Jefferson Parish was the only parish to not have one racial demographic have over 50% majority; for correlations, Jefferson Parish was counted as Black majority.
Table 4
Representation Indices of Gifted Students in New Orleans Metro Area Public Schools, All Races

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total # of Gifted Students</th>
<th>% of Students Enrolled in Gifted</th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Hispanic /Latinx</th>
<th>Indigenous /Native American</th>
<th>Multiracial (Two or more Races)</th>
<th>White/ Caucasian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>2,822</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,590</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.47</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.47</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.84</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>Total # of Gifted Students</td>
<td>% of Students Enrolled in Gifted</td>
<td>Black/ African American Only</td>
<td>Black and Indigenous (BIPOC) Students</td>
<td>Non-White Students</td>
<td>Racial Majority (&gt;50%) at School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>2,822</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>None – Even Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,590</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.44</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.55</strong></td>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1
Phases of Mixed-Methods Design

(2) Compile parish data on total school enrollments by race, and total Gifted enrollments by race
(3) Calculate Representation Indices for eight parishes:

- Focusing on gaining representation across NOMSA
- Particularly focusing on largest Parishes, and Parishes with highest disproportionalities
- Iterative process, recruitment occurring until data saturation

Focus Groups & Interviews
- Novel, qualitative data collection
- General, broad sweeping questions
- Questions derived from literature base findings
- Culture-specific questions elicited from descriptive quantitative data

Coding Qualitative Information
- Grounded Theory
  - Data Transcription
  - Open/Initial Coding
  - Focused Coding
  - Generation of Axial Codes
  - Labeling Themes

Generation of Theory
- Does the presented data reflect the lived experiences?
- How do perceptions of stakeholders impact ID processes?

Consensus Building with Secondary Coder (Research Assistant)

Figure 2
Phases of Participant Recruitment and Participant Attrition

Phase 1
- Six (N =6) individuals contacted for interest in recruitment
- Two (N = 2) individuals confirmed interest
- One enrolled in study (n =1)

Phase 2
- Five (N =5) individuals contacted for interest in recruitment
- Two (N = 2) individuals confirmed interest
- Two enrolled in study (n =2)

Phase 3
- Eight (N =8) individuals contacted for interest in recruitment
- Five (N = 5) individuals confirmed interest
- One enrolled in study (n =1)

Total Enrollment
- 4 enrolled participants
  - 1 Focus group with 2 participants
  - 1 individual interview with 1 participant
  - 1 individual interview with 1 participant
Figure 3

Theory for the Disproportionate Underrepresentation of Black Gifted Students in the New Orleans MSA

Problems in the Referral Process
Referrals are too subjective
Teachers don’t know what to look for when it comes to BIPOC

Problems in the Assessment Process
Tools lack cultural responsivity
Clinicians lack cultural responsivity in their clinical judgement

Black Students do not get referred, and thus identified

Historical Systematic Problems

Risk Factors
• Racial Biases Against Black Students
• Lack of Family Resources
• Adverse Life Experiences

Protective Factors
• Parent/Family Support
• Supportive & Engaged Stakeholders

Under-Identification

Disproportionate Underrepresentation

Black students are not perceived meeting Gifted criterion based on subjective observations

Black Students do not get equitable testing experience
Black students don’t meet evaluation criterion set forth by Bulletin 1508

Black students are not perceived meeting Gifted criterion based on clinical error
IX. Appendix B:
Supplemental Documents
Supplement #1
Focus Group Protocol Script

**Introduction:** [Hello everyone, I’m (investigator name) and I’m very excited that everyone is ready to be part of this study. This study is being conducted because we are interested in learning more about gifted education identification practices in New Orleans metropolitan area schools from the perspective of stakeholders like yourselves, who are directly involved in this process. We’ll be spending about ninety minutes together to discuss this.

Because we will be discussing potentially sensitive topics related to biases and privilege, we ask that everyone be respectful, such as using respectful language, and allowing others to express their perspectives. The information we will discuss in this discussion is confidential, so we ask that conversations, names and any content we discuss in this discussion not be repeated outside our discussion.

If at any time you do not feel comfortable, you are not obligated to answer the question or participate in the study. In terms of Zoom etiquette, we ask that you keep your video on throughout the recording, and microphone on mute while others are speaking. Can I get a nod or a yes that I have your permission to record? *(Allow time for individuals to affirm)*

Okay, so before we jump into questions, let’s introduce ourselves. I want everyone to go around and say their first name, their role in Orleans Metro area schools, your area of expertise interest, and one fun fact about yourself. *(Allow time for individuals to introduce themselves)*.

Okay we’re going to get started with the questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe gifted education (GE) in the schools you have worked in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the purposes/goals in the Gifted program at the schools you were in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What are the benefits of a Gifted program for . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Parents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Teachers/school personnel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you believe there are benefits for children to be in Gifted programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>IF TALENTED COMES UP:</em> Why do you think there is a discrepancy in the referrals to Talented and Gifted?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Demographics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Thinking of your current school, describe the students who are typically in gifted education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What does an ideal gifted student look like to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What things do you look for identifying gifted students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What kind of background or experience does an ideal Gifted student has?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification and Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. What are the expected/standard practices for getting students into Gifted Education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. What are the standard procedures look like in your specific school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
i. What/who are the different roles involved?

Identification
8. Who typically makes referrals?
   d. Why is that?
9. Are there metrics/tools used during the referral process?
10. What positives/difficulties are there with using this process(es)?

Testing
11. What kind of metrics (e.g., tests and tools) are typically used to evaluate children?
   e. How are folks trained to conduct these practices?
   f. Are these practices for training adequate for Gifted evaluations?
   g. [IF STANDARDIZATION COMES UP, ASK:] Do you feel standardization is congruent with culturally responsivity in testing?
12. What practical experiences have you gained in gifted evaluations?
13. Do you deviate or make accommodations to fit your student population?

Biases
14. Do you think these standard practices ID the kind of ideal students you described?
15. When thinking about these disparities, how do you think school personnel can…
   h. Add on to existing disparities (biases) in Gifted Education?
16. Considering these disparities, can you tell me what you think is the source of these inequities?

Wrap Up
17. How would you change any practice to identify the “ideal” students that you all described
18. What would be an ideal solution for addressing the disparities?


Reid, E. (2015). Development of gifted education and an overview of gifted education in the


XI. Researcher Biography

Sydney A. Wing is a seventh year doctoral student in the School Psychology, PhD program at Tulane University. At an early age, Sydney maintained an interest in the psychological well-being for children from traditionally and historically marginalized communities started forming as she developed an understanding and compassion for members of her community in West Philadelphia, PA.

This curiosity for addressing mental health needs in underserved communities was actualized during her undergraduate tenure at Xavier University of Louisiana, where she was a Psychology major, minoring in Spanish. As an undergraduate, she completed research addressing women’s occupational health and perceptions of health problems in underserved communities in the Dominican Republic and Peru.

Currently, Sydney’s research interests include addressing culture and context in psychological assessment, specifically focusing on the creation and adaptation of culturally-fair assessment tools as well as culturally-responsive assessment administration.

Following along this interest in equitable educational and psychodiagnostic assessment, Sydney has had the opportunity to serve as a Research and Development Graduate Intern at the Educational Testing Service. Along this path, she also served as a Clinical Psychology Intern in Assessment, Consultation and Evaluation at Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles.

After completing the doctoral program, Sydney will continue her clinical training for licensure, working towards her aspiration of becoming a practicing psychologist in underserved, Black and Indigenous communities and focusing on providing culturally-fair psychological assessment services and culturally-responsive supervision for trainees.