“HOW ARE THEY BEING HELPED IF I DON’T EVEN KNOW ABOUT IT?”:
ADVERSITY AND PITFALLS OF TWICE EXCEPTIONAL URBAN LEARNERS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of twice exceptional African American students in K-12 urban schools. Additionally, this study investigated the experiences of parents and educators in supporting twice exceptional African American students in urban schools. The sample comprised 8 twice exceptional African American students, 3 parents, and 5 educators, all of which came from a large, urban district in the Midwest. Three major themes emerged from the participants’ responses: (a) the significance of labels; (b) social and personal experiences of twice exceptionality; and (c) challenges and strategies in the school environment. Recommendations for educators (e.g., teachers, school counselors, and principals), the district, and parents are included.

Keywords: Special Education, Gifted Education, African American Students, School Counseling, Urban Schooling
This study is dedicated to my parents, Alvin and Sonya Mayes, and my siblings, Jay, Shayla, and Marcus, who have supported me unconditionally in all my endeavors.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As technology flourishes and becomes increasingly important in the world of work, students will need to be college and career ready upon high school graduation (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). As so, much attention has been given to educational reform efforts to increase student achievement. In his past weekly address, President Barack Obama (August, 2012) stated:

If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible – from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career. That’s why we launched a national competition to improve our schools. And for less than one percent of what our nation spends on education each year, we’ve encouraged almost every state to raise their standards – the first time that’s happened in a generation. That’s why we’ve invested in math and science education, and given states more flexibility on No Child Left Behind… because in America, higher education cannot be a luxury; it’s an economic necessity every family should be able to afford.

This urgency is reflected in increased reform efforts like the Race to the Top challenge and the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Since its onset in 2001, NCLB has called for specific educational benchmarks that students are required to reach as well as action for local schools to take if students fail to meet mandated benchmarks (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). In other words, NCLB calls for greater accountability in that statewide accountability systems are based on rigorous state standards in reading and
Students are to be tested annually in grades 3-8 to ensure that they reach proficiency standards, ultimately leading to all students being on grade level by 2014. The highlight for NCLB is that achievement data are required to be disaggregated by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency to ensure that no group is “left behind.”

While all U.S. public schools are held to NCLB standards, reaching these benchmarks is particularly daunting for urban school systems. For example, securing adequate funding for resources and hiring highly qualified teachers proves to be a constant challenge for schools in urban areas (The Education Trust, 2006). While challenges exist, several urban school systems have been able to successfully produce schools with proficient students. While no exact formula exists, these schools are able to sustain quick gains in academic achievement by building a collaborative school environment that seeks creative solutions to overcome challenges (Guhn, 2009; Herman, 2012).

Despite federal education reform legislation and strides made by individual districts, students continue to be left behind. More specifically, when compared to their White peers, African American students have lower levels of academic success (Brown, Anthony, Boykin, 2008; Davis, 2003) and limited access to rigorous courses (e.g. Advanced Placement Courses; Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; College Board, 2008). Additionally, African American students are often in classes and schools where the curriculum and school environment do not reflect positive images or contributions of themselves. In turn, these students frequently low achieve or underachieve (Davis, 2003;
Strickland-Dixon, 2011). African American students are also more likely to drop out of high school at disproportionate rates and more likely to receive disciplinary action when compared to their peers (Davis, 2003; Strickland-Dixon, 2011; Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank, 2012).

Moreover, parents of African American students often find difficulty in being involved in schools and collaborating with school staff to help support their students. Sometimes, they are even confronted with negative attitudes expressed by school staff (Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, & Tavegia, 2005; Williams, 2007). Thus, when parents have negative interactions with school staff, they are likely to avoid having any interactions and/or communications with members of the school community (Hayes, 2011; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). On the contrary, when they feel valued and believe that the school staff cares about their wellbeing and their child’s, African American parents are likely to engage school staff to ensure the academic success of their child (Hayes, 2011).

Regardless of efforts focused on increasing student success through educational reform, it is clear that both students and parents particularly in urban schools have experienced tremendous challenges. Educational reform is further complicated as educators closely examine students in special programs (i.e., gifted or special education.). As a whole, students in either special or gifted education experience challenges, but African American students in particular have a unique experience. African American students are both overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in gifted education (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2006; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008;
African American students with either label face challenges, including underachievement, stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995), lower expectations from teachers, and isolation from peers (Deshler, Schumaker, Lenz, Bulgren, Hock, Knight, & Ehren, 2001; Ford & Moore, 2004, 2006; Milner & Ford, 2005; Moore, Ford, Milner, 2005b; Obiakor, Beachum, & Harris, 2010; Peterson, 2009; Skiba, Polonit-staudinger, Gallini, Simmons.,2006).

Although the literature is growing with research on African American students in gifted or special education, few have captured the experience of those students who are both gifted and have a disability. Current literature focuses on the general experiences of White students who have a disability and are gifted, also known as twice exceptional students. Generally speaking, these students tend to fall under the radar due to their giftedness or disability masking the other (Brody & Mills, 1997; Foley Nicpon, Allomon, Sieck, & Stinson, 2011). Additionally, twice exceptional students may not have either exceptionality recognized if they are meeting grade-level expectations; thus, never seeming to possess characteristics related to giftedness or having a disability (Foley Nicpon et al. 2011). Moreover, as twice exceptional students navigate the school system, they may internalize negative feelings of low-self-esteem, self-doubt, and frustration (Moon, Zentall, Grskovic, Hall, & Stormont, 2001; Williams King, 2005) as well as externalizing aggressive or problem behaviors that make it challenging to maintain social relationships with their peers and family (Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & Doobay, 2009; Cash, 1999). These characteristics often make it difficult for twice exceptional students to
be academically successful. Therefore, when these negative feelings and experiences remain unresolved, twice exceptional students are vulnerable for academic low achievement and/or underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2002; Zentall, Moon, Hall, & Grskovic, 2001).

In a time of educational accountability for all students, it is critically important that stakeholders, such as teachers, school counselors, and parents, collaborate to ensure the academic success of students, including twice exceptional African American students. Yet, the literature on twice exceptionality has yet to include the voices of African American students. Thus, the specific educational and counseling needs of these students have not been at the forefront of neither educational nor counseling discourse. Given the scant research literature pertaining to twice exceptional African Americans in urban schools, educators (e.g. teachers, school counselors, and administrators) have had little or no training in this area.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

There is a dearth of research focusing on twice exceptional African American students, and there is even less research that focuses on those twice exceptional African American students who attend urban school systems. This study was designed to help educational stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and school counselors, better comprehend the unique experiences of gifted African Americans with disabilities. More specifically, this study examined twice exceptional African American students’ attitudes, perceptions, and experiences with their educators (teachers, school counselors, and
administrators). It also explored the perceptions of educators and parents regarding their experiences with working with twice exceptional African American students.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As previously stated, the twice exceptional literature has seen greater attention, particularly in understanding general experiences and related challenges. Further, the twice exceptional research has led to an even greater understanding of appropriate identification procedures and intervention programs (Foley Nicpon et al., 2011). Several studies have explored within group differences in the twice exceptionality population, including differentiation by disability and by gender. For example, Hannah and Shore (1995) investigated metacognitive skills among 12 gifted students, 12 students with learning disabilities, 12 average students, and 12 gifted students with learning disabilities. In this study, the two researchers found that the gifted males’, with learning disabilities, metacognitive skills were most similar to the gifted students. These students used their metacognitive skills more than the average students and the students with learning disabilities. In a later study, Hannah and Shore (2008) found that gifted male students with learning disabilities also used their metacognitive skills in high school but had lower levels of confidence in their abilities. However, as of today, no study has explored the intersection of disability, giftedness, and race as it pertains to African American students in urban schools. With this in mind, this study is significant because it fills a major void in the literature in relation to twice exceptional African American students, especially those from urban school contexts.
Because of the paucity of research on this topical area, there is little information available that addresses the *meaning, context, and process* by which these students form their perceptions and attitudes of educators. Despite African American students being in a unique position to give voice to their experiences in education they are often ignored (Ladson Billings, 1998). As the voices of African American students are silenced, educators, such as teachers, administrators, and school counselors, are left with an incomplete picture of the educational perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of twice exceptional African American students from urban school systems. If education professionals, such as school counselors, are expected to be leaders, advocates, and agents of change in the lives of all students (ASCA, 2012), then it is critically necessary that they gain the necessary knowledge of all the students they serve. It is believed that this study can provide valuable information to prospective and current teachers and school counselors who work with twice exceptional African American students. Further, it is intended that the study will also provide insights on what types of supports and services that twice exceptional African American students perceived to be useful or necessary.

1.4 Researcher Questions

Due to limited research on gifted African American students with disabilities in urban schools, this study was exploratory in nature. The primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the students’ experiences in urban schools and their attitudes and perceptions of educators. Another aim was to gain better insight on the experiences of teachers, school counselors, and parents have working with twice
exceptional, urban African American students. For this study, the research questions were:

1. How do students and parents understand what having a disability means in school?
2. How do students and parents understand what being gifted means in school?
3. How do the parents identify the needs of students and find the appropriate supports in school? How are students a part of that process?
4. What are the needs of parents who are raising a twice exceptional African American student?
5. What are the strengths, challenges, and needs for teachers and school counselors who work with twice exceptional African American students and their parents?

1.5 Limitations of the Study

For the study, the researcher used qualitative methods (e.g., individual interviewing) because of the lack of research pertaining to twice exceptional African Americans in K-12 urban schools, including the experiences of educators, such as administrators, teachers, and school counselors. There is a tremendous gap in the literature concerning the experiences of twice exceptional African American students as told by them. Thus, these students are in the best position to speak about their experiences, adding another crucial piece to school discourse.

The sample size was a limitation for this study, particularly with the small number of parent participants. Although the researcher used multiple methods to recruit parents
(i.e. phone calls and letters home), only three parents consented to participate in the study.

The students in this study all attended high school in the same Midwestern school district. Although federal and local gifted education policies are similar for all of the schools that the students attend, implementation of gifted curricular and special education services depends heavily on the professional expertise, beliefs, and resources within the school and school system (Azano, Missett, Callahan, Oh, Brunner, Foster, & Moon, 2011). Student expectations of the educators also play a critical role. Thus, the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences that students share are shaped by the school staff that implement the curricular and provide the needed supports.

In the literature, the educational challenges with identifying twice exceptional students are well documented (Brody & Mills 1997; Foley Nicpon et al., 2011). Students’ disabilities often mask their giftedness or vice versa. As such, there may be students who are twice exceptional who have not been properly identified by the local school district. Therefore, the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences shared in this study do not reflect the experiences of African American students who have not been properly identified as being twice exceptional. Instead, it reflects the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences who have been identified for gifted and special education services.

In qualitative research, rigorous data collection procedures are used to present the rich descriptive realities of the participants. The researcher is usually the primary instrument for data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Creswell, 1998). Because of the researcher’s experiences as a school counselor and teaching assistant working with
gifted and twice exceptional students, bias in her perceptions presents potential threats to this study. To minimize bias, the researcher increased the levels of credibility, transferability, dependability, and authenticity to maintain the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, the primary goal of this qualitative study was to provide in-depth, rich descriptions of the subjective experiences of the participants. To this end, the themes of this study were descriptive in nature and were not generalizable to the larger, twice exceptional African American student population in urban school contexts.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Gifted

In the current study, gifted refers to those students who have demonstrated evidence of high intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields. Such students are often eligible for services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school to develop these capabilities and are enrolled in a gifted education program in their respective school (P.L. 107-110, Sec. 9101. Definitions).

Disability

According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA; 2004), K-12 students with disabilities are those who have been identified with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning
disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness) are examples of the student disabilities identified under IDEA.

Twice Exceptional

Students identified as gifted and talented who also possess some form of disability, excluding students with cognitive disabilities.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

In most cases, once students are identified for special education services, they are required to be extended an IEP, which serves as a means to provide individualized supports for the student. This is captured in a living document that outlines students’ present levels of academic achievement and functioning, measureable annual goals that meet students’ needs to be involved in the educational curriculum and other educational needs as a result of their disability, information about the students’ progress towards annual goals, timelines for reports on the students’ progress, evidence-based special education and related services to be provided to students, and accommodations necessary to measure academic achievement and functional performance on state and district wide assessment (IDEA, 2004). Additionally, IEPs may outline alternative benchmarks and assessments for students including a rationale as to why the student cannot take regular assessments.

Urban Schools

In the current study, all of student participants attend schools in an urban environment. Lee (2005) described the context of urban schools. For example, students in urban schools are more likely to drop out of school and those who graduate from high
school are often underprepared to enter college or the workforce. Urban students are also more likely to attend high-poverty schools which, in turn, relates to a lack of access to resources within and outside of school. Students often attend overcrowded schools with crumbling facilities and are taught more often by unlicensed and underqualified teachers. 

_African American and Black_

The two terms were used interchangeably to represent people of African descent.

_European American, White, and Caucasian_

The three terms were used interchangeably to represent people of European descent.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The current review of the literature addresses salient topics designed to provide
the reader with sufficient information needed to contextualize the research study.
Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was used as the theoretical
framework for the study; accordingly, student characteristics, such as race and gender, as
well as their interactions within the K-12 setting were emphasized. Given that this study
concentrated on African American students and their experiences in urban schools, any
such discussion would be remiss without a focus on the urban educational reform,
particularly from the federal level. After reviewing the educational reform literature, the
focus shifts to the topic of twice exceptional African American students. As noted in
Chapter 1, taken as a whole, the research literature on twice exceptional African
American students is scant. Based on the paucity of literature on twice exceptional
African American students, three categories were addressed, including, (a) trends in the
current twice exceptionality literature (Foley Nicpon et al., 2011); (b) the experiences
African Americans in gifted education (Henfield, Moore, Wood, 2008); (c) and the
experiences African Americans in special education (Skiba et al., 2008). These three
broad areas were addressed to provide a general description of the salient experiences and
factors to twice exceptional students in general and urban African American students in particular.

Finally, given the close relationship between academics and parental involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004), the investigation of twice exceptional students’ would not be complete without a comprehensive literature review of the role parents play in the success of their students, particularly in urban schools. Because students in urban schools are often impacted by aspects of their environment (i.e., living in poverty) collaborative efforts between the school and parents is often seen as a way to mediate the effects of the environment on student outcomes by increasing social supports (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In order for educators (i.e., teachers, school counselors, and administrators) to better support students, understanding and collaborating with parents is necessary. Therefore, this chapter includes a review of the literature on the (a) barriers to parental involvement for families living in poverty; and (b) solutions to increase parental involvement for families living in poverty. First, however, the literature review begins with a brief history of federal education reform.

2.2 Education Reform

Educational reform is often seen as an opportunity to bring about positive changes in student outcomes. While reform takes place at the school level, efforts are often guided by policy and legislation both at the state and national levels. Legislation, particularly at the national level, has expanded over the years to include outcome based standards for all children (Wong & Sunderman, 2007).
Educational reform is also rooted in international competition. More than fifty years ago, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik into space, which caused many nations to question their own educational systems (Kessinger, 2011). The United States responded with greater attention and intensity on their respective educational practices, particularly with more focus on science, technology, and mathematics. With those beginnings, educational reform began to find a place at the national level. In the last 30 years, the United States has seen even greater reform efforts in national education reform which has called for greater accountability in student outcomes.

2.2.1 A Nation at Risk (ANAR; 1983)

A Nation at Risk was a report written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education to provide both defined and provided solutions facing the American education system. The report called American education mediocre at best, stating that “educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them” (ANAR, 1983, p. 3). In addition to international competition, the authors argued that individuals who did not possess a certain level of skills or education would be disenfranchised. In the report the authors also identified specific problems facing schools, which included differing and somewhat minimal high school graduation requirements, significantly less time spent in math and science courses when compared to other industrialized nations, and teacher preparation curriculum focused more on educational methods instead of content (ANAR, 1983).
A Nation at Risk marked the beginning of federal concern for K-12 educational outcomes. Despite that challenges that were ahead, the authors called for a United States’ education system focused on achieving excellence in education for all students, including diverse populations. Excellence, according to the authors, was three-fold. At the individual level, excellence referred to pushing through personal boundaries to be successful in both school and the workplace. At the K-12 school or college level, excellence referred to setting and helping learners reach high expectations. Finally, when excellence was achieved at prior levels, a society could achieve excellence. This meant that a society which consisted of individuals who were educated and skilled who could respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

2.2.2 Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994)

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) was a revised version of America 2000, a plan which never received congressional support under former President George Bush, Sr. (Kessinger, 2011). Goals 2000 was an attempt to improve learning and teaching through a national framework for educational reform through “research, consensus building, and systemic changes needed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students” (1994). Eight goals were outlined in the Act, six of which are from the America 2000 plan (Kessinger, 2011). The goals (1994) included:

(1) all children will start school ready to learn; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%; (3) all students will demonstrate competency in
specific subjects in grades 4, 8, and 12; (4) the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century; (5) United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement; (6) every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (7) every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning; and (8) every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (National Education Goals section, para.1-8).

2.2.3 Improve America’s Schools Act (1994)

Just as Goals 2000 was passed, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized as the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA, 1994). It encouraged comprehensive reform at the state and local levels in order to meet national goals. IASA required states to (a) establish common statewide standards for all students in reading and math in grades 3 and up; (b) implement statewide assessments aligned to the standards in at least 3 grades; and (c) implement a statewide accountability system for evaluating school-level performance. Under the provisions of IASA, states still were granted full
autonomy to make instructional, governance, and fiscal policy decisions to support student achievement

The IASA had implications for urban schools, particularly those who receive Title I funds. Prior to IASA, Title I provided federal funding to improve the educational outcomes of schools with high concentrations of children living in poverty; however, these schools were treated at the margins and often held to a lower standard than non-Title 1 schools (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). With the passing of IASA, Title I was overhauled, and schools receiving Title I funds were held to the same high standards as all other schools. Therefore, schools receiving Title I funds were held to the same standards based reform, specifically in high content and performance in math and reading. Additionally, the minimum poverty rate requirement was lowered to 50% poverty in participating schools, down from 75% poverty.

2.2.4 No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was the next subsequent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which extended the provisions under IASA. NCLB represented even greater federal power in educational reform by calling for specific educational goals for students as well as what will be done when goals are not achieved (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). NCLB mandated for greater accountability in that statewide accountability systems are based on rigorous state standards in reading and math. Students were to be tested annually in grades 3-8 to ensure that students reached proficiency standards, ultimately leading to all students
being on grade level by 2014. To ensure that no group was “left behind,” assessment results were required to be disaggregated by poverty, race/ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. Schools that failed to make adequately yearly progress (AYP) for three consecutive years were required to provide supplemental programs to students to improve student achievement. If schools fail to meet AYP for 4 consecutive years, restructuring measures were taken by an outside of entity (NCLB, 2001).

Moreover, NCLB mandated the hiring of “highly qualified” teacher, granting state and local agencies authority over failing schools. Additionally, teachers were charged to use best practices, meaning teaching strategies that were evidence based and aligned to national and state standards.

NCLB had provisions that impact schools receiving Title I funds. These schools were, of course, held to NCLB standards, which focused on students performing on grade level. However, when Title I schools remained low performing or failed to meet State standards, local education agencies were required to use some of their Title I funds to provide students corrective action or the opportunity to attend a better performing school (NCLB, 2001). Low income students that attended schools that fail to meet state standards for three consecutive years were required to be provided with supplemental educational services from the public or private sector, which is also funded by Title I (NCLB, 2001). These services were required to be tailored to students needs to aid in reaching state academic standards.
2.2.5 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA;2004)

As previously stated, NCLB mandated that achievement data be disaggregated by specific student populations which included students in special education. Students in special education were also unique because of specific federal legislation and mandates regarding their identification, ongoing evaluation, and support in schools. More specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandates that students with disabilities be provided with a free and appropriate education with related services and supports to ensure they benefit from their educational experience. The major provisions included (a) students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education that is unique to their needs; (b) schools must use non-discriminatory and multidisciplinary assessment to determine student’s educational needs; (c) parents have the right to be involved in decisions regarding their child’s special education programs and supports; (d) every student must have an individualized education plan (IEP); and (e) every student has the right to receive his or her education with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. These provisions provided several benefits for students which included appropriate supports and teaching tailored to student needs and strengths at no cost to the parents or guardians. Additionally, students received an annual evaluation of their progress toward their educational goals as identified in their IEP. Schools also received benefits for identifying and serving students with special needs. More specifically, schools received additional federal funds that were to be used to support the educational success of students with disabilities.
2.3 Federal Education Reform and Urban Schools

As previously stated, education reform has been seen as a way to increase school achievement for all students, including students in urban schools. However, as states, districts, and schools adjusted to meet these new standards both challenges and strengths arose. The next section focused on challenges and benefits that stemmed from federal education reform.

2.3.1 Challenges of Federal Education Reform

Despite extraordinary efforts, educational reform stemming from the national agenda has fallen short. Although *A Nation at Risk* set the scene for greater federal authority in education reform, all subsequent education legislation has been met with great challenges. While the IASA provided a framework for educational reform and held schools receiving Title I funds to the same high expectations as other schools, states had full autonomy to make decisions on academic and performance standards. However, holding schools and districts accountable to high-stakes mandates proved to be difficult (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). Thus, only a handful of states were granted fully approved standards and assessment systems under IASA (Wong & Sunderman, 2007).

As a response to the failure of IASA, NCLB provided stricter requirements for educational goals. However, these stricter mandates actually further marginalized the students that they were intended to serve. In looking at data from the National Assessment for Educational progress, substantial gaps still exist for the nation’s most vulnerable students, students in urban schools. For example, while the gap in 4th grade
reading has narrowed, students who are eligible for free and reduced meals are still lagging behind students who are not eligible for free and reduced meals by 24 points (NAEP, 2012a). This trend is also present, when looking at race/ethnicity as Black and Latino children score 25 points lower than White children in reading (NAEP, 2012b).

As students fail to meet standards set by NCLB, schools are often identified as low performing and not meeting AYP. Under NCLB, when schools repeatedly did not reach AYP in all student categories, these schools were susceptible to state-driven reforms which may have included state takeovers and even school closure (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). Parents also had the option to enroll their student at a better performing school. However, when schools did not make AYP or close in urban areas, parents were less likely to send their student to a higher performing school (Chapman, 2007; Herman, 2012). In fact, if parents did send their student to a new school, they were likely to send their student to nearby, equally low performing schools (Herman, 2012). To this end, schools that have better resources and better student performance may be discouraged from opening their doors to students from low performing schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

In addition to policy, certain challenges still exist within the context of urban schools. As greater accountability was demanded, challenges too, began to surface for educators. For example, under NCLB, schools were charged to hire highly qualified teachers. However, urban schools continued to be disproportionately staffed with the least qualified teachers who were often inexperienced and underprepared (Diamond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2004; The Education Trust, 2006; Lee, 2005). Furthermore,
the sheer amount of needs of urban schools can cause issues for educators. Urban schools are likely to see a steady pattern of teacher turnover with teachers retiring or transferring to other schools, making reform efforts even more challenging in an unstable environment (Diamond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009).

Furthermore, increased accountability does not necessarily change beliefs and attitudes teachers have about students. Several researchers cite teacher expectations as a negative influence on students (Anagnostopoulos, 2006; Harris, 2012; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). More specifically, teachers tend to attribute negative student outcomes to background and ability variables of the student. For example, teachers in urban schools revealed lower expectations for students because of student and family factors like culture, home life, lower intelligence quotients (IQs), and lack of motivation (Harris, 2012). Additionally, teachers often blamed students for their own retention instead of examining school or teacher practices (Anagnostopoulos, 2006; Harris, 2012). So as standards for student performance and proficiency increase, teachers’ own low expectations may impede students’ ability to rise to the occasion.

Even more important than teacher expectations are the curriculum and practices that are put in place in urban school. Since the onset of NCLB, the delivery of content has seen many changes. Curriculum is frequently narrowed to reflect the subjects where there is high-stakes testing like reading and mathematics (Au, 2007; Diamond, 2007; 2012). Furthermore, instruction is fragmented focusing on specific skills being tested (Au, 2007; Diamond, 2012). While there may be an inflation of test scores, a narrowed, fragmented
curriculum leads to limited student knowledge and even fewer connections between subject materials.

An additional consequence of NCLB, in particular, is the punishment and reward system. Schools who struggle to meet AYP targets were labeled “in need of improvement”. While this label may be appropriate based on accountability standards, this label also overlooks significant growth in student performances, particularly in urban schools that likely started further behind other economically advantaged schools (Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). The AYP metric examines cohorts of students in terms of the proportion of students that reach proficiency which discounts the significant individual growth that students have made (Choi, Seltzer, Herman, & Yamashiro, 2007). Maintaining funding can create even more challenges for urban schools which already have little funding and resources (The Education Trust, 2006). For example, schools that have made vast improvements largely due to extra resources, like a reading or school improvement consultants, can lose those resources when they meet state standards. When these schools meet state standards, they may lose funding which directly impacts their ability to maintain resources that have made a positive difference in student academic outcomes (Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009).

Finally, schools that have struggled to reach federal standards are more likely to “game the system” to make accountability standards. Instead of making systemic changes, these schools often sought ways to make rapid growth in student educational outcomes. For example, some schools manipulated their enrollment by mislabeling students for special education so their scores “won’t count,” retain students to have better
grade-equivalent scores, and even encourage students to leave or drop out of school (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Additionally, schools focused their efforts on supporting “bubble kids,” students who are near proficiency cut scores (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond, 2012). When urban schools game the system by targeting the efforts on short term gains instead of systemic reform, they further marginalize low-performing students.

2.3.2 Benefits of Federal Education Reform

The landscape of urban reform seems covered with failed attempts at bringing about systemic changes in schools. Despite these shortcomings, there are benefits that have come from federal education reform. Perhaps one of the greatest outcomes of the federal education reform is related to the greater accountability measures, particularly targeting traditionally underserved groups. Prior to IASA, Title I provided funds to schools that served a high number of economically disadvantaged students. In a sense the focus was to mediate the effects of poverty through additional resources and programs. Schools that received Title I funds were required to test their students annually; however, the standards that they had to reach put them at the margins (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). These schools, particularly urban schools, were still viewed as being inferior and incapable of reaching the same benchmarks as other non-Title I schools. Once IASA was passed, Title I schools were held to the same standards as non-Title I schools and under NCLB, they had to demonstrate accountability (Wong & Sunderman, 2007).
It could be argued that the rewards and punishments are a negative outcome; however, in the larger picture, NCLB in particular creates accountability for all students. While aggregate data may provide a better picture of a school, data is required to be disaggregated by poverty, race/ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency; this is then reported to understand how subgroups are reaching AYP benchmarks. In looking at longitudinal NAEP data on 4th grade reading, it is evident that the achievement gap is being narrowed in each subgroup. For example, the gap between students eligible for the National School Lunch Program and non-eligible students has narrowed to a 27 point difference in 2011 from a 34 point difference in 2000 (NAEP, 2012a). Additionally the gap has been reduced to a 25 point difference in 2011 from a 34 point difference for Black and Hispanic students when compared to their White peers (NAEP, 2012b). Thus, the subgroup accountability initiated by NCLB has increased attention to traditionally underserved populations of students. Regardless of context or even belief about certain populations of students, schools can no longer turn a blind eye at certain populations of students. All schools are held accountable for all student outcomes.

Additionally, there are urban schools that have shown substantial growth under NCLB. As urban schools are likely to be labeled “in need of improvement,” finding ways to change the course of these low-performing schools can seem daunting. However, a growing area of research identifies case studies of successful school turnaround (Duke, 2011; Duke & Landahl, 2011; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). School turnaround is defined as a quick, dramatic gains in academic achievement at persistently low performing schools (Herman, 2012; Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene,
Maynard, Redding, 2008). Based on these case studies, Herman et al. provided recommendations that may prove to be viable practices in turning around low-performing schools. These recommendations included (a) signaling the need for dramatic change with strong leadership; (b) maintaining a consistent focus on improving instruction; (c) making visible improvements early in the school turn around (quick wins); and (d) building a committed staff. In addition to these practices, LeFloch, Herman, and Birman (2010) also provided recommendations for effective practices from school reform research. These recommendations included embedding professional development to aid in changing instructional practices; changing curriculum and instruction through use of data to monitor progress and aligning to state standards; providing greater flexibility to enact changes at the school level which includes staffing and budgeting decisions; and providing social and emotional supports to students to address the nonacademic needs of students at chronically low performing schools. While both school turnaround and reform research provide potential strategies necessary for school turnaround, more research is needed on the universality of each (Herman, 2012).

2.4 Twice Exceptional Students

Within the field of gifted education, students who are twice exceptional have received increasing attention. It is estimated that there are 300,000 twice exceptional students (Baum & Owen, 1988). Twice exceptional students may not have either exceptionality recognized if they are meeting grade-level expectations; thus never seeming to possess characteristics related to giftedness or having a disability (Assouline,
Students may be underidentified as either being gifted or as having a disability but not both.

The intersection of disability creates challenges for educational stakeholders as well as students. Despite ethical codes and obligations, educators are often puzzled in how to meet the needs of these students (Leggett, Shea, & Wilson, 2010). This may lead to potential errors in identification and educational placement of twice exceptional students. Twice exceptional students often experience challenges in reaching their gifted potential in the face of their own disability which can lead to underachievement (Nielsen, 2002). Based on the unique characteristics that twice exceptional students possess, they may be at risk for being excluded or even removed from gifted programs (Vantassel-Baska Feng, Swanson, Quek, & Chandler, 2009). Thus, twice exceptional students are in need of additional support and interventions targeted at creating more positive experiences in school.

It is also important to note that there is no clear definition of twice exceptionality. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), twice exceptionality could exist with all disabilities except for cognitive disabilities. While there are several different combinations of disability and giftedness, not all are well researched, especially in the context of giftedness (Foley Nicpon et al., 2011).

2.4.1 Identification

The identification and diagnosis of twice exceptional students poses several challenges. Challenges are often due to gifted characteristics masking disability or disability characteristics masking giftedness (Antshel, Faraone, Maglione, Doyle, Fried,
Seidman, & Biederman, 2008; Antshel, Faraone, Stallone, Nave, Kaufmann, Doyle, & Biederman, 2007; Baum, Olenchak, & Owen, 1998; Brody & Mills, 1997; Foley Nicpon, Doobay, & Assouline, 2010). An example of this may be in how a disability can affect a student’s performance on the assessments used to identify students for gifted education (Leroux & Levitt-Perlman, 2000; Nielson, 2002). Using curriculum-based assessments, meaning assessments that show student performance as well as student progress towards performance goals, would allow for fewer referrals to be made for students who perform average or above average despite the discrepancy between their performance and cognitive abilities (Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & Whiteman, 2010).

Additionally there are can be challenges with the referral process. For instance, Rinn and Nelson (2009) provided 132 preservice teachers with two profiles of a student with both gifted and ADHD characteristics. When presented with the option of the student being gifted only 29.4% of respondents suggested the student as being gifted or gifted with ADHD. When presented with the profile and asked what might explain the student’s behavior without the suggestions of gifted or gifted with ADHD, only 21.9% of the participants identified the student as gifted or gifted with ADHD. Related studies with pre-service school counselors (Hartnett, Nelson, & Rinn, 2003) and special and general educators (Bianco, 2005) have similar findings in that each group was less likely to identify students with disabilities with gifted characteristics to gifted education. When schools rely heavily on teacher referrals to initiate the identification process it becomes highly problematic as educators are more likely to identify students for counseling or social skills training for their disability rather than to be recommend students for gifted
education (Bianco, 2005; Hartnett et al., 2003; Reis, McGuire, Neu, 2000; Reis, Neu, McGuire, 1997; Rinn & Nelson, 2009). When they do not consider modifying their identification process to be sensitive to students with special needs, these students continue to be underserved and excluded.

While there are challenges in the identification process, several authors provided several suggestions towards identifying students who are gifted with disabilities. Instead of solely using performance on intellectual assessments, several authors suggested a comprehensive approach that focuses on intra-individual evaluative approach toward ability and achievement (Assouline et al., 2010; Brody & Mills 1997; Nielson, 2002). For example, this assessment may include a developmental history, insight to motivation behind student behaviors, and a diagnostic evaluation that includes formal testing and observation of social interactions and pragmatic use of language to understand if a student is gifted, has a disability, or both (Assouline et al., 2009; Niehart, 2000). Additionally, several authors suggest an interdisciplinary team that includes parents, teachers, and a mental health professional for a more comprehensive assessment of the student (Little, 2002; Niehart, 2000). For those students who are already enrolled in gifted education, identifying a potential disability may present several challenges. McCoach, Kehle, Bray, and Siegle, (2001) suggested monitoring students’ achievement test scores over time to detect declining performance despite their superior ability.

2.4.2 Characteristics and School Experiences

Twice exceptional students also face a myriad of academic, personal, and social challenges as they possess characteristics unique to their disability and giftedness. For
example, Assouline, Foley Nicpon, and Whiteman (2010) administered a battery of test to 77 students to assess academic talent and confirm or rule out disability. Fourteen gifted students with learning disabilities in written expression exhibited strong verbal abilities like verbal comprehension, conceptualization, and reasoning (Assouline et al., 2010; Ferri, Gregg, & Heggoy, 1997). However, these students had weaker nonverbal abilities in the areas of spatial abilities, decoding, auditory working memory, and processing speed (Assouline et al., 2010). Students often struggle academically as they explore their gifts while dealing with their disabilities (Assouline et al., 2006; Williams King, 2007). As students navigate the school system, they may internalize negative feelings of low self-esteem, self-doubt, and frustration (Moon et al., 2001; Williams King, 2007) as well as externalize aggressive or problem behaviors that make it challenging to maintain social relationships with peers and family (Assouline et al., 2009; Cash, 1999). For example, Antshel and colleagues (2008) investigated the similarities and differences in behavior and functioning of 92 gifted students and 49 gifted students with ADHD. The researchers found that gifted students with ADHD had higher levels of anxiety, exhibited more disruptive behavior, and experienced greater impairments in social, academic, and family functioning (Antshel et al., 2008). All of the characteristics can make it increasingly difficult for twice-exceptional students to be academically successful. Therefore, when these negative feelings and experiences remain unresolved, twice-exceptional students are at-risk for academic underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2002; Zentall et al., 2001).
2.5 Gifted African American Students

2.5.1 Identification

Identification for gifted education often begins with a teacher referral. However, there are many factors that teachers may consider when referring students for students beyond academic talent. Teachers may be influenced by their own perceptions and expectations of students based on cultural background. For example, when examining gifted nomination and identification data for the state of Georgia, McBee (2006) found that teachers are more likely to refer Asian and White students to gifted education when compared to the rate at which their African American and Hispanic peers are referred. This may be a result of the teachers' perceptions and stereotypes of what gifted characteristics students must possess to be referred, which often means that African American and Hispanic students are overlooked because they may exhibit gifted behaviors differently (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005b). Alternatively, teachers often have low expectations of African American students; thus, limiting their exposure to rigorous teaching (Ford & Moore, 2004).

In addition to teacher perceptions, standardized testing often plays a role in the identification process for gifted education. After a student is referred by a teacher, standardized test are administered and believed to capture the student’s potential for success in gifted education. However, standardized tests have been shown to be poor assessments of students of color academic potential due to cultural bias and stereotype threat (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002; Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005a; Steele &
Aronson, 1995). Continued use of these assessments keeps the enrollment in gifted programs to primarily White and middle class students (Ford & Harmon, 2001).

2.5.2 Characteristics and School Experiences

African American students who are gifted often have to negotiate their academic identity with their racial identity. As students are beginning to make sense of their own identity, they also encounter messages in schools that can be negative, stereotypical, racist, and oppressive (Moore et al., 2005b). For instance, researchers found that gifted African American students viewed their status in schools as abnormal as they were one of a few gifted African American students (Henfield et al., 2008). Of the 12 students who participated in the study, 9 discussed not wanting to standout but to be normal, meaning perceived to be the same as their non-gifted peers (Henfield et al., 2008).

It is believed that these students may not see themselves represented in the curriculum. In such cases, students may underachieve, dissociate from school, and even drop out of school (Milner & Ford, 2005; Moore et al. 2005b). Further, societal messages about black intellectual inferiority may also push gifted African American students to dissociate with their cultural background in order to avoid that negative stereotype. The research of Henfield, Moore, and Woods (2008) concluded that gifted African American students’ experiences were heavily shaped by teachers’ deficit ideologies and stereotypes of intellectual inferiority in that these students felt that they had to defy stereotypes and dispel myths. African American students who internalize this message of intellectual inferiority are at risk of “stereotype threat” as these messages influence the student’s
concept of self and their ability to be successful (Ford & Moore, 2006; Ogbu, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Stereotype threat does not always produce negative outcomes. Some African American students are motivated to disprove the stereotype and be successful (Henfield, et al, 2008; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Smith, 2003). For example, Moore et al. (2003) found that in order to prove their White peers and professors wrong, bright African American male college students in engineering felt they had to work twice as hard to prove they were capable. These students, in particular, had a positive sense of self and strong racial identity, and are more likely to be academically successful in the presence of the stereotype threat (Moore et al., 2003). However, the emotional and psychological tax that these students may carry to disprove academic inferiority may be burdensome (Moore et al., 2005a, 2005b; Moore, Ford, Owens, Hall, Byrd, Henfield, & Whiting, 2006).

In addition to stereotype threat, peer influences shape racial identity development and educational outcomes for African American gifted students. Students may not associate academic success with African American culture; therefore, students who are successful are accused of “acting White” may be ostracized from their peer group (Ogbu, 2003; Schultz, 1993). Students who are ostracized may underachieve, dropout, and fail to reach their potential in order to maintain connection with their peer group (Ford-Harris, Schuerfer, & Harris, 1991). However, students who view African American culture as a source of strength and inspiration develop more positive academic identities

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that enable them to academically successful (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Peterson-Lewis & Batton, 2004).

2.6 African American Students with Disabilities

2.6.1 Identification

Identification for students in special education often begins with teacher referrals. While there are many factors that can impact the referral process, teachers are often influenced by their own perceptions and beliefs when referring African American students for special education (Obiakor et al., 2010). For example, teachers may be motivated to refer African American students based on personality conflicts and difficulty in understanding cultural and linguistic differences, often resulting in a deficit view of culturally diverse students (Obiakor et al., 2010; Peterson, 2009). African American students are overidentified for being in special education and have greater probability of being labeled as having a cognitive disability or emotional disturbance (Skiba et al., 2008).

Students referred for special education services are administered assessments as a part to identify their specific disability. These assessments may include intelligence quotient (IQ) tests, the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV), Stanford-Binet, and the Woodcock Johnson. Although these assessments are standard use for identification for special education services, many contain cultural, social, racial biases (Agbenyega & Jiggetts, 1999; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Obiakor, 1999). Therefore, African American students are more likely to be placed into special education despite the known biases of the assessments.
2.6.2 Characteristics and School Experiences

In addition to being disproportionately represented in special education, African American students are disproportionately represented in more restrictive environments. Skiba and colleagues (2006) investigated special education placements based on race and ethnicity and found that African American students with disabilities are underrepresented in general education classrooms. Although educational placement may be linked to the overrepresentation of African American students in emotional disturbance and cognitive disabilities, Skiba and colleagues (2006) found that White students with the same disabilities as African American students often have different, less restrictive educational placements. Because of this placement, African American students with disabilities are less likely to have access to rigorous courses; therefore, these students are less prepared and even lacking the minimum requirements for postsecondary education (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011).

In addition to educational placement, African American students in special education face strenuous personal and social issues in schools related to both their disability and their racial background. For many students, placement in special education calls students to understand their own disability while simultaneously confronting the stigma associated with having a disability. Beyond general stigma around disability, African American students often confront societal beliefs concerning their intellectual capacity or lack thereof. In a study of the experiences of four African American women with disabilities, Peterson (2009) found that the intersection of race, disability, and gender created challenges for the participants. For example, each participant shared
experiences where others viewed them through a restrictive lens; thus, limiting their educational opportunities (Peterson, 2009). As African American students combat these stereotypes, they are likely to be placed in more restrictive and isolating environments. Additionally, they are met by their own negative perceptions and experiences as a result of their disability. These negative experiences can include a mismatch with the instruction, poor self-esteem, and absenteeism all of which lead to lower grade point averages and higher rates of academic failure (Deshler, Schumaker, Lenz, Bulgren, Hock, & Knight 2001). As African American students encounter negative experience they are at an increased risk for underachievement, disciplinary action, and school dropout (Deshler et al., 2001; Fowler, 2011; President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). With these factors, African American students with disabilities less likely to graduate from high school with the skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education and careers.

In addition to understanding disability, African American students are also trying to understand their own cultural identity. Just as with gifted students, the degree to which students developed both their racial and disability identities can greatly impact the success of African American students with disabilities (Mpofu & Harley, 2006). For example, students with higher levels of racial and disability identity experience increased levels of success in postsecondary careers. These students have greater access to internal and external resources. African American students with a high level of identity in either disability or racial identity also see great gains in their career. Their high level of identity in one area enhances their less enhanced identity. On another note, African American
student with low levels of racial and disability identities will likely struggle with completing some or even all of their vocational goals (Mpofu & Harley, 2006).

2.7 Parental Involvement in Urban Schools

Parental involvement is often seen as an effective strategy to bring about more positive student outcomes. For example, parental involvement has been directly linked with student academic achievement (Barnard, 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2012; Xu, Kushner Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner, 2010). When parents are involved in schools, students and their families increase their own social support and resources (Hill & Taylor, 2004). As a result, students have increased support and opportunities for enrichment which ultimately allows students to achieve greater levels of academic success (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

2.7.1 Poverty and Barriers to Parental Involvement

Although seen as an effective strategy to increase student success, the reality of securing parental involvement proves to be a challenge, particularly for urban schools who primarily serve families from low income backgrounds. Parents from low income backgrounds often have less flexible work schedules, lack of transportation, and lack of child care (LaRocque et al., 2011). It is believed that these occurrences frequently prevent families from being able to participate in school activities and events (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In addition to work and transportation limitations, parents are influenced by their own experiences in school. Parents who felt excluded and unsuccessful in their own schooling are less likely to engage in school activities of their children (LaRocque et al.,
Furthermore, parental involvement is influenced by the interactions that parents have had with their child’s school. For example, if parents have previously had negative or hostile interactions with the school, they are less likely to be involved in school activities (LaRocque et al., 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). Additionally, some African American parents report feeling looked down upon, isolated or alienated from the educational lives of their child and that they lacked the appropriate knowledge to participate (Ford, 1996; Smith, Krohn, Chu, & Best, 2005; Williams 2007).

In addition to the barriers that families experience on their quest to be involved in their child’s education, schools also have practices and beliefs that prevent parental involvement. First, schools often have a narrow view of parental involvement. School personnel more frequently define parental involvement as parents being present at school and communicating with teachers (Williams & Sanchez, 2012). This view of parental involvement discounts the additional constraints of low income parents who may focus more of their efforts on supporting students outside of school. School personnel may also hold negative perceptions of low income families which increase the distance between schools and parents, making collaboration increasingly difficult. Gorski (2012) illustrated four commonly held stereotypes about poor students and their families which include: (a) poor people do not value education; (b) poor people are lazy; (c) poor people are substance abusers; and (d) poor people are linguistically deficient. This deficit view can lead educators to have lower expectations or even blame students and their families for the barriers they face in their pursuit of education. Therefore, when schools seek to
address socioeconomic inequalities, they may focus on “fixing” students and their parents as opposed to working collaboratively to address needs (Gorski, 2012).

2.7.2 Increasing Parental Involvement

Despite these barriers, several models provide comprehensive strategies to build successful partnerships between schools, families, and the community. First, Epstein’s (2001) model of parental involvement provides 6 different typologies where parents can participate in their child’s education both in and outside of school. The six typologies include (a) parenting; (b) communicating; (c) volunteering; (d) learning at home; (e) decision making; and (f) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2001). To understand the applicability of Epstein’s framework in urban schools, Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and De Pedro (2011) examined parental involvement in 12 urban charter schools. The researchers interviewed school administrators about current parent involvement activities, the goals of parent involvement at the school, the techniques employed to obtain high levels of involvement, the ways in which parent involvement is monitored or enforced, and challenges to parent involvement faced by the school. The researchers found that parental involvement activities fell into the typologies outlined by Epstein. However, several schools had to make adjustments to meet the needs of the low income students from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the schools’ representation articulated their sensitivity to parent schedules, providing multiple opportunities for collaboration on different days and times both in and outside of school. Parents could participate in activities like in-class volunteering, school maintenance, school beautification, before, during, and after school. Results from this study suggest
that sustaining high rates of parental involvement in urban settings is possible when schools are sensitive to the specific needs of their student population (i.e., language, time constraints, and financial constraints).

In light of the both the challenges and effective models, there are also different ways to initiate the process of parental involvement and collaboration. As illustrated above with the models, initiating and sustaining parental involvement calls for innovated methods that are sensitive to the needs and strengths of families (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). Additionally, previous negative interactions between families and schools can complicate beginning parental involvement programs. Thus, more creative measures are necessary to begin the process.

2.8 Summary

This review of the research literature addressed salient topics designed to provide sufficient information to contextualize the current study. These topics included a history of federal education reform, the challenges educational reform in urban schools, and the benefit of educational reform in urban schools. Additionally, a brief overview an overview of twice exceptionality, as well as the experiences of African American students in gifted and special education was included. In closing, barriers and solutions to parental involvement in an urban context was also explored.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The recruitment and retention of gifted students with disabilities continues to be a challenge for many U.S. public schools. Gifted students with disabilities often remain hidden in typical classrooms because their disability masks their giftedness or their giftedness masks their disability (Foley Nicpon et al., 2011). Thus, these children are overlooked or underserved because their unique needs remain hidden within their disability and giftedness. Twice exceptional children experience a range of challenges based on the intersecting identity of giftedness and disability which include frustration, low self-esteem, and isolation from peers (Williams King, 2007). When negative feelings and experiences remain unresolved, twice exceptional students are vulnerable of low achievement and/or underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2002; Zentall et al., 2001).

While the twice exceptional literature is leading to greater discoveries about general experiences, challenges, and characteristics, no publications have captured the perspective of African American twice exceptional students, particularly those who attend urban schools. There is a growing body of literature on African American students in gifted or special education which suggest that their educational experiences are challenging, often as a result of the interplay of race within the context of school (Ford & Moore, 2004; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Henfield, Moore, Wood, 2008; Moore et al.,
However, there is a severe lack of literature on twice exceptional African American students in general and in urban schools in particular, which means that there is little information about the meaning, context, and process by which these students have formed their perceptions about disability, giftedness, and their experiences in school and the community. Additionally, parents have had a limited voice and not reflected in the literature base. As such, these questions must be asked: “What are the needs of parents and twice exceptional African American students?” and “How do school staffs collaborate with families of twice exceptional African American students to bring about successful student outcomes?” These questions are especially important for school counselors as they are student advocates, who often bring together teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to find solutions to meet student needs. For this reason, a qualitative methodology was used to collect in depth, detailed data about the way people experience and find meaning in their lives (Glesne, 2011).

Overall, this study explored twice exceptional African American students and their parents’ attitudes, perceptions, and experiences in both gifted and special education programs in urban schools. Additionally, this study explored the perceptions and experiences of teachers and school counselors, who work with twice exceptional students. By focusing on topics that are important for students and their parents, the study’s findings provided areas where school climate, culture, and personnel like the school counselor can work to better support African American twice exceptional students and their families.
3.2 Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role of parents in the experience, perception, and needs of African American families of twice exceptional students in urban schools. This study also explored how these students perceived themselves specifically in terms of their race, ability, and giftedness. This study also investigated the experience of teachers and school counselors who have worked with twice exceptional African American students. The research questions to pertinent to this study are the following:

1. How do students and parents understand what having a disability means in school?
2. How do students and parents understand what being gifted means in school?
3. How do the parents identify the needs of students and find the appropriate supports in school? How are students a part of that process?
4. What are the needs of parents who are raising a twice exceptional African American student?
5. What are the strengths, challenges, and needs for teachers and school counselors who work with twice exceptional African American students and their parents?

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of twice exceptional African American students in urban schools and their families by giving them the opportunity to tell their stories. Also, this study provided information on the experience
of school counselors and teachers who work with these students. In summation, the intent of this study was to examine how these students make sense of their intersecting identities (e.g., disability, giftedness, and race) in the context of school. According to the interpretivist approach, these individual experiences are socially constructed and reflect multiple realities in which students live (Glesne, 2011). Moreover, these realities impact the perceptions and meanings that individuals make in their environment and interactions with others (Glesne). Thus, interpretivism is a major aspect of the theoretical framework for this study.

Because qualitative studies are invariably interpretive in nature, the researcher’s interpretive lens is largely shaped by Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological perspectives indicate a hierarchy of influences that are most proximate and influential on development. This theoretical viewpoint illustrates how the environment impacts youth, but also how youth, in turn, influences these environments. Therefore, Ecological Theory is utilized as a theoretical underpinning for this study. Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that the developing child is surrounding by layers of interactional relationships much like nested Russian dolls.

Ecological Theory (1979) reflects five layer, which interacts with each other to directly and indirectly impact child development. The first, most inner layer, is the *microsystem*, which is typically the setting in which the child lives. This layer consists of individuals and agents that the child directly interacts with like family, peers, school, and the neighborhood. Moreover, the child is active in constructing this setting. The next layer is the *mesosystem*. This layer consists of connections and relationships between the
individuals and agents in the microsystem. For example, the relationship between parents and teachers or the family and church are both a part of the mesosystem. The third layer comprises people who are indirectly involved in the child’s development; this is called the exosystem.

The exosystem includes individuals like the parents’ employers and family health care workers who can influence child development indirectly. For example, parents with a demanding job may have a harder time committing to family activities. The fourth layer is the macrosystem includes attitudes and ideologies of culture in which individuals live. The macrosystem reflects the larger societal values, political trends, and community events that ultimately influence how individuals live. Included in the macrosystem are religious ideology, cultural norms and values, and customs. The fifth and final layer is the chronosystem, which speaks to the greater time and history around child development. The chronosystem encompasses the transition events that happen in the developing child’s lifespan which may including graduating from high school, entering the world of work, marriage, and sociohistorical events.

Ecological theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study for the following reasons:

1. Although the racism and marginalization experienced by African American students in schools and other learning contexts has been well documented (Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, & Suda; 2012; Henfield et al., 2008; Ogbu, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995), little attention has been given to intersection of race and ability status in gifted education, in particular twice exceptional African American
students. It is intended that findings from this study will illustrate interactions that the student has had within the system that has led to marginalization. As such, findings from this study also has the potential to stimulate discussion among colleagues and students in the gifted education community, particularly as it concerns the daily realities of African American gifted students with disabilities.

2. Parental engagement and collaboration has shown to be an asset to more positive student outcomes (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Kraft, 2003; McDonnell, Cavanaugh, & Giesen, 2012). While African American families may value education, building positive relationships with individuals in the school system often proves to be a daunting task. African American parents often experience isolation, racism, and may lack the appropriate knowledge to actively participate (Ford, 1996; et al., 2005; Williams, 2007).

3. Ecological Theory allows for more expansive but focused understanding of student development. More specifically, Ecological Theory offers a framework to understand the complex layers of school, family, and community relationships as it relates to individual student development.

3.3.2 Population

A Midwestern, large, urban school district provided the sample for the study. The district serves students pre-K-12 in a variety of educational settings at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. There are 67 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 14 neighborhood high schools, and 5 all district programs. The school district offers a variety of specializations at each level including special focus on science, technology.
engineering, and mathematics, as well as arts, Spanish and French immersion, arts, African history and culture, vocations, and performance and visual arts. Twelve of the high schools were recognized in 2010 by the U.S. New & World Report with silver and bronze designations.

This district provides a continuum of services for students, which include gifted and special education services. For example, the Gifted and Talented Department offers services based on students’ individual interest, ability, creativity, and demonstrated achievement for students who have been identified as having superior cognitive ability, specific academic ability, creative thinking ability, or outstanding aesthetic production in visual art, music, theater or dance. Students are identified annually by state approved standardized intelligence tests or achievement tests for superior cognitive or specific academic ability respectively. For creative thinking and visual and performing arts, students are first screened by a state-approved ability test or visual and performing arts specialist, and then a behavioral checklist is used to identify students as gifted in creative thinking or visual and performing arts.

In addition to gifted education services, the school district provides K-12 special education services, as mandated by IDEA (2004), for those students identified under the following disabilities: autism; cognitive disability (i.e., mental retardation); deaf; blindness; developmental delay; emotional disturbance; hearing impairment/deafness; multiple disabilities; orthopedic impairment; other health impairments; specific learning disability; Speech or Language Impairment; Traumatic Brain Injury; or Visual Impairment. A team of school staff and parents determine the eligibility for special
education services based on assessments, observations, medical information, and developmental history of the child. Then, an individual education plan is developed based on the individual needs of the child. These special education services are then implemented for the student by “highly qualified” teachers, therapists, and paraprofessionals.

The district as a whole, served a total of 410 twice exceptional students in first grade through twelfth grade. Of the population, 170 (41.5%) were female and 240 (58.5%) were male. African American students accounted for over half of the twice exceptional population (53.7%, 220 students) followed by White students at 36.6% (150 students), multiracial students at 5.4% (22 students), Latino students at 3.2% (13 students). Separately, Asian and Native American students each accounted for less than 1% of the twice exceptional population. Of the entire African American twice exceptional population, 161 (73.2%) were in high school. Only 13 (8.1%) of the high school students had been identified as being academically gifted and 4 (2.5%) were identified as being gifted in creative thinking, leaving the majority (89.1%) of twice exceptional African American students as being gifted in the arts (dance, vocal music, instrumental music, theater, and visual).

3.3.3 Participant Selection

Participants in this study included students, parents, teachers, and school counselors in the school district.

Students. The researcher recruited 8 African American high school aged students (between the ages of 14-20), who have been identified as having a disability and as gifted
and talented in superior cognitive ability, specific academic ability, creativity thinking ability, or visual and performing arts. The researcher chose to focus on high school aged students because: (a) this is the period of time where there is a significant transition from middle school to high school and where there is greater emphasis on academics for college and career readiness (Holcomb-Mccoy, 2007; 2010), (b) this is the age group when the onset of the disability mostly impacts identity development, when other identities may be filtered through a lens of disability, or the onset of disability may halt or stall the development of other identities like racial identity (Alston, Bell, & Feist-Price, 1996); and (c) this is the student population, in comparison to elementary and middle school aged students, that can reflect on a greater range of their schooling. In closing, it is believed that the high school aged group best positions the researcher to understand how key early experiences like duration in special education and or gifted programming has impacted student development.

Parents. In addition to the students, three parents and guardians of twice exceptional African American students participated in the study. These individuals are often seen as great support for student success. Moreover, their involvement in school has been linked to greater academic achievement for students (Bryan, et al., 2011; Epstein, 2001; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Inclusion of parents, in this study, allowed for the researcher to comprehend their perspective and understand the unique needs of their child as well as the strengths and challenges they faced when trying to find support from the school and greater community.
Educators. One school counselor, one special education tutor, one principal, and two district-level gifted education administrators participated in this study. These are the individuals who often provide support for students. Through culturally responsive teaching and fostering strong teacher-student relationships, teachers and administrators in are great position to help twice exceptional students be successful students (Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright, 2012). School counselors are also in good position to support the success of twice exceptional students. Further, they can aid in the personal/social, academic, and career development for students by creating interventions and programing that meet the unique needs of these students (ASCA, 2012). Moreover, school counselors can work with parents to provide a consistent network of support both in and outside of school (ASCA, 2012). The inclusion of educators, in this study, provided unique insights to the reality of working and supporting a twice exceptional African American student, including the successes, challenges, and areas where additional support was needed.

After gaining IRB approval (see Appendix F) to conduct this study, the researcher worked with a representative in the district to identify twice exceptional African American students enrolled in high school. The district provided the researcher with a list of all of the twice exceptional African American high school students which included their current school, grade level, gifted identification, and special education identification. The researcher then worked with school principals and school counselors to invite students to a recruitment session during the school day. Students who were interested in participating in the study were provided an envelope containing the
following: (a) a letter introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the study, (b) informed consent forms requiring signatures by the parent/guardian and student to be interviewed, (c) demographic questionnaires, and (d) a flyer containing information on when the researcher would return to their respective school to collect the completed materials (i.e., demographic questionnaire and informed consent form) and schedule the individual interview.

Sample size in qualitative research is often subjective; however, Creswell (1998) suggests that the number of participants should be between five and twenty-five. Additionally, given the nature of qualitative research, data collection is more about the richness and depth of data rather than merely the sample size (Jones, 2002). Therefore, the researcher included 8 twice exceptional African American students, 3 parents, and 5 educators bringing the total sample size to 16 participants. The participants are detailed below in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 (for complete description, see Appendix A).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Chosen Pseudonym</th>
<th>Student Chosen Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Special Ed. ID</th>
<th>Gifted Ed. ID</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>School Size</th>
<th>Free/Red Meals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>77-82</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Sarah</td>
<td>Chelby</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>77-82</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Tammy</td>
<td>Darnell</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>TBI</td>
<td>Instr. Music</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Helen</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>87.92</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Instr. Music</td>
<td>Less than 77</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Vocal Music</td>
<td>Less than 77</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Vocal Music</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trey</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Description of Student and Parent Participants’ Gender, Age, Grade, Special Education Identification, Gifted Education Identification, Grade Point Average, School Size, School Percentage of Free and Reduced Meals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chosen Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current Position</th>
<th>Years in Current Position</th>
<th>Years in District</th>
<th>Additional Experience in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Grace</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>District Gifted Ed. Administrator</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>English Teacher, Gifted Teacher, GED Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jacobs</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High School Special Ed. Tutor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>E.S. &amp; M.S. Special Educator, Art Teacher, Theater Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kimble</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>High School Counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>E.S. Art Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Russell</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>District Gifted Ed. Administrator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gifted Coordinator, M.S. Gifted Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Wallace</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High School Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>H.S. English Teacher, Instructional Coach (English), Adjunct Professor in English, Leadership Intern, Assistant Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Description of Educator Race/Ethnicity, Current Position, Years in Current Position, Years in the District, and Additional Experience in Education.

3.3.4 Data Collection

Qualitative research lends itself to multiple methods of data collection (Glesne, 2011). The following methods of data collection were utilized for this study: (a) individual interviews and (b) document collection.

*Individual Interviews.* All of the participants in the study took part in an individual interview for 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Because participants were local, both the researcher and participants worked together to find a mutually agreeable location to conduct the individual interview. A general interviewing guide was used to ensure consistency in the questions that participants are asked (Appendix B; Patton, 2002). The general interviewing guide included semi-structured questions, based on the researcher’s
experiences and a review of the literature prior to the individual interviews. Additionally, questions may be subtracted or modified depending on the responses of the participants before, during, or after the interview. This process allowed for systematic and comprehensive interviewing while offering flexibility to divert from the interviewing guide or ask follow-up questions related to participant responses (Patton, 2002). The researcher also took notes during the individual interviews.

Document Collection. The researcher collected the following information: (a) school demographic data, (b) special and gifted education policy data, (c) student demographic data, (d) community demographic data, and (e) family demographic data (see Appendix A). These documents were completed by students who agree to participate in the study after parental consent and student assent forms were collected. Once the researcher received all of the aforementioned documents, pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

While qualitative investigations of twice exceptionality are present in the literature, no study has focused on the experience of African American twice exceptional students. Given that educational outcomes are often shaped by race, it is important to include the voices of African American parents and students in these investigations. African Americans possess a unique voice that, when shared, deepens the understanding of the educational system and the challenges and barriers they may face on their educational pursuits (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Despite African American students and parents’ position, their voices are often silenced or ignored. As such, the researcher used
qualitative methods to illuminate the experiences of twice exceptional African American students and their families in urban school contexts. More specifically, constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to analyze the qualitative data and other data sources obtained for this study. Constant comparative analysis strategy typically involves collecting and analyzing data simultaneously (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this case, data were taken from one individual interview, statement, or theme and were compared to all other data that may be similar or different to develop conceptual categories that illustrate the relationships between the data (Thorne, 2000). This process continued throughout the investigation until all interview data had been compared with each other.

After the first interview was transcribed, the data analysis phase of the study began and continued with each additional interview being compared to its predecessor. Emergent themes were identified from raw data and indexed in a process called open coding (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this process, the researcher tentatively identified and named conceptual categories where observed phenomena were grouped. The goal of open coding was to create preliminary categories that are descriptive and multidimensional. In addition to describing data, analysis provided a new understanding of the observed phenomena.

To further refine preliminary categories, axial coding was used (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding allowed for the researcher to test the relationships of categories against data while continuing to identify indications of each category. Stated differently, axial coding was the process used to build and clarify categories by
examining data and identifying the variations within and between the categories to explain the observed phenomena (Charmaz, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This process also entailed re-examining the raw data and collecting additional data if gaps were discovered in the data (Charmaz). As a result of both open and axial coding, the researcher reported an account that “closely approximates the reality it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57).

From the beginning of data analysis, the researcher worked with two research team members (Appendix E) to analyze, compare, and contrast data. Data was first coded individually using the codebook (Appendix C) and coding worksheet (Appendix D) then meetings were held with the research team to discuss and compare patterns as well as assigned codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research team also identified and discussed emergent themes which were recorded using the coding worksheet.

3.4 Researcher Subjectivity

Researchers are the totality of their own experiences and personal qualities. These experiences and qualities ultimately influence interpretations of research data (Peshkin, 1998). For example, before confirming the exact focus of this study, the researcher spent three summers working for Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY), a world renowned gifted program. As a teacher, administrator, and counselor, the researcher interacted with over 600 students per summer, some of which were twice exceptional. In addition to CTY, the researcher also conducted an exploratory interview with a gifted African American student with cerebral palsy and his mother as a part of doctoral qualitative research class. Both experiences provided valuable insights regarding the
lives of twice exceptional students. However, these experiences, in conjunction with an extensive review of the literature, combined to shape the researcher’s assumptions prior to conducting the study, which are as follows:

1. Twice exceptional African American students experience gifted and special education programs differently from other students.
2. Twice exceptional African American students may experience more difficulty in achieving positive self-identity (i.e. racial, disability, academic) compared to their peers.
3. Parents of twice exceptional African Americans are involved in their child’s education differently from other parents.
4. Twice exceptional African American students and their parents have low perceptions of educators.

Although the researcher’s aforementioned experiences allowed for certain advantages in conducting this study, these experiences led to certain subjective biases that are accounted for in the writing of the research findings. Therefore, specific tactics as outlined below were employed to produce a more trustworthy study and to prevent any misrepresentation of participants.

3.5 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the researcher is in a position of power as the interpreter of the data. However, as a part of this study, the researcher incorporated a myriad of methods to decrease the probability of unethical behavior and to ensure a more trustworthy study. In qualitative research, trustworthiness depends on the extent to which
researchers take steps to increase levels of credibility, transferability, dependability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the researcher is able to accurately capture the views of those being researched (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As previously stated, all research is subjective and certain measures must be taken to balance researcher interpretation and participant meaning (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). In this study, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking were used to ensure the credibility of the findings. More specifically, *data, investigator, and methodological* triangulation were used to increase the credibility of the research findings.

1. *Data triangulation* was implemented by the following sources (see Appendix A for additional demographic information):
   
   a. Twice exceptional African American students and parents who have had experience with educators.
   
   b. Twice exceptional African American students and parents who have not had experience with educators.
   
   c. Students of varying academic achievement levels.
   
   d. Parents of varying levels of school engagement and collaboration.
   
   e. Educators who have worked with twice exceptional African American students and their families.

2. To ensure *investigator triangulation*, the following techniques were implemented:
a. Several scholars suggest enlisting the support of an external auditor (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). An external auditor is a skilled colleague who is not directly involved with the research study, who can provide critical feedback on the development of and finding of the study. This allowed the researcher to clarify thoughts, probe any researcher biases, and challenge presumptions or interpretations throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

b. Additionally, member checking was used to ensure that the researcher’s “interpretations honor the meaning as conceived by participants” (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). The researcher performed member checks throughout the study where participants were asked for clarification of their interview responses. Additionally, once data was coded and categorized, the researcher verified categories and themes with participants.

3. The methodological triangulation techniques were utilized (see Appendix A for more information):
   a. Individual interview data
   b. Student demographic questionnaires
   c. School data
   d. Family data
   e. Community data
3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the measures taken by the researcher to provide sufficient contextual data that can be generalized to other similar cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a technique of transferability, the researcher provided thick descriptions of the events conveyed during the individual interviews of participants. Further, the interview questions were comprehensive to gauge meanings that students, parents, and teachers attach to their environment. The researcher also maintained a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to record the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions as a means of researcher introspection and understanding.

3.5.3 Dependability

In order for a qualitative study to be deemed dependable, researchers must document and systematically follow a set of procedures and analytic strategies (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). Therefore, a logical, traceable, documented audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was established which illustrates a rigorous and reproducible research study. For this study, the following techniques were utilized in the creation of said audit trail:

1. Raw data (i.e., interview records, demographic questionnaire results, school data)
2. Data reduction and analysis (i.e., summaries and working hypotheses)
3. Data reconstruction and synthesis (i.e., themes, definitions, relationships, interpretations, inferences, connections to existing literature and integration of concepts, relationships and interpretations)
4. Process notes (i.e., methodological notes including procedures, strategies, decisions and rationale, documentation regarding trustworthiness including external auditing, member checking, etc.)

5. Intentions and disposition (i.e., proposal, personal notes and reflections, expectations and predictions)

6. Instrument development (i.e., protocols and demographic questionnaires).

7. A reflexive journal was also instrumental in increasing the dependability of the study.

3.5.4 Confirmability

In order to meet the trustworthiness standard of confirmability, the researcher presented the data in an objective manner that is clear and discernible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To this end, the aforementioned techniques of triangulation, member checking, and reflexive journaling were used.

3.6 Authenticity

In essence, authenticity is the attempt to synchronize the goals of the researcher with the needs of the people being researched (Spradley, 1979). To balance the needs of the researcher and participants, the researcher was open and honest with participants throughout the study. For example, as a part of the informed consent process, the researcher noted that a major reason for their current interaction is for dissertation research. However, the researcher also communicated that the focus on this topic stems from a deep desire to improve policies and practices that impact the experiences of twice exceptional African American students and their families in schools. As such, students
and their families were made aware of their integral role in providing their personal insights and experiences to enhance the study and push the dialogue on twice exceptionality forward.

3.7 Interpretation and Representation

Qualitative research focuses on shining the light on live experience. This is particularly important for students and families of color whose voices often remain silenced in education. However, given that the researcher inherently holds power as the interpreter of participants’ stories, certain precautions were taken to honor, rather than exploit participants’ experiences. To avoid exploiting participants, the researcher took on the role of a learner, who is seeking to understand the experiences and motivation of participants. Moreover, member checks (Glesne, 2011; Nutt, Williams & Morrow, 2009) were conducted to ensure that the researcher’s interpretations are close to the data, illuminating the participants’ lens on their individual experiences. This allowed the researcher to show, not tell, the experiences of the participants.

Additionally, writing illustrates the meanings of participants in the contexts of their lives. However, researchers must strive to find a balance between their own subjectivity and participant meaning (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). To account for this, the researcher took the following precautions during the final writing of the data:

1. The participants were allowed to talk and explain their own reality through lengthy quotes and vignettes.
2. Writing was in the language of the participants.
3. An autobiographical style was used.
These precautionary measures served as a means to bridge research, policy, and practice, in addition to providing evidence of the collaborative efforts of the researcher and participants.

3.8 Summary

In summary, chapter three provided an overview of that research study, which included the several research questions, research design, theoretical framework, population, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, representation, and trustworthiness.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the participants and a synthesis of the findings. As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of twice exceptional African American students in urban schools. Moreover, this study examined the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of parents and educators (e.g., teachers, school counselors, and administrators) on working with twice exceptional, African American students in urban schools. The following research questions were examined:

1. How do students and parents understand what having a disability means in school?
2. How do the students and parents understand what being gifted means in school?
3. How do the parents identify the needs of students and find the appropriate supports in school? How are students a part of that process?
4. What are the needs of family members who are raising a twice exceptional African American student?
5. What are the strengths, challenges, and needs for teachers and school counselors who work with twice exceptional African American students and their parents?
4.2 Demographic Characteristics

Table 4.1 describes the gender, age, and grade distribution of the student participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Student participants’ frequencies and percentages by gender, age, and grades.

Table 4.1 also indicates that 3 (37.5%) student participants are male and 5 (62.5%) student participants are female. Student participants’ ages ranged from 14 to 19, with 6 (75%) being 16 or older. Further, all of the participants were in high school, 25% in 9th grade, 25% in 10th grade, and 50% in 12th grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Free and Reduced Meals</th>
<th>School Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Less than 77</td>
<td>77-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Student participants’ frequencies and percentages by grade point average, free and reduced meals, and school size.

As Table 4.2 indicates, of the 8 student participants, 12.5% had grade point averages between 87 and 92 while 50% had averages below 82. Each student attended high schools in an urban district, where the majority of the student population was on free and reduced meals (see Appendix A). Of the 8 student participants, 7 (87.5%) reported being on free and reduced meals, while 1 (12.5%) did not indicate this point. The
majority of the participants (87.5%) attended schools with a student enrollment less than 850 students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Special Education Identification</th>
<th>Gifted Education Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Student participants’ frequencies and percentages by special education identification and gifted education identification.

Table 4.3 indicates that 62.5% (5) participants were identified as having a specific learning disability. Of the 8 participants, 25% were identified as having emotional disorders, and 12.5% had a traumatic brain injury. According to the table, the majority of the participants were identified as being artistically gifted in instrumental music, vocal music, or dance, while 1 participant was identified as being visually gifted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education by Primary Parent or Guardian</th>
<th>Living Arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>H.S. Diploma 2 Yr Degree 4 Yr Degree Some Grad./Prof or School Grad./Prof. Degree Single Parent Home Two Parent Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>50% 12.5% 12.5% 12.5% 12.5% 12.5% 75% 25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Student participants’ frequencies and percentages by participants’ primary parent or guardian’s highest level of education and living arrangement.

As Table 4.4 illustrates, 50% of the participants reported the highest level of education obtained by their primary parent was a high school diploma. The number of participants reporting their highest level of education obtained by their primary parent
was a 2 year degree, 4 year degree, some graduate or professional school, or a graduate or professional degree was evenly dispersed (12.5%). Of the 8 participants, only 2 (25%) reported being in a two parent home. Further, of the six students who indicated being in a single parent home, 2 reported living with their grandmother, 2 reported living with their mother, 1 reported living with an adoptive mother, and 1 reported living with a foster mother.

Table 4.5 describes the race/ethnicity, gender, and current educational setting of the educators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current Educational Setting</th>
<th>Experience Teaching Gifted classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Educator participants’ frequencies and percentages by race/ethnicity, gender, current educational setting, and experience teaching gifted classes.

As Table 4.5 illustrates, 60% (3) educators identified themselves as African American while 40% (2) educators identified themselves as being White. Only two of the educators are males while 3 are female. Of the 5 educators, three are currently working in high schools while 2 are working at the district level in administration. Only 2 (40%) educators, the district level gifted administrators, have experience in teaching gifted classes.

4.3 Theme Emergence

As previously mentioned, the research used constant comparison approach (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for data analysis. Throughout the data
collection process, individual interview transcripts and interview notes, and collected documents (i.e. demographic data, community data, and school data) were reviewed. During data analysis, the researcher assigned codes to raw data and systemically organized a codebook (see Appendix C for descriptions and examples) developed by the research literature.

Individual interview transcripts and interview notes, collected documents (i.e. student demographic data, community data, and school data) and the initial codebook were shared with members of the research team (Appendix E). The researcher and two research team members coded the interview transcripts and notes independently and recorded their findings on the coding worksheet (Appendix D). Once each team member completed coding, the research team met to share their opinions and discuss the various codes they assigned to the interview transcripts and notes. The research team discussed each line of the interview transcripts until 100% consensus was reached regarding the assigned codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was followed by a discussion of codes and transcripts until 100% agreement was reached the themes and assertions that depicted the lives of the participants.

4.4 Presentation of Findings

The remainder of chapter four presents the findings of the research from the perspective of participants which included twice exceptional African American high school students, parents, and educators. Based on the data analysis, three major themes emerged, which are discussed in the remainder of this chapter. In keeping with the purpose of qualitative research and trustworthiness, rich, in-depth descriptions were
presented to shine a light on the lived experiences of the participants (i.e. students, parents, and educators). The participants were open about their experiences with twice exceptionality, including their challenges and successes.

4.5 The Significance of Labels

While the researcher was provided specific information about students regarding their gifted identification and special education identification by the district, it was important to understand students’ experiences around their intersecting identities in special education, gifted education, and race, it was important to first understand how they made sense of each identity. Additionally, it is important to understand how the parents and educators conceptualize each of these identities. For each, their own conceptualizations heavily influenced their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences in school.

4.5.1 “I felt like I was alone” Initial Reactions to Special Education Identification

Although the overall experiences of special needs varied among participants, each student participant talked about the initial identification of their special needs as being isolating. For example Karin, a senior with a specific learning disability and giftedness in vocal music, mentioned that initially she felt positive about having a special need but later realized that she was different from her peers, when she said, “I kind of felt special because I got to leave class and when I started to learn remedial [materials], and realized I was farther behind than anybody else, I kind of felt stupid.” Other participants used terms like dumb, slow, and different to describe how they initially felt when they were identified with special needs. Of the eight student participants, three were unable to recall
or name their special need (i.e. Luisa, Amber, and Riley). When asked about the worst part of having a disability, Luisa, a sophomore with an emotional disorder and identified for giftedness in vocal music, explained, “It’s that I don’t know what it is. I mean I know what the IEP [Individualized Education Plan] is, but I just don’t know what my disability is.”

In addition to feeling different from others, Riley, a high school senior with a specific learning disability and identify as gifted in vocal music, discussed feeling isolated by her educational label and placement in special education classes:

For a while I felt like segregated. I felt low and stupid. I mean a lot of people didn’t know I [had] an IEP, so I tried to keep that away. I would try to keep [it a secret]... I would try to stay in the back. Because of her feelings around being identified as having a specific learning disability and being in a separate class, Riley purposely isolated herself so that others would not know she had special needs. Other student participants also discussed purposely isolating themselves from their peers. For example, Amber, a ninth grade student with a specific learning disability and identified as gifted in vocal music, shared that she was much more social before she was diagnosed with a disability. However, once she found out, her sociability changed. For example, she stated, “ever since I figured that out I’ve been acting like I don’t want to be around people a lot lately. I just want to be by myself.”

Parent participants had different reactions to their child being identified for special education. Two parents were initially in denial, thinking that there was “nothing wrong with” their child and that they just needed to try harder. For example, Miss Sarah, the mother of a sophomore with an emotional disorder and identified as gifted in dance,
shared her journey coming to terms with her child’s special needs. More specifically, she stated:

They [teachers] had suggested it the year before… I said, ‘There ain’t nothing wrong with this girl. There ain’t nothing wrong with her. She’s just defiant.’ Then when the tests came back, she’s ADD because she’s impulsive and then ODD [because] she is defiant. [I was] so surprised and relieved, because I understood better why she [was] having so many behavior problems. And, it just went from there. Because it happened [being identified for special education] after she was suspended [over] 23 times in one school year, I think it was the 7th grade.

Similarly, Miss Helen also went through denial before coming to terms that her son, a senior with a specific learning disability and identified as gifted in dance, had special needs:

I thought basically, at first, it was like a behavioral problem. I mean [that] I really did know that he had a learning disability…I think I was, maybe, in denial. I came out of the denial and realized that he was having problems…

While Miss Helen and Miss Sarah faced the challenges understanding their child’s special needs through school, Miss Tammy’s experience was vastly different. Her son, a sophomore with a traumatic brain injury and identified as gifted in instrumental music, saw her son’s challenges manifest as the result of a concussion. She further explained:

I noticed [his disability] right away. He had his accident [on] January 28, 2010. He was outside playing in the backyard…It’s an enclosed backyard, it’s our home, and it was snowing. He wanted to make a snowman. After a while, I told him to come inside [because] it was time to eat. And, it took him a while to get upstairs, so I didn’t think about it…maybe he just wanted to play. When he came in the house, he crawled and sat in a chair right by the door, and I’m looking at him. I’m like, “Darnell, take off your shoes and your coat. It’s wet. You’ve got snow on it,” and I went back to finish getting dinner ready. I did not know, when I had my back turned that he crawled all the way to the couch, because he couldn’t walk. And, when I looked at him on the couch, I was like, ‘Are you okay? What’s wrong?’ His pupils were off, and he wasn’t answering questions right away. It took him awhile. He was looking all over the place, and he just didn’t look right. So, I immediately took him to the hospital, but, when we were going, I said, ‘Come on, let’s go,’ and he couldn’t…he was wobbly as he got up, and I
said, ‘No.’ I physically had his brother help me take him downstairs. We got in the car, and I drove straight to Children’s Hospital. Since then, I noticed things were different with him, and, for two weeks afterwards, he couldn’t walk. We’d have to pull up to the curb, get a wheelchair and take him to his visits, when he had to see the at the concussion clinic. He’s been admitted in the hospital twice. So, right away, I knew things were different.

While parents’ readiness to accept that their child had special needs varied, each parent participant found ways to learn more about the special needs that their child had.

For example, Miss Helen looked to her mother for guidance and understanding. Her mother was in constant communication with the school and participated in the IEP meetings. Both Miss Sarah and Miss Tammy found themselves joining support groups and taking classes to learn more about their child’s special needs. For example, Miss Sarah found classes in the community that trained her and her daughter (Chelby, a freshman with an emotional disorder and giftedness in dance, on her specific special needs:

I took some classes. We went through this [program]…I can’t think of the name. It was a Catholic place on [north street]. We went through an 11-week course. We both had to go through it. But, we broke in sections…she went with her age [group], and then the parents got together …they do an 11-week course, and [the organization] trains you a lot on ODD [Oppositional Defiant Disorder]. The [organization] trains you on all of it. But, the thing is dealing with kids…dealing with abandonment and kids who [have] been adopted or whatever…In [other words], they go into all those, ADHD, ODD, and how to deal with kids with behaviors [associated with those disorders]. It was very good! She [Chelby] even liked [the courses].

In addition to classes, Miss Tammy indicated that she connected with an educator at the district-level who had meetings for parents with a child with a traumatic brain injury. To this end, she suggested that the meetings gave her perspective and also more information to assist her and her son plan for the future. For example, she stated:
I remember the TBI [Traumatic Brain Injury] having a meeting for parents who had children with TBI through Ms. Thomas. [I met] some of the other parents in the room. It was amazing to see people from elementary school age children to college kids who have to be an advocate for themselves... It was good to know that you [can] reach out to people ahead of time [and] to talk to them in college. ‘What is your plan for someone who has an IEP or what type of services do you offer?’ It actually was great, and this was through Ms. Thomas that I [learned] about this. So, I’ve gone to meetings, and I think it [was] wonderful. I used to feel bad sometimes because my son had the fall... He couldn’t walk and has trouble with his eyes and headaches, but then, too, you look at some children who are in a wheelchair or on a feeding tube, can’t swallow, in a diaper, and then you almost feel like...[there are] different severities of other problems. I know it’s a service that’s available, but it’s just like other people are looking at me like, ‘Your son is walking...’ It was almost like you feel bad in a way, but it’s not about that. This is for me...

4.5.2 “No one’s really talked to me about it” Hidden Gifts

In the district, students are identified for gifted education in several different ways, depending on the particular area of giftedness. Below is a conversation that highlights this point.

Ms. Russell: [For] gifted identification, we have to go by state standards, so there’s an approved list of tests that the state produces and has on their website on ODE [Ohio Department of Education], and depending on which test that the district chooses to use to identify gifted students. The kids can either take an individual test or a group test, and, then once the tests are scored for the majority of the state approved tests, it’s a 95 percentile or above in the areas of reading, math, science, social studies, creative thinking and superior cognitive ability. Those are the academic areas. Then, there’s identification like in visual arts, music, dance, and theater.

Mayes: So how [about] the ones that [are not] academic? If you’re gifted in expression or arts, how do they become identified?

Ms. Russell: That’s a different process... It’s basically an art teacher or a dance teacher, or a parent may even request that their child is identified. For example, if people think their children are ID’d [identified] in dance, and they nominate them. And, then, they’re given a form [that is] given to the teacher... they fill [it] out. We actually hold
dance auditions, once a year for elementary [aged children], if the teachers believe that they have the possibility of being ID’d…then we pay some dance teacher a supplemental contract; and they come up with some routines and have the kids follow them and they fill out a check list to see if they’re ID’d. The same thing [is] with the arts, if the kids put together a portfolio full of work. Through the parents and the art teacher, they fill out a checklist, and if the kids qualify, then they’re ID’d as gifted in the arts by the state.

Once students are identified, a letter is sent home detailing the results of their test and the students’ area of giftedness.

Of the 8 student participants, only 3 (37.5%) initially saw themselves as being gifted. For example, Trey, a senior with a specific learning disability and identified as visual gifted, described his gifts with the following excerpt: “It’s like somebody do something…like I could just do it off the top of my head like that.” Chelby, a freshman with an emotional disorder and identified as giftedness in dance, shared that she had always know she was gifted because she had been dancing, since she was three.

Darnell, a sophomore with a traumatic brain injury and identified as gifted in instrumental music, was the only participant that had experienced gifted classes as an elementary school student: “Third grade I was in [a] gifted math class…[and] I remember being in gifted class in English in fourth grade.” It should also be noted that Darnell was also the only participant that experienced giftedness, prior to his special needs, as he had the traumatic brain injury seventh grade. Further, his mother, Miss Tammy, shared that Darnell’s third grade teacher spoke with her about Darnell being gifted, “Mrs. Hawk, she was an art teacher but also his homeroom teacher. She said ‘You know what? Darnell is
very smart. I’m going to recommend that he start the gifted intelligent class, the eclipse class.’ ”

Other students had limited experience or knowledge of being identified as being gifted. For example, when asked if anyone at school ever spoke about their giftedness, six (75%) of the student participants indicated that no one shared this information with them.

In several instances, student participants talked about how the focus was on their deficits. For instance, Zero revealed, “some of my teachers said I had problems, but I guess that was supposed to mean I was gifted.”

Of the three parent participants, Miss Helen was the only parent that was not informed her son was identified as gifted. In fact, she explained that her communication with the school was generally focused on her son’s special needs:

Mayes: I want to switch gears a little bit and ask you, if you remember when your son was identified as being gifted?

Miss Helen: Now, I don’t know…I always thought [being] gifted was like if you [were] exceptional. You know what I’m saying? So, I’ve never really heard anybody label him as gifted. It was always [as] special [education]. He’s always been in special classes. He was in those classes…up until I think maybe 11th grade, maybe.

Mayes: So no one ever told you that he was gifted or had [a] supreme talent in any area?

Miss Helen: No. They always, just like I said, labeled him like in the IEP classes or whatever they’re called…He had behavioral problems. Nobody said he was gifted, or he was good in [anything or] has strong strength in [his subjects]. He’s [bright]…he can pick up on anything. He can do it, if he’ll apply himself…but I think he didn’t because, maybe, he couldn’t. He didn’t want to be embarrassed or whatever…I think that’s, when the acting out started. He was like, ‘I don’t want to be embarrassed, so I’m not going to try to do it and get embarrassed,’ or ‘I’ll just act up.’ So, I think that [is] when they put him in the special classes.
In addition to limited communication from the school about their gifts, two (25%) student participants elaborated about being made aware of their giftedness through this study. When asked “when” she learned that she was gifted, Luisa, a sophomore with an emotional disorder and identified as gifted in vocal music, admitted to recently learning about her giftedness. For example, he stated:

Mayes: When did you learn about being gifted?
Luisa: Recently.
Mayes: How recently?
Luisa: …when the school counselor came – I mean she didn’t come - I had to go to her and she told me about this [study]. [This was] the very first time I ever felt like I was special.
Mayes: You mean for participating in this study?
Luisa: Yeah, this is the first time.

Similarly, Chelby had learned that the school recognized her giftedness, despite her not knowing she was gifted in dance. As an example of this, she stated: “Mr. Barry told me [this news]. He said, ‘you’re very talented,’ and that’s when he told me about you.” Although Chelby was never told by someone in school, her mother, Miss Sarah, recalls on what she [remembered] the process was at Chelby’s middle school. More specifically, she asserted:

She was in the sixth grade, [when] someone put her name in as being gifted. She’s excellent, excellent [in dance]… she loves dance. She’s an excellent dancer. A couple of her teachers have seen her perform at the dance academy, and they might have been the ones who [recommended her to the gifted program]. Not that they [were] coming to see her, they were coming to see someone else and saw her perform. So, I’m thinking that’s how [she was identified for the gifted program].

While the majority of student participants shared that no one from their schools ever talked to them about their giftedness, two participants did not believe that they were gifted. When asked about what she thought her giftedness was in, Luisa explained, “I
really have no idea. I don’t even know what my [giftedness] is. I don’t know ‘cause I pretty much suck at everything.” Karin also declared that she was not gifted but that she was smart. More specifically, she stated:

I wouldn’t necessarily say I’m gifted. I don’t know who even says that. I’ve been given awards for my grades, since my junior year (last year) and that’s when I kind of realized that, oh man, I’m good at school. When I went to [School X] never got any awards whatsoever, but I started to get better grades because I concentrated more. So, I guess, when I came here, I kind of realized…I’m actually smart, and I can actually do things. So, I feel that’s probably… when I was a junior, that’s probably I realized that I’m kind of smart.

4.5.3 “I don’t know who said that” Conflicting Views of Giftedness

As student participants thought and expanded on how they might be gifted, it was clear that there was a disconnection in their self-identified gifts and how the district identified them. Several student participants defined giftedness broadly, as being “talented” or “smart in your own way,” which may or may not include specific academic subjects like reading or math. For example, Riley expressed her gifts as being in dance, math, and leadership while the district identified her as being gifted in vocal music. When the district’s gifted identification of vocal music was shared with Riley, she quickly asserted that she did not see dance as her gift. Similarly, Karin described her gifts as the following:

I know what I’m good at, and I know what I like to do. I know what makes me happy. I like to write. I know it’s going to sound corny, but I like to daydream. If I ever get bored I like to listen to music, and then I picture myself somewhere else. So, if a certain class is annoying me or I feel different than all the other kids, I can just put on this certain song. And, then, I’m away from it all…I want to travel, and I want to see the world…I want to be a businessperson or do something really, really important for society. So, I think I’m kind of gifted with my creativity and my words because I can articulate my words. Ms. Harris said I can
do that [well], so I was like, ‘I can do it,’ and that’s probably [why] I think I’m gifted…

However, when the researcher shared that the district identified her as being gifted in dance, Karin expressed:

I think that’s a complete lie because I can’t dance whatsoever. I don’t know who said that because I hardly [dance]. There are no dance classes here, first, and, second, I don’t dance. I mean…I’m Jamaican so we like wind, but I don’t do that in front of my family anyway...I do that by myself, when I’m listening to music but dancing, no. I don’t know who said that. [It’s] funny, really.

Zero also shared that there was “just a whole bunch of labels.” Further, he thought his gifts and talents centered on his creativity in art, thinking games, and his physical strength. In contrast, the district identified Zero as being gifted in dance. Amber and Luisa stated that their gifts were respectively in poetry and geometry. However, the district identified Amber and Luisa in instrumental music and vocal music respectively. Additionally, Miss Helen was in utter disbelief by the label of giftedness in dance that was bestowed on her son by the district because “he doesn’t even dance anymore,” and, at that, he “just danced around the house” when he was younger.

Just as students struggled to reconcile their view of giftedness in how they were identified by the district, there was also a disagreement in the district on, “What is giftedness?” While the district has its own definition and criteria for identifying gifted students, there were disagreements from the teachers on who can be gifted. As a district-level gifted education administrator, Ms. Grace has interacted and trained numerous teachers. She has provided professional development opportunities on various aspects of giftedness, including diversity in gifted education. Despite her efforts, teachers,
throughout the district, have expressed narrow views of giftedness. For example, she stated:

Sometimes, it’s hard to get teachers, especially when they’re looking at a list of kids, and it’s not the kids that they expect to see on the list, because it’s not the teacher-pleasers a lot of times. It’s not the kids who are sitting in the front of the room who are raising their hand. It could be Joe in the back who is tired of [hearing what is taught] or being taught to the middle in every class, so he acts out because he’s bored to tears. And, I’ve had some people say, “Well, so-and-so’s got lice. How can she be gifted?” I’m like, ‘Really, and you have a degree? That’s very sad for you. I think you need to get your money back.’ People have a vision, a myth of what a gifted child looks like or acts like, or is from a certain socio-economic background. I’ve had someone tell me, ‘Well, she had a baby. How can she be gifted?’ I said, ‘Because she has hormones, too.’ So, she can be really smart in the cognitive thing, but she’s ruled by hormones so she got pregnant and had a baby. I had one boy who was hit by a car. The teacher said, ‘How can he be gifted? He got hit by a car.’ I said, ‘Because he made a poor decision. He’s also ADHD, so he’s impulsive.’ …people will also get it mixed up, because you can be gifted in math and be LD [have a Learning Disability] in reading. They [teachers] want to put a blanket over gifted.

4.6 Social and Personal Experiences of Twice Exceptionality

As the students came to be identified as twice exceptional, they also experienced their environment differently. For most students, their orientation was that they had a disability first, and later found out they were gifted, some of which found out through their participation in the study. As such, their social and personal experiences of their special needs and giftedness are vastly differently.

4.6.1 “What am I going to do having IEP?” Worry About School and the Future

Of the 8 student participants, 6 (75%) expressed concerns and worry about their ability to be successful in school and in life. For example, Luisa, a sophomore with an
emotional disorder and giftedness in vocal music, expressed her initial concern about high school:

When I’m thinking of myself in that way [with special needs], I really don’t know what to really think. Like what am I going to do having IEP? What’s high school going to be like for me? You know, how hard it will be?

Karin, a senior with a specific learning disability and giftedness in dance, also expressed similar worry of what her life was going to be like with her special needs:

So that’s the only thing that a disability can really annoy a person, is that they feel like everybody else has two skates and they’re just trying to roll with one skate and they have to keep on pushing and pushing. And you just keep on wondering if it’s always going to be like this, always going to be referred to as a special student? Everybody else has it a whole lot harder, but, still when some things don’t go your way, it feels like it’ll never change and that’s what a “disability” can do to you. It can make you feel like you’re inferior and everybody else is superior and you can’t get anywhere unless you do what everybody else does…

In addition to worry about what the future holds, student participants also expressed concerns about their ability to do well in school. Trey, a senior with a specific learning disability and visual giftedness, worried about his special need impacting his experience in class, “the worst part is you feel worried that you don’t know. You really can’t read it…I tried to be the class clown just to get out of it”  Zero, a senior with a specific learning disability and giftedness in dance, shared his concern and confusion that happened in class:

[I had] constant headaches, mainly confusion on what I even was doing. Like the last time I decided not to do anything, because I would just totally drop it and I would come back and have no idea what I’m doing at all.

Darnell, a sophomore with a traumatic brain injury and giftedness in instrumental music, worried about his academic success changing after his concussion:
I didn’t really think I’d be as smart, I guess. I knew things would be different because of the – the plans and stuff like that that were being made. It was kind of like a constraint in a way….It’s just a stressful situation sometimes when I can’t figure something out or if something’s hard; overwhelming, just can’t think or whatever the case may be. It’s just stressful, frustrating too.

All 3 parent participants shared considerable concern for their child’s future beyond high school. In the following statement, Miss Helen revealed that she felt that her son, a senior with a specific learning disability and giftedness in dance, was underprepared and on the brink of graduating:

There are some things I feel now that he’s still really doesn’t know. Even though he’s getting ready to graduate, I mean I feel like there’s some things that he still really doesn’t know…like when he clocks out for work he’ll call me and ask me, you know, tell me, “I clocked out at this time, what time to do I go back?” I don’t know if he’s just being lazy and don’t look for himself, or if he really just doesn’t know.

Miss Sarah’s concern for her daughter, a freshman with an emotional disorder and giftedness in dance, stems around her daughter’s behavior. While her daughter’s behavior is the manifestation of her special needs, she sees it as potentially dangerous:

She don’t know how to – she goes from 1 to 10 in a matter of seconds and that’s what so dangerous and that’s what my biggest concern about her is, is her getting in trouble cause she don’t have a middle. She goes from 1 to 10 in a matter of seconds, cause she don’t think. That’s that impulsiveness. The impulsiveness and the defiant, they’re just working against each other… where’s she going to be the next time that she gets out there and does something stupid? Next time it may be a police officer and she’ll end up getting shot.

Likewise, Miss Tammy felt that her son’s challenges with his traumatic brain injury would reflect poorly on him as he starts to apply for colleges:

It’s frustrating to see the accelerated on the state standardized test but the C’s and D’s on his report card, because the report card is not a reflection of him, Unfortunately when he goes to college, they go by what’s on the report card…But, as a parent, what can I do to explain what obstacles he has gone
through and where he is now, but just let them know that is not a true reflection of
him.

She goes on to talk about her concern for him getting scholarships, especially as many are
based on grade point average and ACT scores. She wants for colleges and scholarship
foundations and college admission offices to really get to know her son beyond his tests
scores and grade point average, “every child is different and they have their own special
talents and gifts. I want my son to not be limited, but [I want them to] understand he’s
very smart but he’s had some setbacks.”

4.6.2 “I’m just trying to act like a normal kid.” Normalizing and Overcoming Special

Needs

In addition to their worry for the future, several participants dissociated with their
respective special education label. For example, Zero, a high school senior with a specific
learning disability and giftedness in dance, talked about his label being insignificant
when he said:

I actually didn’t think anything was wrong with me. I just didn’t talk a lot. It took
me a while to say my first words. And I went through a lot of tests, basically all
day and I didn’t actually still think anything was wrong with me after that and I
don’t think there is now.

Zero was the only participant to specifically say that there was nothing wrong with him.
Zero also went on to talk about how his special needs were simply something to
overcome when he said, “I just think like there’s a chemical imbalance in your brain
basically and it just won’t allow you to do certain things, but I guess you have to
overcome that at some point.” Similarly, Amber shared that she just needed to work on
her special needs and learn to cope and Trey, a senior with a specific learning disability
and visual giftedness, felt that he had to learn to become more independent as a result of having a special need. However, other participants also discussed their special needs as being normal or common. Chelby, a sophomore with an emotional disorder and giftedness in dance, shared that she felt like everyone had ADHD when she said, “It really didn’t make me feel different, ‘cause almost everybody has ADHD. People go, ‘You got ADHD?’ ‘Oh, I got that too.’ ”

4.6.3 “It seems like I can do anything in the world” Celebrating Giftedness

Although students’ special needs were something that they did not want to share with others, all of the student participants viewed being gifted more positively, particularly in their self-identified gifts as there was some disagreement with the gifted identification from the district. The student participants used terms like “special,” “happy,” that being gifted “meant the world” to them, and that they really “appreciated” it. For Trey, his gift meant that he was unique, “I know I can do stuff that other people can’t.” For 2 participants, having gifts and talents gave them an outlet for creative expression. Chelby felt that her gifts in dance not only separated her from her peers, but gave her an outlet to dance out her frustrations:

It makes me feel different because not a lot of people have the dancing abilities that I have….I like it. If I have a bad day and I know I’m going to practice that day, it makes my day go better. Every time I dance and I’m mad about something, I feel like I can just get it out through my dancing. And I’m very competitive. It’s like if I’m mad, then I’m going to compete with you in dance class and I know I’m going to do better than you in dance class.

Miss Sarah also noticed that dance was an outlet for Chelby, “she’s excellent. It’s like a whole different person when you actually look at her up on stage... it’s like seeing
another person, the way she carries herself, her body language, everything about her is different.”

Zero discussed that art was how he communicated with the world:

I guess through art it was basically the only way I could communicate with other people clearly. Like if it was raining and I got depressed, I would draw the frowny [sic] face, I guess, or a small lizard dressed like dragons crying. I guess I really didn’t draw anything when I was happy, because I was usually outside.

As Zero’s art was a venue for him to communicate with his peers and teachers, he also saw his art as a way that he connected with other students. Other students saw his talented as an artist, “they liked the way I drew, I guess. They would ask me to draw certain thing.” Darnell’s gifts and talent also brought him closer to his peers. Darnell describes the impact of being in gifted classes in elementary school:

It was great. Fifth grade was like the best year of school for me. You know, the work wasn’t hard; recess was fun because we played tag every day and stuff like that. It was just a good time. Until like 3rd grade I was just kind of lonely, I guess. I didn’t make a lot of friends at that time cause I was the quiet kid. Then when I got into the gifted classes, I just met all these different types of people and made a bunch of friends at the time…The kids in there were just really friendly compared to the other classes. I didn’t really get to know the other kids that well, but they just kind of welcomed me in when I figured out I was gifted.

After his first experiences in gifted classes and even after his traumatic brain injury, Darnell describes himself as an outgoing, “social butterfly” with many friends in school.

In addition to being a way to express themselves and connect with others, three participants saw their self-identified gifts as the opportunity to feel more confident, smart, and have greater opportunities. Riley discussed having higher self-esteem and not caring about “what people say.” She also talked about the impact of having a teacher present her with a reward for improvement:
It made me feel smart, it made me feel more confident… before if I got a bad grade, they [her parents] would blame it on IEP; but they seen that and they’re just like jumped on me, ‘you can do better. I know you can, cause I’ve seen it.’

In the following statement, Luisa discussed how she could see her smarts emerge in as early as elementary school:

In elementary school, I knew I was different, but I didn’t know that I was gifted at the time. But slowly I could see that I was more gifted than most of the kids in the class….Whenever we took tests, I always got like an A or B, which was very surprising. Everybody else got something different, way different, and they usually pay attention.

Karin similarly talked about her creativity emerging in her English classes:

In English class because I like to read, so I would answer the questions and I would like the way I answered the questions because I sounded smart; like I could articulate about how I felt about a certain book or how I felt about a certain character and then I would write it down and I would get a good grade and I was like, “Oh, I can do that.” Besides for that, that’s really it. I wasn’t really writing poetry at that time so, no, I didn’t really feel creativity except for in school when I was reading.

Karin went on to discuss how being gifted meant that she had more opportunities:

Mayes: What does it mean [to be called gifted]?
Karin: For me? I think it means I have a chance.
Mayes: A chance at what?
Karin: A chance to do something really good or at least to believe in myself, so I think it kind of gives me a chance like letting me know like if life’s not good right now it can get better, because I’m labeled gifted. So if I can use the talents that I have, then maybe I can get out of here. So I have a chance to get better and to soar higher than where I am right now. So being gifted to me means that – kind of means like I’m special because everybody in class are like ‘Oh, Karin, give me this answer, help me out with this question’ and that makes me feel good. I won’t say it, but it makes me feel good. So I’m like, ‘Oh, my gosh, they’re coming to me.’ So it kind of makes me feel like if people are asking me for questions and stuff then they think I’m smart, so it makes me believe that I’m smart. So, it kind of like gives me a chance not to
give up on myself because I do that a lot lately. So that’s what it means.

Amber also felt like her gifts gave her more opportunities. While she wanted to keep her special needs a secret from everyone she wanted to shout from the rooftops about her gifts, “it seems like I can do anything in the world. I would just go out there and tell everybody what I have.”

4.6.4 “I don’t want to be labeled another black, lazy kid” Personal Experiences of Race

When the participants talked about race in their school, most found it to be unifying. Of the 8 participants, 5 expressed that being black in school was “cool” or “fine” because “there’s a lot of African Americans at this school.” Because of Riley’s school’s focus on Africa, she felt like she learned more about her culture and history as well as teachers really respecting her identity. Karin, Darnell, and Zero shared that they have experienced some challenges with stereotypical views of being black. For example, Darnell felt that initially teachers at his school pre-labeled him as negatively as “another black, lazy kid”, and he had to work to overcome that label. Similarly, Karin expressed that she had fewer opportunities, resources, and had to work harder to defeat stereotypes about blacks:

Well, obviously, Caucasian people, they get more attention than black people do, especially academically and in the richer school districts, they get a lot more. They get I-Pads and better computers and better textbooks and they get to go here and do that and for a black student everything is sort of how it is, this is how you get, this is how it is, it’s not going to change. And, if it does change, then the school will then have to come and take money from your mom’s pocket to make the change. So for a black student, it’s really a lot more harder because we already have that reputation, we already have that symbol of lower privileged, you’re not going to go anywhere, you’re going to get pregnant before you drop out, all that other stuff; whereas, with the Caucasian students, they’re uppity, they have money therefore they have better chances. You have to work a lot harder, you have to strive a lot harder, you have to think harder, you have to plan harder,
[and] you have to want difference. If you don’t want anything different, then you’ll just be like every other typical black person.

Because Karin wants something different for herself, she felt like she was singled out by people in her community. For example, Karin shared:

My parents, my family, they call me a White girl because not many black girls want what I want and when I’m in school, when I was in chemistry a while ago, we would talk about these girls who talk about boys and then they would say, ‘You want a White boy, right?’ because I’m black, but I don’t really want to date black guys. So that’s how I think I’m different than Caucasians because they get a better chance at certain things. And, if a black person wants to go, and not necessarily be like a Caucasian, but they want to have the same chances, then the whole black community as a whole turns on you and says, ‘Okay, well you’re treating – you’re just leaving us for them.’ You know what I mean? And that’s not the case…I just want different. I don’t want to be a mother at 16 or 17.

4.6.5 “I had no friends. People called me slow.” Challenging Peer Relationships

Part of going to school is the social aspect of making friends. While each student participant talked about having some friends, seven (87.5%) also shared that they were also picked or excluded on because of their special needs. Despite being outgoing and having “a lot friends,” Chelby shared that her educational placement in the resource room became a source of hostility for her:

I don’t like it. I’ll be trying to sneak into my class, [be]cause I was being teased because I was being in the resource room. I’ll be trying to not let people see me going there for class so I’m always late for class, cause they think it’s the slow class. So they’re like ‘did you eat your cheerios today?’ They just think it’s slow, but it’s not the slow class. It’s a behavior class but they still call it the slow class.

For Chelby, the teasing takes such a toll on her that she has tried to get out of the resource room despite having a strong bond with the resource room teacher:

I mean half of me wants to stay in the resource room, because Ms. Carl really, really, really be helping me out with my grades and stuff and the other half, I don’t want to be in there because I want to be with all the other kids.
Similarly, Karin found herself having to defend her educational placement and her smarts to her peers:

It didn’t really bother me that much but it kind of bothered me now, like last year when I was a junior everybody said, “Oh, you’re in like the basement classes” and I’m like, I’m not stupid. I just have a disability in math. And it’s not really a disability. I would just say I don’t really know how to multiply and add and round, those kind of things like basic math, I don’t know how to do that. So I’m not stupid. It’s just that class alone. Everything else is A’s and B’s.

In addition to educational placement, several participants talked about being made fun of or excluded in their classes. Although Riley tried to keep her special needs a secret from her peers, when a peer found out, he made fun of her in class.

Mayes: What were your peers like in trying to understand who you are, like Riley as a person?

Riley: Well, they really didn’t know I had IEP. I remember one time one did find out I had IEP and I had got accepted to participate in C. State early college and he said, “Well, if she can do C. State, I can do C. State, because she’s stupid. She has IEP.”

Mayes: So when that student said that, how did you feel about that?

Riley: Disrespected.

Zero also had some negative experiences with his peers, particularly in his middle school years. In his 8th grade year, Zero changed schools towards the end of the year and it was a struggle for him academically. His efforts to reach out to his peers were met with negativity, “since everyone basically knew everyone from elementary and preschool… they asked each other for help. I’d try to [ask them for help], and they’d basically just brush me off.”
Of the parent participants, Miss Sarah was the only parent that saw her daughter face challenges with her peers as it relates to her special needs. More specifically, Miss Sarah felt that other students saw Chelby as an easy target:

Chelby is a puppet. I tell the teachers that… I tell everybody that. She’s a puppet. People know that Chelby’s the key. If you want a reaction, pick Chelby. [Be]cause if you say something to her, she’s going to give you a great performance, and the kids know that. It [doesn’t] take long to figure that out at all. But, Chelby is a puppet and that’s who they go to get a reaction. The only thing is Chelby [doesn’t] know how to control that reaction. So, once she’s out there, she’s out there, and they know that… So, they use her and then once they [the teachers] try to pull her back in, then that’s when the defiance comes in. So it’s like a lost battle. I say, ‘Chelby, quit being people’s puppet. Quit letting people set you up.’

Educators also saw that twice exceptional students struggled to fit in at school. They believed that they were very different from their peers and had limited opportunities to get connected into school. For example, Mr. Jacobs, a high school special education tutor, thought that students were different and somewhat isolated in schools, “they are obviously different than everyone else around them and they know it… And [they need to] meet other people who are kind of like them but they don’t even know each other exists.” When thinking about the twice exceptional African American students at his school, Mr. Wallace described their experience as “unleveraged” because there were limited opportunities for students to explore their gifts in dance, art, instrumental music, and vocal music in his school. So students could easily fall through the cracks and not be connected. Ms. Kimble, a high school counselor, saw that the twice exceptional African American students that she worked with had no connection to school, poor grades and attendance:
One I know is incarcerated and the other, I think, is failing all of the subjects and
not coming to school very much, a boy and a girl…They just are – they just don’t
have a place in the school. They don’t stay in school. They’re too busy with their
personal lives or too busy with being so smart or so intelligence or feeling so
entitled that they don’t want to be in the school setting…it’s hard to support just
one student in a classroom setting and if the students, by the time they’re in high
school, if they’re not really wanting to be a part of the school setting and if
they’re acting out or if they are acting like they’re smarter – I mean, they’re both
smart kids, but they are not sitting in the class long enough to hear the material.
They’re not in school enough to practice the material, so their grades are poor and
they have enough street-sense that they probably can make it on the streets in
whatever capacity that is, whether it’s selling drugs or getting a job, just getting a
regular job and making money that way. But they definitely do not usually have
success in the school life scene, but now keeping in mind that’s only a couple of
students I’ve seen at the high school level.

4.7 Challenges and Strategies in the School Environment

Each student participant experienced challenging and some empowering social
and personal experiences as they came to understand their unique abilities as a twice
exceptional student. Another important part of their education is their experience in
classrooms in working with school staff including teachers and school counselors.
Additionally, parents and educators have a wide range of experience in working to
support twice exceptional African American students in the classroom.

4.7.1 “I don’t think they know” Identifying Twice Exceptional Students in School

Each educator believed that twice exceptional African American students
experienced personal challenges in schools, but they also believed that the educators who
worked with these students experienced unique challenges as well. Mr. Wallace
discussed his own lack of awareness about twice exceptional students in his building and
believed that his teachers likely did not know as well. This may be due to how
information about students is shared in the district. For example, Ms. Russell, a district level gifted coordinator explained how gifted information is shared in the district:

We have to be careful what information we share, what information we don’t. If there is a request, an individual request by a parent that their child is ID’d [identified], again an ID letter is sent home to that family and then, depending on what school the child is in, here in in the district, that gifted person is notified that that child is gifted, what grade, what their area of ID is in, and then from our database center, we get all the ID list of all the gifted kids in all the schools, in all the areas and we disseminate those lists to the building principals. It is up to the building principal to notify whether they want that teacher to know if those kids are ID’d or not, especially if they’re not being served. So if you have a gifted teacher that’s assigned to the school and they’re going in the classroom and working with particular teachers, they will let them know which kids are ID’d in that classroom and which kids they are focusing on. But if they’re not servicing them, those teachers may not know because, again, that’s left up to the principal because we just can’t share student information if we’re not directly involved in it.

While gifted identification information is heavily on the building principal, the gifted teacher, and the gifted services offered at that particular school, the special education information comes from another office in the district. Ms. Grace elaborated on the impact of different offices sharing student information:

We know that those kids exist…The teachers will get a list of who’s gifted and then the special ed piece has to come from the – because it’s federal money, it comes from the special ed office. Although we’re under special ed, special ed people at the school don’t know who’s gifted and special ed because of FERPA. So, there’s a lot of barriers to everybody having all the knowledge that they need in order to help the students.

Even as a school counselor, Ms. Kimble can only see that students have been identified as gifted but no information on what exactly their gift is in the school student information system. She can, however, see students’ special education information.
Of the five educator participants, two have observed or experienced educators working in silos rather than more collaborative efforts to support students. For example when Mr. Jacobs, a high school tutor, brought his concerns about potential unidentified special needs to his supervisor, he was told “‘that’s none of your business. You just teach them math, science, and English.’” Similarly, Ms. Grace sensed that there was more of a turf war in the district between different departments:

To be honest, essentially [special educators] don’t want to know if they’re gifted because they’re just like, ‘I work with their deficit.’ And, English people are like, ‘Well, that’s all fine and well, but they need to be able to write a five paragraph essay,’ and the math people are like, ‘Well, that’s nice, but they have to do geometry.’ And my thought is if you have some gifted kids you could really go deep with them and do some serious analysis of the information and the content while still allowing the kids over here to feel their way through like I did in geometry, because they won’t mind that you’re giving them harder work and not more work, harder, complex.

In addition to lack of information shared on students, there are barriers to providing gifted services for students. According state law, schools are required to identify students as gifted; however, they are not obligated to provide services. In this particular district, gifted services are restricted to academics through enrichment activities and advanced placement courses. Ms. Grace offered a detailed description of the district’s current approach to giftedness in the arts:

There’s just no money to do that. I hate to say it because it sounds horrible and we really should be, but when they get to middle school they can take choir or art or band or something that hones in on their gift because at the middle school and high school a lot of it is course selection, especially at the high school.

However, dependency on course selection in middle and high school presents potential problems for twice exceptional African American students. Ms. Kimble described the challenge that come with exploring gifts in the arts with a disability:
If they are gifted in art, let’s say, but they are having IEP and they have trouble with math and sciences, they are not going to be able to be in the art class because they’re going to be failing that core subject sometimes. That’s the other tricky thing.

So, artistically, gifted African American students with disabilities may have limited course selection with their electives due to the need for extra support in a challenging subject area. Ms. Grace also suggested that teachers that are unable to work effectively with gifted students in their class. Instead of welcoming students who look at content “through a different lens,” teachers can shut that student down and say they is only one way to perform a task. Similarly, Ms. Kimble discussed a lack of training to even provide enrichment at her particular high school:

Let’s say they’re kinesthetically gifted, so they were chosen as being physically gifted which means that they’re really good at knowing their body and knowing how to understand things physically. Maybe they’re a really good dancer, maybe that’s why they were flagged as being gifted, but there’s not really a place for that in the high school setting except in the gym class. Art – Your math teachers don’t do kinesthetic kind of lessons that help keep you do hands-on tactile learning in the math room physically. So, I think that there’s not as much training and it really takes a special teacher to be able to understand how to help them. And maybe that’s why they slipped through the cracks, because there aren’t enough teacher connections with the students…I don’t know, but they both are not doing well, so it seems like it’s wasted and that’s sad because they seemed [liked] both their talents and their strengths seem wasted.

While there are professional development opportunities at the district level, very few have focused specifically on twice exceptionally. As a district level gifted coordinator, Ms. Russell has had a small number of teacher contacts concerning a twice exceptional student:

Most of them don’t [contact me]. Again, a couple of times, and I can say on one hand that it’s been brought to me, again the direction is to first of all find out –
and that’s just from learning what I’ve learned from last year’s training and the little bit of exposure I’ve had to it. First of all, what is in the best interest of the student and what does their IEP say? What did they need help with? Because we need to make sure that we’re working together as a team and bridging that gap and it’s a lot like the special ed teacher takes the kid out for here and does this and we do this separately. We need to work together. I’ve encouraged the teachers that when they’re doing the meetings, that they need to be part of that so you can bring out that gifted piece and show the student’s strengths and what they are doing well.

4.7.2. “they assumed every student was the same there” Unsupported Educators

Because most students were never in gifted classes, their experiences with teachers were with general and special educators. Nearly every student participant shared multiple stories about how their teachers and IEP tutors were unaccommodating to their special needs by teachers despite their needs being documented in an IEP. Several also shared that teachers’ lack of accommodation was often coupled with rudeness and hostility. For example, after Darnell’s traumatic brain injury, he experienced headaches, dizziness, nausea, and had trouble walking. When this would happen in class, he found that teachers were less than understanding:

Before the disability, everything was just kind of carefree. I was making good grades and stuff like that. I had nothing to worry about or anything like that. Then, I would start getting headaches in class after the disability…the grades would go down because they [teachers] weren’t really understanding. I’d ask to go to the nurse, and they would be like, ‘Get over it. It’s not that bad. You can wait till the end of the day...’ They [teachers] just didn’t really see it as a disability. You know most teachers don’t even know I have the concussion until I bring it up to them. They [teachers] don’t even check the IEP [Individualized Education Plan] folder or whatever that they get. This year, Dr. Burris didn’t even know I had a concussion until I brought it up. Then, she didn’t believe I had an IEP either until she checked the files. They thought I was just complaining until they actually saw the proof in it, I guess.
Similarly, Zero and Riley both talked how teachers looked at them as being the same as other students; thus, not meeting their special needs. For example, when Zero moved to another school in the middle of his 7th grade year, he felt that teachers “assumed every student was the same there and they all did the same work.” While teachers would rephrase what they were saying, Zero felt that “it was still hard to understand.” Riley also noted that her she experienced more challenges in general education courses:

Especially, when you’re in a regular class, not an IEP class, they just throw a bunch of work and you’re trying to keep up and they don’t understand that you have an IEP and you need help. So, they just don’t but your- cause you’re just like everybody else.

In knowing his particular challenges around reading, Trey knew that if a teacher didn’t know about his special needs that he would try to be the “class clown” to avoid embarrassment.

Parents also saw that some teachers and school staff were not accommodating to their child’s special needs. When Miss Helen initially saw that her son was struggling to learn in kindergarten, she thought that he should be held back to have another opportunity to get it. Yet, when she approached the school this suggestion, she was told that holding him back was not an option. Miss Tammy also reported that some teachers were not accommodating of her son, Darnell. She was told by teachers that Darnell needed to come to school more, but she explained, “yes, I understand that, but how can I send my son to school when he can’t walk, or he has this headache…?” Due to the teachers and staff insensitivity to Darnell’s special needs, Miss Tammy found herself becoming more involved in school by advocating for Darnell. In the following statement, she
communicated her disenchantment with school accommodations, “I’m still fighting with some teachers to this day. Teachers, I hate to say it, of my own color…to this day, I have to fight with them.”

In addition to teachers not accommodating special needs, student participants discussed general rudeness, low expectations, and a lack of relationship with their teachers. For instance, in Karin’s middle school, her math teacher told her “you should go back to where you came from,” communicating that students like her did not belong in that particular teacher’s classroom. At the beginning of his high school experience, Darnell shared that he felt like he was pre-labeled by teachers as a lazy, black kid. For example, he stated: “it just wasn’t a pleasant thing.” Riley also talked about being labeled by her high school tutor, who is a part of the accommodations for her IEP. When asked about her relationship with her tutor, Riley revealed that she has found other ways to get assistance because she felt like her tutor thought she was slow:

Riley: Sometimes, I feel like he tries to take advantage sometimes because he thinks I’m slow. So, sometimes, we get in arguments or whatever and he always seems like he’s always right.

Mayes: So, when that happens, what do you do after that?

Riley: I stay away from him. I don’t really go to him anymore or, if I have to, I try to ignore it. I was only set up to only come to him when I need help…I would ask some of my friends, I’d look it up on the internet, for my persistent questions I’d ask my teacher. That was about it.

For Luisa, unsupportive teachers were those who made no attempt to get to know her.

When asked about how teachers have been unsupportive of her she explained, “by not trying to get to know me, not trying to get to know what I like to do, [and] not even trying to contact my parents. Telling them [my parents] how well I’m doing or if I’m doing bad
or anything good.” Chelby also talked about feeling like some teachers hated her. When she felt this way, she indicated that she would purposely get in trouble to go to the in-school suspension room, where there was a teacher she loved. Chelby was also one of the only student participants to discuss a negative teacher interaction involving her giftedness related to dance. When Chelby entered high school, she tried out for cheerleading and did not make the team.

Chelby: I remember I tried out… I think I’m a little bit too conceited when I come to my dancing class, cause I went to cheerleading tryout and I’m like, “Okay, I’ve got this. I can dance. I’m very flexible,” and I didn’t make it and I was just so mad. I was so mad [be]cause I felt like I lost it or something, I don’t know!

Mayes: Cheerleading at high school?

Chelby: I said, ‘I’m never trying out again.’ But, I’m going to try for drill team and if I don’t make it, that means something’s wrong.

Mayes: What do you mean something’s wrong?

Chelby: [Be]cause every time I do a talent show or an audition or something, I always make it. So that’s why I was like, ‘What? I didn’t make it?’ But, they said it was because of my behavior in school. What’s that got to do with my cheerleading abilities?

Likewise, Miss Tammy and Miss Helen saw that some teachers and staff had low expectations for their children. Miss Tammy shared about a situation where Darnell’s teacher would say rude comments regarding his lack of attendance in front of the class. Not only was she not understanding of his physical challenges, but her comments in front of the class embarrassed Darnell. When Miss Tammy talked with an administrator about it, she felt like she was brushed off. Miss Helen’s negative experience involves her son’s removal from school. The high school informed her that her son earned all of his credits in before winter break of his senior year and he would become a work study student.
Miss Helen was stunned by this decision and felt that the school was tired of working with her son:

I was still baffled by it. See, I wasn’t there, so basically I feel like she [her mother] should have said no. I don’t know if it was because, like I said, he was having some problems or I don’t know if they just basically threw him out of school because he was 18 and had had some previous problems in the 11th grade or whatever and didn’t want him to get in any more trouble or whatever. That’s the way I just felt.

4.7.3. “They were really understanding” Positive Experiences with Educators

While all of the student participants had negative experiences with school staff, each could identify several staff members who provided them with support and encouragement. Trey shared that some of his teachers were sensitive to his challenges with reading; therefore, they would spend extra time with him, going over the work again. They also complimented and encouraged Trey with his gifts, telling him that he “could go to school for that.” Chelby also expressed that she was supported primarily by her teachers in the resource room teachers, Mrs. Wright and Ms. Carl who gave her extra attention in the classroom. For Chelby, Mrs. Wright went the extra mile to make sure she was successful, “if you don’t have your work turned in, she’ll give me all the papers that I need and then she’ll call my mom and make sure I did them. I think she really wants me to pass ninth grade.” Miss Sarah, Chelby’s mother, saw Ms. Carl as a part of her support system in the building. Ms. Carl became Chelby’s go to person when she was having a bad day:

If another teacher calls and says Chelby’s having a bad day, they’ll call Ms. Carl, and Ms. Carl [would] go get her and take her to her room. Ms. Carl is the one, if they [teachers] can’t find Chelby, she’ll be the one [to look for her]. She’s the one who tries to talk [to] Chelby. She’s the one who [handles any problem with
Chelby]. And, when she’s talking, she says, ‘She’s one of my kids,’ like she’s responsible for her…And, she cares and you know she cares.

Similarly, Zero discussed how his teachers were “very motivated” for him to be successful. His teachers set goals and benchmarks for him throughout his schooling, starting small with getting to school, “then to pass middle school, then graduate high school and actually get a successful job.”

Above extra attention and support with schoolwork, student participants discussed the relationships that teachers created with them. For example, Riley and Karin both treasured their relationships with teachers who treated them like a friend and could talk to them about their personal problems. More specifically, Riley described her favorite teacher, Mr. Peters, as being inclusive yet accommodating:

He hasn’t really discriminated [against] me…he’ll teach me like how he teaches [other] students, and sometimes if I’m struggling a little bit, he’ll pull me aside and talk to me…and tell me another way to do it. He’ll talk to you as a friend and not a teacher.

Likewise, Karin appreciated teachers that she could connect with her teacher, Mr. Larry, on a personal level, who could talk about the real world:

He is a very great teacher, and he’s like my favorite teacher ever. He helped me with [my] confidence and self-esteem; he was very supportive, especially this year. He was a really, really [a] great teacher and I really, really liked him as a teacher…he was really, really nice and he helped me out with personal [challenges]. Like if I told him, ‘Oh, this is how it is at home.’ He would give me advice, or he’d tell me, ‘Oh, keep your head up, and that’s how every teacher in this building is.’ Everybody had a teacher that they can go to for anything and that was my teacher… I am going to miss him, when it comes to learning because, as I said, I’m going to be by myself in college. He gave me the confidence that I needed, and I’m going to have to learn to be more independent. I don’t know how to do that yet. At that time, when we were speaking, I was like, “Man, I don’t know how to drive a car. I need to learn how to do this.” And he would say, “I’ll help you. You can come in here and we can study together when the kids are doing work.” …that’s the teacher that I’m going to miss, because he was willing
to help me and not many people are. You don’t find people on the street that are willing to help you like that, especially a White teacher.

Finally, as students saw support through their relationships with teachers, one student saw that school staff members advocate for him in the school building:

Mayes: I’m wondering in what way other teachers have been supportive of you and your family.

Darnell: My band teacher…he was real supportive. He helped every step of the way. I was getting bad grades in his class at one point because I was absent a lot. Then, once we told him about the concussion, he was just on board ever since then.

Mayes: So what are some of the things that he does to support you?

Darnell: I guess talking to the other teachers and me about my situation, cause he was very understanding about it. His son went through something similar… [he] sat in meetings, put in a good word for me basically.

Miss Tammy also saw Darnell’s band teacher as a positive force in his life and felt connected to him on a personal level. She explained that Mr. Egbert, the band teacher, was “like family” and was her voice at school when she was not there. In her eyes, Mr. Egbert went above and beyond. An example of this is illustrated with the following excerpt: “it’s just wonderful when you have someone who understands what you’re going through and can help you or point you in the right direction.”

4.7.4 “I don’t like counselors. They’re annoying” Limited Experiences with School Counselors

Overall, student participants had limited or no interactions with the school counselors. However, two did have negative experiences with a counselor. Although Riley has had limited interactions with her high school counselor and did not think that she was too effective as indicated with the following quote, “I feel like she’s not a good
school counselor at all.” Interestingly, Chelby’s dislike derived from her experience with outside community counseling. Of all the student participants, Chelby had the most experience with counselors because of her behavior in school but felt counseling was ineffective:

Chelby: I don’t like counselors. I don’t like no type of counselors.
Mayes: Is there a reason that you don’t like counselors?
Chelby: I’ve had counseling all my life, and they don’t help. They’re annoying and they make me angry cause all they do is ask questions, stupid questions that they already know the answer to. I know you know the answer cause you made me fill out this long piece of paper with all the questions you’re about to ask me.

Of the few experiences shared, most of the student participants elaborated on how they sought out their school counselor only in high school. For example, Trey and Karin, both seniors in high school, connected with the school counselor for academic concerns like monitoring their grades or discussing their next steps after high school. Amber was the only student participant that sought out the school counselor for personal concerns. She felt that the school counselor, Ms. Kimble, was her favorite as indicated with the following quote, “because she helps me with everything. I can go to her when I need help or anything like that.”

4.7.5 “Follow the rules” Desired Supports in School

When thinking about their particular needs, the majority of the student participants wanted teachers build positive relationships with educators. They wanted educators to understand and help them to be successful in school. Darnell wanted teachers to see his potential and be sensitive to his needs as a learner. For example, he stated: “[I want] for teachers just to be patient, follow the rules [his IEP], and not be on
the other side sort of against me.” Amber and Chelby wanted teachers to be more helpful with their schoolwork. More specifically, they wanted support to keep their grades up and to ensure their work was being completed correctly. On the other hand, Luisa wanted to have more of a challenge, particularly in math as indicated with the following quote, “[give me] harder problems to solve. Give a little more mystery to them instead of just the basic ones.” Luisa further suggested that she wanted more opportunities and college preparatory courses.

Both Miss Tammy and Miss Sarah had recommendations for the schools to be more supportive of their twice exceptional student. Miss Tammy wanted school staff to understand Darnell’s needs and to communicate with her so she can help her son to be successful. For example, she asserted:

I think the best thing to help me would be communication. Let me know how your assignments go, or Darnell’s having trouble with this. He might need extra tutoring for that or this. He can read this for extra credit assignment. Talk with me. Let me know what I can do so we can get Darnell on the right page, or what Darnell needs to do to be on the right page. I’m not going to do his work for him, but I will help him. I will give him examples or I will work on something and let him do the next one, but I will work with him. That’s what a parent does. You have to mold your child first before going to school. I wouldn’t expect a teacher to mold him for me, but work with me.

Although Miss Sarah recognizes that her daughter, Chelby, must take responsibility for her learning, she felt that the school could be more supportive if they were more consistent in enforcing their behavioral expectations. Miss Sarah did, however, discuss her need for greater outside support. She shared how difficult it has been for her to maintain her relationship with family and friends because of her daughter’s troubling behavior toward them:
When I first started, I had a whole bunch [of support] but, as the years go by, something she’s [Chelby] done—like I’ve said, “Well, that’s another support system gone. Well, that’s another support gone. Well, that’s another support,” because the stuff she’s done along the way. But I had a great support system, but now it’s mainly me and my other daughter. It was family, friends, church, but now they’re all gone. They’re all gone, cause she’s either cussed them out or whatever. One of the—she tried to fight the assistant pastor at the church—a man. She fought one of the ladies at the church. You know, and just cursing people out at the church, just the attitude at the church…My sister filed assault charges against her too before, but she ended up dropping them…that was her first contact with the law was by my sister. That was another support gone because this is one of the sisters who would keep Chelby for me. But now I’m thinking I can’t take her over to her house no more. I can give you stories about each one and now they’re gone.

While Miss Sarah realized that Chelby has behavioral challenges, she believed that Chelby could turn it around and she needed people that would be supportive of that. More specifically, she wanted a support system that would be nonjudgmental, understanding, who would listen, and support her spiritually through prayer.

Because of limited experience with school counselors, very few participants had recommendations for better support from school counselors. Riley wanted school counselors to have better communication with students. Luisa need for school counselors was geared more toward family issues. She wanted the school counselor to “help [her mom] with drinking and drug addictions.” Darnell’s desired role for school counselors was similar what he wanted from teachers. In addition to following the rules, Darnell wanted school counselors to “know the signs and symptoms of brain injuries.”

Despite the challenges that each educator saw in nurturing twice exceptional African American students, they desired to find new ways to support these students. For example, Ms. Grace and Mr. Wallace believed that we greater awareness and
collaboration, educators could pull their resources to ensure the success of these students.

More specifically, Ms. Grace envisioned a holistic approach to serving the student:

I think if every school had a meeting with the gifted coordinator and the special ed coordinator in the building and then the counselor and starting there on kind of a social/emotional theme and then figuring out who the child is and the best way to help him or her and then pulling in the teacher… I think just some conversation and collaboration and having a real sense of like wanting to help this child in a holistic way as opposed to being the keepers of the information and maybe not wanting to share and talk about how can we help the whole child. And it seems Pollyanna, but it’s not. It’s really kind of common sense.

Likewise, Ms. Russell also saw the need to bridge the gap between special and gifted educators to have a more comprehensive understanding of twice exceptional students.

Ms. Russell added that she has personally made changes to the information gathering process for gifted identification to include a request for any special needs that the student may have.

Educators also saw that they played a critical role in supporting twice exceptional African American students’ success. While the district does not provide gifted services in instrumental music, vocal music, dance, or art, Ms. Russell has been working to have spots reserved in the arts elementary, middle, and high schools for students who are gifted in those areas. Mr. Jacobs viewed himself as an important resource for students as well. He believed that he if he could build a strong relationship with students, he could help to nurture their talents and connected them with others in the community that could support them as well.
Finally, the student participants also realized that they played a role in their success. Several participants described what they needed to do in order to be successful in school. Chelby and Trey thought that they needed to “go to class everyday”, do their work, and make friends with peers who would be good influences. In addition to these things, Karin stated that to be successful, she needed strength from within, “I need confidence. I need self-esteem. I need to believe in myself, in my ability to do the work.”

4.8 Summary

The previous sections of this chapter offered a thorough description of the subthemes that developed after rigorous data analysis by the researcher and research team. These subthemes were formulated under overarching themes: (a) the significance of labels; (b) social and personal experiences of twice exceptionality; and (c) challenges and strategies in the school environment. A thorough discussion of the themes and subthemes will be offered in chapter five.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview of the Study

This qualitative study explored the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of twice exceptional African American students in K-12 schools. Included in this investigation were the experiences and perceptions of parents and educators around working with and supporting twice exceptional students in the urban school district. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the following three overarching themes emerged from the raw data: (a) the significance of labels; (b) social and personal experiences of twice exceptionality; and (c) challenges and strategies in the school environment. The following section discusses how these themes answer the research questions that were the foundation of the current study.

It is important to note that interpretivism (Glesne 2011) and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989) were used as the theoretical underpinnings to understand the experience, perceptions, and attitudes of twice exceptional African American students, parents, and educators. According to interpretivism, humans play an active role in creating meaning in their lives. Similarly, ecological systems theory focuses on the interactions between systems that ultimately impact development of the individual at the center of said interactions. Moreover, the interactions are dynamic in that the individual at the center influences the systems as the systems influence them.
5.1.1 Research Question 1

How do students and parents understand what having a disability means in school?

In the findings from the interview transcripts and the biographical questionnaires, the students and parents identified challenges, both internally and externally with making sense of their disability. Because the most of the participants had no knowledge of being identified as gifted by the district nor did they participated in gifted services, they experienced the majority of their education as a student with a disability with masked gifted ability. The student participants reported negative views of their disability that reflected societal beliefs concerning their lack of intelligence as well as the general stigma of being a student with a disability (Peterson, 2009). When they discussed their initial special education identification, the each expressed feeling **dumb, different, slow, or stupid**. As a result of being identified, both Riley and Amber talked about the isolation they experienced in the school environment by their placement in special education classes. The isolation they experienced led them to disengage in classes as to not draw attention to themselves or their special needs (Peterson, 2009).

Disability was seen as being unacceptable, wrong, and something to hide. Parents initially saw that disability meant that something was wrong with their child. In discussing the initial identification of their children, Miss Helen and Miss Sarah quickly said that “there’s nothing wrong” with their child and that they needed to try harder. In their denial, as they called it, they illustrated their understanding that to have a disability means that something must be wrong or deficit. Student participants also discussed ways
that they would hide it from their peers by sitting in the back of class or acting like they did not have a disability.

In addition to feeling different, there seemed to be a general sense of worry related to the students’ special needs. The students and parents both worried about their futures would hold as well as their ability to be successful. Karin wondered if she was always going be referred to as a “special student.” Despite being accepted into college, she worried how she would persist and if her disability would limit her ability to connect with professors and ultimately be successful. All three parents were worried about their child’s ability to be successful after high school. Miss Helen felt that her son, a graduating senior who was “kicked out” of school for behavioral problems and placed in a work study position, was unprepared to enter the workforce (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011). Likewise, Miss Sarah worried that Chelby’s disabilities (e.g., ADD and ODD) would get her into more dangerous situations. Finally, although Darnell had scored high on state tests, he had mostly C’s and D’s which caused Miss Tammy to worry if colleges would be able to see and understand his potential.

Their feelings of difference around disability were also reinforced by their interactions with their peers. With the exception of Darnell, all of the student participants were picked on, made fun of, and excluded by their peers. Trey explained that some students were “haters” and “liked to taunt.” Because of their educational placement in special education classes, students teased Chelby and Karin. They were called “slow” and made to feel different because they were in the “basement classes.” Chelby, Amber, and Riley changed their behavior, once identified, to not draw attention to themselves.
Therefore, they would sneak into their classes, sit in the back of their classes, and mask their disabilities by behaving as if they did not have one.

Interestingly, Darnell was an outlier in how he viewed his special needs and interacted with his peers. He did not use terms like *dumb* or *stupid* to describe his feelings or thoughts about his disability. Instead, he shared the physical challenges that he experienced in school and how he appreciated being gifted. These feelings were likely due to the differences between him and the other participants. Darnell was the only student participant to be identified as gifted first. He was also the only student to actually take gifted classes. Additionally, his specific disability, traumatic brain injury, is related to an accident whereas other students in the sample have disabilities that stem from their biological processes. So, it seems that Darnell’s elementary school experience in gifted education and the later onset of his disability mitigates his views of himself and interactions with peers. For example, he seemed to see himself as a gifted student first that has some physical challenges as a result of his traumatic brain injury. Additionally, he can look at his disability as something that happened to him whereas other student participants’ disabilities (i.e. specific learning disabilities and emotional disorders) come from internal biological processes that they were born with in a sense.

5.1.2 Research Question 2

*How do the students and parents understand what being gifted means in school?*

The current literature on twice exceptionality identified challenges particularly in identifying students appropriately as being gifted and having a disability. More specifically, the literature suggests that identification is difficult because giftedness often
masked disability or disability masked giftedness (Brody & Mills, 1997; Foley Nicpon et al., 2011). Although in this study student participants were identified as twice exceptional by school staff, their own knowledge and understanding of their giftedness seemed to be masked. Out of the eight student participants, only Darnell, Chelby, and Trey initially thought of themselves as gifted. As previously mentioned, Darnell was the only student out of the group to participate in academically focused gifted programming in his school experience despite his being identified as gifted in instrumental music. After more prompting from the researcher, the other five student participants identified areas where they believed that they were gifted or talented. However, their self-identified gifts and talents did not correspond with their gifted identification from the district. When the researcher shared the discrepancy, the student participants were in shock. For example, Luisa, who self-identified as being gifted in math, asked “how did they get that?,” when the researcher indicated that she was gifted in vocal music. It goes without saying that these five student participants, as well as Trey and Chelby, did not report being contacted by anyone in the district regarding their gifts, despite district protocol to send letters home reporting that the child was identified as gifted.

While two parent participants knew their child’s gifts and had been informed by the district, Miss Helen had no idea that her son was gifted. She expressed her view that gifted was for the exceptional, and her son was always viewed as a problem. Miss Sarah and Miss Tammy both talked about their child’s gifts emerging early and both being recognized by the school as being gifted. Students were also directly impacted by district policy around gifted education services in that their non-academic gifts fell in areas that
the district lacked adequate funding to provide enrichment services. As such, these students' giftedness remained masked throughout their education because they were viewed and regarded as students in special education by their teachers and peers.

Although students did not experience gifted education and several disagreed with the district's gifted identification, all of the participants viewed their self-identified giftedness positively. Many of the students felt special and happy. Amber and Riley both shared that they did not want their peers to know about their disability but wanted some sort of recognition for their self-identified gifts. They both wanted their peers to see how smart and capable they were.

In addition to being recognized by peers, being gifted also gave Darnell the opportunity to make friends. Prior to his being in gifted classes, Darnell stated that he was lonely and quiet, but being in gifted class allowed him to make friends. To him, the students were more friendly and welcoming. Being identified as gifted created a connection to Darnell’s peers. For other students, their self-identified giftedness provided not only a connection to the world, but a way to express their thoughts and feelings. Chelby and Zero found that their giftedness identity, in dance and art respectively, allowed them to communicate with others and release pent-up emotions.

5.1.3 Research Question 3

How do the parents identify the needs of students and find the appropriate supports in school? How are students a part of that process?

Only one parent talked about how she found out what her son needed to be successful in school. Through numerous doctor appointments as well as consulting with
Ms. Thomas, a district level support staff, Miss Tammy was able to identify the appropriate supports that Darnell would need to be successful in school. Miss Tammy had those needs documented initially in a 504 plan for the remainder of Darnell’s middle school experience and changed to an IEP in his first year of high school. She included Darnell in the meetings, particularly when addressing teachers at the high school level so that he can express what he needs as well.

When students thought about their academic needs, they focused primarily on was that teachers and school counselors could be more supportive of them in school. They wanted teachers to really know them on a personal level, to understand their needs, but to challenge them. Students wanted sensitivity to their special needs in class. For several students, that meant extra time on tasks and reminders about work. They wanted educators to be fully invested in their success as students. Interestingly, students also saw that their actions can impact their overall success. For instance, Karin saw that her own internal focus and strength was important, “I need confidence. I need self-esteem. I need to believe in myself, in my ability to do the work.” Students also discussed their own decision-making like going to class, studying, and picking good friends as being pivotal in their academic success.

5.1.4 Research Question 4

What are the needs of parents who are raising a twice exceptional African American student?

Interestingly, parents had similar experiences as their twice exceptional child in trying to navigate the school to find adequate supports. While the parents readily
engaged in the school environment, they each were confronted with negative perceptions by educators, who often communicated a deficit view of the student (Gorski, 2012). As an advocate for Darnell, Miss Tammy shared that she has been constantly fighting with teachers and administrators to follow Darnell’s IEP. In some instances, she felt like it was her against the school and that she needed someone more powerful on her side like a lawyer. However, when talking about what she needed from the school, it was simple: communication. She wanted teachers to communicate with her on the progress of Darnell so that she could find ways to support him at home. She also felt that Darnell would have a better experience if school staff had some understanding of traumatic brain injuries.

Miss Sarah felt that the school was doing their best to support her daughter, Chelby. Yet she believed that it could be improved if there was more consistency in the teachers and administrators behavioral expectations of Chelby. Miss Sarah did elaborate on her need for outside support. She explained that as a single parent, she needed friends and family to support her but found that it was increasingly difficult to maintain those relationships because of mishaps with her daughter. So, as her family and friends had negative experiences with Chelby, they removed themselves as a support for Miss Sarah. As a result, Miss Sarah talked about wanting more supports like her church pastor, who could support without judgment.

5.1.5 Research Question 5

What are the strengths, challenges, and needs for teachers and school counselors who work with twice exceptional African American students and their parents?
Educators experienced what seemed to be more challenges and needs than strengths in working with twice exceptional African American students. For example, all educators talked about their challenge in even knowing who the twice exceptional African American students were. In many ways, it seemed to be a reflection of district policy in how information is shared as gifted information is shared with teachers only in a student is receiving gifted services. For the students in this particular study, their gifted information would not have been shared as they were identified in the arts and not receiving gifted services. Moreover, information that was shared seemed to stay with the area in which it was shared in that gifted educators did not communicate with special educators. So each tended to work more in silos rather than trying to work together. Furthermore, they described their own frustrations in working with a student information system that did not provide adequate information, particularly on student gifts. Ms. Kimble, a high school counselor, shared that she could see gifted flags but had no idea what the student was gifted in. So that made it more challenging for her to support the student when difficulties arose in his classes.

In addition to challenges identifying and gathering information on students, there was a struggle with understanding what it means to be gifted and how to support those students. More specifically, teacher perceptions and expectations heavily influenced their interactions with students (Ford & Moore, 2004, Moore et al., 2005b). Ms. Grace discussed the misconceptions that teachers have shared with her about who can be gifted. Teachers thought that gifted students were “teacher pleasers” who would be engaged in class, make good decisions, and, most importantly, wouldn’t have disabilities.
Regardless of both Ms. Grace and Ms. Russell’s efforts as district level gifted administrators, these perceptions were still held by individuals in the district.

Just as these misconceptions are detrimental in this urban district, teacher’s lack of ability to work effectively with twice exceptional students was equally as detrimental. Educators saw that there were challenges for teachers to really nurture students’ gifts in the classroom setting. More specifically, educators thought that teachers lacked training, time, and even desire to want to engage gifted students. Interestingly, Ms. Russell, a district level administrator for gift education, rarely had teachers seek her out for support or professional development in working with twice exceptional students.

Despite all of the challenges, each educator expressed their own motivation to support these students. Each saw that gathering information on these students was an important first step followed by more collaboration among staff. For example, Mr. Wallace discussed the need to be aware of the students special needs and gifts so that his staff could work together to leverage resources to enhance twice exceptional African American students talents and support their special needs. Ms. Grace and Ms. Russell also saw collaboration between special education and gifted education as pivotal in taking a more holistic approach to understanding student needs and gifts.

5.2 Conclusions

The aforementioned assumptions of the research were validated by the findings of the study:
1. Twice exceptional African American students experience gifted and special
   education programs differently from other students.

2. Twice exceptional African American students may experience more difficulty in
   achieving positive self-identity (i.e. racial, disability, academic) compared to their
   peers.

3. Parents of twice exceptional African Americans are involved in their child’s
   education differently from other parents.

4. Twice exceptional African American students and their parents have low
   perceptions of educators.

The study’s participants gave numerous accounts of the perilous status of twice
exceptional African American students. Due to the intersection of their special needs and
giftedness, it was clear that twice exceptional African American students experience both
gifted and special education differently than their peers. For example, previous studies
on twice exceptionality highlighted challenging experiences centered on building positive
relationships as well as reconciling giftedness and special needs (Moon et al., 2001;
Williams King, 2007). While the student participants in this study did experience
challenges with building positive relationships, 7 out of the 8 students reported never
officially being recognized as gifted. In a sense, their own giftedness, although identified
by the district, was invisible to them, their peers, as well as the school staff. The
invisibility of their own giftedness enabled students to experience and be seen as students
in special education as opposed to a student with special needs who is also gifted. Only
one student was enrolled in gifted classes despite being identified as being gifted in instrumental music.

Because the majority of students reported never being told that they were gifted they did had the opportunity to develop a gifted identity or even enhance their gifts or talents. Despite being told they were gifted as a part of this study, 4 of the students did they agree with how they were identified as gifted by the district. Only three believed that they were gifted prior to their participation in the study. Other participants identified areas that they thought they were smart or had some talent, primarily in academic subjects, which was vastly different than their gifted identification from the district. As a result of not being served, students’ primary experience and lens in schools focused on their disabilities. While disability seemed to be the students strongest identity in school, many shared negative perceptions of their own disability and internalized stigma. There disability was seen as something to overcome in isolation, to hide from peers for fear of ridicule.

Additionally, students’ invisible giftedness impacted how parents were involved in schools. Because students were not recognized or receiving gifted services in schools, parents talked about their involvement in schools as it related to having their child’s special needs met. They communicated the struggle with advocating for their child’s needs in that it always seemed to be a fight. They felt that educators worked against them rather than worked with them.
Finally, parents and students both reported numerous experiences where their interactions with educators were negative. Student and parent participants shared at length on educators’ lack of accommodations to their special needs as well as even conveying rudeness and deficit thinking towards students. As previously stated, parents did not feel included or valued in the school environment. They often had disagreements with how their student was being treated but felt that they had to come prepared to fight with educators as opposed to working with them.

5.3 Discussion and Implications

As previously stated, the current literature on twice exceptionality has critical gaps pertaining to the experience of African American students in urban schools. If this trend continues, the challenges that twice exceptional African Americans may never be explored or resolved. Toward that end, the findings in this study have the potential to start a dialogue among educators and policymakers.

Educators in this study provided numerous examples of the challenges that they face in supporting twice exceptional African American students. They spoke to a lack of awareness that these students existed as well as the difficulty in gathering all the information necessary to understand students’ special needs and gifts. Additionally, educators reported a lack of training on knowing exactly how to work with twice exceptional students. This was evident in the experiences that students shared around working with teachers. Students felt each in their experiences with teachers who were not accommodating of their special needs while expressing generally low perceptions of
them. As such, educators need more training, knowledge, and access to information about twice exceptional African American students. Thus, such individuals may be interested in the findings of this study to gain a better understanding of twice exceptional African American students.

According to the findings, twice exceptional African American students responded to special education and gifted education identification different. Students generally viewed their disability negatively in that it wasn’t to be shared with anyone and that it would present challenges in their future. However, their self-identified giftedness was something to be celebrated and shared with the world, despite most never being a part of gifted education services. These results will be of particular interest to all educators, especially gifted and special educators as they work directly with students concerning needs and gifts. Also educators may be interested in student’s experiences around race, particularly in students’ finding unity with peers or being negatively labeled. Students also expressed the impact of race in school and society in that they were pre-labeled as a “black lazy kid” and if they were smart then they were excluded from their black peers for “acting White.” While they enjoyed being in school with their black peers, they saw that being black in the current U.S. society meant that they would be fighting an uphill battle. Coupled with educators’ misconceptions on gifted characteristics, special education identification, and gifted education labels, it can be very challenging for students to develop positive identities needed for success in school and life. Educators may find the results of the study particularly helpful in understanding the
meaning, context, and experiences of twice exceptional students as a result of their intersecting identities.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several suggestions are provided for teachers, school counselors, principals, and parents.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Teachers

1. Teachers should build and maintain positive relationships with parents. Parents play an important role in student success and need to be included in the identification process for both gifted and special education. Moreover, teachers need to work in alliance with parents to find the best ways to nurture and support the student in school. There should be ongoing communication, be it telephone calls, notes home, and meetings at the convenient times and locations so parents can feel empowered to be a part of their child’s education.

2. Given the intersecting identification of these students, it is important that there is greater collaboration with other educators (i.e. special and gifted educators, school counselors, etc). This collaboration will lead to a comprehensive understanding of the student’s unique needs and gifts. Additionally, educators would be better able to determine the best way to support the special needs of twice exceptional African American student while enhancing gifts in their classrooms. This collaboration should happen, regardless of the gifted education services that are offered in the building.
3. Teachers should participate in professional development opportunities to increase their awareness of personal beliefs regarding twice exceptional African American students. Additionally, professional development activities should build a greater capacity to support and enhance the education of twice exceptional African American students.

4. Teachers should also find ways to build positive relationships with their students. Instead of deficit thinking and lower expectations, teachers should focus on building students up and seeing their potential. Teachers also need to be sensitive to their student’s special needs while maintaining high expectations.

5.4.2 Recommendations for School Counselors

1. School counselors should collaborate with fellow educators to determine needs of twice exceptional students as well as the best ways to support the student’s academic success. Additionally, school counselors should provide support for educators in navigating the legal protections for special education (Assouline, et al., 2006).

2. School counselors should participate in professional development opportunities to increase their awareness of personal beliefs regarding twice exceptional African American students. Additionally, school counselors should attend professional development trainings on the counseling needs of twice exceptional African American students.

3. Given that students had limited interactions with their school counselors, school counselors need to find ways to build positive relationships with the students and...
parents. Through this relationship, school counselors have the opportunity to share their role in aiding student success and helping the student to develop a self-awareness of their unique strengths and needs (Assouline et al., 2006).

4. School counselors should advocate for greater opportunities for gifted services at their respective schools. School counselors should seek out community partnerships to connect students and parents with outside resources that can support gifts if there are limited gifted services at their respective school.

5. Implement parent-trainings to help parents understand twice exceptionality as well as the services that are offered as a part of special and gifted education.

6. It is important that school counselors understand the challenges that students face around the intersecting identities of race, gifted education identification, and special education identification as it can greatly impact students’ self-perception and overall experience in education. As such, school counselors must be aware of the students’ perceptions in order to reduce the mental tax that students may experience.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Principals

1. Principals should disseminate information regarding the students who are gifted in the building. The principal should also make collaboration between gifted and special educators a priority in ensuring the success of twice exceptional African American students.

2. Principals should recruit school staff that is trained to meet the unique needs of twice exceptional African American students. Moreover, principals must
maintain ongoing professional development opportunities for school staff to increase their skills to work effectively with twice exceptional African American students.

5.4.4 Recommendations for the District

1. As all of the students in this study were identified as being gifted in the arts, the district should ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in gifted education by providing financial resources to support gifted and talented programs (Moore & Flowers, 2013).

2. Although students were identified as being gifted, they were not properly notified under the current district policy of sending a letter to the student’s home. Therefore, the district needs to change their district policy and strategies on notifying families about students’ giftedness. In addition to sending a letter, a meeting, either in person or over the phone, needs to be arranged with the district gifted coordinators and parents in order to share information about the student and resources for the parent.

3. Given that twice exceptional students have IEPs, it is pertinent that the district find ways to include the student’s strengths and gifts in the IEP. This will allow for more comprehensive understanding of student needs to be shared with the appropriate teachers.

4. Provide professional development opportunities to ensure that principals are aware of issues facing twice exceptional African American students.
5.4.5 Recommendations for Parents

1. Parents should work with the school counselor or special educator to better understand their child’s disability, policies around federal and state law on disability, state law and district policy on giftedness. Additionally, parents should work with their children to understand their experience of being twice exceptional.

5.5 Future Directions

This study offers detailed information regarding the lives of twice exceptional African American students, their parents, as well as educators. All data for the study was collected through individual interviews and document collection. While the interviews and documents were insightful, the findings of the study would have been strengthened if observations of the school environment including student interactions with peers as well as student and parent interactions with teachers, administrators, and school counselors. School observations would provide a more in depth understanding of student, parent, and educator experiences and provide an overall context. Future research should incorporate observations

Additionally, most of the participants in this study were identified as being gifted in non-academic areas (e.g. instrumental music, vocal music, dance, etc) and only one student had experienced gifted education classes. Future research studies should incorporate the experience of twice exceptional African American students who are gifted in academic subjects and receiving services. For example, a study could be
conducted on comparing the experiences of twice exceptional African American students receiving gifted services with those who not receiving services. This would shed light on the impact of gifted services on overall experiences in education as well as how students conceptualize their race, disability, and giftedness.

Furthermore, future studies should explore differences in identification impacts students’ experience. More specifically, students who experience their giftedness first may have a very different experience than students who experience disability first. Likewise, experiences may differ greatly based on disability. For example, a study might explore the differences in experience of twice exceptional African American students who have physical disabilities in comparison to those with disabilities related to their biology.

Follow-up studies with twice exceptional African American students to explore the issues they face in transitioning to post-secondary educational opportunities. This study would highlight how and if students’ understanding of their unique needs and gifts change over time as well as their experience in finding supports in a new system. The findings in this study may assist high school counselors as they assist twice exceptional African American students prepare for post-secondary opportunities. It also may provide insight to the important partnerships and resources needed to ease twice exceptional African American students’ transition to post-secondary opportunities. Twice experience of twice exceptional students that received services
5.6 Final Thoughts

Ecological systems theory is concerned with understanding how child development is impacted through dynamic interactions with the environment. As such, ecological systems theory was useful in conducting this study because it provided a lens to view adversity that twice exceptional African American students face in schools. Ecological systems theory, in conjunction with interpretivism, allowed the researcher to explore the meanings made by students around race, disability, and giftedness which ultimately shaped their overall experience. Moreover, interpretivism and ecological systems theory provide a lens to understand the challenges experienced by both parents and educators as they tried to support twice exceptional African American students.
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doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01735.x


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doi:10.1080/02783190802527349


doi:10.1080/15505170.2011.624032


Average scale scores for reading, grade 4 by race/ethnicity used to report trends [Data file]. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
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<tr>
<th>Parent Pseudonym</th>
<th>Student Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
<th>Gifted Education</th>
<th>Current Educational Placement</th>
<th>Extra Curricular Activities</th>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>77-82</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Inst. Music</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Chelby</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77-82</td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>General Education &amp; Resource Room</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Less than 77</td>
<td>TBI</td>
<td>Inst. Music</td>
<td>General Education with IEP Tutor</td>
<td>Marching band, Concert band, Robotics club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>87-92</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>Special Education Classes</td>
<td>National Honor Society</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 77</td>
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<td>Vocal Music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>Softball, Dance Team, Worked for Pay</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>General Education and Resource Room</td>
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<td></td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
<td>Special Education Classes</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Highest Ed Dad</td>
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<td>Educational Goals</td>
<td>Career goals</td>
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<td>4 Year Degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>College to work on peoples hair or pets</td>
<td>Work with people or save pet/animals off the street</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>H.S. Diploma</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>College or Air Force</td>
<td>Become an archeologist, paleontologist, or veterinarian</td>
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<td>Some College</td>
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<td>Current Position</td>
<td>Years in Current Position</td>
<td>Years in District</td>
<td>Additional Experience in Education</td>
<td>Experience Teaching Gifted Classes</td>
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<td>H.S. English Teacher, Instructional Coach (English), Adjunct Professor in English, Leadership Intern, Assistant Principal</td>
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APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL
1. When did you first learn that you had a disability? How were you included in the identification process? What did it mean to you having that label? What changed for you after getting that label?

2. What is it like to have a disability in your school? What is the best part? What is the worst part?

3. When did you learn that you are gifted? How were you included in the identification process? What did it mean to you having that label? What changed for you after getting that label?

4. What is it like to be gifted in your school? What is the best part? What is the worst part?

5. What is it like to be an African American in your school? What is the best part? What is the worst part?

6. What were your experiences in elementary school?

7. What were your experiences in middle school?

8. What were your experiences in high school?

9. What are your most important academic needs? How are your needs different than other gifted students? Students with disabilities? White students? Male/Female students? African American students?

10. What are your needs as a gifted student? How are your needs different than non-gifted students? Students with disabilities? African American students? Male/Female students?

11. How would you characterize your overall experiences with your teachers? Please provide details.

12. In what ways has your teachers been a source of support for you and your family? Please explain.

13. In what ways has your teachers not been a source of support for you and your family? Please explain.

14. What do you need most from your teachers? How could they be more helpful?

15. What experiences have you had with your school counselors?

16. In what ways has your school counselors been source of support for you? Please explain.

17. What do you need most from your school counselors? How could they be more helpful?
18. What other programs or sources of support have been helpful to you and your family? What are these programs? How are they been helpful? How would you improve them?

19. Who is your favorite school personnel (e.g., school counselor, teacher, etc.) and why?

20. How can the school be more helpful to you and your family?
1. When did you learn that your child had a disability? What was your initial reaction? How has it changed over the years? What or who has been helpful to you?
2. Prior to your child’s diagnosis, what did you know about that particular disability?
3. How did you learn more about that disability?
4. What concerns did you have for your child before he/she entered school? Why do you think that you had those concerns?
5. How did these concerns influence you/your family in selecting his schools? What did you do to help make your decision? Who did you talk to? How did this help?
6. What grade was your child identified for gifted education? What prompted the school to test your child for giftedness?
7. How were you informed and included in the identification process for gifted education? What was helpful and not helpful about the process?
8. What came up in the school that affected your child (e.g., teachers, peers, school structure, etc.)? How did you and/or the school address those issues?
9. What individuals were particularly supportive in the school environment (e.g., administrators, school counselors, teachers, etc.)? In what ways?
10. Have your school counselors been a source of support for you and your child? Why or why not?
11. What has been your experience with interacting with other parents or students in the school?
12. What do you need most from your teachers? How could they be more helpful?
13. What do you need most from your school counselors? How could they be more helpful?
14. What do you need most from the school environment? How might school staff be more helpful in your child’s success?
15. Are there additional resources or supports have you accessed to help your family/child? Which ones? How did you learn about them? Are there additional resources or supports would be helpful for you?
1. How do the student’s unique gifts and special needs manifest in your classroom? What were some of the strengths and challenges that the student possessed?

2. How were you involved in the referral process for gifted education? Was the student identified for special education prior to the gifted referral? How did that impact the referral process?

3. How did you distinguish between the student’s gifted behaviors and behaviors related to disability?

4. How did you adjust your curriculum to meet their needs? Were there any challenges in adjusting the curriculum and still meeting the needs of your other students? How so?

5. How did the structure of the school help or hinder your ability to implement services to support the student?

6. Were there any unforeseen challenges that affected the student socially or personally? How did you address those challenges?

7. How did you work with other school teachers to meet the needs of the student? In what ways were they helpful? How could they have been more helpful?

8. How did you work with the school counselor in the building to meet the needs of the student? In what ways were they helpful? How could they have been more helpful?

9. How did you work with the students’ parents to meet the needs of the student?

10. Were there professional development opportunities (conferences, books, workshops) that you participated in order to work more effectively with the student?

11. What additional resources or supports have you accessed to aid teaching twice-exceptional students? What additional resources are still needed?
1. How were you involved in the referral process for gifted/or special education?

2. What are the student’s challenges and strengths that you have you observed? How did they manifest in the school setting?

3. How did you work with the student/family once they were identified? Were there specific interventions? If you did not work with the student specifically, what supports or interventions would you have liked to put in place?

4. How did the structure of the school help or hinder your ability to implement services to support the student?

5. Were there professional development resources or opportunities (conferences, books, workshops, consultants) that you participated in order to work more effectively with the student?

6. What additional supports or resources have you accessed to aid in counseling twice-exceptional students? What additional resources are still needed?
APPENDIX C

CODEBOOK
Emerging Codes: Subcategories and Subcode Definitions

Special Education Stigma (STIG)

- Different (DIFF)
- Dumb and Stupid (DMB)
- Isolated and Segregated (ISO)

Understanding Special Needs (UNSN)

- No Understanding (NOUD)
- Need to Try Harder (TRYH)
- Learn Differently than Others (UNIQ)
- Wanted to Be Alone (ALON)
- Worry for the Future (WOR)

Benefits of Being in Special Education (BBS)

- Have More Fun Learning (FUN)
- Increased Independence (INDE)

Challenges of Special Education (CHSP)

- Don’t Want Others to Know about Special Needs (SECP)
- Others Low Expectations (LEXP)
- Being Picked on by Peers (BULP)
- Worried about school work (WSW)
- Family Understanding Special Needs (FAM)

Understanding what Gifted Means (UNDG)

- None/Don’t See Self as Gifted
- Little Understanding or Still Trying to Understand
- Never Told about Being Gifted
- Conflicting View of Gifted Label by District and how they see themselves as Gifted.

Benefits of Being Gifted (BBG)

- None/Don’t See Self as Gifted (NGIF)
- Have a chance/future (FUTR)
• Special/Unique (SPEC)

**Being Black in School (BBLK)**

• No Difference, Peers all Black (NODF)
• Proud of Culture (PROC)
• Stereotypical Views of What Black is (STERO)
• Seeing Being Black as a Challenge in Larger Society (LARC)

**Standing Out Positive (SOP)** – Students positive perception of being recognized as twice exceptional, gifted, or in special education.

• Recognition and Special Treatment (RST)

**Standing Out Negative (SON)** – Students’ negative perception as being recognized as twice exceptional, gifted, or in special education.

• Wanting to be perceived as normal (NORM)
• Skipping or Coming Late to Class Resource Room (SKIP)
• Sitting in Back of or Acting Out in General Education Class (ACT)

**Educational Placement and Accommodations (EDPL)**

• IEP Class/Tutor
• Resource Room (Core Classes)
• General Education
• Career Center

**Interactions with Peers (INWP)**

• Bullied or Made fun of (BUL)
• Few Close Friends (FCF)
• Seen as Talented among Peers (TAL)
• Called White or Acting White (AW)

**Positive Interactions with Teachers (POST)**

• Helped with Work
• Built a Positive Relationship
• Helped with Family Challenges

**Negative Interactions with Teachers (NEGT)**
- Labeled Student as Lazy or Slow etc (LAZ)
- Low expectations, Problem Oriented (LOWE)
- Not accommodating Students Special Needs (NACOM)
- Feeling Silenced (FSIL)

**Academic Needs (ACN)**

- Internal: Go to class, do work, make friends (INTAN)
- External:

**Desired Role for Teachers (DRT)**

- Build Relationships (RELA)
- Explain Things Better (ETB)
- Give More Time (TIM)
- Challenging Curriculum (CHAL)

**Interactions with School Counselors (ISC)**

- Unfamiliar or No Interaction with School Counselor (NOSC)
- Poor Communication of Important Information (PCOM)
- Check Grades Talk to Teachers (GRD)
- Place to Where Student can just Talk (TALK)
- Encouraging and Motivating (ENCO)

**Desired Role for School Counselors (DRSC)**

- Communicate More
- Help with Family Challenges/Problems
- No recommendations

**Desired School Improvements**

- More School Spirit
- More Student Input
- More Engaging Activities in Class & School
- Better Organized
- Better Resources
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APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH TEAM
Description of Research Team Members

**Researcher: Renae D. Mayes**

The researcher in the current student is an African American female. She is a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University (OSU). She is a licensed professional school counselor and has supervised and co-taught master’s level school counseling students at OSU. She also has three years of experience in working with gifted students as a teaching assistant, administrator, and academic counselor at Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth summer program. Additionally, she has taken both qualitative and quantitative research courses and has conducted research using both.

**Research Team Member #1:**

Research Team Member #1 is an African American female. She is a doctoral candidate in cultural foundations at The Ohio State University. She has worked extensively on diversity initiatives at the collegiate level and has also provided support services for students of color transitioning to college.

**Research Team Member #2:**

Research Team Member #2 is a Caucasian female. She is a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at The Ohio State University. She is a Licensed Professional School Counselor in a local school system, has supervised and co-taught master’s level school counseling students, and has experience with conducting qualitative research studies.
APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL
July 3, 2013

Protocol Number: 2013B0058
Protocol Title: AN EXPLORATION OF TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH AND FAMILIES, James Moore, Renae Mayes, Wellness & Human Services

Request to amend the protocol dated 06/26/13--Add 8 research sites (Africentric, Beecherroft, Brookhaven, Eastmor, Independence, Marion Franklin, Northland, Walnut Ridge)

Type of Review: Amendment #01---Expedited
Approval Date: June 28, 2013
IRB Staff Contact: Kellie Hall
Phone: 614-292-0569
Email: hall.1451@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Moore,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED the above referenced research.

Note that if applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378. All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Steve Beck, PhD, Co-Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board