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Best Practices and Perceptions of Elementary Administrators to Address the Underrecognition of Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Students in Gifted and Talented Education Programs

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

Marson S. Richardson

MA, Grand Canyon University, 2019

BS, North Carolina State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

Walden University

February 2024

Abstract

This study addressed the problem of the underrecognition of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) elementary school student populations in gifted and talented (GT) programs in the United States. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify to what administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Critical race theory (CRT) informed this study and was supported by an appreciative inquiry approach. The research questions explored equitable recognition and best practices described to encourage equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Elementary school administrators who served in schools with equitable recognition of CLED elementary student populations in GT education programs were targeted for participation. Data were collected via semistructured interviews with seven participants who met the criteria of (a) being elementary school administrator leaders (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders), (b) managing and supporting GT programs, and (c) having 3 or more years of experience in their role. Data analysis involved the use of a priori and open coding to identify codes, categories, and themes. The emergent themes were (a) equity-focused leadership dispositions; (b) equitable GT best practices, awareness, and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students; and (c) equity and GT-focused professional development. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by informing education stakeholders of practices and leadership dispositions to cultivate and recognize giftedness in CLED students, potentially diversifying GT education programs to equitable levels.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the most important people in my life. First, I dedicate this study to my late father, Johnny Earl Richardson, who taught me persistence and patience in reaching my goals. Next, I dedicate this study to my mother, Carolyn Richardson, whose unconditional love is an inspiration. I also dedicate this study to my Grandparents, Johnnie and Irene Richardson, and the late Herman and Beatrice Richardson, who taught me the importance of education and saw the potential in me. I dedicate this study to all family members, friends, and colleagues who have kept me in their thoughts and prayers during the completion of this study. Finally, I give all praises and thanks to God. “For with God nothing shall be impossible,” Luke 1:37

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2017–2018, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that 6.7% of public school students were served in gifted and talented (GT) education programs across the 50 United States (De Brey et al., 2021). According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) *State of the States Report* (Rinn et al., 2022), school districts employ a multi-point criteria identification process to determine which students require GT education services. The multi-point GT identification process often consists of IQ and standardized assessments, teacher and parent nominations, and teacher rating scales to address racial and socioeconomic inequities (Morgan, 2020). However, racial and socioeconomic disparities in GT education persist, as 60% of the nation's gifted population is identified as White, even though student populations in the United States are becoming increasingly more diverse (Rinn et al., 2022).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2023b), 54% of all public-school students were students of color, representing a 12% increase from 2010. Additionally, in 2017, 25% of public school students attended high-poverty schools (NCES, 2023a). Schools are labeled high poverty if at least 75% of the student population participates in Free and Reduced Lunch programs (NCES, 2023a). Of students who attend high-poverty schools, Black, Latinx, and multilingual learner students are disproportionately represented (NCES, 2023a). The NCES (2023b) also reported that in 2020, multilingual learners represented 10.3% of the public school population, an increase of 1.1% from 2010. As a result, there has been increasing attention from educators and researchers given to the problem of the underrecognition of culturally,

linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) elementary school student populations in GT education programs in the United States (Azano et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Mun et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019). Simultaneously, educators and researchers are emphasizing the need for equity over equality to serve all students, especially those who are historically marginalized and underserved.

School administrators can have influence and decision-making responsibilities in schools and, through their equity-based leadership practices, can guide school communities in becoming more aware and attentive to underserved populations and disproportionality in education, improving student outcomes (Windlinger et al., 2020). The problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in gifted education programs in the United States is often the subject of discussion and debate in the field (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morgan, 2020; Peters et al., 2019). This study addresses a gap in practice by identifying what elementary school administrators serving in exemplar districts attribute the equitable recognition of CLED elementary students to in their schools' GT education programs. This study may yield information that could inform practice and future research on the topic, resulting in implications for positive social change. In Chapter 1, I aim to provide additional context to the problem and purpose of the study. Highlights of Chapter 1 include the study's background information and the conceptual framework used to ground the study. I also describe the nature, scope, and limitations of the study.

Background

Meeting the needs of all learners, regardless of race, background, culture, or socioeconomic background, has long been an aspiration of the U.S. educational system. From *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which led to the desegregation of schools, to more recent work in educational settings regarding educational equity, social justice, and culturally responsive education practices (Amiot et al., 2020; Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; Smith, 2021), the U.S. education system has evolved to become more inclusive, and educators have become more responsive to the needs of the ever-increasing diversity of our student population. Despite progress, inequities in the educational system persist, and consequently, society suffers due to the ill preparation of our most diverse student populations. Inequities abound in the U.S. education system, including the misuse of funding in urban schools, assessments that are misaligned with the life experiences and backgrounds of diverse student populations (Ladson-Billings, 1999, pp. 23-25), and school staff that are not representative of the diverse student populations that they serve (Morgan, 2020, p. 209). Increasingly, much attention has been given to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in GT programs in the United States (Azano et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019), yet another inequity found in schools.

The educational trend of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is well documented. The NAGC (Rinn et al., 2022) reported that 60% of the nation's gifted population is White, suggesting that Whites are overrepresented in GT education programs when compared to other subgroups (American Indian, Black, Latinx,

Multiracial, multilingual learners, and special needs-identified). Furthermore, most data published by the NCES (Rinn et al., 2022) showed that 3,189,757 students were enrolled in GT education programs in U.S. public schools, and more than half (1,944,410) are White, more than all other subgroups combined.

The problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in GT education programs in the United States is well documented in academic literature. Extending the findings of the NAGC (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021), Peters et al. (2019) used representation indices (RI) to demonstrate the disproportionality found in GT education programs when comparing student subgroups (American Indian, Black, Latinx, Multiracial, multilingual learners, and special needs-identified), determining that Whites and Asians are historically and currently overrepresented in GT programs. Additionally, educators and researchers have addressed the problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in the United States in GT education programs, determining that culturally biased GT identification protocols and teacher perceptions of giftedness have contributed to the problem (Azano et al., 2017; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). As a result, educators and researchers have championed the use of multi-point GT screening criteria, early talent development, and professional development and training for teachers in culturally responsive teaching practices to diversify the GT population (Ford et al., 2021; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). However, the reform efforts suggested by researchers require school administrators and teachers to implement changes in perception and practice at the school level. Considering the underrecognition of CLED students in GT

education programs endures (Ford et al., 2021; Mun et al., 2020), further exploration of the problem is necessary. I sought to fill a gap in practice regarding the inequitable recognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs.

Problem Statement

The problem that was addressed in this study is that CLED elementary school student populations in the United States are underrecognized in GT education programs. It is well documented in the literature that a disproportionate number of White students are served in GT education programs when compared to other subgroups (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). CLED students with high ability and potential are frequently less likely to be identified than their White counterparts, limiting their access to advanced curriculum, educational opportunities, and avenues to apply critical thinking and problem-solving (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017). The disparity of White students' enrollment rates compared to CLED students in GT education programs poses a significant challenge to educators and researchers regarding school equity, educational access, and positive student outcomes.

Trends in GT enrollment data provide additional evidence and context for the problem. Peters et al. (2019) calculated the RI for each state to demonstrate the disproportionality in gifted-identified student populations served in GT education programs across the United States. Researchers determine RI by calculating the ratio of a student subgroup to the percentage of students of that subgroup that GT education programs serve. An RI of 1.00 indicates that a particular subgroup is proportionally

served in GT programs. An RI of more than 1.00 suggests that a population is overserved, with an RI of less than 1.00 demonstrating underrepresentation. Peters et al. (2019) found that CLED students are underrepresented in GT programs.

Table 1 presents the RI for each subgroup for 2009, 2016, and 2019 using state-by-state data from a national study (Peters et al., 2019; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). As demonstrated in Table 1, nationally, Black, Latinx, and Native American students were underrepresented in gifted education programs with RI calculations below the 1.00 threshold for each measurement year. In contrast, White and Asian American students were overrepresented in gifted education programs for all three years of measurement.

Table 1

National Representation Indices by Race/Ethnicity: 2006, 2016, and 2019

Subgroup	RI 2006	RI 2016	RI 2019
Black	0.55	0.57	0.47
Asian	1.90	2.01	1.61
White	1.20	1.18	1.38
Latinx	0.65	0.70	0.38
Native American	0.75	0.87	0.76

Note. RI = representation indices. Researchers determine RI by calculating the ratio of a student subgroup to the percentage of students of that subgroup that GT education programs serve. An RI of 1.00 indicates that a particular subgroup is proportionally served in GT programs. An RI of more than 1.00 suggests that a population is overserved, with an RI of less than 1.00 demonstrating underrepresentation. Adapted from "Who Gets Served in Gifted Education? Demographic Representation and a Call for Action by Peters et al., 2019, Gifted *Child Quarterly*, *63*(4), 273–287. http://doi.org/10.1177/0016986219833738

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Critical race theory (CRT) is a part of the conceptual framework for the study. Appreciative inquiry informs the methodological approach for this study, as elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar schools in terms of equitable recognition of CLED elementary school populations in GT education programs were selected as participants. School leadership has a vital role in the GT identification process, using their influence and instructional leadership to influence GT identification and placement in GT educational programs (Day et al., 2016; Nadelson et al., 2019). Moreover, elementary school administrators should lead with equity at the forefront to maximize the learning opportunities and potential of all students and, likewise, lead school staff to do the same (Nadelson et al., 2019; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). Giftedness occurs in all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and exceptionalities (Rinn et al., 2022), yet CLED student populations are underrecognized in GT education programs (Azano et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Mun et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019). For this study, I intentionally use the terms "recognition" and "underrecognition" to emphasize that giftedness is present but not always identified in diverse populations (see Nwangwu, 2023). The problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school students in the United States in GT education programs persists

(Azano et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Mun et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019) and is worthy of further exploration.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this basic qualitative study are as follows:

RQ 1: What do elementary school administrators serving in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs in their schools?

RQ 2: What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?

Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory was the conceptual framework that supported this study (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). The conceptual framework "is the researcher's understanding of how the research problem will best be explored, the specific direction the research will have to take, and the relationship between the different variables in the study" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, pp. 16-17). To that end, I selected CRT as the conceptual framework of this study to support the identification of the topic, the development of the study's research questions, and the data analysis plan (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Exploring CRT as a conceptual framework is key to better understanding the beliefs and principles that guide and underpin this study. Critical race theorists scrutinize inequalities in education, workplaces, the legal field, and society (Bell, 1980, 1987;

Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theorists examine outcomes for people of color compared to their White counterparts and demand remedies for inequitable outcomes (Delgado et al., 2017). Four tenets underpin the CRT:

1. Racism is not an abnormality but rather the norm and prevails today. CRT theorists believe that racism is an everyday occurrence in society and that it is embedded in the U.S. education and legal policies, practices, and systems (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). As a result, racism can no longer be viewed as a flawed individualistic attitude or perspective but as systemic to diminish the outcomes of people of color.
2. Whiteness is considered a proprietary advantage. CRT theorists promote the idea of "whiteness" as a proprietary advantage in that being White means having inherently afforded privilege that leads to educational, financial, and social advantages, whereas being "non-White" can naturally lead to disadvantages in terms of academic, financial, and social status and outcomes (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017).
3. An incremental approach to positive change will never achieve the results warranted regarding racism. CRT theorists support the idea of aggressive and immediate change to rectify the harm done by systemic racism. Targeted action is required to mend the damage in all aspects of society, including education policy, practices, and systems (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017).

4. Race is a social construct that is wielded to label marginalized groups as "others" to maintain the social hierarchy (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theorists believe that race is a societal mechanism that allows dominant groups to maintain power through the gatekeeping of resources, solidifying their place in society (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theorists subscribe to the idea that education is a resource that can be afforded or withheld and that dominant groups perpetuate educational inequities to oppress the academic, social, and financial growth of marginalized populations.

This study was grounded in CRT, as it is an appropriate conceptual framework to explore historically marginalized populations in the social science field (Daftary, 2018). Examining how race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status may influence the GT identification processes is beneficial to the field and fills a gap in practice in what is known regarding equity-minded administrators' influence in the GT identification process. Additionally, identifying the best practices and perspectives of elementary school administrators regarding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in the United States in GT education programs through the lens of CRT enhances what is already known. With the focus on exemplar schools and districts that identify CLED students equitably, the findings may reveal best practices and leadership dispositions that are key to promoting more equitable GT programs. Practitioners may adopt these practices and mindsets to achieve equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs in their setting. To appropriately collect the

data needed to identify the findings of this study, the developed data collection instrument, an interview guide, needed to be aligned with and informed by the CRT, the conceptual framework of this study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Remaining true to the foundations of qualitative research, an interview guide was used to collect data for this study. Grant and Osanloo (2014) emphasized the need for the data collection instrument to reflect the conceptual framework to better demonstrate alignment throughout this study. The relationship between the conceptual framework and the data collection instrument is "complementary" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 14). As such, this study benefits from a data collection instrument developed to embody key principles and beliefs of the CRT, the conceptual framework. The interview questions in the guide were derived from the study's research questions. The research questions were designed to determine to what elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar school schools and districts attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. The interview questions were grounded in the themes of marginalization, equity, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, aligning with the key principles of CRT. Additionally, I examined elementary school administrators' perceptions of the exemplar districts' practices, policies, and systems that govern GT identification and how they promote or hinder equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. The concepts explored through the developed instrument, the interview guide, are aligned to and derived from CRT, an appropriate conceptual framework to explore marginalized populations (Daftary, 2018).

The CRT was also used to inform the study's data analysis plan. Content analysis was used to analyze the data generated from semistructured interviews. Krippendorff (2019) described content analysis as a qualitative data collection method that increases the researcher's understanding of a phenomenon. To make meaning of the data, I conducted three rounds of coding, the first of which was descriptive coding through the lens of the conceptual framework, CRT (see Saldana, 2021). I sought to determine what elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar schools and districts attribute equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students in GT education programs to. I also sought to highlight best practices described by elementary administrators that address and prevent the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs. The purpose of this study is aligned with the conceptual framework, the CRT, as CRT involves the exploration of societal problems that exacerbate the marginalization of specific populations (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Additionally, I used a priori coding to analyze the data collected. In a priori coding, a researcher infers thematic codes derived from the conceptual framework prior to data collection (see Stemler, 2001). A priori coding ensures that the researcher's organization and interpretation of the data are grounded in the conceptual framework. I used the study's conceptual framework, CRT, to develop a priori codes prior to data collection. Professional colleagues vetted these a priori codes to ensure conceptual framework alignment through peer review, a best practice in qualitative research (Krippendorff, 2019; see also Allen, 2017; Given, 2008).

This study was also informed by aspects of the appreciative inquiry approach, as developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987). Appreciative inquiry is a positive approach to spur organizational change by highlighting successful aspects (i.e., what works well) in an organization (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Storace, 2023; Watkins et al., 2016). Appreciative inquiry involves appreciating and recognizing organizational success by examining successful people, teams, practices, and potential for positive change. Historically, appreciative inquiry has been used in the business world, but researchers have made connections to educational leadership and schools (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Hearn, 2018; Peel, 2021; Zoll et al., 2021).

I applied an appreciative inquiry approach to this study's methodology. Participants selected for the study were elementary school administrators in exemplar schools demonstrating an equitable recognition of CLED student populations in their GT education program. I sought to explore to what elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students in GT education programs in their school settings. I also sought to determine what they describe as best practices to yield equitable CLED recognition in their school setting. Identifying, celebrating, and sharing what works well within an organization is a key component of appreciative inquiry (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Storace, 2023; Watkins et al., 2016), and I applied this perspective to inform educators of successful approaches to promoting equitable recognition of CLED elementary students in GT educational programs.

The conceptual framework, the CRT, is examined more in-depth in Chapter 2: Literature Review. In the following section, the Nature of the Study, I introduce and

provide the rationale for the research approach selected and provide a brief description of the methodology of the study.

Nature of the Study

This study was basic qualitative in design. Basic qualitative research is defined as a research design that "is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known [or more established] qualitative methodologies" (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 4). I chose a basic qualitative research design for this study, as it was the best approach to better understand the phenomenon in question, the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Qualitative research is rooted in empiricism, the philosophy we learn from experience and interacting with the world (Given, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). One overarching goal for this research was to learn and share about a phenomenon that naturally occurs in our world, and qualitative research is designed to support this learning and sharing of knowledge (see Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Accentuating the rationale for the selection of a qualitative research design is the research setting. An aspect of the qualitative design is that the research is conducted in a setting where the researcher can examine and question what occurs in the natural world (Given, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The phenomenon addressed in this study, the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs, occurs naturally in our world. Therefore, a qualitative approach was best to gain the knowledge that I sought (see Given, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

I conducted this study using basic qualitative methods to determine how people in a naturalistic setting construct, interpret, and make meaning of their environment and the observed interactions (Merriam, 2009). I wanted to explore what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs to. This goal was best accomplished by applying basic qualitative principles to gain a better understanding from those who serve in schools that have demonstrated success regarding the equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students in GT education programs.

I recruited seven elementary school administrators as the participants. In this study, I defined participant inclusion criteria as (a) being elementary school administrator leaders (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders), (b) managing and supporting GT programs, and (c) having 3 or more years of experience in their role. Data were collected using semistructured interviews from seven participants who met the inclusion criteria. The semistructured interviews ranged from 41 minutes to 82 minutes, with an average length of 63 minutes. The administrators' interview transcripts were analyzed using open coding and a priori coding to identify significant themes related to the study topic.

This study was strengthened by inclusion criteria identifying schools and districts demonstrating equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs as exemplar districts. Participants who met the inclusion criteria served in these exemplar schools and districts. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) coined this methodological approach to organizational improvement as "appreciative inquiry." An appreciative inquiry approach aims to identify and celebrate the successes found in organizations to

maximize their influence and share knowledge regarding effective practices that yield achievement (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). I cross-referenced participant candidate demographic information with the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022), NCES (De Brey et al., 2021), and school district websites to identify these exemplar districts and confirm inclusion and exemplar criteria. Schools identified as exemplar demonstrated equitable recognition of diverse students in GT education programs from 3 out of 4 student subgroups: Blacks, multilingual learners, Latinx, and socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The findings of this study may inform educators' decision-making regarding promoting more equitable GT education programs based on the experiences, perspectives, and recommended best practices of elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar schools and districts. Definitions of key terms that are relevant to this study are provided in the next section.

Definitions

The following is a list of terms used in this study related to GT education and the nature of the study.

Appreciative inquiry: Appreciative inquiry is a positive approach to research, leadership, and organizational change that is used to foster innovation (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Researchers have noted that appreciative inquiry supports organizational change by identifying strengths in practices, systems, and human resources and using them to promote further innovation and positive change (Watkins et al., 2016).

Critical race theory (CRT): Critical race theorists suggest that racism is not merely the attitudes and prejudices formed by individuals, but rather that racism is systemically and deeply embedded in the United States legal systems, educational institutions, housing policies, and workplace practices (Delgado et al., 2017). Credited to legal scholars Bell, Crenshaw, and Delgado, the critical race theorists examine inequalities in educational, workplace, legal, and societal outcomes for people of color compared to their White counterparts and demand remedies for inequitable outcomes (Delgado et al., 2017).

Culturally, linguistically, and economically disadvantaged (CLED) students: CLED students are traditionally underrepresented in GT programs. CLED students often include Black, Latinx, Native American, multilingual learners, and students from low-income households (Ezzani et al., 2021).

Elementary school administrators: Elementary school administrators are instructional leaders (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders) who manage and support GT education programs in school districts (Bond, 2021).

Exemplar school district: School districts identified as exemplars have demonstrated equitable identification of CLED students. I identified schools and districts as exemplar when they demonstrate equitable recognition of diverse students in GT education programs from 3 out of 4 student subgroups: Blacks, multilingual learners, Latinx, and socioeconomically disadvantaged (McLaughlin, 2002)

Gifted and talented (GT) education: Gifted and talented (GT) education refers to the educational programs and initiatives that support gifted students in schools. GT

education differs by state; however, central to all GT education is advanced curricula, acceleration, and student groupings in educational settings that support students identified as GT (Rinn et al., 2022).

Gifted and talented (GT) identification: The identification of students as GT varies across states, but all GT identification processes are typically systemic and multi-phased. Educators collect qualitative and quantitative data using common instruments such as non-verbal assessments, achievement data, teacher recommendations, and parent nominations (Rinn et al., 2022).

Underrecognition: The term selected in this study to describe the lack of participation of CLED students in GT education programs, in lieu of the term "underrepresented." *Underrecognition* shifts the blame for the inequity from the vulnerable population to those in leadership who hold the power to challenge and overcome it. The term *underecognition* also better communicates that gifts and talents are found in abundance in all backgrounds and nationalities, yet the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs persists (Nwangwu, 2023).

Assumptions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. There are several assumptions about this study that are likely accurate but cannot be proven. One assumption made was that the elementary school administrators who serve as participants in this study are

knowledgeable in instructional leadership, specifically GT education. Also, an assumption was made regarding the elementary school administrators' understanding of their school's GT identification and placement process. The purposive sampling (Vasileiou et al., 2018) employed in this study afforded the careful selection of participants based on the study's inclusion criteria, that improves the likelihood that the assumptions made are accurate.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope and delimitations of a study are the boundaries that a researcher employs to define the parameters of the research, providing a clear focus. In this basic qualitative study, I used a national sample, as the problem is found in schools throughout the United States (see Azano et al., 2017; see Ezzani et al., 2021; see Ford et al., 2021; see Hodges & Gentry, 2021; see Peters et al., 2019; see Rinn et al., 2022). Aligning with an appreciative inquiry approach, I identified exemplar schools and districts in the United States that yielded equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs as a model of best practices and leadership dispositions. Participants met inclusion criteria and served in these exemplar schools and districts. I also sought to identify best practices from elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar districts that yielded an equitable recognition of CLED students identified as GT. With the CRT as the foundation for the study, I sought to gain a further understanding of the role of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as contributing factors to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs. Ultimately, I

wanted to garner information that may inform practice on this topic and inspire further research.

In this study, I focused on elementary school administrators, as opposed to middle or high school administrators. The elementary school level is where universal screening for GT identification generally occurs (Rinn et al., 2022). Middle school and high school administrators were excluded from this study, as universal GT identification screening is not common at these grade levels (Rinn et al., 2022). I recruited elementary school administrators who served in the exemplar schools and districts as participant candidates for this study. I identified seven elementary school administrators who supported GT education programs as participants in this study. I chose a basic qualitative design for this study as it was the best approach to capture the descriptive data needed to fully explore the phenomenon of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and to respond to the research questions sufficiently (Henry, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Trochim & Donnelly, 2001)

I sought to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. I also sought to determine what they describe as best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in their respective GT programs. I hope that the findings of this study are used to inform practice and further research; therefore, I must consider the concept of transferability. Transferability is the extent to which research can be applied in other contexts or studies (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Aspects of this study may or may not be transferable to other settings. The study was national in scope, which may

lend itself to transferability, but may also limit it. The structure of GT education programs and identification processes are generally established at the state level and, therefore, the identification processes vary from state to state (Rinn et al., 2022). To increase transferability to other states, I made note of any significant differences in the identification processes described by the participants. Conversely, my focus on elementary school administrators and their roles in increasing the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs addressed a nationally relevant problem and may yield findings that can be generalized to other school settings, with similar inclusion criteria and setting criteria.

To further define the parameters of the study, additional delimitations are identified. Delimitations are the boundaries of a study that the researcher imposes to intentionally narrow the focus (McBrayer, 2018; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Therefore, delimitations are factors of the study that the researcher can control (McBrayer, 2018). Another delimitation of the study was the selection of participants based on their roles in the identified exemplar schools. Vasileiou et al. (2018) referred to this type of selection of participants as purposive sampling. The use of purposive sampling supports capturing the rich descriptive data required for qualitative studies by carefully selecting participants who embody the characteristics needed for a sample (Vasileiou et al., 2018). I purposefully selected principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders who supported GT education programs as participants in the study for data collection. These individuals were best suited to speak to school leadership's role in addressing the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Other individuals,

such as classroom teachers, play a significant role in GT education programs and identification and could potentially provide insight into the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. However, this study focused on elementary administrators, so participants who self-selected into the study who did not have administrator and supervisory responsibilities were excluded. Delimitations are intentionally selecting boundaries in a qualitative study to narrow the focus (McBrayer, 2018; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In the following section, Limitations, I describe the weaknesses of the study that were outside of my control as the researcher.

Limitations

This study has limitations or weaknesses that are present in the research. that are outside my control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One limitation is the study's focus on elementary school administrators, which excluded the important voices of teachers and other staff members who may be knowledgeable about the topic. However, this study was intentionally designed to gather and share the knowledge of elementary school administrators who wielded great influence and decision-making in schools (see Day et al., 2016; Nadelson et al., 2019). The focus on elementary school administrators also filled a gap in practice regarding the role of school leaders in equitable GT education practices for CLED students. Another limitation is the varying GT education policies established at the state level (Rinn et al., 2022). This study was national in scope; therefore, participants did not communicate from a national standardized GT education policy due to their varying geographical locations and varied settings. However, the variance in GT education policy and practice may reveal novel or successful aspects of

GT policy and practice, informing educators and researchers about what their counterparts are doing well in other states, aligning with this study's appreciative inquiry approach in participant selection and data collection (see Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Storace, 2023; Watkins et al., 2016). Another limitation was using a social media platform, Facebook ™, for recruitment. After having challenges securing participants as outlined in my study's proposal, I received permission from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) to expand my efforts into social media, namely school administrator-specific Facebook ™ groups. Therefore, the number of respondents that I received was subject to chance. Additionally, I relied on participants who used their school system email addresses to respond to the pre-screener, which allowed me to conduct an internet search to identify the school districts and schools and cross-reference those identified settings with data found in NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) to confirm that the school or district met the exemplar criteria.

I addressed the limitations of the study by ensuring the use of an interview protocol, which provided a standardized way to conduct the semistructured interviews (Morris, 2015). As stated, prior to the semistructured interviews, I researched the potential participant school district settings of those self-selecting into the study, using the provided school district email address, to determine the school districts that they served in, thereby allowing me to confirm that each participant served in an exemplar school or district, as described by the participant inclusion criteria. Additionally, before each interview, I scheduled a brief conversation with the potential participant to review

the purpose of the study and the inclusion criteria, that also included a discussion of the school's or district's GT participation data, subsequently allowing me to confirm that the inclusion criteria were met. The purpose of the study was reviewed during the semistructured interviews. Participants also consented verbally to participate in the interview and were again informed of their rights to end the interview at any time. After the participants responded to each interview question, I paraphrased what they stated and asked them to validate my understanding of their response (see Bernard & Ryan, 2010). I also incorporated member-checking (see Given, 2008), which allowed participants to review and confirm my interpretation of the draft summary of findings (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). In the next section, I detail the significance of the study.

Significance

The study is significant because it may provide additional insight into the underrecognition of CLED students in elementary GT education programs from the perspective of elementary school administrators. Additionally, this study may reveal best practices employed by elementary school administrators who serve in an exemplar district to increase equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Other school leaders may adopt these best practices to increase the recognition of CLED students in GT programs, addressing a gap in practice. The study has implications for positive social change, as the findings could inform the decision-making and practices of elementary school administrators who serve in GT education programs to implement practices that support equitable identification of CLED students for GT services. As a result of the

findings of this study, the best practices described by leaders from the exemplar district may be adopted by other schools to foster equity in GT programs.

Educational opportunities and outcomes for marginalized students may be improved based on this study's findings. More students who demonstrate giftedness or potential giftedness may be placed into GT programs. Thus, student access and exposure to learning opportunities that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and advanced curricula may be increased. Marginalized students who may have never received such educational opportunities may benefit from the findings of this study. This study contributes to positive social change as school administrators who serve marginalized student groups may be better informed of best practices and strategies to nurture equity in the GT identification processes.

Summary

The problem that was addressed by this study is that CLED elementary school student populations in the United States are underrecognized in GT education programs. The findings of this study may support addressing the gap in practice, which is that elementary schools throughout the United States have an inequitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs. The underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is a nationally relevant problem and poses a significant challenge to educational opportunity and attainment of vulnerable populations (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). To address the problem, educators and researchers have highlighted the need for reform in the GT identification process, that has led many states to adopt multi-point criteria

consisting of IQ assessment, standardized assessment, teacher and parent referrals, and teacher rating scales (Morgan, 2020). Reform efforts have made improvements in the proportional identification of CLED students; however, racial, and socioeconomic disparities persist. The disproportionality in GT identification grows as the United States becomes increasingly diverse. The NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) reported that 60% of the GT population is White, even as the U.S. population becomes more diverse. Additionally, Peters et al. (2019) and Yoon and Gentry (2009) provided further evidence of the disproportionality in GT identification through RI, a ratio-based calculation of the total subgroup population to the percentage of that subgroup identified as GT. The work of these researchers proved that Blacks, Latinx, and multilingual populations are underrecognized in GT education programs, whereas Whites and Asians are overrepresented in GT education programs. Regardless of the multipoint criteria now implemented by many districts to promote more inclusive GT education programs, the data suggest that there is more to understand about the problem. In this regard, I sought to explore the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs at the school level through the lens of elementary school administrators who manage and support GT education programs.

School administrators have great influence and decision-making power in schools (Day et al., 2016; Nadelson et al., 2019). Equity-minded school leaders are cognizant of disparities in the educational system and seek to promote equity in all aspects to better serve the needs of the students in their care (Nadelson et al., 2019; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). The problem of the

underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs is a matter of educational equity, and school administrators play a vital role in promoting an equity mindset in schools, thus influencing the decision-making and practices of school staff in terms of culturally responsive education and the GT identification process. Gaining a better understanding of the perspectives and best practices of elementary school administrators who serve in an exemplar district that demonstrates equitable GT identification of CLED students in GT educational programs could potentially provide educators and researchers with information to promote and nurture more inclusive GT education programs.

The problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs threatens educational equity and opportunity for the most vulnerable and marginalized student populations. An exploration of the problem is incomplete without examining how race and socioeconomic status impede educational attainment in schools. I used the CRT as the conceptual framework for this study. The CRT highlights how racism influences American society and is an appropriate lens to explore marginalized populations (Daftary, 2018). Giftedness occurs in all races, ethnicities, backgrounds, and exceptionalities, yet marginalized populations are underserved in GT education programs (Rinn et al., 2022). Critical race theorists propose that racism is a social construct designed to limit the socioeconomic progression of marginalized populations and that anti-racists must seek out and dismantle racism through policy analysis, strategic action, and change (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Additionally, critical race theorists promote the idea that racism is

not an individualistic thought or action but structural and systemic and is interwoven throughout all aspects of society (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). To combat structural and systemic racism, critical race theorists maintain that the sharing of more inclusive narratives and perspectives can disrupt and dismantle the racism embedded in mainstream culture (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). To that end, I sought to explore the anti-racist perspectives and practices of elementary school administrators who serve in an exemplary school district in terms of equitable and proportional GT identification and share the findings as a counter to the racism found in the educational system with the hope of informing educators of how to be a better advocate for more inclusive GT education programs.

The findings of this study may support addressing the gap in practice, which is that elementary schools throughout the United States have an inequitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs. I hope to inform educators and researchers of the factors to which elementary school administrators who serve in an exemplar schools attribute the equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students in GT education programs. I also sought to determine best practices described by elementary administrators that address and prevent the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs.

This study has implications for positive social change, as the findings may inform practice and policy concerning traditionally underrecognized populations in GT education programs and may promote further research into the topic. Additionally, due to the findings of this study, educators may learn of leadership dispositions and strategies

that yield better educational opportunities and positive outcomes for marginalized student populations.

In Chapter 1 of this study, I detailed the problem that was addressed, the purpose of the study, and background data that support the relevancy and the need for the study. A brief synopsis of the conceptual framework, CRT, was provided. Additionally, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, and scope and delimitations were addressed in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, the literature review, I provide additional context into the problem and purpose of the study. In the literature review, I introduce the CRT in education, the history of GT education and identification processes, and culturally responsive school leadership. The literature review is designed to provide additional insight into this study's problem and purpose and highlight previous research findings in the field to provide a synthesized synopsis of this study's conceptual framework, CRT, documented issues in the literature regarding equity and GT education programs, and school leadership.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review of this study grounds the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019) in current and seminal literature. With the ever-increasing diversity of schools within the United States, promoting and providing equitable educational experiences, regardless of race, religion, language, or socioeconomic status, is an ethical and moral obligation for all educators. Considering the educational inequities that are well documented by researchers in the literature (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Forlin & Howard, 2021; Voulgarides et al., 2017), it is incumbent on educators to acknowledge the issues that persist in terms of equity by examining leaders and teacher behaviors and look to those who have led as role models and catalysts for positive change in school communities.

Aligning with the overarching need to discuss and promote equity in schools, the disparities found in GT education programs are a problem worthy of study, particularly the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, school administrators' beliefs, perspectives, and dispositions regarding equity, inclusion, and gifted education can shape school culture and student achievement (Nadelson et al., 2019); therefore, insight into their perspectives on the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in GT education programs the United States. This qualitative study explored to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the

equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs through the lens of CRT, which serves as the conceptual framework.

The following literature review provides a comprehensive review of seminal and current research related to the study's problem, the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. An extensive exploration into the conceptual framework, CRT, is also provided. Equally important, an appraisal of CRT in education, GT education, school leadership, and school equity is presented to provide additional context to the reader. This literature review provides the reader additional background and understanding of the study's purpose, which was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs.

Literature Search Strategy

I used online research databases for the literature review. Online databases such as ERIC, Sage, Education Source, ProQuest, and Scholarworks, made available through the Walden University Library, supported the search for relevant literature. Google Scholar was also used to identify current and seminal research related to this study that was not easily located within the databases. A key strategy I employed included finding a relevant article through Google Scholar using key search terms, locating applicable research, and then searching for the title, authors, or the digital object identifier (DOI) of the article in the Walden Library database for full access to the research.

Key search terms included are *critical race theory, critical race theorists, critical race theory and education, gifted and talented education, disparities in gifted education,*

underserved gifted students, underrepresented groups and gifted education, equity and education, inclusion and education, equity and school leadership, gifted education, and school leadership, leadership styles, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, equitable leadership, instructional leadership, history of gifted and talented education, gifted identification process, and *elementary school administrators and gifted education.*

For current research related to the study, I searched only for peer-reviewed articles published in 2018 or later in the Walden University Library Database. Each search of key terms and phrases generally yielded 1,000 or more results. I then narrowed the results by selecting options from the publication and subject tabs. For example, a search for the phrase *underserved populations* and the term *education* yields 8,230 results, which I narrowed to peer-reviewed articles published no earlier than 2018. Then, the publication tab was used to further target the search to display results from *Gifted Child Quarterly*, resulting in seven peer-reviewed articles relevant to this study. The process described was used repeatedly throughout my literature review search for each topic, yielding 53 peer-reviewed articles dated no earlier than 2017 used in the literature review. Other articles, books, and seminal works are cited in this study but are not included in the literature review source count.

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory Overview

The conceptual framework that underpinned this study was the CRT. I used CRT as a conceptual framework to collect, analyze, and interpret the findings, as it is an

appropriate theoretical framework to explore historically marginalized populations in the social science field (Daftary, 2018). CRT is a lens to view racism and its influence on American society. CRT emerged during the 1970s as a response to the conservative uprising against the advancements made during the Civil Rights Movement (Delgado et al., 2017). CRT defined racism as a concept that extends beyond individualistic thought and action (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theorists believe racism is a dominant social construct, thus naturally affecting people of color. Moreover, critical race theorists insinuate that the American legal system is structurally designed to oppress people of color to maintain white dominance in culture and society. To combat structural and systemic racism, critical race theorists rely on dismantling and disrupting mainstream culture by offering more inclusive narratives and perspectives that counter it. CRT is grounded in five tenets that aim to identify the social constructs perpetuating racism (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). In the next section, I review these five tenets.

Critical Race Theory Tenets

Tenet 1: Racism is the Norm

Critical race theorists assert that racism is not abnormal but is an accepted and commonplace facet of society (Bell, 1980, 1987, 2004; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Racial realism suggests that racism is always present and that anti-racists must seek out and dismantle racism through policy analysis, strategic action, and change. The concept of racial realism is that if racism is such a part of everyday life, the presence of racism makes it even more challenging to acknowledge and address (Curry, 2008;

Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theorists argue that to promote change, one must assume that racism is always present and constitutes a perpetual threat to the lives of people of color.

Critical race theorists also maintain that the concept of color blindness exacerbates the normality of racism in society. As suggested by critical race theorists, color blindness is grounded in traditional yet harmful notions of equality, where everyone is viewed as equal and treated as such. Critical race theorists object to such ideas, as conventional concepts of equality and color blindness allow individuals to excuse themselves from acknowledging the perpetual racism to which people of color are subjected. Furthermore, critical race theorists believe that the notion of color-blindness and more traditional concepts of equality remove the responsibility of those in power to address systemic racism, serving as barriers to actual change. Racism as a societal norm serves as a lens through which to view the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in gifted programs and how the collected data is analyzed and interpreted.

Tenet 2: Interest Convergence

Tenet 2 of CRT is focused on interest convergence and is centered around aligning the interests of people of color and Whites. Interest convergence, a concept coined by Bell (1980, 1987), states that the advancement of people of color only happens when progress is aligned with White self-interest. To illustrate, Bell controversially contended that *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was the product of White self-interest and not true Civil Rights advancement. He argued that the desegregation of schools served only to improve the international politics of the United States during the

Cold War. Bell further explained that once the interests of Whites and people of color deviated, *Brown v. Board of Education* was curtailed by legislation reaffirming segregation in schools for decades.

Another dimension of the interest convergence tenant is material determinism. In terms of CRT, Bell (1980, 1987) proposed that material determinism occurs when there is little interest in extirpating racism, as racism serves to advance the material self-interests of Whites. Critical race theorists believe that racism is a mechanism for the dominant culture to maintain power by suppressing people of color (Delgado et al., 2017).

This study is influenced by the concept of Bell's interest convergence tenet (1980, 1987), providing additional context to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs.

Tenet 3: Race as a Social Construct

Another central idea of the CRT is the thesis of race as a social construct. Critical race theorists believe that race is a social construct the dominant culture uses to advance their self-interests (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado et al., 2017). In essence, the concept of race and race categories are generated, manipulated, or expelled only when advantageous to the dominant culture. To further compound this idea, critical race theorists purport that the dominant culture exploits biological differences among races, such as complexion, hair, and physique, dismissing what all individuals have in common to ostracize those who are not a part of the dominant culture (Delgado et al., 2017). According to critical race theorists, the dominant culture maintains power by emphasizing the superficial in lieu of genuine characteristics such as personality and

intelligence (Delgado et al., 2017). The concept of race as a social construct provided additional contexts in exploring elementary school administrators' perspectives on the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs.

Tenet 4: Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the advantages or disadvantages of membership in multiple social categories. The overlapping of social groups, such as race, gender, religion, sexuality, and disability, can contribute to compounded advantages or disadvantages (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). For example, the intersectionality of a White heterosexual man may afford that individual social, professional, and financial advantages over a Black homosexual woman, who, as a result of being a member of multiple marginalized groups, may experience compounded oppression as a result. Critical race theorists suggest that the oppression faced by individuals may stem from race, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, or other labels. Critical race theorists believe that focusing solely on race as an oppressing force is shortsighted and may exclude other factors, such as gender or sexuality (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Understanding how intersectionality may impede CLED GT identification is important to consider when exploring the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Tenet 5: Differential Racialization

Critical race theorists refer to differential racialization as the purposeful radicalization of certain races by the dominant society based on ever-fluctuating social,

economic, and cultural needs at different historical points (Delgado et al., 2017; Quiros et al., 2020). For example, depending on the needs of the dominant society in history, Blacks have been portrayed by the mainstream as jovial servants to Whites when convenient and at other times dangerous and menacing (Delgado et al., 2017). Similarly, when Whites commit atrocious crimes such as mass shootings, race is not often a talking point in analyzing the tragedy; rather, mental health and poor parenting become the talking points for such traumatic events. However, when a person of color commits similar atrocities, race, ethnicity, and religion are usually critical aspects of the discussion, and in turn, entire groups of people are racialized as "terrorists" (Delgado et al., 2017; Quiros et al., 2020). The concept of differential racialization informs this study, as the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs can be attributed to the racism and sexism embedded in the educational system resulting from fluctuating biases and stereotypes (James, 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Reinholz et al., 2020).

In this study, I sought to explore the problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in the United States in GT education programs through the lens of CRT. A better understanding of the best practices and perceptions of equity-minded elementary school administrators who serve in a school district that demonstrates an equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs is vital to addressing the problem at the national level. The following section details the literature review as it relates to key concepts. The literature regarding CRT in education, curriculum, and instruction is examined, as well as an exploration of the history of GT education and leadership styles and dispositions related to the phenomenon of the study.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Critical Race Theory in Education

CRT activists and advocates have worked to align and apply its principles to the field of education. Educators and researchers have used CRT to explore inequities and disproportionality in education (Delgado et al., 2017). The goal of CRT in education is to illuminate and eliminate racial injustices through policy and instructional change (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020). As a catalyst of change to promote more equitable schools, CRT is a relevant perspective to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021).

CRT as a framework for change in educational settings began with the work of Ladson-Billings (1999). Using CRT principles to analyze the pervasive inequities and social injustices well documented in the literature (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Forlin & Howard, 2021; Voulgarides et al., 2017), Ladson-Billings argued the merit of CRT as a tool for positive change in schools. Ladson-Billings based their claim on the idea of "equal opportunity for all" that prevails in the educational system, which she deemed faulty (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Ladson-Billings posited that the "equal opportunities" provided are inherently unequal, as little had been done in the education field to compensate for past inequalities toward people of color. As a result, policies such as affirmative action and classifying Blacks as a protected class were born out of the need to provide a way for people of color to advance and gain the same footing as their White counterparts. Ladson-Billings cited this evidence as a natural rationale for CRT as an

exploratory means to study school inequalities and make logical connections to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Ladson-Billings's position lays the foundation for further study of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and schools.

However, critics of CRT have asserted that race relations have significantly advanced over the last 50 years and that racial discrimination is essentially an antiquated idea of the past (Cabrera, 2018; Connerly, 2000). CRT critics have also argued that the sharing of counter-narratives as a disruption tool is not inclusive of all voices of color, as many of them object to the notion of embedded and systemic racism as a normal aspect of society (Cabrera, 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Largely, critics of CRT rally around the idea that promoting equity over equality is inherently racist and discriminatory (Cabrera, 2018). Regarding this study, opponents of CRT and their criticisms support the idea that further study of CRT in the education field, including the problem of CLED student underrecognition in GT education programs adds to the existing literature and fills a gap in practice.

Critical Race Theory and Educational Leadership

Education researchers have suggested using CRT to study and improve educational leadership practices. Ladson-Billings (1999) suggested a connection between CRT and critical aspects of teaching and learning, including curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Previous studies on educational leadership through a CRT lens have demonstrated positive outcomes in achievement, implementation of culturally responsive

practices, parental involvement, and school culture when leadership practices are focused on equity and social justice (Amiot et al., 2020; Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; Smith, 2021).

Previous research on equity-minded school leadership and teaching and learning has explored the concepts of leadership philosophy and practice and the achievement of all students (Kruglanski et al., 202; Nadelson et al., 2019; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). School leaders, namely principals and assistant principals, play a critical role in the teaching and learning that occurs in schools (Kruglanski et al., 2021). Considering the numerous responsibilities of administrators, the influence of school leadership can either promote equity or hinder it. Therefore, gaining a better understanding of to what elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs may yield additional insights into beliefs and practices that contribute to equity in schools.

Compounding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs are traditional and biased educational beliefs and practices that hinder equity. Equity-minded school administrators also face challenges in meeting the needs of their students and staff from school districts. Often, unconventional methods of leadership that disrupt traditional yet racially and socioeconomically biased practices are met with pushback and repercussions from school districts (Wilkerson & Wilson, 2017). The findings of this study may provide insight into how school administrators overcome these challenges.

Critical Race Theory in Curriculum

Critical race theory has given rise to debate on how students are taught, and the materials and resources used. Critical race theorists view traditional curricula taught in schools as "White specific" because they only focus on and pertain to Whites. As a result, the traditional curriculum silences the experiences and voices of people of color throughout history (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Moreover, critical race theorists believe that atrocities committed by Whites throughout history are understated and glossed over in the traditional curriculum, presenting a more favorable view of Whites, contradicting actual history. Ladson-Billings (1999) and Swartz (1992) referred to this concept as "master scripting," where dominant White male voices are standard and are considered the only information worth teaching and learning. Critical race theorists' views on traditional curricula have led to controversy.

Opponents of CRT take issue with the critical race theorists' criticisms of the traditional curriculum. Critical race theory detractors maintain that it leads to further racial and socioeconomic divide, promotes intolerance, and focuses on group identity instead of unity. In terms of curriculum, CRT opponents insist that the critiques of the traditional curriculum detract from rigorous learning in crucial subject areas and further implant racism into schools (Butcher & Gonzalez, 2020). However, critical race theorists have their criticisms of the traditional curriculum regarding rigor and enrichment.

Regarding rigor and enrichment, Ladson-Billings (1999) described access to enrichment and rigorous learning opportunities as privileges historically afforded mostly to Whites. Critical race theorists consider restricting access to learning opportunities as

an example of "whiteness as property." Coined by Cheryl Harris (1993), the phrase "whiteness as property" delineated the notion that being White is a form of property and comes with a wealth of privileges protected by law. Ladson-Billings (1999) and other critical race theorists cite the overrepresentation of White students (Peters et al., 2019) in GT education programs as an example of whiteness as property. CLED students are less likely to be identified as gifted (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). Critical race theorists assert that traditional GT identification processes, curriculum, and instruction purposely contribute to the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Critical Race Theory and Instruction

Critical race theorists insist that most classroom instruction often involves students of color being taught from a deficit perspective. Namely, educators erroneously assume that due to race or socioeconomic status, students of color naturally lag White students academically, even when there is no objective evidence of the deficit (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Additionally, deficit views lead to educators emphasizing student weaknesses over strengths (Mun et al., 2020). As a result of educator deficit views in the planning and implementation of instruction, students of color are provided with substandard learning opportunities that do not challenge but, instead, remediate. Critical race theorists suggest that the perceived lackluster instruction provided to CLED students, stemming from the deficit views of some educators, perpetuates the phenomenon of racial, cultural, and socioeconomic homogeny in GT education programs (Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Mun et al., 2020)

Researchers on deficit thinking and the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs have emphasized educators' need for culturally responsive educational practices and social-justice training (Ellis & Rowe, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). One example is the proposed "repositioning" of literacy instruction as a social justice issue (Mun et al., 2020). This repositioning of literacy instruction towards social consciousness serves to recognize and celebrate cultural differences and bridge the gap between the home and school lives of CLED students (Mun et al., 2020). By making educators aware of their deficit views and implicit biases through professional development and training, critical race theorists hope to move race and ethnicity to the forefront, rejecting the idea of colorblindness and fallacious notions of equality (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999) that they believe hinders CLED student access to educational opportunities, such as GT education.

Critical Race Theory and Assessment

Methods of assessment in schools have long drawn the ire of critical race theorists. Critical race theorists have viewed traditional assessments in schools as culturally void, emphasizing the weaknesses of CLED students instead of revealing their strengths (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017). Equity-minded assessment allows students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in multiple ways, capitalizing on learning styles, strengths, and cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, most traditional means of assessment confirm only specific demonstrations of learning instead of others, negating the culturally responsive assessment needed to accurately evaluate diverse learners (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017). Critical race theorists

embrace these critical views of traditional assessment and cite them as evidence of an educational system that limits the achievement and opportunity of CLED students.

Gifted and Talented Education

"Gifted and talented education" is the phrase used to describe instructional practices and research that addresses the need for specialized instruction for students identified as GT. Lewis Terman, known as the father of GT education, pioneered and popularized the Stanford-Binet intelligence assessment that radically changed the educational landscape of America, paving the way for GT identification (Beauvais, 2016). Terman revolutionized the concept of IQ testing in the U.S. educational system.

However, Terman adopted the ideology that heredity plays a significant role in giftedness and that there are innate differences in intelligence among groups of people. Terman advocated for eugenics, the idea that the intelligence and talents of the human race can only be advanced through the exclusion of groups of people, most notably people of color, who were thought to be inferior (Sternberg et al., 2021). To that end, eugenicists supported the notion that those thought to be genetically and intelligently superior, namely Whites and Asians, should be the only representations of giftedness. Terman's ideas and writings ultimately distorted American perceptions of giftedness, reinforcing the notion that ethnically and socioeconomically diverse populations are genetically incapable of being GT.

Subsequent research in GT education and learners reveals other factors influencing giftedness. Contrary to the work of Terman (Sternberg et al., 2021), Hollingworth, an educator and psychologist, emphasized the role of a student's

environment in developing giftedness in conjunction with innate intelligence (Klein, 2000). Hollingsworth's research pioneered how GT students' academic and social-emotional needs are met in schools and served as the basis of modern GT education, outlining principles that influence GT identification and curriculum and instruction.

Gifted and Talented Identification

Terman's Stanford-Binet IQ test paved the way for GT identification in schools (Beauvais, 2016). Using IQ tests, such as the Stanford-Binet assessment, provided educators and researchers with a method of GT identification. Since, GT identification methods have evolved to include standardized achievement tests, classroom performance, and teacher and parent recommendations with the intent of addressing inequities in the GT identification process (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Peters et al., 2019). However, schools still heavily emphasize achievement test scores, which can discriminate against CLED students (Morgan, 2020). This emphasis on achievement over other factors, such as creativity and talent, may often exclude CLED students from GT education programs as they do not perform well on standardized tests due to external factors, such as challenging home lives (Morgan, 2020).

Achievement assessment requires students to lean on their previous knowledge gained through the learning opportunities provided at school and home, indicating little to nothing regarding their learning potential (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morgan, 2020). As a result, marginalized student groups from disadvantaged backgrounds may not perform as well on standardized tests as their counterparts, even though they have high learning

potential. Measuring achievement ability as the primary means to determine giftedness often overlooks potentially GT students of low socioeconomic status, perpetuating the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morgan, 2020).

Schools employ multipoint criteria to determine giftedness to provide balance and equity. One aspect of multipoint criteria is teacher referrals. Teacher referrals are significant in GT identification (Morgan, 2020; Novak et al., 2020). However, Morgan (2020) and Novak et al. (2020) assert that teachers' implicit and explicit biases often contribute to the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Teachers often evaluate low-income and students of color through the lens of their middle-class values, which are often misaligned with the behaviors that manifest in these students, leading to fewer low-income and students of color being referred to GT education programs by teachers, and thus, identified as GT (Morgan, 2020). Compounding this issue is the lack of minority teachers in schools. It is suggested that minority teachers have higher expectations of students of color than their White counterparts (Atkins et al., 2014; Morgan, 2020; Vinopal & Holt, 2019). With teacher expectations closely linked to student achievement (Atkins et al., 2014; Flanagan et al., 2020), the lack of minority teachers in schools is problematic for teacher referrals in GT identification.

To combat the limitations of teacher referrals, many school districts have implemented universal screening in their GT identification efforts. Universal screening involves assessing all students for giftedness, removing the reliance on parent and teacher referrals (Morgan, 2020). Another advantage to universal screening is the use of local

norms in the GT identification process. Local norms involve comparing and evaluating students against other students in their community instead of using national norms, which may not be representative of the school community (Morgan, 2020; Peters et al., 2021). Positive results have resulted from the use of universal screening, as the identification of CLED students as GT has increased sharply in school districts that employ it (Morgan, 2020; Plucker & Peters, 2018).

School Administrators and Equity

The underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019) is a matter of school equity. School administrators are pivotal in advocating and promoting equitable opportunities, resources, and outcomes for all students. An equity mindset is a crucial attribute of school administrators (Nadelson et al., 2019; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021) and is essential in combating the inequities that scourge schools (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Forlin & Howard, 2021; Voulgarides et al., 2017). A school administrator's beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions can shape school culture and student achievement (Nadelson et al., 2019). However, developing an equity mindset often occurs in tandem with leadership experience as a school leader, highlighting the need for comprehensive social-justice leadership preparation programs and professional development for prospective and current school administrators.

Social justice leadership is described by Theoharis (2007) as leadership that clusters social justice issues of marginalized and underrepresented groups under the central tenets of leadership—advocacy, practice, and vision. Social justice-inspired

leaders actively seek out policies, practices, views, and beliefs that contribute to inequitable learning outcomes and prioritize disrupting them to promote positive change (Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). Specific practices integral to social justice and equitable school leadership are framing disparities and action, distributed leadership, and a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020).

First, education researchers described framing disparities, identifying inequitable policies, practices, views, and beliefs, and being considerate of how these issues are framed or presented to ensure that school leadership is not perpetuating them (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020). For example, when analyzing achievement data and characterizing the disparities among groups of students, a school administrator may use the phrase "achievement gap." In doing so, the school leader may perpetuate the idea that certain groups of students will naturally underperform, contributing to deficit views that impede equity (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Mun et al., 2020). Equitable school leadership involves framing disparities with practice and policy at the forefront, examining what should be done to foster school improvement versus characterizing subgroups of students as innately responsible for the disparity (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020). Equitable school leadership models promote equity-mindedness and social justice-inspired leadership with all school stakeholders and galvanize them to share in leadership, focusing on disrupting policies, practices, views, and beliefs that contribute to the marginalization of specific student groups.

Likewise, equitable school leadership embraces distributed leadership, the practice of sharing in leadership to empower and mobilize the leadership expertise of all

stakeholders. This equitable leadership driver involves all stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, community members, and administrators, contributing to a shared vision of equity and working together to ensure equitable outcomes (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Postholm, 2019; Roegman, 2020). Equity-focused school administrators nurture a school culture that promotes collaboration, input from diverse perspectives, and a shared vision to identify and address inequities in practice and policy. In practicing distributed leadership, school leaders share the responsibility of positive change, building the capacity of stakeholders to continue the work in the absence of the school leader (Postholm, 2019). Data analysis serves as the catalyst for inquiry and identification of inequities in distributed leadership (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020). Equity-focused school administrators support all stakeholders in school improvement efforts through data analysis with an inquiry stance.

Lastly, a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement is critical to equitable school leadership. Data collection and analysis are integral to the ongoing cycle of inquiry for school improvement, affording school administrators and other stakeholders the means to identify and address disparities (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020). School administrators involve all stakeholders in the data analysis process, ensuring the inclusion of varied perspectives, yielding the benefits of a collective intellect to develop equitable practices aligned with school goals. Protocols for this equitable inquiry stance include professional learning communities and content-specific instructional coaches to support equitable practices that promote student achievement (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Roegman, 2020; Welborn, 2019). Equitable school

leadership fosters a culture of inquiry and continuous school improvement, a key responsibility outlined in the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) dictate model professional practices and behaviors of influential school leaders, including ensuring an equitable environment for all students. Ten standards compose the PSEL, and each outlines school leaders' responsibility for the achievement and well-being of all students. Equity is embedded throughout the PSEL standards, specifically PSEL standard 3, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is a documented issue of equity and social justice (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019), exploring to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs may yield a better understanding of the equity mindset and practices needed to address the problem.

Leadership Styles

One cannot examine the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs without assessing the leadership styles of elementary school administrators and how leadership styles inhibit or perpetuate the problem. While no one leadership style is preferential for successful schools, and no one leader embodies solely one leadership style (Bush & Glover, 2014; Urick, 2020), a review of the literature on school leadership styles may provide additional

context into school leadership and the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Transactional leadership examines the material or social exchange between leaders and followers that encourages performance at a high level. Namely, transactional leaders offer incentives, such as recognition, praise, and monetary rewards to encourage followers to exceed expectations (Bass, 1999; Hater & Bass, 1988; Young et al., 2021). Transactional leadership is cyclical. Rewards are contingent on high performance, and followers seek to establish positive relationships with the transactional leader and perform at a high level to secure rewards (Young et al., 2021). For example, a teacher may exchange quality instruction for praise and recognition from the principal. Likewise, due to the quality of the instruction, the same teacher may spark high student achievement, which may lead to financial rewards in the form of bonuses from the district. Transactional leadership has been proven to produce positive outcomes (Young et al., 2021), but there are limitations to its effectiveness that are outlined in the literature.

As stated, there are noted disadvantages to the transactional leadership model. The conceptual framework for the transactional leadership theory assumes that followers of transactional leaders are void of the innate motivation to contribute to organizational change (Young et al., 2021). Followers of transactional leaders only perform when presented with tangible rewards or recognition. Naturally, the role that extrinsic reward plays in transactional leadership is contrary to most educational philosophies, as the field of education is historically grounded in the belief in change for the greater good and not on incentives that are aligned with self-interests (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Berkovich &

Eyal, 2021). Additionally, transactional leaders, who rely heavily on structure and rules to promote productivity (Young et al., 2021), are often limited by a lack of creativity and innovation due to the absence of involvement of others in decision-making and problem-solving (Khan, 2017). In educational settings, which thrive on flexibility and open-mindedness, rigidness and an over-reliance on singular decision-making and problem-solving approaches are viewed as disadvantageous.

Transformational leadership is the leadership style that spurs change within an organization using motivation and capacity building. Regarding leadership style theory, transformational leadership is one of the most heavily studied and regarded leadership styles in education (Berkovich, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014). Transformational leaders are defined as individuals who inspire and stimulate others to achieve greatness and aim beyond their self-interest, and in doing so, build their capacity as leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). Transformational leadership involves more than the material and social exchange involved with transactional leadership. Followers of transformational leaders have a deep, personal commitment to the organization's vision and goals and have a higher capacity to surpass expectations (Bush & Glover, 2014). Notably, transformational leaders are perceived as having stronger relationships with followers and exploit these relationships to promote organizational growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). At its best, transformational leadership can involve all stakeholders in spurring positive organizational change, which is ideal for an educational setting (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bush & Glover, 2014). However, there are criticisms and limitations to the transformational leadership model.

A critical view of transformational leadership is that transformational leadership is excessively and inauthentically positive and centers on the transformational leader as the organization's hero. Alvesson and Einola (2019) proclaimed that overly upbeat leadership styles, such as transformational and authentic, mimic behaviors found in popular leaders that are accepted as successful in society and have little or nothing to do with actual academia, knowledge, or true leadership ability. Additionally, critics of transformational leadership note that transformational leaders are often associated with heavily criticized components of charismatic leadership, which may result in followers blindly following the leader without question, feedback, or pushback, stunting organizational growth (Yukl, 2013).

Along with transformational leadership, instructional leadership is a highly regarded and extensively studied leadership style in education. According to Davis and Boudreaux (2019), Hallinger and Murphy (1985), and J. S. McBrayer et al. (2020), instructional leadership is the school leadership model in which school leaders work in tandem with teachers to establish a highly defined and articulated vision, identify and promote effective instructional strategies to build professional capacity, embed the belief that all students can learn, and contribute to a positive culture of learning. Moreover, an instructional school leader is engaged with the planning, preparing, and implementing learning experiences in the classroom and is integral in instructional decision-making, primarily building the capacity to support positive learning outcomes. Ultimately, the instructional leader's goal is to prioritize quality learning outcomes and develop other

instructional leaders, countering the traditional narrative of the principal as the school building manager (J. S. McBrayer et al., 2020).

Recent research has proven the instructional leadership model an effective leadership approach. In conjunction with teacher leadership, instructional leadership has increased student achievement. A study by Ingersoll et al. (2017) employed the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey (New Teacher Center, 2013) to garner perspectives of 900,000 teachers across 16 states in terms of effective instructional leadership behaviors of their school leaders. The results indicated that increased instructional leadership and teacher leadership, as determined by survey results, promote higher levels of student achievement (Ingersoll et al., 2017). However, researchers determined that essential components of instructional leadership that spur achievement, including encouraging teacher voice and involvement in school improvement initiatives, are less prevalent in schools with an economically disadvantaged population. Additionally, researchers have found that school leaders struggle to balance administrative, managerial, and instructional tasks (Goldring et al., 2019; J. S. McBrayer et al., 2018). Considering the evidence that vital components of instructional leadership are lacking in economically disadvantaged schools (Ingersoll et al., 2017) and the challenges that school administrators face in balancing instructional and managerial leadership responsibilities (Goldring et al., 2019; J. S. McBrayer et al., 2018) exploring to what elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs may yield important insight into the problem and implications for change in practice.

Underrecognition in Gifted Programs

Disproportionality in GT education programs has been a long-standing problem deemed worthy of academic research. Education researchers have focused their attention on problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs, citing exclusionary identification methods, culturally unresponsive instructional practices, and a lack of understanding of giftedness in diverse populations as factors that cause and exacerbate the issue (Azano et al., 2017; Barnes, 2022; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). Exploring the findings in previous studies provides a rationale for further study of the problem.

Data from The National Association for Gifted Children (Rinn et al., 2022) reaffirmed the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs. The NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) demonstrated that over 65% of the nation's GT population is White, a higher percentage than all other subgroups (American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Latinx, Multiracial, multilingual learners, and special needs identified) combined. While an alarming statistic, the counterargument could be that Whites hold a more significant percentage of the overall school population in the United States, naturally resulting in higher participation in GT education programs. However, Peters et al. (2019) use the concept of RI to provide further evidence of the problem, even when considering the larger population of Whites in schools in the United States.

RI were used by Peters et al. (2019) to demonstrate the overrepresentation of Asians and Whites in GT education programs in comparison to other subgroups. Computing an RI requires the percentage of students identified as GT in a subgroup and the total percentage of students in that subgroup to determine a ratio (Peters et al., 2019). For example, if a school had a Latinx population of 14%, and the percentage of Latinx students identified as GT is 7%. The RI was .50. An RI of .50 indicated that the Latinx population was represented half as frequently in the GT population as in the total population, demonstrating underrecognition (Peters et al., 2019). Conversely, if Whites represented 25% of the GT population, yet only 15% of the total school population, then the RI would be 1.67 (0.25/0.15), demonstrating the overrepresentation of Whites in the GT population. An RI of 1.00 suggested that the total GT population was proportional to the total population of that subgroup (Peters et al., 2019; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Therefore, further evidence of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs is established when examining RI for each subgroup.

Summary and Conclusions

The problem that was addressed by this study is that CLED elementary school student populations in the United States are underrecognized in GT education programs. The problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in GT education programs is well documented in the literature (Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Peters et al., 2019). Statistically, 65% of the GT population is White, suggesting that White students are overrepresented in

GT education programs compared to other subgroups (Rinn et al., 2022). Further evidence of the problem is found when examining the proportionality of each subgroup's total population to the percentage of students identified as GT. Asian and White students are found to be overrepresented in GT education programs when accounting for proportionality, with RI greater than 1.0, while other subgroups are found to be underrepresented with RI less than 1.0 (Peters et al., 2019; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Previous research on the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs has presented substantial evidence of the problem of the disproportionality found in GT programs. Nevertheless, little in terms of policy or practice has been addressed to spur the positive social change needed. I sought to contribute to the previous literature by exploring to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs to provide new insight and understanding of the problem.

Researchers have determined that many factors hinder the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. To address the overreliance on standardized test scores in GT identification, educators now promote multi-point criteria consisting of IQ assessments, standardized test scores, and teacher referrals to identify giftedness (Morgan, 2020). Although standardized test scores have been minimized during the GT identification process, standardized testing still weighs heavily, contrary to research that has proven that minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students underperform on standardized assessments (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morgan, 2020). The underperformance of CLED students on standardized assessments is attributed to factors such as challenging

home lives, limited cultural and academic experiences due to poverty, and sub-par learning opportunities in schools (Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). Likewise, standardized assessment does not account for student learning potential, as students are required to lean into their background knowledge and educational experiences to perform, which may be problematic in the GT identification of marginalized students (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morgan, 2020). Compounding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED elementary school student populations in the United States in GT education programs are the misconceptions and stereotypical views of giftedness and characteristics held by teachers.

Teachers play a pivotal role in the GT identification process, informing the process by providing evaluations of GT characteristics based on observation. Teacher referrals are often skewed by biases and misconceptions of the characteristics of giftedness of teachers during the teacher referral process (James, 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Morgan, 2020; Reinholz et al., 2020). Additionally, low teacher expectations contribute to the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Teachers often view marginalized and disadvantaged students through a deficit lens, believing they are innately incapable of high achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Mun et al., 2020). Subsequently, these deficit views held by educators lead to student educational experiences lacking rigor, critical thinking, and problem-solving opportunities (Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Mun et al., 2020). Further exasperating the issue of low teacher expectations in the GT identification process is the lack of minority educators in schools, as researchers have demonstrated that teachers of color have higher expectations of

disadvantaged and minority students (Atkins et al., 2014; Morgan, 2020; Vinopal & Holt, 2019). Several obstacles limit CLED student access to GT programs. Considering the strong influence that school administrators have in shaping school culture and fostering student achievement (Nadelson et al., 2019), I sought to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs and share this knowledge and understanding of the problem.

The underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is a matter of educational access and equity. School administrators can influence the mindsets and decision-making of teachers and other educators regarding the GT identification process (see Nadelson et al., 2019). Previous studies have highlighted the need for social-justice leadership (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Forlin & Howard, 2021; Voulgarides et al., 2017) and instructional leadership (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; J. S. McBrayer et al., 2020) to address disparities found in the education system, particularly those involving marginalized groups and limited educational opportunity. School administrators can use their influence to promote equity or hinder it. Exploring the role of elementary administrators in reducing the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs can yield additional insight into the social justice and equity mindset required to disrupt the policies and practices perpetuating the problem, a key underpinning of the conceptual framework, CRT.

The literature review justified the need for this study. Previous literature on the topic informs that the underrecognition of CLED elementary school students in GT

education programs is a relevant problem worthy of further exploration (Azano et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021; Mun et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019). It is also known that school administrators have significant influence and decision-making power in schools (Nadelson et al., 2019). In this study, I addressed a gap in practice regarding what is known about attributing factors of the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs as described by elementary school administrators who have experienced success in diversifying their respective GT education programs to equitable levels. I hope this study's findings will inform stakeholders in other school settings of leadership qualities and strategies that have proven successful in increasing the recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of marginalized students.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used to conduct this basic qualitative study. In this chapter, I include a detailed account of this study's design and rationale, the role of the researcher in the study, methodology, participants, data collection tools, and data analysis to allow for replication by other researchers. In Chapter 3, I conclude with a summary of critical points to contextualize the potential findings of this study for the reader in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Historically, CLED elementary school students have been underrecognized in GT education. Further evidence of the problem is national data showing that CLED student recognition in GT education programs is disproportional to the recognition of White students (De Brey et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2019; Rinn et al., 2022; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Many school districts have implemented multi-point criteria for the GT identification process to make GT identification and education programs more accessible to diverse populations. Nevertheless, the disparity between CLED and White students' recognition in GT education programs exists. The underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is a matter of educational access and equity (see Ladson-Billings, 1999), and school administrators, through their actions, beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions, can combat inequities found in schools (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Forlin & Howard, 2021; Voulgarides et al., 2017). In the following section, I detail the research design rationale, data collection plan, and access to participants and address trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

This study was qualitative in design. The data collection protocol consists of interview questions based on the literature review and the conceptual framework to elicit responses from participants. In this study, I sought to identify best practices among elementary school administrators that serve in an exemplar district that demonstrate equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs; therefore, a basic qualitative design was chosen to capture the thoughts and perceptions of individuals in their natural

setting to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Henry, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). Additionally, qualitative studies allow the researcher to capture the meaning individuals make from their lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). A qualitative design was chosen for this study to capture participants' perceptions of the problem of the study, the underrepresentation of CLED elementary school student populations in the United States in GT programs, aligning with qualitative study traditions.

A basic qualitative design was chosen for this study; however, exploring other qualitative designs is necessary to rationalize and demonstrate an understanding of why the research design was chosen. According to Creswell (2003), there are several categories of qualitative research, including narratives, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, ethnographies, and case studies.

Narrative researchers emphasize the importance of stories and how they are central to understanding the human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative researchers may describe the findings of qualitative research through a story to convey meaning to the reader, study how a particular narrative influences everyday life, or use narrative conventions—plot, character, setting, and theme, to examine and make meaning of the experiences of others (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). A narrative would not have been an appropriate research design for this study, as the traditions of narrative research, to which stories and storytelling are foundational, are not suitable for understanding the perceptions of elementary school administrators of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Phenomenological studies are both a methodology and a philosophy that focuses on participants' lived experiences who have experienced a common phenomenon (Given, 2008; Lichtman, 2014). Essential to the phenomenological approach in research is the concept of *bracketing*, which involves the researcher attempting to remove his or her ideas and thoughts of the phenomenon in question and instead focusing solely on the participants' lived experiences regarding the phenomenon (Lichtman, 2014). Due to the focus on a single phenomenon and the concept of bracketing, phenomenology was not considered a methodical approach for this study. To better understand the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding their roles in addressing the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, attention should be given to the thoughts and perceptions of the participants—elementary school administrators, who may or may not have experienced the phenomenon in question.

Another approach to qualitative research is grounded theory. Grounded theory is the qualitative research approach in which an identified theory does not inform the research; rather, the research findings lead to a new theory (Lichtman, 2014). Researchers may choose the grounded theory approach for various reasons. The researcher may be drawn to the connection between practice and theory that grounded theory affords. Another aspect of grounded theory, according to Lichtman (2014), is that the results of grounded theory research are often generalized and lead to subsequent research through the application of the theory that emerges, which may be attractive to some researchers. However, the grounded theory approach is misaligned with the goals and purpose of this study. I sought to determine to what elementary school administrators, who serve in

exemplar schools and districts, attribute the equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students in GT education programs Additionally, I sought to determine best practices described by elementary administrators that address and prevent the problem of the underrecognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs. Therefore, the more generalized findings of a grounded theory approach would not have been appropriate. Additionally, I did not seek to develop a new theory, as is the goal of grounded theory research (Lichtman, 2014). This study may benefit from the clear focus CRT provides as the conceptual framework, as it is suitable for research involving race, ethnicity, culture, and historically marginalized populations in social science (Daftary, 2018).

Ethnography is a qualitative research approach that is closely associated with anthropology. In ethnography, the researcher's goal is to completely immerse themselves into the culturally or socially defined group that is the focus of the study to determine beliefs, practices, and values that are foundational to the group (Lichtman, 2014; Madden, 2017). The source of ethnography is fieldwork, in which the researcher lives the lives of members of the study group, upon which the researcher must gain the group's acceptance, trust, and rapport. A key component of ethnography is the natural setting and circumstances, as the researcher does not seek to control the events in the field (Madden, 2017). An ethnographical approach would have been ill-suited to this study. I did not seek to submerge myself into a culture or societal group. The study participants are not from an unfamiliar group to me; as an educator, I am included in the cultural and societal group, elementary school administrators.

Finally, a case study was not chosen as the research approach for this study. A case study is a comprehensive account of a particular case or single unit of study. According to Tight (2017), a case study involves only one or a small number of cases, requires study within the context of the phenomenon, and the data collection is holistic or broad, involving many data sources to inform the study. One criticism of social science researchers of the qualitative case study is the small number of participants, which some may view as a limitation in transferability (Tight, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs, which naturally lent itself to a broader scope and number of participants than would have been appropriate for a case study. Similarly, this study may have benefited from including elementary school administrators from schools that identify CLED students as GT in proportion to other subgroups, which is antithetical to the singular nature of a case study.

Ultimately, a basic qualitative design was selected for this study. Caelli et al. (2003) and Merriam (2009) affirmed the basic qualitative design as an appropriate research approach, which does not restrict the researcher to a particular set of philosophical assumptions as other more traditional qualitative methodologies. A basic qualitative study aims to identify participants' perspectives based on their experiences and how they make sense of the problem or phenomenon in question (Caelli et al., 2003; Merriam, 2009). The ideology that underpins basic qualitative study is *constructivism*, which is the belief that people actively create their own knowledge based on their

experiences and interactions with the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I am interested in examining and interpreting participants' experiences concerning the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs for which a basic qualitative study is appropriate.

The data collected for this study were derived from open-ended questioning that allowed participants to describe, in detail, their perceptions and experiences with the phenomenon in question. Interviewing is generally how data are collected for basic qualitative studies, emphasizing the constructivist underpinnings of this approach. Interviewing is a tool that researchers use to gain information about how people interpret and make meaning of the identified phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Overall, I am interested in how participants "make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24) concerning the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, for which the basic qualitative design is an appropriate research design.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. I used the basic qualitative design to explore the following research questions:

- RQ 1: To what do elementary school administrators serving in exemplary schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs in their schools?

- RQ 2: What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?

The findings derived from this study may inform educators and researchers of the equity-minded perspectives and dispositions of elementary school administrators serving in the exemplar district and the practices employed to diversify the GT education program. In turn, the findings of this study may lead to positive social change, hopefully providing more understanding of the problem, which may lead to more equitable practices in GT education and positive implications for educational opportunity and attainment for marginalized populations.

Role of the Researcher

Establishing the role of the researcher is essential in qualitative studies. Merriam and Grenier (2019) emphasized the importance of the qualitative researcher to consider their personal experiences and how they may influence a qualitative research study. It is incumbent on the researcher to consider potential barriers to objectivity, including researcher bias. This study positions the researcher as both an observer and a participant. I have 20 years of experience in education, serving as a teacher, instructional leader and coach, Talented and Gifted coordinator, assistant principal, and now, at the time of dissertation writing, an instructional specialist for the district. Additionally, I am an Indigenous American from a socioeconomically disadvantaged familial background. I acknowledge how my personal and professional background may lead to criticisms regarding subjectivity within this study.

Considering the relationship between my professional and personal experiences, I examined how my personal beliefs may influence the study. However, in qualitative research, the researcher's subjective positioning is handled much differently than in quantitative research and is even recognized and embraced (Given, 2008). Unlike quantitative research, which requires complete neutrality of the researcher, qualitative research positions the researcher as a co-creator, along with participants, of the realities expressed within the research (Given, 2008). Nevertheless, a qualitative researcher must aspire not to veer off into unsupported subjectivity that results in more of an opinion piece rather than rigorous scientific research.

To address and temper subjectivity in qualitative research, the researcher is responsible for demonstrating complete honesty, transparency, and contextualization throughout, producing a body of work that provides meaningful insight and the potential for positive social change (Given, 2008). To maintain honesty, transparency, and contextualization throughout the data collection process and reporting of findings, I conducted the interviewing process with integrity, upholding the ethical standards required by the IRB.

I ensured that the interview process was free from personal and professional influences by selecting participants with whom I did not share work or social environment. Participants understood the research's purpose and problem and knew they could withdraw from the study without any consequences. Each interview was structured according to the established interview protocol to ensure consistency in the interview process (Morris, 2015). Member checking and peer debriefing were used to reduce

researcher bias and partiality. The study did not present an element of power differential, as all participants are considered professional peers due to their common work as school administrators, and I do not supervise them (see Morris, 2015). Participants were given a small token of appreciation of $50 for their time commitment. The following section describes the methodology for this study.

Methodology

In the following section, I present the strategies I used to collect and analyze the data for this study. This study is qualitative, and basic qualitative principles were applied. The data source for this study is semistructured interviews of elementary administrators serving in the exemplar school districts that support GT education programs. A priori and open coding were used to analyze the data aligning with Yin's (2018) five-step process, which included (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. Thematic analysis was used to present the data. In the following section, I present detailed information regarding the research design.

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was used to identify potential participants in this study. In research, purposive sampling involves the researcher applying knowledge of the target population to determine a sample of knowledgeable participants regarding the phenomenon of the study (Battaglia, 2008). It was appropriate to use purposive sampling in this study, as I required individuals who met predetermined criteria to provide the required data. Elementary school administrators who serve in the identified exemplar school districts were selected as participants for this study. Elementary school

administrators were defined as (a) instructional leaders (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders) and (b) instructional leaders who manage and support GT education programs and have at least 3 years of experience in their current role.

In my initial study proposal, I planned to use exemplar district websites and employee directories to identify elementary school administrators who may meet the selection criteria based on information provided regarding their role and professional setting. However, after not securing any participants within the first month of my data collection period, I requested permission from the Walden University IRB to recruit participants from Facebook ™ groups targeting school administrators and leaders. I received IRB approval for this change in recruitment procedures, and then actively began recruitment within school administrator and leader Facebook (TM) groups.

I posted the flyer and a link to the SurveyMonkey ™ demographic questionnaire once per week for 9 weeks in several school administrator and leader Facebook ™ groups, including Principal's Principles, the Assistant Principal's Desk, the Principal's Desk, and Principal Life. The demographic questionnaire asked participants for contact information, number of years of experience in their current role, and which subgroups, Blacks, Latinx, multilingual learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged, their school or district demonstrates equitable GT recognition. Once a participant completed the demographic questionnaire, I then used the filter option in SurveyMonkey ™ to narrow the responses to those who indicated meeting the inclusion criteria. I then searched for respondents who used their school district email addresses to respond to the demographic questionnaire and conducted an internet search to further verify that the participant met

the inclusion criteria, cross-referencing NAGC State of the States Report (see Rinn et al., 2022) data. Next, I emailed the participants an invitation to a pre-interview phone conversation, where I further confirmed the inclusion criteria. The invitation email described the participants' time commitment, compensation, and selection criteria. I scheduled the interview at a time convenient for each participant based on the participants' provided information. This process continued until seven participants were secured for this study. Interviews were conducted using Zoom ™ videoconferencing software. In the following section, I explain the exemplar district criteria.

Exemplar District Criteria

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. According to Durdella (2019), the site and participation selection must be purposeful to ensure alignment with this study; therefore, I appropriately established selection criteria to explore the phenomenon of interest and best answer the research questions. I established selection criteria using an appreciative inquiry approach.

Appreciative inquiry involves identifying and studying the strengths within an organization; therefore, exemplar districts that demonstrate equitable recognition in GT education programs are identified (see Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Schools identified as exemplars demonstrated the equitable recognition from three out of four student subgroups: Blacks, multilingual learners, Latinx, and socioeconomically disadvantaged, as determined by RI (Peters et al., 2019) and the 20% equity allowance formula (Lamb et

al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017). Participant candidates were recruited using an electronic flyer, inclusive of a demographic pre-screener, posted to Facebook ™ school administrator groups.

I gathered and triangulated data from the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) and school district websites. NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) are repositories of national and state-level data that provide school-level and district-level GT identification by student subgroup. I used the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) data to cross-reference participant demographic data to evaluate that inclusion and exemplar criteria were met.

Initially, schools and districts identified used NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) data as meeting the inclusion criteria were approached to confirm the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs in their respective schools or districts. However, after a month of no responses, the recruitment strategy was adjusted to incorporate Facebook ™ groups targeting school administrators and leaders with permission from the IRB. An electronic flyer was posted in school administrator Facebook ™ groups, and participants were encouraged to complete an online demographic pre-screener. From the information provided by participants on the pre-screener, participant candidates who indicated that they serve in a school or district that meets the exemplar criteria were filtered. I then conducted a Google search for the identified participant candidates to determine the school or district that they serve in. From there, I cross-referenced the identified school or district with data found in

NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) to confirm that exemplar criteria were met. Participant candidates were then contacted via email, and a brief phone conversation was scheduled with those who responded to reiterate the exemplar criteria and the purpose of the study. Once it was confirmed that the participants met the exemplar criteria through NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) data cross-referencing and the pre-interview phone conversation, the interview was scheduled at a time convenient for the participant. The following section justifies the sample size and its relationship to saturation.

Saturation

I selected seven participants for this study using purposeful sampling. A key characteristic of qualitative studies is emphasizing the rich data collected and analyzed to understand better the phenomenon of interest (Emmel, 2013). As such, it is customary for qualitative studies to have small sample sizes, allowing the researcher to better understand the phenomenon of interest through the rich and descriptive data collected (Emmel, 2013). However, researchers must be mindful of saturation, as it is the most common guiding principle to demonstrating adequacy in qualitative research (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1995; Sandelowski, 1995). “Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible” (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1408). There are varying views among qualitative researchers regarding data saturation and key strategies were employed in this

study to reach data saturation. In the subsequent section, I highlight the four models of saturation, as informed by Saunders et al. (2018).

In qualitative research, the concept of saturation is subject to debate among researchers. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) conducted a systematic review of databases of research that assess the saturation of qualitative studies. A systematic review, as described by Moher et al. (2009) and O'Keeffe et al. (2012), measures the degree of quality and consistency of research findings. In their systemic review Hennink, and Kaiser (2022) determined that saturation in qualitative research can be reached within 9-17 interviews. Conversely, Bertaux (1981) argued that qualitative researchers should aim for at least 15 interviews to reach saturation; however, Mason (2010) challenged this claim, as the author does not present any argument to support this guideline to reach saturation. As stated, saturation continues to be a debatable discussion point among researchers. Saunders et al. (2018) described four models of saturation and their principal foci. In the next section, I describe each of the models and their applicability to this study.

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation is the point in grounded theory analysis when the collection and analysis of additional data does not bring forth any new information and the researcher decides to stop data collection. Rooted in grounded theory, theoretical saturation focuses on the depth of saturation versus the sample size (Saunders et al., 2018). To obtain theoretical saturation, a researcher must ensure that all aspects of a particular phenomenon are explored to "ensure that all constructs of a phenomenon (i.e.,

issues, concepts, categories, and linkages) are fully explored and supported so that the emerging theory is valid and robust" (Hennink et al., 2017). I did not seek to formulate a new theory emergent from data. However, I used an established conceptual framework, CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017), to analyze and interpret the data collected and sought to determine if attributes of CRT could be identified in the collected interview information. To that end, theoretical saturation was a goal for this study, as this study approach was basic qualitative in nature and I was not using a grounded theory approach. Subsequently, I did use a priori coding, using deductive codes derived from CRT and the literature to examine the information for the presence of attributes associated with CRT. In addition to a priori coding, I also used inductive coding, specifically employing open descriptive coding thereby employing two coding approaches. Using content analysis and employing two coding approaches resulted in the identification of 734 pieces of coded text from seven semistructured interviews, demonstrating a depth of saturation over breadth, aligning with theoretical saturation principles (see Saunders et al., 2018).

Inductive Thematic Saturation

Establishing inductive thematic saturation involves identifying new codes or themes that emerge from the data (Saunders et al., 2018). Inductive thematic saturation is contained within the thematic analysis of the data and not during the data collection process. Therefore, the focus of inductive thematic analysis is the repetition of meaning derived from the data. A researcher may conclude that they have reached inductive thematic saturation when the data becomes redundant during analysis, in that no new

codes or themes emerge (Saunders et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers describe the analysis of the raw data without any theoretical or conceptual grounding as inductive, or open coding (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014; Flick et al., 2004; Given, 2008).

Inductive, or open coding, is the initial process of gathering raw data and determining emerging ideas and meanings (Given, 2008). I used open coding to determine the ideas and concepts derived from the raw data and then categorized them based on similarities. After seven interviews resulting in 42 open descriptive codes, which were then grouped and collapsed into six open descriptive codes, no new information emerged, therefore, data collection was terminated. Further confirmation of inductive thematic saturation in this study was the clear alignment of deductive a priori codes to the inductive open descriptive codes, which underscored fundamental ideas of this study. Additionally, the use of open descriptive coding and a priori coding demonstrated data triangulation, strengthening credibility and validity (see Billups, 2021; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 1999; Rossiter, 2008).

A Priori Thematic Saturation

Contrary to inductive thematic saturation, a priori thematic saturation is a deductive approach guided by a pre-established theory to exemplify it (Saunders et al., 2018). To reach a priori thematic saturation, predetermined a priori codes are established before data collection and are represented sufficiently throughout the data (Saunders et al., 2018). Before data collection, I identified seven a priori codes congruent with the conceptual framework CRT. Each of the a priori codes were represented in the data. However, one a priori code, whiteness as a proprietary advantage (see Bell, 1980, 1987;

Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017), was represented in these data less frequently than other deductive codes. One reason for not identifying this code with a similar frequency of the other deductive codes could be limitations in the interview protocol used to conduct interviews, which may not have solicited enough responses from participants congruent with that specific a priori code. Another reason that the a priori code whiteness as a proprietary advantage was represented less frequently in the data could be that participants do not view GT education as a privilege only afforded to Whites. Due to the equity-based and social justice-inspired leadership that all participants conveyed, they may take the perspective that GT education is not necessarily being withheld from CLED students, but rather their innate gifts and talents are not being recognized equitably. Any limitations within the interview protocol are related to content validity, the degree to which the data collection instrument measures what it is intended to (see Rossiter, 2008).

Reaching a priori thematic saturation is contingent upon content validity (Saunders et al., 2018). However, the interview protocol was reviewed by the committee members, university methodology specialists, and an expert panel (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). Thus, the design of the interview protocol is thought to reflect content validity (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). Next, I explore the concept of data saturation and how it is present in this study.

Data Saturation

Topic Saunders et al. describe data saturation as "the degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data" (2018, p.1897). Data saturation occurs principally in the data-compiling stage and is wholly removed from theory (see Yin,

2018). Legard et al. determined that "probing needs to continue until the researcher feels they have reached saturation, a full understanding of the participant's perspective" (2003, p. 152). During the semistructured interviews, I used spontaneous probes to gather more information from the participants to better understand and interpret their perspectives. These probes were response-specific and hinged upon the participants' initial response to an interview question. I asked participants to provide examples of their responses in practice or to share an experience related to their initial response, which provided additional data to consider and analyze. As a result of the use of response-specific probes, four of the seven semistructured interviews lasted beyond the 1-hour mark. Participant responses seemed to echo across participant interviews. Each participant described similar experiences and perspectives. Regarding the importance of replication in data saturation, Grady (1998, p. 26) informs qualitative researchers,

> New data tend to be redundant of data already collected. In interviews, when the researcher begins to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached… It is then time to stop collecting information and to start analyzing what has been collected.

To that end, I then began to analyze the data. I labeled 734 pieces of coded text from participant responses. During a priori coding, each of the 734 pieces of text were labeled with a priori code derived from the conceptual framework. Then, the first round of open and descriptive coding was conducted, which resulted in each of the 734 pieces of text being assigned one of 41 open and descriptive codes. A second round of open and descriptive coding was completed with each of the 734 pieces of text and assigned a

priori and Round 1 code being funneled into six broader codes, which began the categorizing process. Lastly, Round 2 codes were then grouped and collapsed into four categories. I established data saturation through the replicative coding of the similar ideas and perspectives that participants shared. Next, I justify the sample size.

Justification of Sample Size

Topic Initially, I aimed to conduct 10-12 interviews for data collection; however, once immersed in the interview process, I began to note the repetition within and between the participants' responses, a key attribute of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Grady, 1998; Legard et al., 2003; Saunders et al., 2018). I began to "see similar instances over and over again" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61). I also considered the conceptual framework, CRT, and if the data were identified to adequately support all attributes of CRT (see Starks & Trinidad, 2007). All identified a priori codes were represented in the data. Despite the small sample size, this study was strengthened through the replicative nature within and across the data, the a priori coding used to ensure the data was representative of the conceptual framework, CRT, and open and descriptive coding derived solely from the raw data. I justified this sample as this study demonstrates saturation through a combination of the saturation models (Drisko, 1997, p. 192; Goulding, 2005; Morse, 1995; Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1896). Transition

To further justify the sample size, Guest et al. (2006) informed qualitative researchers that purposive sampling can reach saturation with as few as six samples due to the nature of purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, participants are chosen based on shared characteristics (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The use of purposive sampling ensures

homogeneity among participants. The more homogeneity among participants, the sooner saturation can be reached (Guest et al., 2006). For this study, all participants shared common characteristics outlined in the participant inclusion criteria. In the next section, I detail the instrumentation used in this study.

Instrumentation

I used semistructured interviews as the primary source of data collection to capture to what elementary school administrators' attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs. According to Gubrium and Holstein (2001), interviews solicit important information about individuals' lived experiences. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to develop an outline of pre-defined questions to garner a specific type of information but also provide some leeway in the structure to tailor the interaction to the interaction (Billups, 2021). The flexibility of the semistructured interview allows the researcher to follow any new or unexpected leads that may arise during the interview that are relevant to the study (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

A pre-established interview protocol maintained the integrity of the interview process while providing the open-ended structure necessary for me to follow up on potential leads to probe for additional information (Billups, 2021). Using an interview protocol, I used the questioning from the start and followed the same line of questioning for every participant. However, the semistructured nature allows the researcher to follow up or probe the participant for additional information relevant to the study. I employed an interview protocol that centers around elementary school administrators' perceptions of the practices, policies, and systems that hinder or support CLED student representation in

GT education programs and how these administrators describe their role in addressing the problem.

I used interview questions to solicit responses from participants regarding the phenomenon of the study and the perceptions of elementary school administrators of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Interview questions were aligned to the identified research questions and designed through the lens of the CRT conceptual framework to examine how race, cultural, and economic differences contribute to the disproportionality found in GT education programs. The next section describes the basis for instrument development.

Basis for Instrument Development

As indicated, interview questions and an established interview protocol are the instruments that were used to capture the data for this study. The interview questions were designed based on the research questions. I sought to determine to what elementary school administrators, who serve in an exemplar schools or districts, attribute the equitable recognition of CLED elementary school students. I also sought to determine the best practices described by elementary administrators that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs in the United States. To that end, the interview questions were designed to solicit a response from participants that may give insight into the phenomenon of interest.

Literature sources serve as the basis for the instrument development. The goal is to address a gap in practice regarding the inequitable recognition of CLED student populations in the United States in GT education programs. The interview questions were

developed to best gather the desired information. In the next section, content validity is addressed.

Establishing Content Validity

Establishing content validity is important in qualitative research. Content validity ensures that the data collection instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Rossiter, 2008). Carefully formulated interview questions ensured that the research questions of the study were addressed. I also considered how my background and experiences influence the development of interview questions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). A panel of professionals in the GT education field were invited to review and provide feedback on the interview questions to ensure their appropriateness concerning the desired. The review team consisted of individuals familiar with GT education and those who are not to ensure clarity and cultural responsiveness. Additionally, the review team ensured that the interview questions were neutral to avoid any leading questions or bias. I revised the interview guide based on the panel's feedback. The vetting of the interview questions also reinforces content validity. Additionally, participants participated in member checking, a process in which they validated their responses to the research questions to ensure accuracy (Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). The next section describes the sufficiency of the data collection instrument.

Sufficiency of Data Collection Instruments

This study was aligned with qualitative research principles. Interviews are a viable way to conduct research when the motive is to better understand an identified phenomenon (Henry, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). Research

question 1 solicits information from elementary school administrators on to what participants attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs in their schools. Research question 2 asks participants what they describe as best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. All interview questions were aligned with the research questions, and the interview protocol was maintained with all participants to ensure the accuracy of the data collection, thus reinforcing the integrity of the overall study and the findings.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

The participant recruitment process began immediately after receiving the Walden University IRB approval (#03-09-23-1018601). This study was national in scope. Therefore, elementary administrators who manage and support GT education programs were targeted for recruitment through school administrators and leader Facebook ™ groups, as approved by the IRB.

The IRB-approved flier was posted in the Facebook ™ administrator and leader groups, along with the link to the demographic questionnaire. The flier informed the participants about the purpose and nature of the study. The flier also informed potential participants of the $50 gift card token of appreciation. The demographic questionnaire required interested participant candidates to provide their contact information and the number of years of experience in their current role, and to indicate which CLED subgroups their school or district serves equitably in GT programs. Finally, demographic questionnaire data was filtered and analyzed, and qualified participants were sent an

invitation letter. Upon receiving a response from the participant, a convenient interview time was selected by the participant, and I proceeded with scheduling. This process continued until seven participants were secured.

Participation and Consent

Interviews were used as the primary source of data collection, aligning with the purpose of this study and basic qualitative principles. I gathered an in-depth understanding of to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools or districts in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT program, the identified purpose of this study. The primary data source for this study was semistructured interviews, informed by an established interview protocol. The semistructured interviews were conducted using Zoom ™ video-conferencing software. The following section provides information on the data collection process for this study.

A pre-established interview protocol governed the semistructured interview process. According to Given (2008), building a rapport and positive relationship with participants is vital to the semistructured interview process, as the qualitative study's quality depends on the relationship with the participant. I accurately described the nature of the study, the interview protocol, and the protection and confidentiality processes to set the stage for rapport and trust-building (Given, 2008). In the following section, I describe the processes for generating the data for this study.

Data Collection

The semistructured interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom ™ videoconferencing software. The recordings were transcribed and cross-referenced with

the typed notes on the interview guide. Participants provided consent to participate in the study during the interview process, as required by the Walden University IRB. Each interview began with introductions. Then, I reiterated the purpose and problem of the study and ask if the participant has any questions. Participants were verbally reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any point and refuse to answer any questions that may make them feel uncomfortable. I then verbally asked for consent. Each participant provided consent by responding with "yes." The sessions were recorded using the Zoom ™ record feature. The audio was recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai ™, a transcription application, which ensured verbatim transcription for accuracy. Participants were verbally reminded that the session was being recorded and they had an opportunity to allow or reject the recording.

During the interview, I used the interview protocol to ensure the standardization of the process. Each interview was conducted with a copy of the interview protocol to guide the interview and take notes for each response. After each interview question, I used probes to solicit deeper and more thoughtful responses from participants, a strategy recommended by Bernard and Ryan (2017). The probing strategy was used to clarify information and garner additional information related to the phenomenon of this study.

Participant Interview Exit Process

After each interview question, the information provided was paraphrased to the participant for approval, allowing the participant to confirm the accuracy of the information gathered (see Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Each interview session concluded by

thanking the participants and reminding them of the member-checking process. Each participant received a $50 gift card as a token of appreciation for their contributions.

Immediately after each interview session, my written notes were reviewed against the Zoom ™ video recording to ensure the accuracy of the data collection. Additionally, the transcription from the Otter.ai ™ transcription application was compared to the interview recording to further establish accuracy in the data collection process. The interviews served as data to answer the research questions. In the next section, I describe the data analysis plan, that includes content analysis, a priori coding, and open coding.

Data Analysis Plan

I used data from semistructured interviews governed by an established interview protocol. The data were recorded using the record feature on Zoom ™. Additionally, audio was recorded and transcribed using the Otter.ai ™ transcription software. Additionally, I took notes on the interview protocol document and compared my typed notes to the Zoom ™ recording and transcription to increase the accuracy of the data. To solicit deeper and more thoughtful responses, I used interview probes, a strategy recommended by Bernard and Ryan (2010).

Content analysis, a standardized method of making inferences from text of any sort, was used to analyze the data. Krippendorff (2019) described content analysis as a scientific tool that increases the researcher's understanding of a particular phenomenon, aligning with qualitative research principles. Content analysis is a technique grounded in specialized procedures that afford accuracy, replicability, and validity in qualitative research (Krippendorff, 2019). The components of content analysis are:

1. Unitizing: distinguishing the text by categories of interest to the researcher and pertinent to the study.
2. Sampling: generalizing the data found in the sample (data) collected during data analysis.
3. Recording/coding: interpreting what is seen, read, or found by the researcher and then describing the information through analysis (recording) and the formal, standardized method for carrying out the process of recording to allow for replication (coding).
4. Reducing: scaling down the raw data into easily interpreted visuals and narratives to increase accessibility and understandability to a wide range of readers.
5. Inferring: inducing or concluding information from evidence found within the data by relying on the conceptual framework or model of inquiry.
6. Narrating: Respond to the research questions by developing a narrative based on inferences from the data (see Allen, 2017; Given, 2008; & Krippendorff, 2019).

The data analysis plan was influenced by Yin's (2018) five-step model, which includes (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. Krippendorff's (2019) and Yin's (2018) content analysis approaches are complementary in that they both describe the use of a priori coding, open descriptive coding, interpreting the data, and then presenting the data through thematic analysis. The

processes described by Krippendorff (2019), and Yin (2018) provided guidelines for content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Saldana, 2021).

The data analysis plan also contained components of the constant comparative analysis (CCA) method, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Constant comparative analysis involves the researcher comparing the aspects of the data until data reduction occurs and categories emerge (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In its origins, CCA is a data analysis technique that resulted from a first-round open coding and subsequently led to the emergence of a new theory, aligning with Grounded Theory principles (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, since the inception of CCA, qualitative methodologists (see Fram, 2013) have recognized its merit in the data analysis process outside Grounded Theory.

Constant comparative analysis principles were applied in this study. I did not seek to develop a new theory (see Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; see Fram, 2013; see Glaser & Strauss, 1967); however, I used constant comparative analysis principles to reduce and categorize these data. As Fram (2013) suggested, I used CCA to compare data within a single interview and across interviews to reduce and categorize the data (see Boeije, 2002). The application of select CCA that supported data saturation in this study (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see Grady, 1998; see Legard et al., 2003; see Saunders et al., 2018), data reduction, and identification of categories and themes (see Fram, 2013; see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Moreover, using components of CCA afforded me the opportunity to identify any discrepant data (see Fram, 2013). Components of CCA were integral to the data analysis plan, although an established conceptual framework CRT,

underpinned this study. As such, a priori coding was used to deduce codes based on the conceptual framework.

I used a priori coding to conduct my first round of coding and categorizing the data. A priori coding in qualitative research involves the researcher deducing codes based on the conceptual framework and research questions before collecting the data (Stemler, 2001). According to Stemler (2001), a priori coding is an acceptable form of categorizing data in qualitative research when the researcher has selected a conceptual framework. Yin (2018) described this stage of content analysis as disassembling, the decontextualization of the data through identifying and labeling text excerpts as codes. Aligning with best practices in content analysis and a prior coding, professional colleagues vetted identified a priori codes to ensure purposefulness and alignment with the purpose and conceptual framework of this study (Allen, 2017; Given, 2008; Krippendorff, 2019).

After data collection, I refined and tightened a priori codes as necessary to afford mutual exclusivity and exhaustion of the data (see Weber, 1990). Additionally, any codes that arose relevant to the purpose and conceptual framework of this study were included through a priori and open coding to triangulate the data (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014; Flick et al., 2004). Open descriptive coding is the initial process of gathering raw data and determining ideas and meanings that emerge (Given, 2008). I used open descriptive coding to determine the ideas and concepts that derived from the raw data and then categorized them based on similarities. Another round of open coding was completed to further identify similarities and differences among the codes. The process of

open descriptive coding to determine meaning was a continuation of the disassembly phase, as described by Yin (2018) in content analysis.

From the deductive and inductive process of a priori and open coding of words, phrases, and paragraphs, I proceeded to conduct 2 Rounds of open descriptive coding. Next, I then collapsed the Round 2 codes that were similar into categories. Aligning with the work of Yin (2018), I began to reassemble the data in this phase of content analysis. Next, I further categorized to identify emerging themes from the data. Yin (2018) referred to this phase as interpreting. I looked for commonalities within and across the data, applying constant comparative analysis principles (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to reduce the data into categories and themes. Themes relevant to the perceptions of elementary school administrators of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, inclusive GT education, barriers to inclusive GT education, and culturally responsive leadership were included in the study's findings through the lens of the conceptual framework, CRT. The identification and presentation of emerging themes derived from the data is the final phase in Yin's (2018) five-step model, concluding. In the next section, I review the process of establishing trustworthiness in the study. I describe how credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are addressed in the data collection process and throughout this study to ensure rigor and accurate findings.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness in a qualitative study ensures that the data collection process and generation of critical findings are rigorous and verifiable. Trustworthiness

verifies that the study's findings are worthy of the attention of readers, including practitioners and researchers (Elo et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following section describes how I established trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity in this study.

Credibility

Credibility involves demonstrating that the findings are authentic and accurately represent the phenomenon of the study. Several strategies are recommended to ensure credibility in a research study, including prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation of data (Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). The credibility of this study was supported by member checking and data triangulation.

Member checking is another method that strengthens creditability. Member checking involves the researcher verifying the accuracy of recorded responses, transcription of responses, and interpretations through confirming with participants (Given, 2008). Member checking can also serve as an additional tool for data collection (Given, 2008). Drafts of the study findings were provided to participants via email after I have completed the transcription and interpretation processes. Feedback was solicited from the participants on the accuracy of the findings, interpretations, and representations of participant perspectives. Participants were invited to confirm the data consistency and interpretations via email, or other means of communication (i.e., phone, video conferencing) to clear up misunderstandings or inconsistencies. Only member approved data and interpretations were included in the final study. Participants were encouraged to

provide additional context or information regarding their responses or my interpretation of their perspectives.

Finally, credibility was addressed in this study through data triangulation. Triangulation can involve obtaining multiple data sources to authenticate the findings and provide a more holistic view of the phenomenon (Billups, 2021; Coffey et al., 1996; Denzin, 2012). Data triangulation was addressed in this study through open descriptive coding and a priori coding, which lends itself to data triangulation (see Flick et al., 2004).

Data triangulation strengthens credibility and content validity (Billups, 2021; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 1999; Rossiter, 2008). I demonstrated data triangulation in this study through the use of content analysis through employing two different coding approaches and reaching saturation (see Krippendorff, 2019; see Saldana, 2021; see Yin, 2018). I identified key principles from the conceptual framework, CRT, to develop a priori codes prior to data collection. After each semistructured interview, I hand coded key transcript excerpts and labeled them with an aligned a priori code. I then reexamined the Interview transcripts and codes to conduct a round of open descriptive coding. During the process of open and descriptive coding, I coded without regard to the conceptual framework, the CRT. I conducted another round of open descriptive coding to group and collapse the initial round of open and descriptive coding into categories. The use of a priori coding with open descriptive coding demonstrates data triangulation, as I examined the data from two different analytical vantage points (see Flick et al., 2004). The categories developed from the open descriptive coding were congruent with conceptual

framework-specific a priori codes, which strengthens the credibility of the findings of the study (see Billups, 2021; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 1999; Rossiter, 2008).

Transferability

An essential aspect of any research is transferability, that also establishes trustworthiness. Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a research study can be interpreted in similar settings (Billups, 2021; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, transferability is supported through sampling procedures. The participants of this national study serve in schools composed of varied socioeconomic and demographic student populations. The participant selection criteria targeted elementary school administrators who have experienced success in diversifying their GT education programs to equitable levels, aligning with appreciative inquiry principals (see Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Storace, 2023; Watkins et al., 2016). The sampling procedures of this study allows the reader to evaluate the transferability to their setting.

Dependability

Dependability strengthens the trustworthiness of a qualitative study by confirming the degree to which the findings are consistent and stable over time, and the methodology can be replicated by other researchers (Billups, 2021). Dependability is addressed with an audit trail that extensively details the data collection process, allowing third parties to replicate the study. The audit trail consisted of journaling about my thoughts and feelings regarding this study to bring any bias I may have to the forefront. Additionally, I used an external auditor to review the codes during the data analysis process. This external auditor is a veteran in the field who has experience with the focus of the study. Based on

the audit trail, I described the data collection process and reporting thoroughly to allow for replication, thus establishing dependability.

Confirmability

Establishing confirmability also strengthens trustworthiness. Confirmability strengthens trustworthiness by establishing confidence in the findings by proving that others may confirm or corroborate the findings (Amankwaa, 2016; Billups, 2021). I used an audit trail described in the previous section and reflexivity as a confirmability strategy for this study. An audit trail supports confirmability by providing a detailed account of the data collection process to demonstrate that the results are reflective of the participants' responses to the interview questions and are not contaminated by my conscious or unconscious biases. If the results can be replicated, then confirmability is strengthened.

Reflexivity refers to acknowledging the researcher's position in the research by examining one's judgments, beliefs, values, and biases (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018). Previously in Chapter 3, I described my role as the researcher to address reflexivity and provide transparency of my position within the research. As a novice researcher, expressing reflexivity allows me to be self-conscious of how my position can influence the research outcomes and critically reflect on the decisions made (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018). In the next section, I explain how addressed ethics in this study.

Ethical Procedures

Walden University IRB approval is a requirement to complete this study. IRB approval established that I have met all necessary ethical standards for conducting the study, including participant recruitment, interviewing, and data collection. In the next section, I detail how participants, recruitment, data collection, and treatment were handled ethically in this study.

Participants

Researchers are obligated to protect the rights and interests of participants. Individuals have the right to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of the collected information (Billups, 2021). In this study, each participant was informed of the purpose and nature of the study in the invitation to participate email. Participants must indicate their interest in participating in the study by completing the demographic pre-screener. Additionally, participants confirmed consent during the interview session, as detailed in the IRB approval. Therefore, participants self-selected to participate in this study. Additionally, the consent form informed participants of the minimal risks associated with this study. As a participant in this study, one may have encountered minimal, everyday discomforts such as mild fatigue or stress. The electronic consent form informed participants of any minimal potential risks that may occur as a participant in this study. Participants were informed that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason on the consent form, all email correspondence, and during the interviews. I was transparent, responsive, and respectful of participant rights and ensured that the data collection process is comfortable (see Given, 2008).

Personal identifiers such as names and email addresses were compiled only for the sole purpose of communication with participants regarding this study. Names or any other identifiers were not used. Each participant was assigned a numeric identifier to maintain antonymy. Each participant received draft copies of the interpretation of the findings as a part of the member-checking process to ensure accuracy. As Christian (2005) informs, I made every effort to respect each participant's privacy and confidentiality and ensure an accurate interpretation of each participant's perspective is presented. In the next section, I describe the treatment of the data.

Treatment of Data

All hardcopy and electronic documents, such as field notes, will remain locked in a file cabinet in my home for 5 years. All electronic documentation will remain on my personal, password-protected laptop for 5 years. I will be the only individual with access to the file cabinet and laptop. After 5 years, all data will be destroyed, per Walden policy. Next, I describe how recruitment materials and processes are handled ethically.

Recruitment Materials and Processes

The participant section states that recruitment materials and processes are electronic. I received permission from the IRB to recruit participants through social media after my initial efforts were unsuccessful. Principals, assistant principals, and other instructional leaders who supervise GT education programs were targeted as potential participants, as outlined in the participant criteria. An electronic flyer was created and posted to Facebook ™ school administrator groups. The flyer contained a hyperlink to an electronic demographic pre-screener, which interested participant candidates completed

with their contact information. Participants also indicated which subgroups, Blacks, Hispanic, Latinx, or Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, their school or district demonstrated equitable recognition in GT education programs. Participants that selected at least 3 out of the 4 subgroups were selected for further screening.

I used the information that participant candidates provided on the demographic pre-screener to conduct a Google search to gather additional information to cross-reference with the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) data to further confirm that exemplar and inclusion criteria were met. Identified participant candidates were contacted using the information provided in the demographic pre-screener, and a brief phone conversation was scheduled to reiterate the inclusion and exemplar criteria to participants. The consent form that outlined participant rights, including providing or denying consent, the right to withdraw from the study, confidentiality, and the minimal risks involved, was emailed to selected participant candidates. I then coordinated with participants to identify a convenient interview time. Participants provided consent to participate in the study during the interview session.

Other Ethical Issues

Aside from the proper care of participants, treatment of data, and recruitment materials and processes, a few other ethical issues should be addressed. I identified exemplar schools and districts that demonstrated equitable recognition of CLED students for GT education programs. The participant selection criteria included assistant principals, principals, or other instructional leaders, none of whom I supervise; therefore, there are no power differentials. A small token of appreciation, a $50 gift card, was

provided to participants to show gratitude for their time and effort. I ethically conducting this study to ensure the proper protection of participants and the trustworthiness of the data and findings.

Summary

Chapter 3 detailed the research design and data collection process of this study. Additionally, transferability and procedures for meeting ethical standards were addressed. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Participants of this study are elementary administrators who met the following criteria: (a) instructional leaders (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders) and (b) instructional leaders who manage and support GT education programs and have at least three years of experience in their role. Participant candidate demographic information was cross-referenced with data from the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) to confirm that inclusion and exemplar criteria were met.

Semistructured interviews are the data collection instrument. Semistructured interviews were conducted using Zoom ™. Semistructured interview audio was recorded with participant permission, and I used an established interview protocol to guide the interviews and take field notes. Participants received the consent form prior to the interview session for review and then consented verbally to participate in the study during the interview session. Interviews were transcribed using a transcription application, and interview notes were compared to the interview recordings to ensure

accuracy. Data from the interviews was analyzed through a priori and open descriptive coding and presented through thematic analysis. In Chapter 4, I reflect on the study and present the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. As a school-based administrator at the time of the inception of this study, I was curious to know the specific leadership dispositions and mindsets of elementary school administrators who serve in schools that were successful in attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. I was also interested in which classroom and school-based practices elementary school administrators attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their schools. I sought to address a gap in practice regarding the inequitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs through the lens of the school administrators, who wield great influence in shaping school culture and cultivating student achievement (see Nadelson et al., 2019). However, greater than my own self-curiosity and interests, I sought to promote positive social change through sharing the findings with educators to bring additional awareness to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and provide useful information to allow educators to better address the problem in their settings. The findings of the study will inform school administrators, district administrators, and other stakeholders of the leadership qualities and best practices that are effective in increasing CLED student recognition in GT education programs to equitable levels.

The conceptual framework of this study was CRT, which is described by Daftary (2018) as a fitting structure to explore marginalized populations. Critical race theorists

suggest that racism is embedded in the U.S. educational and legal systems (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). Critical race theory is the lens through which this study's data were analyzed, interpreted, and presented. I used an appreciative inquiry approach to data collection in this basic qualitative study. Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) is a strength-based approach to research, leadership, and organizational change that highlights and shared what organizations attribute to their success regarding a particular problem. As such, I specifically targeted participants who serve in schools that demonstrate equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to underscore the leadership dispositions, mindsets, and classroom and school-based best practices that leaders in these schools describe.

In this chapter, I delineate participant demographics, data collection processes, interview conditions, evidence of trustworthiness, and the study findings. I describe the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from seven semistructured interviews with elementary school administrators who serve in exemplar schools in the United States. The interview approach was equable and informal to nurture a comfortable environment for participants to solicit the responses necessary to answer the research questions and reach saturation (see Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). An 18-question self-designed interview protocol was used to standardize the interview process, providing the same questions to each participant (see Billups, 2021; Morris, 2015). The semistructured nature of the interview process allowed me to use preplanned and spontaneous probes to obtain additional study-relevant information from participants. The beginning of each interview consisted of greetings, a review of the purpose and

nature of the study, an explanation of measures to maintain confidentiality, an overview of research questions, and a description of the member-checking process, all strategies described by Given (2008) that promote trust building and positive rapport. I conducted a qualitative data analysis using content analysis. Content analysis is a structured means of making meaning from text (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). During content analysis, I applied three rounds of coding: one round of a priori coding and two rounds of open descriptive coding. The codes were then funneled into categories and themes (Allen, 2017; Given, 2008; Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018).

I used two research questions to guide this basic qualitative study. The research questions were designed to determine what leadership qualities and best practices school administrators describe as attributing to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

- RQ 1: To what do elementary school administrators serving in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs in their schools?
- RQ 2: What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?

In this chapter, I describe the setting of the study, participant demographics, data collection processes, interview conditions, evidence of trustworthiness, and the study findings. I then conclude Chapter 4 with a summary.

Setting

I conducted the interviews using Zoom ™ videoconferencing software due to the national scope of the study. I recruited participants nationally through Facebook ™ groups targeted to school administrators. A SurveyMonkey ™ pre-screener link was provided on the Facebook ™ group posts, and candidates completed a brief questionnaire to indicate their interest in participating in the study, to check that they met the study's participant criteria, and to provide preferred contact information. After filtering the pre-screener data to identify participants who indicated that they met the study's participant criteria, I contacted participants via email and scheduled a Zoom ™ meeting at their convenience. Participants provided consent verbally during the interview. The interviews were conducted using the 18-question interview protocol, which was aligned with the research questions. Participants indicated they engaged in the interview from either their homes or offices. Three out of seven interviews lasted more than an hour, and in those cases, participants provided verbal consent to continue the interview beyond the one-hour mark.

Demographics

Seven participants self-selected to participate in the study. All participants indicated that they served as an administrator or teacher-leader (see Table 2) in a school or district that demonstrated equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs in at least three out of four student subgroups: Blacks, Latinx, multilingual learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Participants were from various parts of the United States and indicated they had at least 3 years of leadership experience.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Role
P1	Teacher leader
P2	Teacher leader
P3	Administrator
P4	Administrator
P5	Administrator
P6	Administrator
P7	Teacher leader

Data Collection

I obtained IRB approval and began posting the recruitment flyer and pre-screening link in school administrator Facebook ™ groups. After 5 weeks, seven participants self-selected into the study. Interviews were coordinated with each participant at a time convenient for them. I conducted the one-on-one semistructured interviews using an 18 open-ended question interview protocol that had been evaluated by the doctoral committee for use of the conceptual framework to create the interview questions, alignment with the literature, and methodological alignment, as suggested by Castillo-Montoya (2016).

To ensure alignment between the research questions and interview questions, I created a matrix to develop and identify questions that would yield study-relevant responses from participants, as informed by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The doctoral committee vetted the interview questions, and the interview questions were adjusted based on the feedback provided. The 18 questions in the interview protocol were followed with additional probes, in which participants were asked to elaborate or provide

an example of their initial response (Billups, 2021). At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there were anything additional that was relevant to the topic they would like to share. The questions generated responses that were sufficient to answer the research questions. Table 3 demonstrates the alignment between the research questions and interview questions.

Table 3

Research Questions and Correlating Interview Questions

Research questions	Interview questions
RQ 1: What do elementary school administrators serving in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the representative inclusion of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs in their schools?	1. Describe the GT identification process in your district. 2. How are the identification process and philosophy regarding GT identification communicated throughout the district to elementary stakeholders? 3. Describe any procedures or guidelines that you believe support the identification of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs. 4. Describe how the school's systems and structures supports the equitable recognition of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs. 5. In previous years, was there a problem with inequitable recognition of CLED students in your school's GT education program? If so, based on your knowledge, what was done to address it? 6. If there never was a problem with inequitable recognition in your school's GT education program, why do you think that is so? 7. What are your beliefs regarding race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and educational attainment and outcomes? 8. Describe the authority delegated to the administrator role to support addressing the problem of underrecognition of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs. 9. How has the role of the administrator been identified and developed as it relates to the identification of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs? 10. How do you view your role in the GT identification process? 11. What are your thoughts regarding the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs? 12. What supports or resources have been provided to administrators in their role in the identification of students in the Gifted and Talented Program? 13. What are your recommendations on any possible changes or refinements to the administrators' role that might be considered in the identification of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs?
RQ 2: What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?	1. What best practices that are currently used do you believe ensure identification of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs? 2. What philosophy and guiding principles do you believe enhance best practices to ensure that CLED recognition? 3. What are your views about the role of the administrator related to using best practices to ensure CLED recognition? 4. What recommendations related to additional practices, supports, communications or professional development do you believe would ensure CLED recognition in Gifted and Talented Programs?

The interviews were conducted via Zoom ™, and the audio was recorded. Interview audio was then uploaded to Otter.ai ™, an audio text transcription software. I ensured the accuracy of the transcripts by listening to the audio and reading the transcripts. The transcripts were then copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document. Sixty minutes were allotted for each interview. The duration of the interviews ranged from 41 minutes to 82 minutes, with an average of 63 minutes. Three of the seven participants agreed to continue the interview after the one-hour mark, which explains the interview length range and average. Table 4 provides the interview length for each participant.

Table 4

Length of Interview by Participant

Participant	Length of interview
P1	58 minutes
P2	52 minutes
P3	82 minutes
P4	75 minutes
P5	73 minutes
P6	58 minutes
P7	41 minutes

I served as the primary data instrument, and as such, the use of the interview protocol reduced variability and established structure in the data collection process (Billups, 2021; Morris, 2015). Each participant responded to the same set of open-ended questions from the interview protocol to maintain consistency (Morris, 2015). Additional probing was used to elicit deeper and more thoughtful responses to relevant to the study (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Some probes were preplanned; however, some of the probes

used were based on the participants' initial responses to the questions. I was keen to listen carefully to the participants' responses to target study-relevant words or phrases, and then followed up with a question that prompted participants to provide an example of the phenomenon or a description of the phenomenon in practice. The response-specific probing questions elicited deeper and more thoughtful responses, which provided many additional study-relevant codes and lengthened the interview, supporting trustworthiness and ensuring saturation (Elo et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I used reflective journaling to establish reflexivity to acknowledge my position within the research by examining my judgments, beliefs, values, and biases (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018). The reflective journal was a tool that I used to note my personal biases stemming from my own experiences and beliefs regarding the education of historically marginalized groups. Reflective journaling allowed me to bring these biases to the forefront. Through the naming of personal biases using the reflective journal, I sought to limit their influence on the study. One question that I asked myself and journaled about after each interview was "How does my ethnicity, familial socioeconomic status, and role as a school administrator in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community influence my interpretation of participants' responses?" Reflective journaling is an attempt to ensure that the study is grounded in the data generated, and not my own personal experiences, beliefs, judgments, or biases (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018).

I used transcription software to transcribe the data within 24 hours of each interview. The transcription software provided raw data that were cleaned and edited to

ensure meaning and then copied into a Word document. At the top of each Word document transcript, I copied and pasted the identified a priori codes and research questions to guide my thinking during the data analysis process. I will retain the data on my password-protected computer in a password-protected folder for 5 years, per Walden University policy. After 5 years, I will delete all data in accordance with Walden University IRB guidelines. There were no unusual circumstances that interfered with the data collection process, aside from a weak internet connection during one interview, which was immediately remedied by turning off my camera to conserve bandwidth. The interview continued, and there was no lapse in data collection.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. Qualitative content analysis is a scientific method that increases the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2019; Saldana, 2021; Yin, 2018). This method also affords the researcher a standardized procedure, establishing accuracy, replicability, and validity in qualitative research (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). The qualitative content analysis process is composed of five steps, all of which were completed in the data analysis of this study. To further ground the process of qualitative content analysis as a qualitative data analysis practice informed by research, each step of qualitative content analysis is aligned with the compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding process that Yin (2018) described. The application of the components of qualitative content analysis as described by Krippendorff (2019) and Yin in this study are detailed below.

Coding Strategy

I used a coding strategy that was guided by Saldana's (2021) qualitative content analysis, which is a deductive and inductive coding process. Qualitative content analysis provides the researcher with a structured method to explore and analyze the data from two different vantage points (see Flick et al., 2004), affording data triangulation. Once the data were compiled, I examined the transcript text excerpts through the lens of the conceptual framework, CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017), and labeled data relevant to the study with a priori codes, a deductive strategy. Then, I recontextualized the data through the inductive process of open descriptive coding to interpret meaning from the raw data obtained from the semistructured interview, independent of the conceptual framework. The triangulation of data through the deductive approach of a priori coding and the inductive approach of open descriptive coding strengthens the credibility of the findings of this study (see Billups, 2021; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 1999; Rossiter, 2008). This study benefits from the application of qualitative content analysis (see Saldana, 2021).

To gain a better understanding of the qualitative content analysis process, I followed the guidelines provided by Krippendorff (2019) and Yin (2018). Krippendorff (2019) prescribed a six-step process for conducing qualitative content analysis, which starts with unitizing the data and concludes with narrating the findings. Complementary to Krippendorff's six-step process is Yin's five-phase model, which begins with compiling and disassembling the data and ultimately transitions to concluding, which is reassembling the data into themes that are easily understood by readers (Allen, 2017;

Given, 2008; Krippendorff, 2019). Both methods involve decomposing the data obtained from the transcripts into smaller units, or codes, to analyze and interpret to ultimately reassemble into themes that answer the research questions. Both Krippendorff and Yin provided a useful roadmap to engage in the qualitative content analysis process as described by Saldana (2021). Below, I detail the steps of the qualitative content analysis process used to determine the results of this study.

Compiling and Unitizing

First, I compiled all data, including field notes, the coding book, the reflective journal, and the interview transcripts obtained from the audio recording of semistructured interviews guided by an interview protocol (Yin, 2018). During my initial review of the audio recordings of the interviews and transcripts, I looked for commonalities and discrepancies in participant responses to the interview questions. I color-coded the commonalities in responses to serve as the foundation for the coding process. I pasted the research questions and a priori codes at the top of each interview transcript to ensure that I was intentional about identifying interview text excerpts that are congruent with the study's purpose and conceptual framework, CRT. I then transferred the highlighted text to an electronic spreadsheet organized by participants' responses. The initial step of compiling all data and analyzing the text for areas of interest relevant to the study is called compiling (Yin, 2018) and unitizing (Krippendorff, 2019). The next step describes the initial stages of the data disassembly process.

Disassembling

In this step, the data is disassembled (Yin, 2018). I identified seven a priori codes derived from the conceptual framework. A priori coding is the deductive process of determining key ideas or concepts derived from the conceptual framework and aligning them with related text from the interview transcripts. According to Stemler (2001), a priori coding is an acceptable form of categorizing data in qualitative research when the researcher has selected a conceptual framework. The text excerpts in the electronic spreadsheet are assigned an a priori code based on the interpreted meaning, which affords a broad categorization of data aligned with the conceptual framework (Stemler, 2001). Table 5 provides the operational definitions of the a priori codes.

Table 5

A Priori Codes Derived from Critical Race Theory

A priori code	Operational definition
Educational best practices	Best education practice activities are behaviors or policies by faculty, staff, and administrators that result in positive changes in student attitudes or academic behaviors.
Cultural responsiveness	Culturally responsiveness means being aware of cultural factors and appropriately responding to them (Barsky, 2018).
Equity	Equity is used to describe processes where individuals are working to achieve fair and equal opportunities for all students based on their individual needs, it "does not necessarily entail equal treatment" (Solomon, 2011).
Educational marginalization	Messiou (2013) describes educational marginalization as "an unfair, favored, or biased distribution of access to learning, learning facilities, and resources based on geography, gender, socioeconomic conditions, or personal circumstances."
Socioeconomic status	Socioeconomic status is generally conceptualized as the social status or class of an individual or group and is frequently measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (Muhammad et al., 2023).
Structural and systemic racism	Critical race theorists promote the idea that racism is not an individualistic thought or action but structural and systemic and is interwoven throughout all aspects of society (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017).
Whiteness as a proprietary advantage	CRT theorists promote the idea of "whiteness" as a proprietary advantage. As such, being White means inherently afforded privilege that leads to educational, financial, and social advantages. Conversely, being "non-White" can naturally lead to disadvantages in terms of academic, financial, and social status and outcomes (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017)

After this initial round of a priori coding, I conducted a peer review process (see Allen, 2017; Given, 2008; & Krippendorff, 2019) that entailed having two professional colleagues review the conceptual framework and a priori code text assignments to ensure a logical relationship between the a priori codes and assigned interview text excerpts congruent to the conceptual framework, CRT. Table 6 is a sampling of interview text excerpts and a priori codes.

Table 6

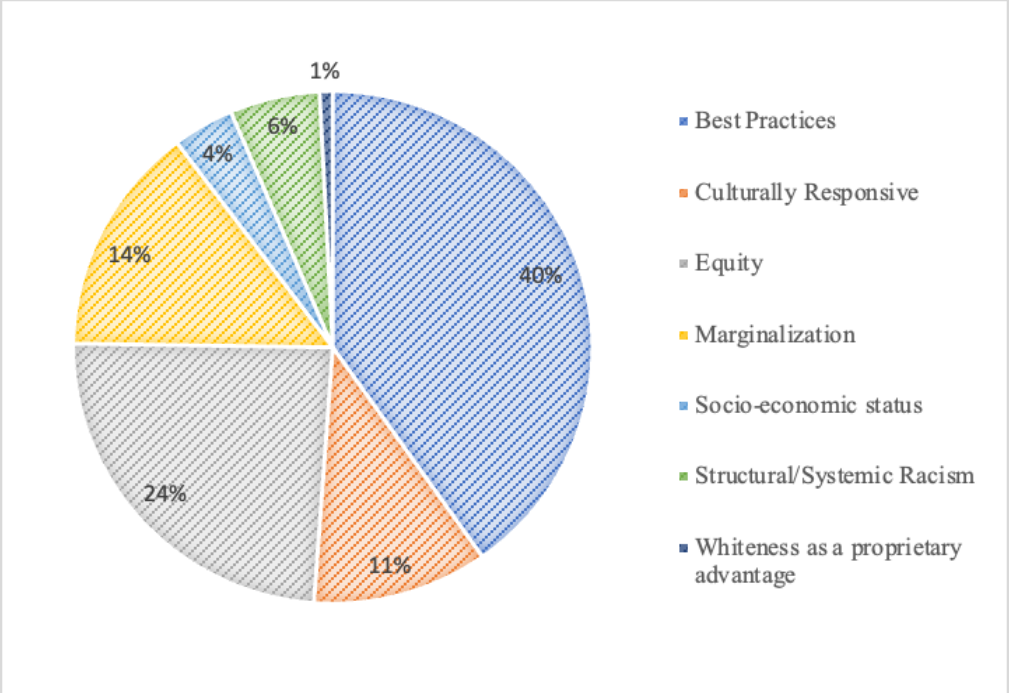
Sampling of Text Excerpts and a Priori Codes

Participant	Interview text excerpt	A priori code
P1	But after testing, and of course, I also get your scales from both teacher and parent. And if there's some other significant adult that is working with that student, they also provide those six behavior scales.	Educational best practices
P2	I think the structure that's in place, is not always engaging for diverse populations of students. And is not always aligned with students in their racial identity development, which I think also can contribute to decreased engagement.	Systemic and structural racism and inequity
P3	And so really getting to know the students and getting to know their interests we talked about, you know, getting to know a child's interest will help us with some insights, getting to acknowledging their strengths, as well.	Cultural responsiveness
P4	And in that way, we further identified minority students to make sure that they're not overlooked	Marginalization
P5	So I work with the elementary school population. And in the nine schools, some schools do have more students that are identified because some of the schools are probably, for lack of a better term, a little bit more middle class with a different parent population and different socioeconomics.	Socioeconomic status
P6	And those questionnaires were only going home in English. So we weren't getting them back.	Whiteness as a proprietary advantage
P7	They might need an environment that is more calming and conducive to someone who might not want to speak out in front of a whole class, you might have students that need to show their work in different ways.	Equity

Once I coded the a priori codes, I used a pivot table to display the frequency of each a priori code in the data. The a priori frequency table allowed me to determine with a priori codes were more prevalent in the data than others. To make the a priori frequency table more accessible, I generated a pie chart derived from the data. Figure 1 displays the percentage of frequency for each a priori code identified.

Figure 1

A Priori Coding Using Critical Race Theory



I continued the content qualitative analysis process through transitioning from the deductive strategy of a priori coding to the inductive approach of open descriptive coding. After a priori codes were assigned to transcript text excerpts, I used the inductive process of open descriptive coding to analyze and identify additional codes that emerged from the raw data, independent of the conceptual framework and a priori codes assigned (Given, 2008). During Round 1 of open descriptive coding, I interpreted the participants' meaning of their responses and developed and assigned codes without regard to the conceptual framework. This process is the continuation of the disassembly of the data (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). Table 7 demonstrates a sampling of the text excerpts and assigned Round 1 open descriptive codes by Participant.

Table 7

Sample of Text Excerpts Using Round 1 Descriptive Coding

Participant	Interview text excerpt	Round 1 descriptive coding
P1	...anybody can refer a student so you know, bus driver, I have students self-refer, parents, of course, and teachers, anybody that's in contact with that student can make a referral."	Multiple referral sources
P2	So I think the structure that's in place, is not always engaging for diverse populations of students. And is not always aligned with students in their racial identity development, which I think also can contribute to decreased engagement.	Awareness of the problem
P3	That definitely was a push around increasing identification of gifted English learners	Cultural shifts
P4	I think that's why and education, our job is to recognize the differences but also celebrate the differences so that they don't eliminate you from being a part of the greater.	Moral obligation
P5	where I'm trying to get them to see, now, these strategies are good for everybody, not just your pullout group.	Talent development
P6	So our English language learners, they are provided additional points, two extra points for being English language learners.	Knowledge of GT identification best practices
P7	I definitely have done that. In the past I, I have definitely advocated for students who people would not normally think of as gifted. I've advocated for two of my autism students before to be tested for gifted. push to help identify students that may be marginalized.	Advocacy

Reassembling and Reducing

Next, I conducted Round 2 of open descriptive coding, where I examined the data for possible patterns between a priori codes and Round 1 open descriptive codes to identify emergent patterns and commonalities. I logically grouped and then collapsed the Round 1 codes by commonalities to identify broader codes. This process is the second round of open descriptive coding and initiates the reassembly and reducing of the data (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). During this stage, select constant comparative analysis principals were applied to reduce the data, as described by Fram (2013) and Glaser and

Strauss (1967). I looked for similarities and discrepancies within the data set from each interview and then across interview data sets to look for commonalities to filter the data into categories (see Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Table 8 demonstrates the emergent commonalities and patterns within Round 1 open descriptive coding and the collapse into Round 2 open descriptive coding.

Table 8

Round 1 to Round 2 Open Coding and Descriptive Codes

Round 1 open codes	Round 2 open codes
Asset-Based Mindset Awareness of Bias (implicit or explicit) Consideration/extra points for marginalized populations Demonstration of learning in native language Differentiation Early intervention GT data analysis Inter-subgroup comparison Knowledge of CLED student characteristics Knowledge of GT Characteristics Parent involvement/awareness Multi-point criteria Multiple opportunities for screening Multiple referral sources Nonverbal assessment Professional development: CLED students Professional Development: GT Education Programming first Talent development Universal screening	Description of school and classroom-based practices
Knowledge of the students' homelife Knowledge of students' culture Knowledge of CLED student characteristics	Awareness and perspective of students' culture and social economic status
Advocacy Cultural shifts Intentionality Awareness of the problem Administrative vision	Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes
Flexible Gifted and Talented policies	Gifted and Talented Policy

To further demonstrate the process of reassembly of unitized data (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018) into broader Round 2 codes, Table 9 presents a sampling of transcript text excerpts by participant and their association to Round 2 of open descriptive codes.

Table 9

Sample of Text Excerpts Using Round 2 Codes

Participant	Interview text excerpt	2nd round coding
P1	When teachers, especially k through grade three, are struggling with behaviors in the classroom, I tried to step in and say, "Are we sure we're not talking about a gifted student who's acting out for other reasons?"	Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes
P2	…and that plan B process includes a rubric that provides additional points for students who come from a marginalized population.	Description of school and classroom-based practices
P3	We happen to have a clear administrative policy that outlines our screening and identification process, and there's accountability.	Gifted and Talented Policy
P4	Whatever they bring to the table, I will take it on and celebrate it, but I need you to learn these things.	Awareness and perspective of students' culture and social economic status
P5	I'm working hard to have the teachers all have the same training. So, no matter what school they're at, the teachers are trained the same, and we want all of the children to be exposed to higher levels of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.	Professional Development: Gifted and Talented
P6	Lots of teacher education starts in the summer before students even come in. We have our teachers do kind of a round-robin with each of the specialists, including the Gifted and Talented Coach and Emergent Bilingual Coach.	Professional Development: CLED
P7	So, I would say within the past five years, there's really been more of a push to help identify students that may be marginalized.	Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes

Table 10 reflects the pivot table data between a priori codes and Round 2 codes and the count of transcript text excerpts by a priori code. I recognized the frequency of a priori codes and aligned Round 2 codes with the pivot table created using the information

from the Excel spreadsheet. The information presented in Table 10 supported the organization and content of the study's findings.

Table 10

A Priori Codes to Round 2 Coding

A priori codes to Round 2 coding	Count of interview data text excerpts
Educational best practices	294
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
Gifted and talented policy	
CLED professional development	
Gifted and talented professional development	
Culturally responsiveness	80
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
Gifted and talented policy	
CLED professional development	
Gifted and talented professional development	
Equity	176
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
Gifted and talented policy	
CLED professional development	
Gifted and talented professional development	
Educational Marginalization	106
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
Gifted and talented policy	
CLED professional development	
Gifted and talented professional development	
Socio-economic status	28
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
CLED professional development	
Structural and Systemic Racism	41
Awareness and Perspective of Students' Culture and SES	
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	
CLED professional development	
Whiteness and proprietary advantage	6
Description of School and Classroom-based Practices	
CLED professional development	

I then collapsed the Round 2 open descriptive codes into categories based on similarities. The process of collapsing Round 2 open descriptive codes into categories is the continuation of the reassembling (Yin, 2018), reducing (Krippendorff, 2019), and constant comparative analysis (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I analyzed the association between the a priori codes and Round 1 and 2 open descriptive codes and identified emergent associations and patterns. I used the pivot table function in the Excel spreadsheet to create tables that allowed me to see and interpret the association between and within a priori coding and open descriptive coding. I focused on the observable patterns within and between a priori and open descriptive coding, allowing for logical associations between and within data sets to emerge. I then used the identified associations to group the data into four categories. Table 11 presents the Round 2 open descriptive coding and associated categories.

Table 11

Sample of Open Codes Assigned to Categories

Round 2 open descriptive coding	Category
Awareness and perspective of students' culture and SES	Awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students
Description of school and classroom-based practices	Implementation and monitoring of GT school and classroom-based best practices
Gifted and Talented Policy Leadership vision, disposition, and attributes	Progressive Leadership V/D for Inclusive GT Programs that yields policy change
CLED professional development Gifted and talented professional development	Ongoing professional development related to equity-focused GT identification and instructional practices

Inferring and Concluding

The pivot tables generated from the coding data in the spreadsheet helped me to identify emergent patterns in the data, which were classified as categories. The categories

were then developed into themes through thematic analysis, a process that Stemler (2001) described as identifying associations and patterns within and across the data and interpreting them to address the research questions. I refined the category titles to be reflective of the research questions and to develop an overarching theme for each category. The themes derived from the data were written to explicitly respond to the research questions. Four themes emerged from the data. Table 12 reflects the association between the categories and themes.

Table 12

Category Association to Themes

Category	Theme
Awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students	Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students.
Implementation and monitoring of GT school and classroom-based best practices	Elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.
Progressive Leadership V/D for Inclusive GT Programs that yields policy change	Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions.
Ongoing professional development related to equity-focused GT identification and instructional practices	Elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in GT programs.

I took a critical race theorist's approach (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017) to develop the research and interview questions, as they relate to systemic inequities in education, specifically in GT education, that impede achievement and talent recognition of marginalized groups (see Daftary, 2018). I then used the lens of CRT to analyze the data as described through the deductive process of a priori coding

(see Saunders et al., 2018; Stemler, 2001). I then conducted two rounds of open descriptive coding, an inductive process independent of the conceptual framework, to interpret the meaning of participants' interview question responses (see Given, 2008). This study is strengthened using both deductive and inductive coding, which demonstrates data triangulation (see Flick et al., 2004). I then analyzed the associations between and within a priori and open descriptive coding and noted congruence between the deductive and inductive data sets, strengthening the credibility and content validity of the study (see Billups, 2021; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 1999; Rossiter, 2008).

Connections to the CRT are explicitly made throughout the study's results, findings, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. The results were reported in an easily accessible format suitable for general readers (Allen, 2017; Given, 2008; & Krippendorff, 2019). This process of presenting the data is described by Yin (2018) as concluding and by Krippendorff (2019) as narrating. The next section begins the process of concluding and narrating as described by Krippendorff (2019) and Yin (2018) through a presentation of the results of the study.

Results

The problem that this study addressed was the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs nationwide. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the representative recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. I sought to identify what elementary school administrators attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs and what they describe as

best practices to attain equitable recognition. Elementary school administrators from school districts and schools that demonstrate equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs were interviewed for the study. The findings of this study may inform educators and researchers of information to consider achieving equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs.

I interviewed seven elementary educators who served in schools or districts that demonstrated equitable CLED student recognition per the study's participant inclusion criterion. Participants self-selected into the study, and participant school and district data were cross-referenced with data from the NAGC State of the States Report (Rinn et al., 2022) and NCES (De Brey et al., 2021) to ensure that participants met the study criteria. The research questions were:

- RQ 1: To what do elementary school administrators serving in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs in their schools?
- RQ 2: What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?

An interview protocol (Billups, 2021; Morris, 2015) guided the interview process. Questions 1 through 13 of the interview protocol were guided by RQ 1. Interview questions 14 through 18 were guided by RQ 2.

Two themes arose from each research question, for a total of four themes. The themes encapsulate what elementary school administrators attribute to their success in the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT programs. The themes derived from RQ 1:

1. Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions.
2. Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students.

Two themes derived from RQ 2:

1. Elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.
2. Elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in GT programs.

Table 13 depicts the alignment between the research questions and themes. In Chapter 4, I explore these themes in detail.

Table 13

Research Questions to Theme Alignment

Research Questions (RQ)	Themes
To what do elementary school administrators serving in exemplar schools in the United States attribute the equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in Gifted and Talented Programs in their schools?	Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions.
	Elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students.
What do elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States describe as best practices to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT programs?	Elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.
	Elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in GT programs.

Theme 1

Theme 1 was that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions. Theme 1 emerged from the participants' description of specific mindsets and actions of the school leader that stem from overarching school visions of serving all students equitably, with a targeted intention to serve marginalized populations. This targeted intentionality described by all participants was to afford educational attainment and positive outcomes for marginalized populations comparable to the majority population. All participants attribute an equity-focused administrative vision, an awareness and understanding of the problem of the

underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, partnerships and collaborative efforts, and school and district cultural shifts to their success in attaining the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT programs.

All participants share that an equity-focused administrative vision was fundamental to attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Moreover, participants regard an equity-focused administrative vision as essential to providing the care and support necessary to increase opportunity, educational attainment, and overall positive outcomes for marginalized students.

Participant 4 elaborated on the importance of an equity-focused administrative vision in serving a diverse student population. This elementary school administrator acknowledges that not all students benefit from the same experiences, opportunities, and resources and, as a result, are inherently at an educational disadvantage. However, through an equity-focused vision, this elementary administrator challenges themselves and their staff to support marginalized student populations to overcome these barriers and place them on equal footing as their majority counterparts. With this equity-based vision at the forefront, Participant 4 reflects on their practice and holds themselves and their staff accountable for implementing systems and structures to maximize potential and outcomes for CLED student populations. Participant 4 also attributes an overarching district-level vision of equity that has helped to shape their equity-focused vision and mindset. This elementary administrator shared,

> And so, we're all running toward the same goal, but they (marginalized groups) are always behind us, right? So, how do you move them forward in this line and

> help them? How do you scaffold them to that next level so that they can be their best? Our district has done that for years, so I think: What do I need to do to get everyone on the same playing field and show that everybody's loved? Everybody sees what's going on! So, what can we do? We implement systems to make sure you can compete with the person who's sitting next to you in a fair way, so you don't feel like you're behind.

Like Participant 4, Participant 7 communicated intentionality from the district level regarding specific actions taken to address inequities across the district stemming from an overarching equity-focused administrative vision. Participant 7 informed that the district recognized the need for an Equity Office to guide the district in realizing this equity-focused administrative vision. In response to how the district Equity Office has worked to actualize this equity-focused administrative vision and address inequities across the district, Participant 7 informed,

> We now have a set course and a path. And they (the district) have a clear vision of what they want the county to look like. We have a 5-year plan. We're now in year three of it. So, I think by the time we hit 2025, we'll see more of those gaps (inequities in achievement and opportunity) closing.

Additionally, Participant 7 described the creation of a district Equity Office as an indicator of an equity-focused administrative vision prescribed by district leadership as a response to pervasive inequities once found in the district. Participant 7 shared, "Over the past several years, they have brought in an Equity Office because the disparities between the two sides of our county were just increasing, not only academically, but behaviorally

also, as far as violence is concerned." The designation of an Equity Office demonstrates a clear vision for equity communicated from the organization's district-level leadership to the school level.

Participant 6 also shared the importance of communicating an equity-focused administrative vision from district and school leadership. They recommended that school leaders "just have clear messaging for their staff that they want it to be an inclusive environment, and they want all students to be represented in all programs."

Similar to Participants 4 and 6, Participant 3 described an equity-focused administrative vision in which the school and community work to remove those barriers that may impede the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 3 acknowledges the challenges that CLED students face from socioeconomic disadvantage. However, they demonstrate an equity-focused administrative vision and leadership disposition by holding schools and communities accountable for mitigating inequities that can constrain the achievement of marginalized populations. Participant 3 added,

> So, I believe if you're coming from a household with limited resources, and that's not always just financial, but that's also human resources, that really can limit your access to multiple opportunities. This includes access to libraries, access to book ownership, and access to learning from adults who have sophisticated language. So, I believe that your family's financial situation can hinder, but it doesn't have to hinder. I think that's where wraparound services, the school, the community, the community at large, kind of come in and lift up those populations.

Participant 3 emphasized the importance of an equity-focused vision to address inequities that result from socio-economic disadvantage. They further demonstrated an equity-focused administrative vision and leadership disposition by referencing implications for overall societal well-being. Participant 3 underscored the importance of cultivating a diverse talent pool for a progressive future society. Participant 5 added, "I think it's critical for our future workforce for us to foster and identify GT students from all different diverse backgrounds because they're going to be the future problem solvers."

As noted in Theme 1, elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions. Participants described equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions as key attributes of their success in attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. However, participants indicate that school leaders must acknowledge and own the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs to actualize this equity-focused administrative vision for equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

In discussing the district-wide mandate of 45 hours of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) professional development for teachers, Participant 1 revealed that awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs are critical to shift to a more equitable and culturally responsive mindset. Participant 1 revealed that district leadership, recognizing the need for more awareness and ownership of the problem, outlined CLD training as mandatory

for all staff members. This mandate is an example of a deliberate effort to increase awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT problem, resulting from a district-wide equity-focused vision. Participant 1 explained how the district handbook was rewritten as a result of the mandate and how the district mandated CLD classes have increased awareness of the problem. They shared,

> Our state also has required everybody to get a 45-hour CLD training before they can renew a teaching license. This is our district policy, and I don't know how much I can even take credit for it. A colleague and I basically rewrote the district handbook to include the district policy. These CLD classes are promoted with teachers to help raise awareness of where students are coming from and being aware of how much culture, economic status, and language can really play a role in that. And I think that has helped some because I'm getting less and less pushback from teachers or administrators

Participant 7 also noted that the awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs led to school stakeholder advocacy for more equitable practices district-wide and more inclusive and equitable GT programs. This elementary school administrator informed,

> A lot of teachers, a lot of parents, a lot of community members, were noticing that our area of the county really lacked recognition in gifted programs. Also, even going further beyond elementary in what we call IB international baccalaureate programs in middle school and advanced placement within High School, our side of the county was really lacking recognition in those areas.

Participants 1 and 7 informed that administrative awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs serve as catalysts for positive change; a shift in mindset and practice required to actualize an equity-focused administrative vision and related leadership dispositions. Regarding the change in mindset of teachers and administrators due to a newfound awareness and ownership of the problem, Participant 1 informed,

> I'm getting less and less pushback from teachers or administrators when I have a student who perhaps couldn't read. And they would just say, "This student can't possibly be gifted." They now understand that giftedness does not necessarily mean reading well all the time.

Participant 1 also spoke of cultural shifts, shifts in mindset and practice, in their district that resulted from a new awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 1 cited professional development on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse student populations, prescribed by school leadership as a response to the disproportionate recognition of CLED students in GT programs, as an impetus for positive change. Participant 7 also described how the awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs led to cultural shifts in their district that resulted in the revision of the GT identification process to be more inclusive.

> So, I have been in my current school district for 13 years, and there has been a noticeable shift within the past five years. It was very apparent in our county. There are two different sides of our county. And it was very inequitable; in one

> area of our district and the other area where I work, the ratio of gifted students was just not where it should have been on our side of the county. So, I would say within the past five years, there's really been more of a push to help identify students that may be marginalized. I know some of the identifiers have been tweaked a little over that time period, just so more students are able to have the opportunity to be a part of the gifted program.

Participant 5 added to the conversation about cultural shifts in schools and school districts that stem from an awareness of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 5 added,

> In one of the schools that is one of our lowest in terms of socio-economic status, teachers are really banding together, and they're the ones that were self-identifying and then asking for students to be tested. I think they're seeing past the socioeconomics and really honoring students as thinkers.

Participant 1 extended Participant 5's idea of this cultural shift regarding the changing perceptions of what constitutes giftedness. They shared,

> So, we've tried implementing different trainings--really short and sweet ones, on what a gifted student can look like. We all recognize the giftedness in the one student who scores at the 99th percentile on everything and needs more work to stay motivated. But we are trying to change that culture to recognize, especially our culturally and linguistically diverse students, they look different on paper than they do, you know, than other students. So, getting them to recognize that has been a huge culture shift--seeing that giftedness comes in all shapes and sizes.

Participant 3 noted another cultural shift resulting from equity-focused vision and leadership dispositions. They described a shift in focus from district leadership as a response to changes in student demographic data in their district, an intentional leadership action to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. They added,

> We have always been a majority-minority school district, even though those demographics are changing significantly. Now, we have more Latin-X/Hispanic families at quickly increasing rates. So, the conversation has changed about ensuring equitable African American recognition; it shifted to really making sure that we are identifying our multilingual English learners.

Participant 3 also informed those collaborative partnerships with professionals across the district's various offices, a result of the overarching equity-focused administrative vision and cultural shifts, have yielded more inclusive and equitable GT programs. Participant 7 attributed these strategic collaborative efforts and partnerships with experts across the district as a deliberate leadership action to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 3 informed,

> Since I have been in my position, which is nearly two decades, we have been very inclusive of our twice-exceptional and English language learners, strategically looking to ensure that those students are not left out. That means strategic partnerships with the Multi-Lingual Learner Office, strategic partnerships with the Special Education Office, and strategic partnerships with the Office of School

> Psychology. So those are all very intentional strategic actions in order to make sure we're not just inclusive, but we are equitable.

Participant 5 also underscored intentional collaboration and partnership as a driver of the cultural shift required to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 5 cited the intentional collaboration of teachers as a catalyst for a change in mindset, which they refer to as a "Culture of Can Do." Participant 5 reflected on the importance of collaboration within schools to promote the cultural shift needed to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs, and credits strong, equity-oriented leadership. They added,

> The third school is doing a really good job because the teachers are also much more collaborative in nature. So, I would say, the collaboration of teachers really does help, because then there becomes a culture of "Can Do." Our students can do this. So, I think it was strong leadership at this campus that led to a focus on collaboration might be what's making the difference.

Participant 2 also elaborated on the concept of collaboration and partnership as a product of an equity-focused approach to leadership that evolved from an overarching administrative vision. The collaboration and partnership between the professionals that they described provided an awareness of the homelives of students in the community, which guides their thinking in terms of what students need to be successful. Participant 2 shared,

> I'm over our Student Services team at my school. So, we meet weekly with the counselors, the social worker, the mental health clinician, just some of the people

> who are more out in the community a little bit more and have more of a finger on the pulse of what's going on in the neighborhoods and what our kids are going through.

Participants informed that attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs results from leading with equity at the forefront. However, participants also revealed that working in opposition to the inequitable systems and structures embedded in the educational system is paramount to actualizing this equity-focused administrative vision.

Participants 2 and 4 lifted the idea that inequitable systems and structures rooted in our educational system can undermine an equity-focused administrative vision. Such ideas are aligned with this study's conceptual framework, CRT. Participant 2 informed,

> There's just so many historical systems in place that impact the state of education today. And so much of education was completely designed for that middle-of-the-road majority student. And that is just not who we are servicing anymore. That is not really what school is about anymore. Those aren't our kids. But that's the system that we're working within. The structure that's in place is not always engaging for diverse populations of students. It is not always aligned with students in their racial identity development, which I think can also contribute to decreased engagement. So, it's important for schools to be culturally responsive and culturally sustaining in order to maintain the engagement of students. Because when we fail to do that, we see these achievement gaps. And we see students who are not achieving at the level they could achieve, which limits their options in life

> and their opportunities to pursue their happiness. I think that that it's important that we recognize that those systems have been in place to keep people down, to keep folks down in marginalized populations.

Participant 4 further elaborated on systemic and structural inequities in education by challenging school leaders to promote inclusive and equitable school environments through implementing equitable systems and structures that disrupt inequity, a fundamental concept of the CRT. They highlighted the importance of embracing and celebrating differences and establishing support systems for marginalized students. Emphasizing the need for equity-minded administrators to combat the inequitable systems and structures that serve to limit the potential and success of marginalized populations, Participant 4 added,

> I think that's why in education, our job is to not only recognize the differences but also celebrate the differences so that they don't eliminate you from being a part of the majority. I think as elementary principals and teachers, our job is to say, "Okay, you can't speak English now, can you? But you do speak Portuguese. Okay, here's the thing we're going to put into place to really help make you successful." So, the differences are not seen as a hindrance, but rather, a challenge. You do whatever you can do to help them become successful. Those are the things we need to put in place. Because all of it (culture, language, socio-economic status, and race) affects greatly, but the question is: *How much do you want to allow it to affect, and what system are you going to put in place to limit it?*

Participants 2 and 4 charge school leaders with the task of recognizing and calling out systemic and structural inequities and implementing disruptive counter systems and structures to promote a more equitable school environment, contributing to GT education programs that are equitable and more representative of diverse student populations.

Theme 1 was that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions. Elementary school administrators cited communication of the equity-focused vision, awareness, and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, cultural shifts, and strategic collaboration and partnerships as requisite leadership dispositions to achieve equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. According to the elementary school administrators, equity-focused vision and leadership dispositions are central to attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs and, on a broader scale, serving all students in their care. I will explore theme 2, elementary school administrators attribute the equitable and representative recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students, in the next section.

Theme 2

Theme 2 was that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students. Theme 2 was grounded in participant input regarding knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge of students'

homelife. Participants communicated that knowledge of the students' backgrounds and home lives is important to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

All participants communicated that awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives attributed to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 2 framed the need for elementary school administrators and staff to understand students' cultural backgrounds and home lives to serve them best and recognize and capitalize on their gifts and talents. Moreover, Participant 2 directly connected this knowledge and understanding of students' cultural background and home lives with positive student outcomes and educational attainment. They shared,

> And how many great stories start with somebody saying a teacher saw something in me, you know? I had bad grades. I missed school. I came from this situation, but my teacher saw something in me, and I think that's what we try to make sure that we're doing, and that's why it's important that we actually know the kids on our campus because we don't want to miss a kid with potential because we don't know our kids.

Participant 1 added to the conversation by referring to the cultural and home lives of the rural community they serve. They elaborated on the agricultural background of the school community and how their awareness and understanding of the community influence how they communicate and their responsiveness to the needs of CLED students. Participant 1 informed,

> With agriculture, you know it's all about the farm. It's not necessarily about whether or not you're going to pass that math test on Monday because we've got

> to get the hay in or whatever. So, the cultural piece of home is very important. And I think it's when I'm talking to families that it's also important to be aware of where they're coming from.

Participant 1 also added,

> So much of the culture and background of a student impacts their learning and how it is perceived at home. We have quite a few Native American students living on a reservation and many Hispanic students. We are very rural. So, we have different cultures coming into play, and each has their perception of the value of education and what authority looks like in their homes. So, to me, the home piece is crucial to know regarding whether a student is going to strive to be at the top of the class because that may not be what their culture values. Or, they may not have the background knowledge to pursue some of those things. Sometimes, even if there's an interest or an ability to achieve at high levels, there's no background knowledge or access to information.

Participant 2 extended Participant 1's message regarding the importance of knowing students' cultural backgrounds and home lives. Participant 2 communicated that awareness and knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives, combined with teachers' knowledge, can lead to fruitful conversations regarding meeting the needs of students, particularly those marginalized. They shared, "So just having that knowledge of your kids and your teachers and having those conversations with folks to get those kids in the right place."

Participant 2 reiterated the significance of this awareness and knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and homelives. They note that having this understanding is essential to serving CLED students and is a constant conversation topic with teachers and staff. Participant 2 communicated,

> Those conversations continue to happen in planning meetings for our gifted and talented teachers. We make sure that we're acknowledging those students' culture, what's important to them, and how they will navigate the world. And, you know, the different challenges they will also face.

Participant 3 extended Participant 2's view of how a better awareness and understanding of students' homelives is essential, especially in framing teachers' thinking through a more asset-based perspective regarding CLED students. They contended that having this awareness of a student's home life, hobbies, and interests may yield new insight into innate talents and gifts. They then connected this knowledge to talent recognition and how it could inform teacher input during the GT identification process. Participant 3 described how this newfound insight into the talents and gifts of CLED students challenges the deficit mindsets of some teachers. Participant 3 elaborated,

> The teachers sometimes come from a deficit perspective, and that's only how they see students. And they're not acknowledging or seeing their areas of strength, especially if those strengths are not necessarily in reading, science, or social studies. So maybe the strength is something in the arts, maybe it's just innovation, maybe they're a great computer programmer. They may do great things at home, and the teacher never knows about it. And so, really getting to know the students

> and their interests will help us with some insights. Getting to acknowledge their strengths will also help.

Like Participant 3, Participant 1 contributed to the discussion of how students' cultural background and home life shape their innate gifts and talents. They established a clear relationship between the awareness and knowledge of a student's cultural background, home life, and GT education, specifically highlighting talent recognition and GT identification. Participant 3 concluded by providing a rationale for an asset-based GT identification process where this awareness and knowledge of the student's cultural background and home life can lead to talent recognition and, subsequently, GT identification. Participant 1 shared,

> We try to incorporate and think about how a student might be really knowledgeable in an area of strength. So, for example, this may include considering their knowledge about agriculture or nature, or, you know, biology. If they're a socioeconomically disadvantaged kid, those students from here are really knowledgeable about biology, nature, and agriculture. And what do they know there? How do they problem-solve in that particular area? And how can they apply that knowledge instead of looking at just that standardized math score? So, we are really trying to look at their background and use that information and let them shine in that area of strength. Similar to how we GT program for a student in an area of strength, I would look for GT identification information within an area of strength.

Participants also acknowledged how this awareness and knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and homelives benefit CLED parental engagement and involvement in the GT identification process. Participant 2 informed that this awareness and knowledge of families' cultural backgrounds and home lives afford more parental input, which provides a better understanding of the student's potential and the likelihood of success in advanced courses. Participant 2 shared,

> Most of our families here have been here for years after years. So, we know families, and we know kids really well. This allows us to think about how students and families answer their questions, the type of questions that they ask, the vocabulary that they use, and the insights that they have. We then can have a conversation about a student and choose to put that student in an advanced course, just based on the potential we see in that child and the information provided by the family.

Some participants acknowledged the challenges that awareness and knowledge of families' cultural backgrounds and home lives bring in terms of providing a community of care and support for diverse populations to respond to their needs adequately.

Participant 6 shared a challenge in responding to the needs of CLED student populations and families based on awareness of the students' cultural backgrounds and home lives. They described how the awareness and knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives reveal an opportunity to serve their school population better. Participant 5's school staff meets this challenge by using this awareness and knowledge

of students' cultural backgrounds and homelives to ensure that all families know the benefits and importance of GT identification and programming.

> We have district-wide parent meetings on GT education, but at our school, we hold separate meetings for parents because we're the northernmost school in our district, and some of our families don't even have reliable transportation. So, we hold local meetings on our campus, and we'll have a couple of people go to the first district meeting and get the information the district provides. And then we'll turn-key it around at our campus to our families.

By knowing and understanding students' cultural backgrounds and home lives, school leaders can implement systems and structures to ensure that CLED families are aware of the GT identification process and the benefits of GT programming. This strategy that Participant 5 shared regarding the GT identification process and benefits of GT programming may lead to CLED family advocacy regarding equitable recognition and an overall sense of belonging in a school community. Participant 4 also shared a challenge in meeting the needs of a diverse student population and school community and reflects on continuous improvement and the importance of a growth mindset when serving a diverse school community. Participant 4 shared,

> We have so many different cultures and types of families here, though. We have almost 15. So, you must be sensitive to the clientele to ensure that you include them. I had a parent who I think got upset because I hadn't included them. We didn't recognize Autism Month, and the parent called us out on it and challenged

> us. I mean, you're trying to be inclusive of all, and that is difficult but important. I can say just keep working at it to try to make it better each year.

Participant 4 expressed the need for a school community that is inclusive of all. They emphasized the importance of being sensitive to the needs of the various stakeholders that encompass the school community and revealed that, at times, feels as though they do not live up to the standard they have set for themselves and the school. However, a commitment to continuous improvement and a growth mindset are the lenses through which they view these missteps. Participant 4 emphasized that the awareness and knowledge of the needs of CLED families promote constant reflection on how to best serve a diverse school community for an equity-minded school administrator.

Participant 5 also shared a challenge in combating the biases of some staff members that emerge from negative perceptions of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives. The awareness of the challenges that CLED student populations face may benefit school leaders and staff in being more responsive to their needs. Still, Participant 5 warns that this awareness of the challenges may lead to bias and stereotypes regarding CLED student achievement and academic potential. They believe that some teachers don't perceive African American students as intellectuals capable of high levels of achievement based on negative stereotypes regarding their cultural backgrounds and home lives. Participant 5 recognized that there is work to be done to change leaders' and teachers' mindsets to use the awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives to better respond to their needs instead of perceiving such as challenges that cannot be overcome.

> This is very sensitive, but maybe there's a perception sometimes that African American students are not scholarly. Seeing all students as scholars and taking away the external looks of a student is something that I think is probably something that needs to be worked on in my community. So, that's something that I would look at--really seeing all of our students as scholars, and not having that unconscious bias towards a student because of their race, or even gender.

They reiterated that they believe the bias and stereotypes that may stem from an awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives is a systemic problem. They informed,

"Even for students that are not GT identified, it is important to see all populations of students as scholars. I do feel like that's a problem systemically." Participant 5 revealed that they believe the misconception of CLED students being unscholarly stems from the biases and stereotypes generated from an awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and home lives and is a systemic inequity in education. Participant 5's disclosure of systemic inequity aligns with the conceptual framework of this study, the CRT.

The responses that Participant 3 provided also demonstrated an alignment with this study's conceptual framework, CRT, revealing challenges that school leaders face in responding to CLED students' needs that result from an awareness of their cultural background and home lives. They elaborated on how aspects of student identity can intersect and compound disadvantage, a foundational underpinning of CRT. Participant 3 acknowledged that educators must consider how these factors of students' identity overlap and increase disadvantage. Participant 3 also noted that some aspects of

intersectionality may not be apparent to educators, so there is no complete awareness of all factors that may intersect. They revealed,

> They (diverse backgrounds, race, and socioeconomic status) intersect. They absolutely do, particularly in our school district. They intersect, and we see that intersectionality all the time. And so, with the intersectionality that we know about, you must think about how it could impact them in a more negative way. I think intersectionality can increase the negative impact.

Participant 3's discussion of intersectionality is aligned with the conceptual framework of this student, CRT. Intersectionality is a fundamental underpinning of CRT and is important to consider when examining issues that undermine equity. Participant 3 summed up the discussion of the various factors of a student's cultural background and home life that may intersect to increase disadvantage with a charge to school communities to implement systems and structures to minimize its influence on positive student outcomes. Participant 3 stated,

> There are so many variables. You can have students that are low socioeconomic, English language learners, and living in shared housing. And, you know, they have no vehicle or computer. So those are more challenges. So, the more challenges a family or a child faces, the more there's to overcome. With structures in place to ensure equity, we can help overcome some of those. We may not be able to overcome all of those barriers, but as a school system and a community at large, it's our moral responsibility to try to mitigate them.

Participant 3 summarized how the intersection of all aspects of student identity, including cultural backgrounds and home lives, challenges school leaders to be responsive to the needs of a diverse student population. All participants stressed that having an awareness of cultural backgrounds and home lives is attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs and, generally, educational attainment and positive outcomes for all students. The consensus is that despite race, culture, and socioeconomic factors, equity-minded school leaders are responsive to the needs of diverse learners. Through an awareness of students' cultural and home lives, school leaders are able to better develop systems and structures that provide access, opportunity, and resources to marginalized populations. Theme 2 explores the awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students as an attribute to equitable inclusion of CLED students, as described by participants. The following section examines Theme 3, which is that elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Theme 3

Theme 3 was that elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. Theme 3 emerged from the participants' discussion of equitable assessment and evaluation practices for GT identification, classroom, and school-based practices for cultivating talent, monitoring tools, and strategies for equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT programs.

There is consensus among all participants regarding the importance of equitable GT identification strategies. Participants cited these equitable GT identification strategies as contributing factors to their success in attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. All participants noted the preponderant influence that universal screening for GT identification has in diversifying their respective GT education programs to equitable recognition of CLED students.

Participant 3 cited research that identifies universal screening as a primary driver of equitable CLED student recognition in GT programs. Participant 3 informed, "In reading up on equity and gifted programming, one of the first things you'll come across is the need for universal screening." In providing recommendations for additional practices to ensure equitable CLED recognition in GT programs, Participant 5 echoed Participant 3's message regarding universal screening, stating, "Well, I would definitely say, test all students at whatever grade level. So, test all students."

Participant 1 described their district's universal screening process and noted that students are referred for screening based on their academic performance, but all students are screened in second and sixth grade, regardless of academic achievement or other factors. They shared, "So, for any student that has been referred for outstanding academic achievement, I will use the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) to screen, and then we universally screen every second grader and every sixth grader in our district every year."

Participant 4 also described their district's use of a universal screener for all second-grade students. They related the concept of a universal screening test to Tier-One instruction--high quality, research-based, and prescribed to all students. They added, "So

everyone takes the initial assessment; you could think of it as Tier-One. Everyone has a chance to take this test. And then from there, we glean which students in second grade should have further testing." Participant 2 also shared that their district employs universal screening for all second graders. They contributed, "So, GT identification is determined through screening. In second grade, there's a screening process for all students." Participant 7 reiterated universal screening as a district practice for all second graders. They shared, "Now, in October, we do CogAT testing with second graders to see if they have proficient scores, which would make it necessary to do further testing with those students." All participants described the best practice of universal screening as integral to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT programs.

Participant 6 contributed to the conversation regarding universal screening by rationalizing using a universal screener in kindergarten. They shared,

> In kindergarten, our students are not identified as GT but are identified for the talent pool program. We use a talent pool program until those kindergarteners go through the identification process in second grade. Initially, we found that a lot of our recognition of kindergarteners in the talent pool was not from our low socioeconomic populations and not from minority students but from nominations and referrals from parents who were more informed and involved in the school system. Therefore, we would catch more of the majority-population students. So, we started a universal screener in kindergarten so that all students have the opportunity to get identified for the talent pool program.

Participant 6 shared an example of how school administrators recognized inequitable recognition in their GT program and addressed it by implementing a new universal screening system for kindergarten. Participants described universal screening as contributing to their equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs and reiterated the need for a multi-point criteria system for GT identification.

Participant 1 shared an experience that underscores the need for multi-point criteria and incorporating other measures to avoid overreliance on achievement scores for GT identification. They shared,

> And so, we will pull up our data and look at numbers, discuss where we are struggling, and how to help reach some of those other students. The district GT Liaison will share other testing materials with us. For example, two years ago, I had a student who we knew was gifted. We just could not get a test score to prove it. And so, she was able to come in with some other assessments and other things to look at, where we were able to qualify this student.

Participant 1 described how using multi-point criteria in the GT identification process supports the equitable GT identification of CLED students. They added,

> Because my younger students, a lot of times, have not had the exposure. Also, our groups that are underrepresented typically do not necessarily perform academically. So, I use that general intellectual ability and do that with the involvement of a committee.

Regarding the concept of a multi-point criteria system, Participant 2 revealed that their district employs a plan A and a plan B structure for GT identification. They informed,

"For the gifted identification process, as I said, it's kind of that plan A or plan B, and that plan B can sometimes give other students an opportunity who might not qualify just based on what comes out on paper." Much like Participant 1, Participant 2 described how employing a multi-point criteria system increases the opportunity for CLED student GT identification, contributing to equitable CLED recognition in their GT programs.

Participant 3 also confirmed using a multi-point criteria system in their district. Regarding their GT identification process, they add, "It's a multicriteria. I believe it's a balance of quantitative and qualitative data." Participant 3 elaborated on the multi-point criteria system employed in their district and how the multi-point criteria system promotes inclusive recognition in GT programs, providing a distinct pathway to GT identification and special considerations for multilingual learners and twice exceptional learners. They shared,

> We also factor in achievement data and a behavioral checklist of gifted characteristics. We also review report card grades. For our twice exceptional learners, we look at all the data available in their psychological assessment and educational testing. We also allow student work samples to be used in our twice exceptional and multilingual learners screening for GT identification. For multilingual learners, we look at Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) data and the U.S. entry date. Those are all factors.

Participant 3 listed a litany of assessments and measures that compose their district's multi-point identification system. However, Participant 4 described a different approach. They stated,

> Every school in my district has a psychologist assigned to them. They come in and then give a second test to students who pass the initial screener. Our psychologist meets with the kids and gives the second test. The test results then determine whether or not they are gifted or not based on standards for giftedness revealed in the second test.

Participant 4 added that their iteration of a multi-point criteria system, consisting of two screeners, lacks parent and teacher nominations, referrals, and checklists. Participant 4 believes that including qualitative data, such as teacher and parent checklists, may invite personal opinions that cloud the GT identification process and, essentially, introduce bias. Justifying their district's approach to a multi-point criteria system, they informed,

> I mean, a student could be gifted but just could be bored, so they don't perform. And then you got some kids that make straight A's who are not necessarily gifted either. They just may be really good at recalling and telling the teacher what they want to hear. Let's just be real--elementary school is very subjective. A lot of times, I'm trying to move us away from being subjective.

Like Participant 4, Participant 7 introduced another layer to the discussion of multi-point criteria systems contributing to equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. They added,

> Let's say you have a kid who maybe gets only 7 out of 15 identifiers (on the GT identification evaluation), and he needed eight to qualify. However, on the performance task, he did something absolutely incredible. Then, it's up to the team to see if we move forward with the next piece of testing.

Participant 7 informed that their district's multi-point criteria system considers student work samples, noting performance tasks. They shared that these performance tasks may reveal giftedness, talent, and potential, which may lead to additional screening, regardless of the student's performance on the initial GT identification screener.

Participant 5 also described a multi-point criteria screener as a practice employed in their district. They shared,

> The screener is multi-tiered. We are not looking at achievement scores because the students are so young, which I think is a good thing anyway. Regarding the point system, the weight of the teacher recommendation is not very high. So, the screener is really the main item that is used.

Participant 5 described a multi-point criteria screener that incorporates teacher recommendations and referrals but is not over-encumbered by them, aligning with Participant 4's rationale for excluding teacher and parent recommendations in their district's GT identification process. Both participants communicated a reliance on the quantitative data those cognitive assessments, such as the CogAT, provide. Regarding the initial screener, some participants described using a nonverbal assessment and assessments provided in the student's dominant language as an initial cognitive assessment. Participant 3 shared,

> Also, after the research about nonverbal assessments in the early 2000s, there was a definite push around increasing the identification of gifted English learners. So, our district has always been at the forefront of ensuring that we're not only inclusive of, but we have equitable recognition of our historically underrepresented populations.

Participant 3 explained how using a nonverbal assessment for a GT identification initial screener benefits the GT identification of multilingual learners. They then identified the use of nonverbal assessments in their district as a contributing factor to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT program. Participant 6 added that their district acknowledged the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and prescribed both nonverbal and dominant language screeners to address the problem. They shared,

> Our district did see it as a problem. Three years ago, we went to a test where the students could test in their dominant language. So, the test is provided in English and Spanish. It is our screener. We also went with a screener that's all visual--no words. So, there is no language barrier for students accessing the screener. Then, they're administered by teachers who give the students directions in English and Spanish.

Participant 4 described the use of a nonverbal GT identification screener as a means to remove bias from the GT identification process. They shared an experience in which they went into a classroom to support administering the nonverbal screener and how this experience shaped their understanding of its importance. They revealed,

> I worked with a few classes to help the kids through the process. When you look at these screeners, it's not language. It's like a shapes relationship kind of thing--which shape goes with what, and what shape goes with this. So, this isn't a culturally biased situation because the screener does not have words that kids have never seen because it does not use words. Its shapes and relationships, you know what I mean?

Participant 5 shared Participant 4's insights into the nonverbal GT screener. They stated,

> The screener is a digital assessment, and it has three different parts to it. And it's really a lot of spatial reasoning and critical thinking. It's nonlinguistic. So, there's no words that they're having to look at. So, it's all based on a series of pictures.

In describing their district's GT identification process, Participant 5 also shared,

> I really feel the nonlinguistic is important. And because it takes language out of it, which is important due to our high English language learner population.

Participant 1 summarized participants' input regarding nonverbal and dominant language assessments as strategies for increasing CLED student access to GT identification screeners. They recognized how language and language development contribute to how CLED students demonstrate learning. They shared,

> We're very aware of language and language development and how to ensure that if a student is culturally or linguistically diverse, they can show what they know in their home language and culture.

Participants described nonverbal and dominant language assessments as a strategy for increasing CLED student access to GT identification. Participants also highlighted

multiple opportunities for screening as a best practice to encourage equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Most participants indicated that providing multiple opportunities for screening promotes equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 3 stated, "Opportunities for screening are offered more than once. So often we say, identify early and often." Participant 1 also acknowledged multiple screening opportunities as a strategy to increase the recognition of CLED students in GT programs. They shared,

> But we try to pay close attention to those kids who are coming in, and we screen regularly. I think our second and sixth-grade screeners are valuable in catching kids. "Oh, you missed the first go-round? We'll catch you the next time."

Participant 5 reflected on a school they support. They detailed how this school is located in a low socioeconomic part of the district. Participant 5 described how the school staff requests additional GT screening opportunities for students who display GT characteristics, academic achievement, or potential to make strides in increasing CLED recognition in GT education programs despite the challenges.

> And in the nine schools, some schools do have more students identified because some are probably, for lack of a better term, a little bit more middle class with a different parent population and socioeconomics. But this year, one of the schools was doing a lot of requesting students be tested again. And that really did help. So, teachers were identifying students, and then this particular school I'm thinking about was one of the lower socioeconomic areas.

Participant 6 recounted that in their experience serving CLED populations, they witnessed how multiple GT screening opportunities led to the GT identification of students not identified during the first and subsequent screenings. They shared,

> I've seen students in that time who were referred or screened in second grade, and they were tested, but they were not identified. And then in third grade, we're testing them again because they've been parent-referred or teacher-referred. And they're not getting identified. And then, by fourth grade, we're finally getting them identified.

Participant 6 also highlighted another strategy other participants described as a best practice to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs, which is multiple referral sources. They spoke of teacher and parent nominations that prompt additional GT identification screening during grade years when students are not traditionally screened. They informed, "And then in third grade, we're testing them again because they've been parent-referred or teacher-referred." Most participants cited this aspect of multiple referral sources in their discussion of best practices to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Participant 1 informed, "Anybody can refer a student--a bus driver, students can self-refer, parents, of course, and teachers, anybody that's in contact with that student can make a referral." Participant 2 also spoke of multiple referral sources, citing,

> And there's also a referral process for students who, you know, they can be referred by their teacher or guidance counselor or a parent. These students are

> then screened through the school psychologist to determine if they are eligible for a gifted education plan (EP).

According to participants, multiple referral sources allow the people who know the student best to advocate on their behalf. In discussing factors that could hinder the GT identification process, Participant 3 spoke of the importance of multiple referral sources to support the GT identification process of multilingual learners and twice-exceptional students.

> A school system can hinder identification by limiting the referral process to parent or teacher-only referrals. An example is when we test all of our first graders, we receive a file with all their cognitive ability and demographic data. And it includes whether or not the student has an IEP or 504. So, we always identify twice-exceptional students from the universal testing pool of students.

Similar to other participants, Participant 3 also revealed that school stakeholders who recognize gifts, talents, and potential in a particular student can refer that student for GT screening. Expanding this idea, they described why this multiple referral process is integral to the GT identification process, particularly for CLED students. Participant 3 explained,

> In addition to that, parents, teachers, special educators, and psychologists can also nominate students because we can't always rely solely on parent or teacher nominations. Our families are extremely busy, potentially working multiple jobs, and may be a language barrier. They potentially may not have access to how to go through the referral process.

Participant 3 noted the limited time and barriers that teachers and parents of CLED students may have in advocating for a GT referral, and in essence, they rationalized the need for multiple referral sources for marginalized populations. Participant 6 also provided a case for multiple referral sources. They reasoned,

> We have tried and true data like the CogAT test and Achievement Improvement Monitoring System (aimswebPLUS). These indicators speak more to what a student can do in those areas. Then, depending on the teacher, if you get four or five students who have been referred and you have four or five lengthy nomination packets to fill out, you may not be giving the best examples of the gifted characteristics or potential that you might see in a student.

Participant 2 suggested, "Make the referral process super easy and supportive because I know some districts, you know, a teacher refers a student, and they've got 12 pages of paperwork to fill out."

Participants 2, 3, and 6 justified using multiple referral sources to solicit information from a diverse set of school stakeholders and to distribute the responsibility of the referral nomination process equally. Most participants referenced multiple referral sources as a best practice to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Most participants lifted the idea of tapping into student potential as a primary driver for equitable CLED recognition in their GT programs. Participant 1 and 3 identified using cognitive assessments and other factors for GT screening as measures of student potential. Participant 3 shared,

> I believe the cognitive ability test absolutely targets potential, but so do the teacher checklists we use. It's based on Joseph Renzulli's work from the University of Connecticut, the grandfather of gifted education. We look at academics, but we also look at task commitment. And we look at creativity. And it's really hard to quantify creativity, although there are assessments that assess creative thinking. And I do know some districts use it. We don't have the resources to factor that in. But I believe both of those are huge indicators of potential.

Participant 1 added,

> I've had principals ask, "This student only scored at the 75th percentile on this cognitive assessment, so why are we considering them for GT?" I responded that we've got to look at all those other pieces and realize that this is not just a test score. It's a way to demonstrate thinking, and it's a measure of potential. So, we want to push those kids to meet their potential and tap into that potential.

Participants 1 and 3 described measures of potential as equivalent to academic achievement indicators in the GT identification process. In recognizing potential as a critical instrument of talent and giftedness, participants also reflected on key classroom and school-based practices for cultivating talent to maximize student potential in talent acquisition and development.

Most participants provided insight regarding talent development in describing classroom and school-based practices for equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participant 6 spoke of their school implementing what is referred to as a

"talent pool" for kindergarten through second grade. Participant 6 described a talent pool screener administered to kindergarten students to identify students with potential. Identified students are placed in the talent pool, which serves to cultivate talent, increasing the likelihood of GT identification in second grade. Participant 6 stated, "We do a talent pool until they go through the GT identification process in second grade." Participant 2 reflected on talent development and described the importance of a classroom environment to cultivate talent in students with potential. They shared,

> It says the classroom environment is really important. The opportunities for collaborative learning, project-based learning, and exposure to higher-order questioning are important. It's about that magic teacher, that firm, demanding, loving teacher who knows you can do it. It's about high expectations. It's a lot about the environment.

Participant 4 shared their experience working at the middle school level as an example of how school administrators respond to concerning data regarding the underrecognition of CLED students in high-level mathematics classes in high school. They described a program in which students identified as having high potential had access to two periods of math instruction to cultivate talent and stimulate acceleration in high school mathematics. This experience that Participant 4 shared emphasized intentional preparation for middle school students transitioning to high school. However, there are implications for practice at the elementary school level regarding talent development, content frontloading, and acceleration. Participant 4 shared,

> I was working in middle school, and because there was an underrecognition of minorities in high school math classes. Kids identified for the program were doing well but needed that extra boost in the seventh and eighth grades. So, we created the schedule so they would have two class periods of math in seventh grade. That way, students received the foundational skills they needed and access to Algebra. And so, when you went to eighth grade, you had two periods of math, one in Geometry and one for additional support. The goal was by the time the students completed middle school, they had already received Algebra I and Geometry. When they move into high school, they can make it to Calculus because we provided you with this support in middle school. We targeted minorities for this program based on the data. We wanted to ensure they'd be represented in those high-level math classes in high school.

Now, as a school administrator at a culturally and socioeconomically diverse elementary school, Participant 4 introduced what they learned at the middle school level regarding talent development. They shared,

> In supporting all students and gifted programming, we have something called frontloading in elementary school; we will provide tutoring for students in Math, English Language Arts, and other skills that they've not been exposed to so that they're better prepared. So, when they get to a skill in class, they've seen it before.

Most participants identified the concept of "GT programming first" as relating to talent development. GT programming first refers to providing students with GT learning

opportunities without having the GT label. Aligning with Participant 6's discussion of talent pools to develop talent at the primary level, participants described GT programming first as a talent development tool for students who demonstrate potential for giftedness. According to participants, GT programming first cultivates talent in students with potential and increases the likelihood of GT identification for CLED students.

Participant 1 shared that they encourage teachers to provide GT programming for students with potential before they are GT-identified. They explained further,

> I envision having my entire GT identification caseload look more like a Response to Intervention (RTI) process. I encourage teachers to program first with or without the label, give the students what they need, and then move forward. It'd be nice to have that formal RTI process in place. It's not there yet, but we are moving in that direction.

Participant 1 grounded the idea of GT programming first in differentiated instruction. They make a case for providing GT programming to students who demonstrate talent and potential, with or without a formal GT identification. They then connect this idea to the Response to Intervention (RTI) process many schools use to support struggling learners. They envision using a similar process to promote talent development for equitable GT identification. Participants also warned of the consequences of a student with high potential not receiving the instruction, experiences, and opportunities associated with GT programming. Participant 1 informed their staff,

> When you have a student that you are unsure if they are gifted, they could use the programming. Consider two questions: What is the harm in identifying a student? What is the harm in not identifying a student?

Participant 2 added to the conversation of GT programming first, noting,

> So, at my school, for example, we need more gifted students to fill an entire section. So, we add those students that we deemed to be advanced. And we have created a rubric to determine who else goes into those courses.

Participant 2 spoke about placing students with identified potential who are not identified as GT in classes to receive GT programming. To sum up the conversation regarding GT programming first, Participant 2 shared this anecdote,

> I brought my daughter to school here. I put her in the advanced class in fourth grade, and she didn't really have a lot of business being in that class. She was slightly above average on her test scores. Academically, she did not belong in that class with those students. After two years with those kids, she belongs with those kids now. When those test results came out at the end of this year, she was right up there with those kids. It just says a lot about what we can do for all kids. I feel like crying. It was eye-opening for me to see my privileged, White middle-class child, who has resources and books at home, grow so much just by being in that class with those students. There was so much untapped potential---more than I even realized. This made me realize that we have kids living in awful situations who face real challenges, and who knows what they could do and what they could be if they had more opportunities?

Participant 2 reflected on GT programming first regarding their daughter's experiences in school. They stated that due to race and socioeconomic status, their daughter was afforded experiences, opportunities, and resources that marginalized groups are often not. However, their daughter demonstrated significant academic growth only when she was placed in classes with academically superior students, and Participant 2 credited the opportunities and experiences that GT programming offers. Participants acknowledged that providing GT programming before an actual GT identification can develop talent in students with identified potential. Participants also identified GT data analysis as a best practice to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Some participants revealed that GT data analysis allows them to determine how marginalized student groups perform and plan a response to address the needs outlined in the data. Participants also indicated that analysis of CLED student recognition in their GT education programs sparks conversation, reflection, and action to promote equity in their respective GT programs. Participant 2 shared, "It shows us where to shine the flashlight." They also expressed,

> We have student populations that we keep a very close eye on their achievement and their progress, such as our African American students and our students with disabilities. So, we have regular data chats with our teachers about how those students perform compared to their peers. We keep a close watch on that.

Participant 6 also disclosed how their leadership team monitors the GT program participation data, revealing areas for improvement and spurring thoughtful reflection on the barriers that impede CLED recognition in their GT program. When asked about

strategies that their team uses to attain equitable recognition in their GT program, they suggested,

> Monitor your percentages. When we came to our campus, our multilingual students were only about 23% of our identified gifted and talented students, which didn't make sense for our demographic on campus. But monitoring things like that and looking at our process to find the disconnect. Why aren't those students getting identified? So, we monitor our data and look at the percentages of how students are represented in that programming and set a benchmark. We would like our GT program to mirror what our student demographic is. So, we've grown from 23% multilingual students. Now we're at about 75%. Our fifth-grade students who left this past year pulled up that average for us. So, it's something you must be mindful of and watch for. You have to identify the barriers.

Participant 3 described a district-level data review to determine district-wide recognition percentages of CLED students participating in GT programs. The district-level review serves as a mechanism for school leadership to review the data again, specifically targeting multilingual learners to find students that may have been overlooked during GT identification screening. They shared,

> Then, three times a year, a pretty detailed report is run to analyze it to determine equitable recognition at least three times a year; it takes time to break everything down. But it's looking at it from a whole district perspective, then from different subgroup perspectives. And then taking and looking at schools with lower

> enrollment or higher English learner populations to see and then going back and reviewing data to see if we overlooked anyone.

Participant 3 also described how GT data analysis serves as an additional pathway for GT identification of CLED students and elaborates on the role of data triangulation in this process. They shared,

> So, instead of parents doing the referral or teachers doing the referrals, in many ways, I have all these pieces of data in front of me that make a puzzle. In this case, I get to make the referral. Sometimes, that referral means we need to give the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) to that student, or I need to go and track down that psychological report given last year for the IEP meeting. So, another pathway involves a deep data dive to capture students who are not captured through academic testing, universal screening, or teacher-parent nominations. I dive into whatever data I have available.

Participant 1 added to the conversation regarding GT data analysis and describes a collaborative effort in which a committee of educators' reviews CLED GT recognition, identifies growth areas, and develops action steps for improvement. They described,

> So, we have regular meetings with our district Board of Educational Services (BOES) with all the regional coordinators and directors. We receive additional GT identification training. We look at our data together. So, we will pull up our data, look at the numbers, and discuss where we are struggling and how to help reach some of those other students. The BOES will then share other materials with us to support us.

Participant 1 also described intentional data analysis to identify underrecognized populations, “So we’re consistent, and we’re persistent. And we also try to watch our numbers and ensure that if we’re missing a group, what are we missing? Who is that? Why are we missing them?”

To conclude participants’ insights into the use of GT data analysis as a best practice to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT programs, Participant 6 also described a collaborative student data review. They shared,

> So, at the committee meeting, there’ll be a one-sheeter for each student who’s been through the testing process, and it’ll have no identifying information about the student. It will have if they’re in another program of some sort, their 504 plan, Special Education inclusion, or anything like that. The one-sheeter will have the results of their screener, their CogAT testing if they’ve done any state testing and their universal screener results.

Participant 6 then elaborated on how their team attempts to remove subjectivity from the data review by removing student identifiers. They disclosed,

> I think that not knowing which student we are reviewing helps because sometimes we can get preconceived notions about students, especially if they are students, you may have a lot of interaction with. We can get a preconceived notion but being able to just look at the data and say, like, based on their test scores or their screener or their intelligence testing, and we could just look at the numbers.

Participant 6 alluded to a student data review process focusing on quantitative data to avoid subjectivity. Using an objective data review process in the GT identification

process encourages an asset-based approach grounded in a focus on student strengths, not deficits. Participants also described using an asset-based mindset as a best practice in attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Participant 5 reflected on how their asset-based mindset led to positive student outcomes despite their students' socioeconomic challenges. They shared,

> I worked at a school for 10 years that was the most socioeconomically disadvantaged. I tell people we're not serving our students if we don't have an asset-based mindset and only look at the deficits. At that school, my students did well. Obviously, circumstances influence factors, but you can still move past the barriers.

Participant 5 spoke of a school they support. This school serves a socioeconomically disadvantaged population, yet the staff has made great strides in equitable CLED student recognition in their GT program. Participant 5 also added,

> When you think about more of an asset or a deficit mindset, I think this school really does have that asset-based mindset. Whereas the other two schools in the low socioeconomic area really have a deficit mindset that they see their students with. So, they're seeing all their deficiencies, like all the problems that the kids they perceive our students are bringing with them.

Participant 5 contrasted the asset-based mindset of the staff in servicing socioeconomically disadvantaged students with the more deficit-based mindset of the staff of similar schools. They suggested that the staff's asset-based mindset contributes to successfully attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in the GT program.

Participant 7 added to the conversation about the benefits of an asset-based mindset in supporting CLED students. They state, "Maybe, you know, their writing might not be up to grade level, but verbally, they can express themselves very well." Participant 3 echoes this strength-based approach, emphasizing the harm a deficit mindset can cause. They informed,

> The teachers sometimes come from a deficit perspective, and that's only how they see students. And they're not acknowledging or seeing their areas of strength, especially if they are not necessarily reading, science, or social studies. That is why a child could be overlooked in the GT identification process. Or, it could just be a disability has masked their giftedness, or sometimes their giftedness has masked their disability.

Participant 3 affirmed the importance of an asset-based mindset in supporting diverse student populations, including students who may be twice-exceptional. They informed that a strength-based approach allows talents and gifts to shine through any challenges that a student may face.

To conclude the discussion regarding an asset-based mindset, Participant 6 added,

> I think the biggest barrier with those populations is that it's not the students once they get to us; it's not their capability or anything. It's educating the parents on what resources and programming are available for their students at school.

Participant 6 communicated an asset-based mindset, noting that students from marginalized groups can achieve despite challenging circumstances. They also revealed another challenge in the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs--parent

awareness and involvement. All participants cite CLED parental awareness and involvement in the GT education programs as a challenge and share strategies to address it.

Participant 7 shared, “I think the biggest thing for our county is educating our parents. Our parents don’t have a lot of time to put in, unfortunately, to the education process, just due to work, transportation needs, and all those different things.” They added,

> But we bring parents in as much as possible to explain the GT identification process. We should sit down with them if their child is identified as part of the gifted process to talk through it with them.

Participant 7 spoke of the challenges of the lack of parental awareness and involvement but suggests intentional parental communication regarding GT programming is integral. Participant 1 also cited the lack of parental awareness and involvement in GT programs. They shared,

> Parents are sometimes just not interested in knowing if their student is gifted or not and really don’t even want to go through the process because they do not understand the risks and the things that come if a gifted student is not identified.

Like Participant 7, Participant 1 described intentional parent communication strategies to remedy the lack of parental awareness and involvement. They shared, “I always have a GT class, aka GT 101 parents in the community are invited to learn about the processes and ask questions, even if their students are identified or if they’re just wondering about the process.”

Participant 3 suggested that GT identification screeners require the same communication strategies from school stakeholders that high-stakes standardized tests typically generate. In providing recommendations to school leaders about how to diversify their GT programs, They shared,

> They need to ensure their communication when it's time to test students. They need to ensure they're doing a really good job of communicating with the families that this is an important test. Communicate that students should get a good night's sleep.

Participant 5 echoed this sentiment and shared,

> In my district, there is no prior notification for parents for the second-grade screening. However, I do think it would be valuable. My children were screened for GT identification, and I didn't know about it. I could have prepared my children that morning, presented a positive mindset about the test, and ensured that they got a good night's rest. So, I definitely think prior parental notification of GT screening is really important.

On a related note, Participant 2 also shared,

> But we don't do a good job sharing the GT screening process with the community. We screen all our students, and to my knowledge, there is no communication that screening is upcoming. So, unless your child is identified, you're not going to hear anything about it. And I think we could do a better job of helping the community understand what that process is and learning more about it.

Regarding intentional parent communication regarding the GT screening process, they also added, “I don’t know if communicating about upcoming GT screening would empower the community as a whole, but it could empower some families. And that’s a good enough reason to do anything.”

Adding to the discussion of the importance of communication with parents regarding GT programming, Participant 3 shared their district’s communication strategies. They stated,

> Every identification letter goes home in three languages: English, French, and Spanish. The brochures that go home are also in those same three languages. Our website is set up so parents can access at least half a dozen or more languages to mitigate the language barrier. I have been invited to present to schools, and we always have interpreters at our showcase, both language interpreters and sign interpreters.

Participant 6 shared additional communication strategies,

> So, we’ll do Remind (an electronic communication platform) messages for the district and the local meetings. We have a monthly newsletter that will send information out. When the GT identification window opens, we’ll send Remind messages and emails with reminders about when it’s opening, how, and who they can contact to refer their student for GT testing.

Participant 2 also reiterated the importance of parent communication to stimulate parental awareness and involvement in GT programming. They shared,

> So, at my school, we do a lot of communication and family outreach; we have a robust parent-family engagement plan. We're pretty involved with our staff to ensure we communicate that. Because we're a Title One school, we have a lot of accountability about the communication we share with families about what's happening on our campus.

Participant 4 also noted parent communication as a best practice to foster parent awareness and engagement in GT programming. They shared, "I share via the newsletter. My newsletter has a "Gifted Corner" that's all about GT. We also have a Week at a Glance, which tells what's upcoming, and my parents read it."

To sum up the conversation on CLED parental awareness and involvement in the GT programs, Participants 4 and 7 reflected on gaps in communication resulting in parents being uninformed about GT programming, which limits avenues for parental advocacy. Participant 7 shared,

> If parents had more information and were made aware of things, it definitely would help. Our parents don't know their rights regarding different programs available to their children. And I think we don't do a good enough job as a county and school for trying to inform our parents.

Participant 4 concluded,

> For example, a kid in second grade didn't meet the screening. A parent can return and say, "Can you guys screen him again?" And we do because he just might just make it. But the parent can't advocate for rescreening if they don't know they can.

Participants 4 and 7 described parent communication as an avenue for parent advocacy in GT programming.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Theme 3 revealed that elementary school administrators described several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. Participants attributed these research-based and classroom-based practices to their success in demonstrating equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participants also described essential learning opportunities provided to the school staff in addressing the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in the GT program. The final theme, elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable representative inclusion of CLED students in GT programs, is explored in the following section.

Theme 4

Theme 4 was that elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. In the previous section, participants described several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. Theme 4 surfaced from participant input regarding fostering knowledge of GT CLED student characteristics,

equitable GT identification best practices, and knowledge regarding equity. In this section, participants highlight key equity-focused professional development that yields the implementation of research-based and classroom-based practices requisite to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Participants described professional development that fosters knowledge of CLED student characteristics as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. In providing recommendations for professional development to school administrators, Participant 3 shared,

> So, the first thing I'd say they need to do is be well-versed in the characteristics of gifted learners. They also need to know the diverse characteristics of gifted learners--how gifted English learners may exhibit different characteristics, how gifted African American students show different characteristics, how girls show giftedness versus boys, characteristics of economically disadvantaged, gifted student characteristics, etc.

Later in the conversation, Participant 3 added, "So the profiles of all these different learners are very different." Participant 3 described the need for professional development that provides school administrators and teachers with knowledge of the diverse characteristics of CLED students for equitable GT identification and programming. In describing the professional development topics that they recommends for schools, Participant 5 shared,

> I feel like there's a misunderstanding of what it means to be gifted and all the different characteristics. It's not necessarily the high achiever or the highest

> academically. So, I think sometimes there's a misunderstanding from the teachers on what a diverse gifted student looks like.

Participant 1 also described a need for knowledge regarding GT CLED characteristics. They described professional development as essential to shift the mindsets of staff regarding GT CLED student characteristics. Participant 1 stated,

> Changing the school culture to recognize that our culturally and linguistically diverse students look different on paper than others. So, getting teachers and staff to recognize that has been a huge culture shift. They need to see that giftedness comes in all shapes and sizes.

Participant 3 also acknowledged the need for professional development regarding GT CLED student characteristics. They shared,

> Most people have a little bit of knowledge, or they've heard about gifted students. So, they have a perception of what they think a gifted learner is, but very few know about the characteristics of gifted multilingual and twice-exceptional learners. That seems to be an area that more and more people must learn about.

Participant 7 also noted the need for increased knowledge of GT CLED student characteristics and identifiers. They shared, "I feel our educators need more training and awareness on some of the identifiers of being GT. A lot more training." Participant 6 also suggests professional development on GT CLED student characteristics. When asked what they would suggest to encourage equitable CLED recognition in GT programs, they added,

> More teacher education on identifying students, parent education on identifying those characteristics in their students, and having clear messaging for their staff that we want an inclusive environment and all students to be represented in all programs.

Participant 5 also recommended professional development on recognizing the characteristics of GT CLED students. They shared,

> So, I think that's one of the first things I would do with any teacher I work with. I would explore the characteristics of diverse gifted children. I think that it would be really valuable for all teachers to be aware of the characteristics of gifted and talented students. And that's going to take away some of the bias that we have regarding what we traditionally consider gifted. We often view a child and think, "Well, that's that child's not gifted." But knowing those characteristics would help teachers, families, and even students understand. We may question, "Why is this student like this?" The answer could be that characteristic could be a sign of giftedness, right?

Participant 7 also described the need for professional development regarding GT CLED student characteristics resulting from an increased understanding of how CLED students may demonstrate giftedness. They shared, "Over the years, as an educator, I've seen how the identifiers for gifted have changed. They've offered more kinesthetic, more different types of learning than they did before."

Participant 7 described the need for increased knowledge of the characteristics of GT CLED students, which led to a discussion on how their district outlines professional

development. They also highlighted that GT-identified students are placed into "clusters" with general education students in their district. Teachers of those clustered classes are offered GT professional development to best serve those students. They shared,

> Our county now encourages general education teachers to continue professional development through micro-credentials. That's done through trainers throughout the county. And so, at our school, our principal strongly encourages teachers to get their micro-credentials in GT if they want to serve those students. So, the teachers who have the gifted clusters are the ones who have completed these micro-credentials.

Participant 7 revealed that ongoing GT professional development is highly encouraged by their principal. Much like Participant 7's principal, Participant 4 also demonstrated advocacy for ongoing GT professional development for their staff. When asked about GT professional development, they informed,

> Teachers must take six or seven classes to get a GT endorsement. So, what I've been doing is trying to entice teachers. I offer to pay for it. I want teachers to get their GT endorsement-- it looks good on your resume to do it. But with the GT endorsement, I can also ensure that gifted services are being provided in the general education classroom to all students, not just those who qualify for the GT program. The GT endorsement encourages teachers to "think outside the box" and exposes them to different ways of thinking and teaching. This allows exposure to GT programming for kids who did not qualify for the GT program, which is important.

Participant 4 discussed the benefits of teachers pursuing the district's GT endorsement. In general terms, they described how the GT endorsement improves teaching and learning for all students due to the cluster grouping model implemented at their school, which involves placing groups of GT-identified students in general education classrooms. In cluster grouping, the general education teacher supports GT students through differentiation. In a cluster grouping setting, students who are not GT-identified may receive exposure to learning opportunities and experiences that stem from intentional GT programming. Participant 4 identified the structure cluster grouping as a driver of talent development, a strategy participants described in the previous section as contributing to equitable recognition in GT programs. The cluster grouping model is only possible through the GT programming professional development for all teachers. Participants also described professional development opportunities related to culturally responsive practices and equity as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Participant 2 highlighted the need for systemic professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy. They shared,

> Culturally responsive education is the responsibility of the district. And I think that is done primarily through professional learning now. Now, how much professional learning is happening regarding cultural responsiveness? I would say less than before because of the political climate.

Participant 2 identified the need for professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy but shared that the current political climate has limited its delivery. They also added,

> It is a hostile time for cultural responsiveness, unfortunately. We at the school level have a responsibility to our students and our families, and what we know is real--what we know to be real life for our students despite the political climate at this time.

Participant 1 also described professional development in cultural responsiveness. They shared that their district has embraced cultural responsiveness, mandating Culturally, Linguistically, and Diverse (CLD) systemic professional development for all staff. They shared, "Our state also has required everybody to get a 45-hour CLD training before they can renew a teaching license." In describing the CLD professional development, they shared, "There are CLD classes where we provide to teachers to help raise the awareness of where students are coming from, and being aware of how much culture economic status language can really play a role in that."

Regarding professional development in cultural responsiveness, Participant 3 added,

> I think at the state level, there could be more done around communication of diverse gifted learners. I think there could be a focus on a bigger focus on culturally responsive strategies for working with gifted learners. I believe my district has covered a lot of that, but I do know other school districts around the state that could use that knowledge.

Like Participants 1 and 2, Participant 3 described the need for systemic professional development on cultural responsiveness. They shared that their district provides this training to their staff but acknowledge that other districts could benefit from the knowledge gained from systemic professional development on cultural responsiveness. Participant 2 also shared,

> Cultural responsiveness has always been important to me personally. It is important to share with folks that culturally responsive teaching is good Tier-One instruction. It's not an intervention. It's not a program. It's just good Tier-One instruction. It is what all kids need to achieve.

Participants also shared specific professional development opportunities related to cultural responsiveness and equity as contributing to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Participant 2 describes training that they have provided to staff regarding implicit bias. They shared,

> When I first started as an assistant principal four years ago, I provided professional development to the staff on equity and cultural responsiveness. My first presentation to the faculty was about implicit bias. And folks took a quiz on their own implicit biases. And we talked about why it was so important.

Participant 5 added to the conversation regarding anti-bias training. They described how anti-bias training may be uncomfortable, but it is necessary to expose and move past the biases that may impede an asset-based mindset. Participant 5 shared,

> I do think there needs to be more anti-bias training. There is still some uncomfortableness about anti-bias training in my district. Anti-bias training is especially important for school leaders and teachers. I think anti-bias training would unlock some of the perceptions that teachers might have with their students and with their families. There could be some biases when looking at families. People could think, "Oh, this child is not going to be successful because of his background and family dynamics." So, I do think anti-bias training is needed, even if it is uncomfortable.

Participants 2 and 5 described anti-bias professional development as an essential component of implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. According to participants, anti-bias training promotes self-reflection and awareness of potential biases that may impede an asset-based mindset, a best practice identified by participants as integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Participant 3 also added to the conversation regarding professional development in cultural responsiveness. They mentioned how their district is culturally responsive to multilingual learners and twice-exceptional students. They also revealed the need for professional development regarding gifted Latinx students, the fastest-growing student demographic in their district. They explained,

> So, in terms of culturally responsive, I think our additional review for our twice-exceptional students and English language learners speaks to that. I think there's still a lot to be done around professional development. There's not as much

> research out there about gifted Latinx students, which is the fastest-growing population in our district. I think there's still work to be done from both the experts at the university level that's doing the research, all the way down to the practices that we're doing. There's, there's minimal, concrete research to support these families.

To conclude the conversation on the need for professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, Participant 2 shared,

> So, it's not about being woke. It's good Tier-One instruction. I am trying to convey that to our faculty and staff. We have many people who understand that naturally. But for other folks, it's a little bit heavier of a lift. It's more than "I'm just here to teach fractions." That's just not going to cut it because that's just not reaching everybody. You have to engage in that culturally responsive pedagogy because it's just part of being a good teacher. It's not extra, it's just what it is. It is what you are supposed to do and what we owe our kids.

Participant 2 provided a case for professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, acknowledging that some of their colleagues do not recognize its function and importance, limiting their ability to reach the diverse population of students they serve. Participant 2 also identified culturally responsive pedagogy as Tier-One instruction--high quality, research-based, and prescribed to all students. Most participants identified the need for culturally responsive pedagogy to implement best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs.

Four themes emerged from participant input. Participants attributed the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions and to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students. Participants also described several research-based and classroom-based best practices and sustained and equity-focused professional development to implement the best practices identified. In the next section, I provide evidence of trustworthiness.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This study's methodological design established trustworthiness. As a novice researcher, it is important that I demonstrate the findings of the study as worthy of the attention of education practitioners, researchers, and general audience readers (see Elo et al., 2014; see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the next section, I describe how I assure credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity in the proposed study.

Credibility

As a novice researcher, I relied on the research methods employed in the study to confirm credibility. This study benefitted from prolonged engagement, saturation, member checking, and triangulation of data, all strategies to confirm credibility in qualitative research studies (see Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). According to Creswell (2003) and Toma (2006), credibility is the strength of qualitative research.

The semistructured interviews ranged from 41 minutes to 82 minutes, with an average of 63 minutes. Three interviews were more than 60 minutes, longer than the

projected time initially allotted for the interviews. Once the interview arrived at the 60-minute mark, I reminded participants that they were only asked to participate for 1 hour. However, most participants agreed to continue the interview despite reaching the 60-minute time allotment. The prolonged engagement described was achieved by following the responses of participants with a probe that derived from the initial response. For example, if a participant mentioned the word "differentiation," I then would ask, "What does that differentiation look like for CLED students?" I used response-specific and content-relevant probes, which led to lengthier interviews and generated many phenomenon-relevant codes during qualitative content analysis. Prolonged engagement during the interview process supports credibility (Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014).

Saturation is the most common guiding principle to demonstrating adequacy in qualitative research (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1995; Sandelowski, 1995). The four models of saturation, as outlined by Saunders et al. (2018), are represented throughout the data collection and analysis process of this study. Below, I outline each of the four models and their applicability to this study, demonstrating saturation (see Drisko, 1997, p. 192; see Goulding, 2005; see Morse, 1995; see Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1896).

Theoretical Saturation

The focus of theoretical saturation is the depth of the saturation versus the sample size (Saunders et al., 2018). Theoretical saturation is established in this study through the data generated from seven semistructured interviews. The data yielded 734 study-relevant codes, which were analyzed through the deductive process of a Prior coding (see Stemler,

2001) and then the inductive process of open descriptive coding. The number of codes generated from the semistructured interviews is indicative of depth over breadth that Saunders et al. (2018) references.

Inductive Thematic Saturation

Inductive thematic saturation refers to the identification of new codes and themes that emerge from the raw data set, without regard to a pre-established conceptual framework or theory (Saunders et al., 2018). This study is informed by a conceptual framework, the CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017); however, open descriptive coding was conducted in this study independent of the influence of the conceptual framework. I conducted two rounds open descriptive coding by analyzing transcript text excerpts and generating an appropriate code based on my interpretation of the text from the raw data. The inductive process of open descriptive coding is an iteration of inductive thematic saturation. The study is strengthened by the congruence of a priori coding and open descriptive coding, demonstrating data triangulation (see Flick et al., 2004).

A Priori Thematic Saturation

The goal in establishing a priori thematic saturation is to demonstrate complete representation of a pre-established theory throughout the data set (Saunders et al., 2018). This study was guided by a conceptual framework, CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). In this study, pre-established a priori codes, derived from key principles of the conceptual framework, were assigned to transcript text excerpts. Each a priori code was represented throughout the data set. However, some a

priori codes were more prevalent in the data set than others (see Figure 1), so complete a priori thematic saturation is not evident in this study. The lack of evidence of complete thematic saturation may be due to limitations found in the interview protocol, resulting in potential content validity issues regarding instrumentation (see Rossiter, 2008). The instrumentation used to collect data, the interview protocol, may not have solicited the responses from participants needed to completely represent all aspects of the conceptual framework, CRT, throughout the data set (see Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Saturation

Data saturation refers to "the degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data" (Saunders et al., 2018 p.1896). To reach data saturation, the researcher must interview until a full understanding of the participants' perspective is obtained (Legard et al., 2003). The semistructured interviews were lengthened using spontaneous, study-relevant probes, which prompted the participants to share additional information to better understand their perspectives. The participants responses to the interview questions were replicative, reiterating similar ideas and perspectives regarding the study's purpose, which was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the representative recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Repetition in participant responses suggested saturation was reached, and no new information would emerge (see Grady, 1998). I also used a purposive sampling strategy to increase the likelihood that saturation was reached (Battaglia, 2008; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Saturation is further established from participants' common characteristics, as outlined in the participant criteria. Considering that all participants served in an

exemplar school or district as elementary school administrators, as outlined by the inclusion criteria, they communicated common perspectives, which may have led to the replicative nature of the data collected (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see Grady, 1998; see Legard et al., 2003; see Saunders et al., 2018).

Member checking is another strategy that confirms credibility. This study employed member checking, which involves participants verifying my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions (Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014). I wanted to ensure that my interpretation of the participants' responses is accurate and representative of their perspective. A draft of the research findings was emailed to participants to confirm their accuracy. The final research findings addressed any misunderstandings or inconsistencies in interpreting the responses to the interview questions. Participants reviewed draft research findings to verify that my interpretations were accurate, affording an additional layer of credibility. I received responses from <insert number> participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations.

This study benefitted from data triangulation through the coding process, which further established credibility. I used a spreadsheet to label and organize the coding. I first used a priori coding to infer thematic codes from the conceptual framework, CRT (Stemler, 2001). In the a priori process, I analyzed the interview transcripts to find text excerpts demonstrating alignment with the conceptual framework, CRT. I then conducted an open coding process, where I immersed myself in the data to identify any new codes that emerged (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). I then analyzed the open codes for commonalities and collapsed them into categories. Themes emerged from the categories.

Flick et al. (2004) described triangulation as viewing the research phenomenon from at least two viewpoints. As such, the deductive process of a priori coding and the inductive process of two rounds of open coding are examples of data triangulation. I then compared coding from the deductive and inductive approaches to identify alignment with the conceptual framework, CRT. I also used a coding journal during the coding process to support coding alignment and organization (see Amin et al., 2020; Janesick, 2011; Laine et al., 2007). The next section describes how transferability is evidence of trustworthiness in the study.

Transferability

It is important that this study's findings apply to similar settings, environments, and contexts. Transferability describes the degree to which the findings of a research study can be interpreted in similar settings (Billups, 2021; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative studies, the responsibility of transferability lies on the reader and not the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2021). However, in this study, I further established trustworthiness by demonstrating transferability through the sampling procedures and coding procedures. The sampling procedures targeted elementary educators who serve schools with diverse populations with varied socioeconomic and demographic background (see Battaglia, 2008; see Palinkas et al., 2015; see Vasileiou et al., 2018). Thus, transferability is afforded in school settings with similar diverse populations.

The coding procedures also provided evidence of transferability within the study. During coding, I ensured alignment between the coding and research questions to identify

answers to research questions. Additionally, the interview questions were designed to solicit information from participants that aligns with the research questions (see B. F. Crabtree & Miller, 2022). I also analyzed the data with a critical race theorist lens (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017) ensuring alignment with the conceptual framework, the CRT. I established transferability by communicating attributes and descriptions of school leadership dispositions and best practices that apply to similar diverse school settings, especially those that serve marginalized populations (see Battaglia, 2008; see Palinkas et al., 2015; see Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research demonstrates if a study can be replicated by a different researcher using the same methodology. Dependability is often more associated with quantitative research; however, the rigor in the methodology of the qualitative research process affords a degree of dependability (Toma, 2006). The study findings were strengthened by a rigorous data collection process described in detail, which lends itself to dependability.

I established dependability by using an audit trail. The audit trail thoroughly detailed the methodology of the study to other researchers seeking to replicate the study (Carcary, 2020). Using the coding journal, I recorded the study's methodology (see Carcary, 2020), including the details regarding the naming and renaming of codes, coding and recoding of data, and descriptions of my thinking as I disassembled and reassembled the data (see Krippendorff, 2019; see Yin, 2018). The purpose of the audit trail was to describe the data collection and analysis in such a way that the process may be replicated

by another researcher. However, it is important to be transparent about my thoughts and feelings during the data collection and analysis to provide insight into any decisions that were made during the process (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Reflective journaling was used throughout the data collection process. In the reflective journal, I captured my thoughts and feelings about the data and collection process. I recognize that my personal experiences and background may influence the qualitative study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I used reflective journaling to note my personal connections to the study during the data collection process to bring personal biases to the forefront to mitigate their influence. I also provided a detailed account of the data analysis process in the reflective journal, which often included coding, recoding, and then coding again.

The study also demonstrated dependability through the security protocols that protect confidential information. All documents related to the survey, including interview transcripts, interview recordings, and field notes, are saved in a password-protected file located on a password-protected laptop. All documents will be saved for a period of 5 years and then destroyed, per Walden University policy.

Dependability is also demonstrated through the alignment of the research questions and the data through the lens of the conceptual framework, CRT. The data produced codes that are compatible with the CRT, verifying dependability. The member-checking process described in the previous section also serves to establish dependability, as participants are provided with a draft of the findings of the study to ensure that the interpretation of the data is accurate. Finally, dependability is addressed through

saturation. I established saturation through the combination of aspects of the four models of saturation (see Drisko, 1997, p. 192; see Goulding, 2005; see Morse, 1995; see Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1896). Theoretical saturation is reached due to the depth of the semistructured interviews, which yielded 734 codes, demonstrating depth over breadth of data (see Saunders et al., 2018). Inductive thematic saturation is demonstrated in this study using inductive open descriptive coding independent of the conceptual framework (see Given, 2008), which yielded data consistent with the purpose of the study. I conducted a priori coding (see Stemler, 2001) and demonstrated representation of each a priori code throughout the data, aligning with a priori coding saturation principles (Saunders et al., 2018). Finally, data saturation is established through the lengthy semistructured interview sessions that revealed study-relevant information which revealed data replication within and across participant responses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Grady, 1998; Legard et al., 2003; Saunders et al., 2018), which may have resulted from the purposive sampling technique applied (Battaglia, 2008; Vasileiou et al., 2018). In the following section, I detail confirmability.

Confirmability

Trustworthiness is also assured by confirmability. Confirmability underpins trustworthiness by proving that others may verify the findings (Amankwaa, 2016; Billups, 2021). As mentioned in the previous section, I used an audit trail to provide a thorough account of the data collection process. The audit trail provides researchers seeking to replicate the study with a transparent description of the research steps (Carcary, 2020). Confirmability is also established by reflective journaling. My role as a

researcher requires me to consider how my conscious and unconscious biases may influence the study. I used the reflective journaling process to write out my thoughts and feelings about the data during the data analysis process, with the intent of documenting any bias that I may have and lessening their influence.

Trustworthiness is also strengthened by reflexivity (see Billups, 2021; see Corlett & Mavin, 2018). Reflexivity is described as the acknowledgment of the researcher's position in the research by assessing the researcher's judgments, beliefs, values, and biases (see Billups, 2021; see Corlett & Mavin, 2018). In Chapter 3, I provided a detailed description of my role as the researcher to promote reflexivity. As a novice researcher, I must communicate my position within the research and acknowledge how it can influence the research findings (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018). Reflexivity also allows the researcher to be self-aware of their position within the research and promotes reflection throughout the research process (Billups, 2021; Corlett & Mavin, 2018). In the next section, I detail discrepant data found in the study.

Discrepant Data

I used purposive sampling to identify participants for this study (see Battaglia, 2008; see Vasileiou et al., 2018). Participants were required to meet the selection criteria to participate. Due to the characteristics shared by participants as a result of purposive sampling, many of responses to the interview questions were similar in content and were congruent with the themes of the study. Therefore, there were not discrepant cases identified in this study.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the data collection, data analysis, and coding used to derive the results of this study. Seven participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Battaglia, 2008; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Participants engaged in semistructured interviews with the use of an interview protocol (Billups, 2021; Morris, 2015). A priori codes were identified from the study's conceptual framework, CRT (Stemler, 2001). Text from interview transcripts was labeled with a corresponding a priori code. Then, two rounds of open descriptive coding were conducted (Krippendorff, 2019; Yin, 2018). Ultimately, open descriptive codes were categorized, and I identified emerging themes. I identified a total of four themes. There were two themes aligned with RQ 1 and two themes aligned with RQ 2.

Participants attributed the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions. All participants shared the importance of equity-focused administration vision and leadership dispositions to diversify GT education programs and to promote positive student outcomes for all students (see L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; see Forlin & Howard, 2021; see Voulgarides et al., 2017). Participants referenced key leadership strategies, attributes, and dispositions contributing to their success in attaining equitable recognition in their respective GT programs.

Participants also referenced the importance of communicating this equity-focused vision to all stakeholders. Participants shared awareness and ownership of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs as central to producing

the intentionality required to address the problem. As a product of this awareness and ownership of the problem, participants reported cultural shifts in mindsets and dispositions regarding CLED students and giftedness as vital to attaining equitable recognition of GT students in GT education programs (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Mun et al., 2020; see Postholm, 2019; see Roegman, 2020). Lastly, participants cited collaboration with all stakeholders and strategic partnerships as essential in achieving equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Postholm, 2019; see Roegman, 2020).

Participants attributed the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students. Participants described the need for equity-minded administrators to be aware of the challenges that students' backgrounds and home lives may present that could hinder positive student outcomes and educational attainment (see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). With an understanding of the challenges, participants informed that equity-minded administrators are better positioned to be responsive to the needs of diverse students. Participants shared that this awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students yielded equitable systems and structures that disrupt and dismantle inequities that are inherently embedded in the education system, which aligned with the conceptual framework of the study, the CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017).

Participants also described several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. Participants underscored the value of universal screening for all students as a foundational step in attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participants also cited multi-point criteria (see Morgan, 2020), multiple referral sources, multiple opportunities for screening, and nonverbal assessment as requisite for equitable GT identification processes. Participants described a focus solely on achievement may hinder the GT identification of CLED students (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Morgan, 2020) and informed that measures of potential and talent development structures (see Ford et al., 2021; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020) are critical to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Lastly, participants described sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participants recommended systemic professional development in the areas of CLED GT student characteristics and unconscious bias to attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs (see Ford et al., 2021; see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). Participants also described the importance of professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy as a driver of equitable GT education programs and, more broadly, sound Tier-One instruction (see Amiot et al., 2020; see Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; see Smith, 2021).

The information and recommendations from participants are consistent with what is found in the literature regarding equitable CLED recognition in GT programs.

Participants reaffirmed what is already known about diversifying GT education programs to equitable levels, especially regarding research-based practices and the equity and social justice-based mindsets required for progress. Participants also revealed important information pertinent to GT education programs, and on a broader scope, the education of our most vulnerable populations in general. In the following chapter, I will interpret the findings, describe the limitations, and provide recommendations and implications of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. The study design was basic qualitative as it is the most appropriate approach to better understand the phenomenon of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. The phenomenon of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs occurs naturally in our world; therefore, the basic qualitative design was suitable for obtaining additional knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon (see Given, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Additionally, the study addressed a gap in practice regarding leadership dispositions and best practices required to address the problem of the underrecognition of GLED students in GT programs, as recommended by school administrators who have demonstrated success in this regard.

I chose the CRT as the conceptual framework of this study. According to Daftary (2018), CRT is a natural fit for research that explores historically marginalized populations. Critical race theorists take a systemic view of racism. Critical race theorists recognize racism as deeply embedded in the educational, legal, and business institutions, policies, and practices in the United States (Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Thus, CRT is an appropriate conceptual framework to examine the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs in the United States and served to strengthen the data analysis and interpretation of findings. This study also employed an appreciative inquiry approach in methodology. Developed

by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), appreciative inquiry is an asset-based approach to learning and sharing what organizations do to achieve success. I sought to learn and share from elementary school administrators who have demonstrated equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs, aligning with appreciative inquiry principles. To that end, appreciative inquiry is a relevant approach to studying successful educational institutions and what attributes to their success (see Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Hearn, 2018; Peel, 2021; Zoll et al., 2021). The conceptual framework, CRT, combined with an appreciative inquiry approach employing a basic qualitative methodology, afforded the opportunity to examine how race and inequity influence GT education programs and highlight and share equitable leadership dispositions and practices that yield successful outcomes in attaining equitable CLED student recognition in GT programs.

The findings of this study are consistent with what is found in the literature regarding the implications of CRT and equity in education. Educators and researchers have aligned CRT principles to the education field (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999) to examine inequities that impede educational attainment and achievement for marginalized populations. The purpose of this study is congruent with the goals of CRT in education, that is to unearth systemic racism and inequities prevalent in schools and school districts today (see Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 23-25) and deconstruct them through policy and instructional change (see DeCuir-Gunby, 2020).

The findings of this study reveal how elementary school administrators face the challenges of systemic racism and inequities in schools and overcome them through equity-oriented vision, dispositions, and implementation of counter systems and

structures that yield equitable outcomes. The participants of this study all reveal that an equity-focused administrative vision is attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT programs, consistent with the literature regarding an equity mindset as a critical quality of school leaders (Nadelson et al., 2019; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). Participants shared quotes such as "How do you move them forward in line?" and "We've got to look at all those other pieces and realize that GT identification is not just a test score." Another participant shared, "Historically, our district has been very aware and cognizant of the need to ensure that we're inclusive of historically underrepresented populations."

Additionally, all participants divulged that key equitable GT educational practices attributed to their success in attaining equitable CLED recognition in their respective GT education programs. Participants described practices such as universal GT screening (Morgan, 2020; Plucker & Peters, 2018) and talent development (Ford et al., 2021; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020) contributed to their success in attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. One participant noted, "Well, I would definitely say, test all students at whatever grade level. So, test all students." Another shared, "We do universal screening to screen every second and sixth grader in our district every year." Regarding talent development, a participant shared, "We put students into a talent pool until they go through the identification process in second grade." The key equitable GT educational practices, as described by participants, are consistent with what is found in the literature regarding equitable GT identification and programming practices that are proven to be successful in diversifying GT education

programs to equitable levels (Ford et al., 2021; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020; Plucker & Peters, 2018). The idea of "knowing your students" also appeared throughout the participant responses to the interview questions, as represented by the a priori code cultural responsiveness, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Participants highlighted the importance of awareness of and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and home lives in attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. One participant disclosed, "We make sure that we're acknowledging the students' culture, what's important to them, and how they will navigate the world. And, you know, the different challenges they will face as well." Participants noted the importance of capitalizing on student strengths regarding equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. One participant stated, "Getting to know the students and their interests will help us with some insights. Getting to acknowledge their strengths will also help." Participants also emphasized the importance of knowing the challenges that families may face. Acknowledging the limited resources that families may have access to, participants described strategies to make information regarding GT education more accessible to families who may not have transportation. One participant shared, "We hold local meetings on our campus, and we'll have a couple of people go to the first district meeting and get the information the district provides. And then we'll turn-key it around at our campus to our families." Participants also shared how deficit views of the cultural backgrounds and home lives of marginalized populations held by school staff pose a challenge for equitable recognition. One participant noted, "Seeing all students as

scholars and taking away the external looks of a student is something that I think is probably something that needs to be worked on in my community."

Participants also described sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participants highlighted the need for school staff to be well-versed in the characteristics of GT CLED students. One participant shared,

> They need to know the diverse characteristics of gifted learners--how gifted English learners may exhibit different characteristics, how gifted African American students show different characteristics, how girls show giftedness versus boys, characteristics of economically disadvantaged, gifted student characteristics, etc.

Another participant noted, "They need to see that giftedness comes in all shapes and sizes." Participants also emphasized the need for GT education endorsements for all teachers to maximize student exposure to critical and higher-order thinking. One participant stated, "But with the GT endorsement, I can also ensure that gifted services are being provided in the general education classroom to all students, not just those who qualify for the GT program." Finally, participants describe culturally responsive pedagogy professional development as attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. One participant shared,

> There are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse classes that we provide to teachers to help raise the awareness of where students are coming from, and being

aware of how much culture and economic status language can really play a role in that.

Finally, participants described anti-bias training as a strategy to acquire equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. One participant added, "So, I think anti-bias training is needed, even if it is uncomfortable." All participants attribute equity-focused professional development to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT education programs. In the next section, I detail my interpretation of the findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this basic qualitative study, I sought to share key leadership dispositions and best practices described by school administrators who successfully attain equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. A basic qualitative methodology was combined with appreciative inquiry principles (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Hearn, 2018; Peel, 2021; Zoll et al., 2021) to highlight and share to what participants attribute their success in attaining equity in their respective GT education programs. I also sought a better understanding of the roles of race and socioeconomic status in GT education, particularly in GT identification. To that end, CRT was chosen as the conceptual framework for this study, as it is an appropriate means to examine marginalized populations (see Daftary, 2018). In the next section, I describe findings related to the conceptual framework, CRT.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this basic qualitative study was CRT. Critical race theorists view racism as not individualistic in thought, nature, or action but rather systemic, infiltrating the U.S. legal, business, and educational systems. Researchers have examined disproportionality and inequality in education through the application of CRT principles (see Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Through subgroup comparison, critical race theorists examine outcomes of marginalized populations versus the majority population, bringing race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to the forefront. Through "calling out" inequities, critical race theorists outline specific action steps to remedy the problem and bring about positive change. Through a CRT lens, I sought to "call out" the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs, an example of educational inequity and disproportionality that is well documented in the literature (see Azano et al., 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; Hodges & Gentry, 2021). I also sought to share specific action steps to address the problem from elementary school administrators who have demonstrated success in diversifying their GT education programs to equitable levels (see Lamb et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Examining CRT in relation to the study's findings was key to better understanding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. The four key tenets underpinning CRT (see Bell, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017) are important to this examination. Below, I summarize each of the four tenets and examine the findings of this study in relation to each.

Racism Is Not an Abnormality but Rather the Norm and Prevail

Critical race theorists propose that racism should no longer be viewed as an individualistic attitude, thought, or action but rather systemic and pervasive in all areas of society, including education (see Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999). The concept of systemic racism is supported in this qualitative study as it relates to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Lewis Terman, regarded as the father of GT education, revolutionized the practice of IQ testing to identify giftedness (Beauvais, 2016). Critical race theorists and researchers have noted that traditional means of assessment, including IQ and standardized testing, are void of the cultural responsiveness required to adequately assess giftedness in CLED students (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017) contributing to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. Participants report that IQ tests such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) and Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGat) are widely used in schools today as initial GT screeners. However, participants also universally report that multi-point GT-identification criteria (Morgan, 2020), which include teacher and parent nominations and teacher rating scales, are used as additional data points to screen for giftedness to compensate for any challenges that IQ and standardized testing present in the GT-identification process. However, the reliance on parent and teacher nominations and rating scales is also problematic due to the biases, misconceptions, and stereotypical views sometimes held by educators regarding characteristics of giftedness and CLED students (see James, 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Morgan, 2020; Novak et al., 2020; Reinholz et al., 2020).

The biases, misconceptions, and stereotypical views of giftedness and CLED students often held by educators are evidence of systemic racism and inequity, aligning with critical race theorists' views. Terman, noted as the father of GT education due to popularizing IQ assessments for GT screening, believed that people of color are innately inferior to Whites and, thus, could not possibly be GT (see Sternberg et al., 2021). Terman's promotion of IQ testing supported these views, as people of color and disadvantage often lacked the educational background, experiences, and opportunities to achieve on such assessments (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). As a result, the lack of achievement of CLED students on IQ and standardized assessments is often erroneously cited as evidence of disproportionality in intelligence, with Whites viewed as more intelligent and capable than students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Morgan, 2020; Mun et al., 2020). Moreover, deficit views (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; Michael-Chadwell, 2011; Mun et al., 2020), sometimes held by educators, perpetuate the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs. Deficit views perpetuate the stereotype that CLED students are ill-prepared for standard-based instruction, resulting in students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage receiving remedial classroom instruction, even when there are no data to support this instructional choice. Consequently, instructional opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving are limited for CLED students (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017). The eugenic views of Terman perpetuate the biases, misconceptions,

and stereotypical views that plague the educational system today, especially regarding GT education and CLED students.

Participants' responses support critical race theorists' concept of systemic racism and inequities. The data further emphasized the association between the concept of systemic racism, educational inequities, bias and stereotypes, and participant responses. To view patterns and replication across and within-participant interview data, pivot tables were generated within the electronic spreadsheet that I used to organize the data. There were 26 codes derived from participant responses to the interview questions that were labeled as "implicit or explicit bias," 12 for "stereotypes," and seven for "deficit-based mindset," according to the pivot table. As a response, several participants revealed the need for anti-bias training in schools to dispel deficit views, stereotypes, and cultural misconceptions of CLED students held by some educators. One participant suggested, "I think anti-bias training would unlock some teachers' perceptions of their students and their families. There could be some biases when looking at families." Another added, "My first presentation to the faculty was about implicit bias. And folks took a quiz on their own implicit biases. And we talked about why it was so important." Another participant noted that not all staff members view people of color, particularly African Americans, as "scholarly." They note, "Seeing all students as scholars and taking away the external looks of a student is something that I think is probably something that needs to be worked on in my community." The need described by participants for culturally responsive professional development, particularly in the area of implicit bias, confirms the concept of systemic racism and inequity that critical race theorists cite as an

impediment to the educational attainment opportunity of CLED students and reaffirms what is found in the literature (see James, 2019; see Martin et al., 2017; see Morgan, 2020; see Reinholz et al., 2020). Additionally, participants note that maintaining an asset-based mindset focused on student strengths instead of weaknesses is key to an equitable GT identification process and holistic CLED student achievement. The ideas shared by participants are well represented in the data, as informed by the pivot tables I used to observe patterns and commonalities throughout the data.

Whiteness is Considered a Proprietary Advantage

Critical race theorists view that just by being born white, Whites are inherently afforded educational, economic, and social privilege. As such, "whiteness" is a proprietary advantage over people of color. This qualitative study did not yield sufficient data to support this view held by critical race theorists, based on the information in the electronic spreadsheet and generated pivot tables, which yielded only eight codes labeled as "whiteness as a proprietary advantage." However, participants did share experiences that could be considered examples of "whiteness as a proprietary advantage." One participant noted changes the school district made to address community concerns regarding school zoning that appeared to be segregated. "Over the past several years, they have brought in an Equity Office because the disparities between the two sides of our county were just increasing, not only academically, but behaviorally also, as far as violence is concerned." It can be inferred that this participant described a situation in which the district was divided along socioeconomic and color lines, and as a result, the district took action to examine and address the disparities. Another participant also

described implementing a universal screener for the kindergarten talent pool as a result of recognizing that more informed parents, typically from the majority population, were dominating the nomination process, which yielded inequitable results. They stated, "So, we started a universal screener in kindergarten so that all students have the opportunity to get identified for the talent pool program." These isolated examples that participants describe support the notion of "whiteness as a proprietary advantage" as, in both cases described, the majority population benefitted from the systems in place. However, these administrators described the intentional action steps taken to disrupt these systems of inequity.

An Incremental Approach to Positive Change Will Never Achieve the Results Warranted Regarding Racism

Critical race theorists suggest that immediate and aggressive change is needed to address racism and inequities that are found in the educational system. Participants universally describe the disruption of inequitable systems as integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs, a concept directly related to social justice and equity-focused leadership models described in the literature (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Roegman, 2020; see Stone-Johnson et al., 2021; see Theoharis, 2007). One participant noted, "Because all of it (culture, language, socio-economic status, and race) affects greatly, but the question is: *How much do you want to allow it to affect, and what system are you going to put in place to limit it?"* Another participant shared, "The structure that's in place is not always engaging for diverse populations of students. It is not always aligned with students' racial identity development, which can also

contribute to decreased engagement." Each participant recognized that systems and structures that yield inequities are embedded in the educational systems. Participants attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT education programs to counter systems that disrupt the systems and structures that perpetuate inequity. These counter systems include structures for talent development, recognition of potential and academic achievement, and asset-based GT-identification and programming that capitalize on student strengths and cultural backgrounds, consistent with what is found in the literature (see Ford et al., 2021; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020), that were all well-represented in the data with a total of 60 codes in the electronic spreadsheet labeled as such.

Race is a Social Construct Wielded to Label Marginalized Groups as "Others" to Maintain the Social Hierarchy

The underpinning of race as a social construct is grounded in critical race theorists' belief that the majority population labels people of color as "others" in an effort to maintain social standing and resources(Bell, 1980, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017). This study yielded no specific findings regarding race as a social construct. However, suppose educational opportunity and attainment can be viewed as resources. In that case, it can be suggested that these resources are often withheld from students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage. Participants revealed that quality instruction and classroom environment are integral to talent development, recognition of potential, and GT identification. In a discussion of culturally responsive teaching, a participant noted, "It's not an intervention. It's not a program. It's just good Tier-one instruction. It is what

all kids need to achieve." As the literature suggests, instructional decision-making often favors remediation over acceleration for students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage, limiting their opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (L. M. Crabtree et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017). Quality Tier-one instruction could be considered an example of a resource that may be withheld from students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage, intentionally or unintentionally, limiting opportunities for GT identification and, more broadly, the overall educational achievement and attainment of CLED students.

Findings Related to Emergent Themes

This qualitative study explores what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. Four themes emerged from the data. Each theme details key leadership dispositions and practices that participants found attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT education programs. Each theme represents this study's conceptual framework, CRT, and confirms what was detailed in the literature review. Below, I detail each theme and related findings.

Theme 1

Theme 1 is that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable inclusion of CLED students in GT education programs to progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions. The literature review confirmed the concept of equity-mindedness as an essential disposition of school leaders in diversifying GT education programs to equitable levels and was well-represented in the data. The

findings of this study are congruent with the work of Amiot et al. (2020), Rivera-McCutchen (2021), and Smith (2021) regarding social justice and equity-focused leadership. Participants also demonstrated progressive, equity-focused administrative vision and leadership dispositions in their responses to the interview questions, corroborating what was previously established in the literature.

Social justice and equity-based leadership (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Nadelson et al., 2019; see Roegman, 2020; see Stone-Johnson et al., 2021) are grounded in the idea that social justice and equity are central to core components of leadership -- advocacy, practice, and vision (Theoharis, 2007). Study participants all demonstrated actions and qualities compatible with social justice and equity-inspired leadership, including actively "calling out" the policies, practices, views, and beliefs that perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students and implementing counter-systems and structures to disrupt their influence (Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). In the section that follows, I describe Theme 1 regarding the leadership dispositions and practices encompassing social justice and equity-based school leadership, as described by Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) and Roegman (2020).

Advocacy for Equity. The concept of advocacy as a leadership disposition central to the equitable GT identification of CLED student populations was well represented in the data of this study. Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) inform that equity-minded school leaders act as change agents to advocate for counter-systems and structures that disrupt current practices and policies that have proven to yield inequitable outcomes. This advocacy for equity often involves school leaders collaborating with all

stakeholders to identify, create, and implement equitable counter-systems to the current systems of oppression (see Bell, 1980, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017; see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Mun et al., 2020; see Postholm, 2019; see Roegman, 2020).

Based on the findings of this study, school leaders demonstrate this advocacy for equity through developing and sharing a school vision of equity, communicating an asset-based mindset regarding student achievement and talent, explicit knowledge sharing with stakeholders around equity barriers, and developing and implementing explicit means of dispelling the pervasive bias, stereotypes, and deficit-based perceptions of CLED students and their capabilities. School leaders who have demonstrated success in diversifying their respective GT education programs to equitable levels (see Peters et al., 2019; see Wright et al., 2017; see Yoon & Gentry, 2009) use their equity and morally based values, principles, and influence to shape school culture and advocate achievement for all students (see Nadelson et al., 2019). However, to advocate for equity within GT education programs, school leaders must first demonstrate the ability to frame disparities and take action to limit their influence.

Framing Disparities and Action. Framing disparities and action is a critical attribute of equity-minded leaders, as described by Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) and Roegman (2020). Regarding the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs, participants of this study communicated naming disparities and intentional action to address the problem. Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) informed that equity-based leadership practice involves taking an asset-based stance, focusing on countering and

disrupting the systems and structures that yield inequitable outcomes, and embracing the idea that giftedness is found in every race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background (Rinn et al., 2022). In lieu of a deficit-based mindset, which attributes the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs to negative biases and stereotypes of marginalized populations, equity-minded school leaders seek out inequitable systems, structures, and policies and develop and implement systems and structures to counter them (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014). In this study, participants demonstrate framing disparities and action (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Roegman, 2020) by calling attention to the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and suggesting equitable GT identification and programming strategies, including implementation of systemic and structural means of talent development, acceleration in lieu of remediation, and instructional and interest-based differentiation. Study findings also highlight the need for distributed leadership and collaboration, another critical component of equity-based leadership (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Roegman, 2020).

Distributed Leadership and Collaboration. The distribution of power and collaboration with all stakeholders is inherent to social justice and equity-based leadership. The findings of this study corroborate the notion that distributed leadership and collaboration are critical to achieving equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs, consistent with previous literature on social justice and equity-based school leadership (see Amiot et al., 2020; see Nadelson et al., 2019; see Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; see Smith, 2021). Intentional collaboration with stakeholders,

including students, parents, community members, and district leadership, was described as a strategy that yields successful outcomes in efforts to diversify GT education programs to equitable levels (see Lamb et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Participants collectively suggest that school leaders rely on the knowledge and input of school and district-based specialists in equity, special education, educational psychology, and multilingual learners to address GT identification and programming inequities. The findings of this study reveal that school leaders' collaboration with these stakeholders helps to shape the knowledge and understanding of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and support in developing and implementing systems and structures that yield equitable CLED recognition in GT education programs and on a broader scope, academic achievement and positive outcomes for all students. To determine where barriers to equity in GT education lie, participants of this study also suggest that developing a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement is essential (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Roegman, 2020).

Culture of Inquiry and Continuous Improvement. Seeking out the systems and structures that breed disparity involves data analysis focusing on equitable outcomes for all students. The findings of this study support the need to establish a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement, a facet of social justice and equity-based leadership, as informed by Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) and Roegman (2020). The findings of this study suggest that social justice and equity-minded leaders have demonstrated success in diversifying their GT education programs to equitable levels (see Lamb et al., 2019;

Peters et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017; Yoon & Gentry, 2009) through consistent analysis of subgroup representation and GT identification data to identify and celebrate areas of success and to determine growth areas. Participants describe taking an inquiry-based approach to identify which circumstances, factors, and strategies contribute to success in order to replicate and refine them, aligning with the appreciative inquiry methodological approach found in this study (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Hearn, 2018; Peel, 2021; Zoll et al., 2021). Similarly, participants also describe identified growth areas revealed by the data as an opportunity to determine the origins of the identified problem and brainstorm ways to address them. This continuous improvement cycle is attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in participants' GT education programs, supporting previous literature regarding social justice and equity-based leadership (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; see Roegman, 2020). In the next section, I detail the study's findings regarding theme 2, which is that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students.

Theme 2

Theme 2 is that elementary school administrators attribute the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs to awareness and responsiveness to the needs of CLED students. Theme 2 relates to the concept of cultural responsiveness in education. Participants collectively attributed their success in attaining equitable CLED recognition in their GT education programs to "knowing their students" and being responsive to their needs.

CLED students with high learning potential may not perform as well as their majority population on standardized measures of achievement counterparts due to challenging home lives, limited resources and opportunities, and inferior learning experiences (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). Due to the disadvantage within CLED student populations, participants in this study reveal the need for school leaders to develop and implement wraparound services to support and "lift" marginalized student groups to achievement levels congruent with their majority population counterparts. Study findings are consistent with previous research that centers on social justice and equity-based leadership as asset-focused (see Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014) rather than deficit-focused. In essence, the perspective of social justice and equity-based leaders is that the system is the problem, not the students' cultural backgrounds and home lives. As such, this study's social-justice-inspired and equity-minded participants attribute their success in attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT education programs to an awareness of CLED students' cultural backgrounds and home lives to better respond to their needs. Examples include implementing culturally responsive and socioeconomically sensitive means of delivering information to families, parental involvement in instructional decision-making, and community-based partnerships to provide family resources.

Participants' asset-based perspectives of social justice-inspired leadership and equity-mindedness also reveal school and classroom-based culturally responsive practices they attribute to the equitable CLED recognition in GT education programs. To counter the discrepancies in achievement data of CLED students compared to the majority

populations, participants describe asset-based practices that capitalize on student strengths and talents that are not captured by achievement data (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). Examples include strong Tier-one instruction, talent development structures, culturally relevant instruction that engages all learners, and celebrating cultural differences (Mun et al., 2020). Regarding best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students specific to GT education programs, the findings of this study also reveal several research-based and classroom-based practices that are integral to success, which serves as the basis of Theme 3 of this study.

Theme 3

Theme 3 is elementary school administrators describe several research-based and classroom-based best practices integral to attaining equitable CLED recognition in GT programs. The findings of this study confirm previous research regarding best practices in equitable GT identification and program implementation. The participants of this study cite these practices as integral to attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs.

Comprehensively, the concept of universal screening was well represented in the data and communicated by participants as attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT education programs. Universal screening involves the systemic assessment of all students for giftedness through intelligence testing, such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT 3) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) (see Card & Guiliano, 2016; see Morgan, 2020; see Plucker & Peters, 2018). The

nonverbal components of the CogAT and the NNAT3 provide nonverbal intelligence assessment in reasoning, relationships, and problem-solving in the hopes of reducing the bias that enters the assessment process as a result of a language or verbal battery (see Carman et al., 2020; Naglieri & Ford, 2003). As such, the findings of this study are consistent with the literature regarding the use of universal screenings and nonverbal intelligence assessment to attain equitable CLED recognition in GT education programs (see Morgan, 2020; see Plucker & Peters, 2018; see Rinn et al., 2022).

The use of multi-point criteria was also well-represented in this study's data. Participants described GT-identification processes that rely on IQ assessment, standardized assessment, teacher and parent referrals, and teacher rating scales (Morgan, 2020). The purpose of multi-point criteria is to bring balance to the GT-identification process to avoid an over-reliance on assessment data, which has proven to be historically discriminatory to CLED student populations (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). However, the findings of this study reveal problems embedded in the multi-point criteria process due to the involvement of teacher referrals, which can introduce implicit bias and stereotypical views of teachers regarding CLED and gifted students into the assessment process (see Haller-Gryc, 2022; see Lamparske & Pijanowski, 2022; see Morgan, 2020; see Novak et al., 2020). Moreover, the parent referral process was found by study participants to be flawed, as the parents of CLED students are often uninformed about the referral process and the importance of GT education programs, and as a result, they do not refer. The problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is further

compounded by a parent referral component of multi-point criteria better understood and exploited by the majority population. Study participants suggest that the parent referral process can be complex and presents cultural and language barriers that may inhibit parent referrals of CLED students.

Study findings suggest that talent development is attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs. Talent development is identifying students' innate talents and strengths and capitalizing on them by providing intentional opportunities to develop them (Subotnik et al., 2017). Participants described structures of talent development opportunities for students in their respective schools to increase CLED recognition in GT education programs. Participants also communicated the need to develop knowledge of the interests and abilities of all students to ensure that innate talent is recognized, which is a prerequisite for talent development. The findings of this study support previous literature on talent development (see Gagné, 2015**;** see Subotnik et al., 2017). The findings of this study corroborate talent development theorists' (see Gagné, 2015**;** see Subotnik et al., 2017) assertion that matters of equity in GT education programs can be remedied by structured talent development programs that recognize and capitalize on student potential. Lastly, the study findings revealed the need for sustained equity-based professional development of school staff as integral to developing and implementing the systems and structures described by participants as attributable to equitable CLED recognition in GT education programs.

Theme 4

Theme 4 is that elementary administrators describe sustained and equity-focused professional development as essential to implementing best practices that yield equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. Study participants communicated the need for school staff to receive professional development in CLED student and GT characteristics, culturally responsive education practices, and knowledge of equitable GT identification best practices. Key to the findings on equity-focused professional development is the idea that "giftedness comes in all shapes and sizes," as communicated consistently by all participants.

Collectively, all participants noted that misconceptions, stereotypes, and biases of school staff inhibit the GT identification of CLED students. Participant responses corroborate previous literature findings (see James, 2019; see Martin et al., 2017; Morgan, 2020; Novak et al., 2020; Reinholz et al., 2020) regarding misconceptions, stereotypes, and biases that perpetuate the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs. Consequently, the findings of this study reveal that equity-focused professional development, including anti-bias and unique characteristics of GT CLED student training, is needed to shift the culture of schools to yield a more inclusive and asset-based mindset in school staff. The findings also demonstrated that participants who serve in schools that have yielded equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs have implemented equity-focused professional development to achieve this status. However, participants also described equity-focused professional development as an opportunity to exploit for continuous improvement in

further diversifying their GT educational programs and to spur overall student achievement.

Anti-bias training is represented in the findings of this study as attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs and as an opportunity for continuous improvement. Anti-bias training programs are designed to bring awareness to implicit and explicit biases and to reduce them in an organization's decision-making, practices, and policies (Carter et al., 2020). Anti-biased perspectives are innately linked to the concept of anti-racism (Husband, 2016; Kalin, 2002). Anti-racism is the approach to education that deals with racism head-on to challenge and counter the oppression of marginalized groups (Sapon-Shevin, 2017), a fundamental attribute of the conceptual framework of this study, CRT. Participants described anti-biased training as integral to their success in attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs. Participants also identified anti-biased training as a strategy to spur continuous improvement. The findings of this study support previous literature regarding promoting equity within organizations through anti-biased training (see Carter et al., 2020; see Husband, 2016; see Kalin, 2002; see Sapon-Shevin, 2017).

The findings of this study also confirmed the need for professional development regarding GT characteristics, specifically twice-exceptional and multilingual learners. The equitable GT identification of students with special needs and multilingual learners continues to be a topic of conversation among researchers and educators (see Cheek et al., 2023; Gubbins et al., 2018; Mun et al., 2020). The need for educators to recognize the characteristics of giftedness in special education and multilingual learner populations is

well-represented in the data of this study, with some participants referencing non-traditional means of GT identification to increase the GT recognition of such student populations. Study participants agree that if educators are more equipped to recognize the characteristics of GT learners, specifically within special education and multilingual learner populations, an increase in the GT identification of CLED students will result. In the next section, I detail the limitations of this study.

Limitations of the Study

The basic qualitative design of this study lends itself to limitations. Most evident is the small sample size of this study. Small sample sizes are traditional to qualitative studies (Emmel, 2013); however, the small sample size of this study could lead to criticism regarding validity and saturation. In the hopes of limiting the influence of the small sample size on the study's findings, I adhered to the recommendations of Saunders et al. (2018) regarding the four models of saturation, their principal foci, and how the methodological design of this study achieves each. There was replicability within and across the data based on participants' responses to interview questions, a priori coding was used to establish alignment between data interpretation and the conceptual framework, and descriptive coding was extracted from the raw data (see Drisko, 1997, p. 192; see Goulding, 2005; see Morse, 1995; see Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1896). The limitations of the small sample size are narrowed due to data triangulation as described (Billups, 2021; Elo et al., 2014) and conformity to saturation models (see Saunders et al., 2018).

Researcher bias is also a limitation. As the researcher, I am both an observer and a participant in this study. Naturally, I have my thoughts and perspectives on this study, as I share commonalities with the participants regarding our roles as school administrators and the similar student populations we serve. I am also an Indigenous American from a socioeconomically disadvantaged familial background and, as such, an adult CLED student. However, the intersectionality of my professional role, racial identity, and familial socioeconomic background makes me uniquely positioned to explore the phenomenon of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs through the lens of the conceptual framework, CRT (see Bell, 1980, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017). The researcher's acknowledged identity is invited into qualitative research (see Given, 2008), as the researcher is both an observer and participant. However, to ensure that my interpretation of the data and findings of this study are accurate and not mired by my personal bias, I used reflective journaling as a means to mitigate the influence of my personal background and professional role (see Billups, 2021; see Corlett & Mavin, 2018), with the intent of separating myself from the data collection and interpretation. Additionally, member-checking (see Billups, 2021; see Elo et al., 2014), a method of verifying the researcher's interpretation of the data, was used in this study. Participants were provided with a draft of the findings and were able to confirm or contradict my interpretation. I invited all participants to participate in the member-checking process. I received feedback from three participants. The participants confirmed my interpretation and appreciated the opportunity to review and corroborate the findings.

Recommendations

The problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is well-documented in the literature. Previous research on this topic provides notable strategies to promote equitable GT identification practices but frames the problem as worthy of additional exploration (see Azano et al., 2017; see Ford et al., 2021; see Hodges & Gentry, 2021; see Mun et al., 2020; see Peters et al., 2019; see Wright et al., 2017). This study contributes to the existing literature by examining the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs through the lens of CRT and by highlighting the leadership dispositions and practices of elementary school administrators who were successful in diversifying their GT education programs to equitable levels (see Lamb et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Participants described practices consistent with what is found in the literature regarding effective and equitable GT education identification processes and programming, including universal screening, multi-point criteria, and talent development (see Gagné, 2015; see Morgan, 2020; see Plucker & Peters, 2018; see Rinn et al., 2022; see Subotnik et al., 2017). Based on the findings of this study, I recommend a mixed methods study to research the outcomes of students in school districts that have developed and implemented structured student talent development programs versus districts that have not. The mixed-methods design of this study would allow qualitative data, such as semistructured interviews, to be contrasted with school or district achievement data to afford a level of data triangulation (see Billups, 2021; see Elo et al., 2014) that is absent from this basic qualitative study. This mixed methods comparison

study would provide valuable qualitative and quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of talent development programs in increasing the likelihood of GT-identification of CLED students and, more broadly, overall CLED student achievement. I also recommend additional research on GT identification structures and programming for students with special needs and multilingual learners, which will add to the knowledge base regarding equitable GT education programs. Additionally, I recommend further study into the influence of equity-minded school administrators on student achievement, particularly students of color and socioeconomic disadvantage.

What I found to be most compelling regarding the study's findings is the description of equity-minded leadership dispositions of participants and how they influence decision-making and actions regarding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs. The equity-minded school administrators who participated in this study described key systems and structures developed and implemented to promote equity in student outcomes. A broader, longitudinal study that focuses on the outcomes of a cohort of CLED students as they progress through an equity-minded administrator-led school could provide critical insights into the influence and results of such leadership. Finally, I recommend a qualitative study with GT CLED students as participants to better understand the experiences and perceptions of marginalized GT students who participate in GT education programs. However, such a study would present ethical challenges due to the involvement of children, and researchers would need to demonstrate great care to ensure that no harm will come to the minor participants due to the study.

Implications

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. This study contributes to the existing literature regarding the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and fills a gap in practice regarding the leadership dispositions and practices that elementary school administrators accredit to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their respective GT education programs. Study participants shared analogous practices that promote equitable GT education programs and demonstrated mutual progressive, equity-focused leadership dispositions and mindsets. This study has implications for positive social change as the equitable practices and leadership dispositions described by study participants may inform other school leaders about the leadership actions and mindsets recommended to diversify GT education programs to equitable levels (see Peters et al., 2019; see Wright et al., 2017; see Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

Positive Social Change

This study presents implications for positive social change at the individual, family, and organizational policy levels. Implications for positive social change at the individual level include a greater school administrator awareness of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs as an issue of moral inequity (see Ford & Harmon, 2001, p. 147). Considering school administrators' great decision-making power and influence (see Nadelson et al., 2019), an awareness and

better understanding of the problem may yield opportunities for school principals to yield their influence and power to promote equitable practices and dispositions at the school and district levels.

Implications for positive social change at the family level depend on school administrators' actions as a result of a greater awareness of the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs. The findings of this study demonstrate that parents of CLED students are often uninformed about GT identification processes and the benefits of GT programming, an aspect that perpetuates the problem and impedes the advocacy of CLED parents afforded to parents of the majority population. Equity and social-justice inspired administrators should develop and implement systems and structures to provide culturally responsive communication to CLED student parents regarding the GT identification process and the importance of GT education programs, empowering this population of parents to better advocate for their children.

At the organizational policy level, implications for positive social change involve examining practices that may inhibit CLED student participation in GT education programs. Study participants described the need for school administrators to examine GT participation data by subgroup to seek out inequity and implement strategies to address concerning areas revealed in the data. Study participants revealed the implementation of specific counter-systems that interfere with historically inequitable ones to promote more equitable outcomes for students, aligning with the critical race theorists' idea of seeking out and disrupting inequitable systems and structures (see Bell, 1987; see Crenshaw,

2011; see Delgado et al., 2017) and equity and social justice inspired educational leadership (see Amiot et al., 2020; see Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; see Smith, 2021). At the organizational policy level, continued and sustained professional development on equity and inclusion could be the impetus for positive change. Identifying and examining systemic inequity may yield a revision of organizational policy regarding GT identification and programming through an equity lens to promote positive student outcomes. In the next section, I examine the theoretical implications of this study.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

Study participants communicated a progressive, equity-focused leadership disposition, a recurring theme of this study. It can be inferred that equity and social justice-inspired school leaders must have an understanding that racism is systemic and yields inequitable outcomes for marginalized students. This inference is supported by participants' responses to interview questions, in which they acknowledge systemic inequity and the need to disrupt it with equitable counter-systems, a fundamental component of the conceptual framework of this study, CRT. Participants shared, "Our district has always been at the forefront of ensuring that we're not only inclusive of, but we have equitable recognition of our historically underrepresented populations" and "There's just so many historical systems in place that impact the state of education today. And so much of education was completely designed for that middle-of-the-road majority student."

In summary, this study reaffirms CRT as a proper lens through which to examine marginalized groups (see Daftary, 2018), as study participants noted the systemic

oppression and inequity that gives rise to inequitable outcomes for marginalized groups and indicated counter-systems to disrupt them, aligning with CRT ideology (see Bell, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017). The advancement of the CRT in academia and research is imperative, as matters of race, identity, socioeconomic status, and equity are more relevant than ever (see Hamman-Ortiz & Palmer, 2023; see Irwan et al., 2023; see Lardier et al., 2023). However, CRT opponents misunderstand and intentionally distort the purpose and intention of CRT to support an ill-founded notion that it is divisive and contributes to societal problems instead of remedying them, often for political gain (see Cabrera, 2018; see Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The misplaced political controversy regarding CRT could muddle the perspective of CRT as an appropriate theory to examine inequity and marginalized populations. Critical race theorists should continue to provide counter-narratives (see Bell, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017) to reposition CRT as a tool to solve problems of inequity and oppose its demonization in the media and political landscape.

The methodology of this study is informed by appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Hearn, 2018; Peel, 2021; Zoll et al., 2021) is integrated into this study to support the methodological approach. Appreciative inquiry focuses on learning and sharing about what is done to achieve organizational success. This asset-based approach provides a means to celebrate and share successful approaches to solving a problem with the intent of replication. Traditionally, appreciative inquiry has primarily been used in the business world but has implications for use in education. Organically, schools and districts take an appreciative

inquiry approach to identify and share best practices. The use of appreciative inquiry in the education field continues through implementing a more structured system to "share the good news" to support schools and districts with learning how to solve problems from those who have proven successful. Next, I provide practice recommendations.

Recommendations for Practice

Practice recommendations include implications for equitable GT identification and programming practices. Schools and districts should continue to explore culturally responsive and equity-based alternative methods for GT identification, especially regarding special education and multilingual learner populations. This recommendation aligns with what is found in the literature regarding universal screening, multi-point criteria for GT identification (see Card & Guiliano, 2016; see Morgan, 2020; see Plucker & Peters, 2018), and inequities found in IQ and standardized assessment that suppress GT identification of CLED students (see Ladson-Billings, 1999; see Michael-Chadwell, 2011; see Morgan, 2020; see Mun et al., 2020). One specific recommendation regarding alternative methods for GT identification is school-level local norming of GT identification assessment, affording CLED students to be compared to other students with similar characteristics and circumstances at the school level (see Carman et al., 2020). Additionally, school districts should standardize the practice of administering universal screening more frequently to increase opportunities for GT identification and provide the funding and staff for schools to do so.

Schools and districts should continue to frequently analyze subgroup participation in GT education programs to identify areas of success, replicate and refine them, and

identify growth areas that may be exploited to move closer to equity in CLED student recognition in GT programs. Likewise, schools and districts should formally recognize student potential in conjunction with student performance as determining factors in GT identification and provide talent development programs to develop students' innate gifts and talents (see Gagné, 2015). I also recommend culturally responsive practices to engage CLED parents in conversations about the benefits of GT education and the GT identification process to empower them to advocate for their children.

Regarding school leadership, I recommend coursework in equity and social justice-inspired leadership in school administrator preparation programs. Equity and social justice-inspired leadership coursework would lay the foundation for future school administrators to challenge systems of inequity in their school setting, paving the way for equitable student outcomes. Additionally, I recommend continued professional development in anti-bias, anti-racism (see Carter et al., 2020), and culturally responsive education for school leaders and staff. Finally, we should continue challenging the misconceptions and stereotypes associated with CLED and GT student characteristics through equity-based professional development for all school and district staff.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore to what elementary school administrators in exemplar schools in the United States attribute to the equitable recognition of CLED students in their GT programs. I purposefully chose the word "recognition" in lieu of the universally accepted use of the term "representation" to describe the phenomenon in question, as I wanted to echo and emphasize the notion that

giftedness is found in every race, ethnicity, and background and that educators share the responsibility of developing an equitable means to recognize and celebrate it (see Nwangwu, 2023). This idea served as the impetus for this study, as I explored the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs through the lens of CRT (see Bell, 1987; see Crenshaw, 2011; see Delgado et al., 2017) with the intent of cementing it as a problem of moral inequity. If educators can subscribe to the notion that giftedness "comes in all shapes and sizes," as described by study participants, then we have to ponder how many GT children are not adequately served by our schools due to GT identification processes that are ill-suited to recognize giftedness in diverse populations. Dr. Donna Ford expertly framed this problem by asking, "How many more diverse children must suffer while we debate this issue?" (Ford & Harmon, 2001, p. 147). This question posed by Dr. Ford is a call to action for educators and researchers to continue to explore the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs and a charge to promote equity in GT identification and programming, the rationale and inspiration for this study.

In this study, I interviewed elementary school administrators who serve in schools that have demonstrated success in diversifying their GT education programs to equitable levels (see Peters et al., 2019; see Wright et al., 2017; see Yoon & Gentry, 2009) aligning with appreciative inquiry principles (see Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; see Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; see Hearn, 2018; see Peel, 2021; see Zoll et al., 2021). I sought to learn and share the practices and leadership dispositions of these elementary school administrators to inform researchers and practitioners of what is necessary to tackle the

problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT programs. I learned that these elementary school administrators describe several research-based practices identified in the literature as attributable to the equitable recognition of CLED students in GT programs. More compellingly, I learned that progressive, equity-based leadership dispositions are accredited to their success in diversifying their respective GT education programs to equitable levels.

Acquiring equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs requires equity and social justice-inspired leadership, which can be attributed to the fundamental beliefs that all children can achieve and that gifts and talent are both innate and developed. In attaining equitable recognition of CLED students in GT education programs, these administrators positively influenced the learning outcomes of all students, not just those who are gifted. In essence, the problem of the underrecognition of CLED students in GT education programs is one of moral inequity. As such, educators bear the moral responsibility of challenging this phenomenon to advance educational attainment and achievement for all students.

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