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Identifying academic protective factors in gifted minority students

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Identifying Academic Protective Factors in Gifted Minority Students

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Abstract

As the demographics of the United States continue to change rapidly, school psychologists will continue to play a role in meeting the needs of racially and ethnically diverse students. One major concern is the overrepresentation of certain ethnic minority groups (e.g., Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American) in special education, dropout rates, and school discipline and the underrepresentation of those same groups in gifted education programs. The purpose of the current study was to find what factors may be contributing to the academic success of gifted Black/African American students. The researcher conducted one on one interviews with nine Black/African American high school students who were identified as gifted in elementary school. The researcher asked questions about the participants' early and current school experiences, experiences while enrolled in the gifted program, and personal and environmental factors that contributed to their success. The participants' responses were transcribed and coded for common themes. The results suggested that students in the study were high achieving, had a lot of parental and teacher support, had hardworking parents and other adults in their homes, had a strong desire to go to college, and had a number of personality characteristics that contributed to their success. Implications for practice include school psychologists playing a role in fostering a school atmosphere that creates success for Black/African American students.

Identifying Academic Protective Factors in Gifted Minority Students

Statement of the Problem

Imagine visiting a school's special education classroom and gifted classroom. In the gifted classroom, you may see a majority of Caucasian students. On the other hand, you may see a majority of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students in the special education classroom. Nationwide there are disparities between the educational outcomes of Caucasian, Asian American, Black/African American, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino students. Native American students are over-represented in the categories of specific learning disability and intellectually disabled (National Education Association, 2007). Black/African American students are severely overrepresented under the categories of emotionally disturbed and intellectually disabled; more specifically, Black/African American boys are more likely to be identified as emotionally disturbed. Even in areas with a large number of culturally and linguistically diverse students, a majority of the students in those gifted programs are Caucasian. Of the Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students enrolled in school, only 3.04%, 3.57%, and 4.86% are in gifted programs, respectively. Out of all Caucasian and Asian American students enrolled in school, 7.47% and 9.9% are in gifted programs, respectively. School psychologists can play an important role in helping to foster resiliency in these students and reducing the cultural biases that may be present in the selection of gifted minority students.

Protective Factors

While gifted students do have certain characteristics in common, school psychologists may want to consider which of the common characteristics act as academic

protective factors. That is, factors which aid gifted and high-achieving minority students in being successful in school. Herbert and Reis (1999) examined factors that may contribute to the success of high-achieving minority students in urban environments. The researchers conducted a qualitative study on high and low achieving gifted minority students over a span of three years. A large majority of the students were from a low socio-economic status. Participants were interviewed and observed in school and extracurricular settings. There were a number of protective factors that contributed to the students' success. The participants had a strong belief in their abilities to reach their goals; in many of the participants, this belief was fostered by supportive relationships. The participants cited that supportive adults have been influential in their academic success; most of these adults were teachers. Many of the participants reported that they were a part of a high-achieving peer group; in other words, they frequently interacted with other high-achieving students in their school buildings. Many of the participants reported that extracurricular activities, after school programs, and summer enrichment programs contributed to their academic success. Participants in the study reported that challenging academic experiences that required them to produce high-quality work (i.e. Honors and AP classes) contributed to their academic success. There were also a number of personality characteristics that contributed to the participants' academic success which include: acceptance of cultural diversity; setting realistic goals; and being independent. The participants also cited family support as being a major contribution to their academic success; the support was not always in the form of parental involvement in the school, it also came in the form of emotional support.

Morales (2010) examined the protective factors in high-achieving and gifted minority students. The researcher wanted to find out what specific protective factors were common with these students. His sample consisted of 30 African American and 20 Hispanic American students from a low socio-economic status, who were currently enrolled in college or university. The researcher interviewed these students and developed two clusters of protective factors based on the commonality of their responses. The first cluster consisted of responses related to the idea that it was okay to be smart. There were five major factors under this cluster. Ninety-four percent of the sample expressed a desire to move up in social class. Ninety percent and 72% of the students said they had an adult K-12 and in college that cared about their academic well-being, respectively. Many of the students in the sample felt a strong obligation to give back to their community. Eighty-six percent of the students saw future attainment as more important than immediate gratification. The second cluster consisted of responses that related to personality factors and parent/community expectations. An overwhelming majority of these students identified themselves as having high self-esteem, having a strong work ethic, and being persistent. Ninety-two percent of the sample had a strong internal locus of control. Many students attended out of district schools as a way to escape negative influences. Many students said that their parents held high expectations and that they felt supported by their parents through words and actions. Seventy-four percent of the students identified a mother that had a strong work ethic.

Achievement Gap

When addressing the problem of underrepresentation of minorities in gifted and talented programs, school psychologists may want to consider the achievement gap

between Caucasian, Asian American and other minority students (African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American) and cultural biases in the selection of students for gifted and talented programs. The achievement gap refers to the fact that overall, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students perform lower than Caucasian students in an academic setting (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) conducted a descriptive and exploratory study to examine what may contribute to the achievement gap between African Americans and Caucasians and the under-representation of African Americans in gifted programs. The sample consisted of 372 middle and high school African American students from Ohio. The participants were administered surveys that addressed social pressures, interests and hobbies, time spent on both academic and extracurricular activities, and study habits. The mean grade point average for the participants that reported it (less than half) was 3.4 on a 4.0 scale. Twenty-eight percent of the sample reported that they do not try their best in school which is considered a form of underachievement. The participants reported that they spent an average of 7.2 hours a week studying and 4.6 hours a week on reading assignments. The participants reported that they spent majority of their time not dedicated on school on the following activities: spending time with family (27.1 hours per week); watching television (13.7 hours per week); spending time with friends (10.5 hours per week); listening to music (10.4 hours per week); playing sports (8.2 hours per week); talking on the phone (7.2 hours per week); playing video games (6.5 hours per week); and reading for pleasure (4.1 hours per week). Approximately two-thirds of the participants reported knowing someone who was teased for doing well in school, and one-third of the participants reported being teased by other students. Gifted African

American students cited having other priorities, laziness, depression, lacking academic confidence, problems at home, and dislike of teachers as reasons why smart students do not perform well in school. This particular study provided an excellent overview of what role individual student's behavior plays in the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students, but it lacked information on the role that school officials may inadvertently play in the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students.

McBee (2006) took a different approach to looking at factors that may be contributing to the achievement gap in gifted programs by examining the role that nominations play. The researchers sought to find how effective nominations were and the equity across racial and socio-economic groups. The data from over 700,000 students in grades one through five and enrolled in Georgia public schools were analyzed. The main nomination sources for gifted programs consisted of automatic referrals (performing at or above the 90th percentile on a standardized test), teacher referrals, parent referrals, self-referrals, peer referrals, and other referrals (someone other than a teacher, parent, self, or peer). The results showed that students from a lower socioeconomic status were less likely to be selected for gifted programs; however African Americans (2.2%) and Hispanics (1.7%) of a lower socio economic status were a lot less likely to be selected for gifted programs when compared to Caucasians (4.4%), Asian Americans (9.4%), and Native Americans (5.3%) of a lower socioeconomic status. Even African American (5.4%) and Hispanic (4.2%) students of a higher socio economic status were referred at lower rates when compared with Caucasian (15.6%), Asian American (22.4%), and Native American (14.3%) students of a higher socio economic status. This study shows

the clear divide between socio economic status and referral for gifted programs; there also appears to be an interaction between race and socio economic status. One shortcoming of this study was the fact that free and reduced lunch was the only factor used to qualify whether students belonged to a high or low socio economic status. If maternal education, parental occupation, and neighborhood were taken into account, then the percentages may have shown greater discrepancies.

Gregory and Weinstein (2010) proposed that there may be a relationship between the achievement gap across ethnic groups and the inequality in discipline procedures. The researchers hypothesized that teacher and student conflicts contributed to the overrepresentation of African Americans who received disciplinary referrals; a majority of African Americans who received referrals from one or two teachers; and teacher personalities are related to discipline outcomes of African American students. The discipline data of over 440 students in a mid-sized urban school district were analyzed. Results showed that African American students made up approximately 30% of the school population, yet they made up 58% of student discipline referrals for defiance. Of the students who were referred, there was an average of two adults who referred the students. Students in the sample felt more cared for by teachers who they rated as cooperative than they did by teachers who submitted discipline referrals. This study begins to explain the inequity of the discipline procedures used for African American students. It lays the groundwork for future studies to explore why teachers may be more likely to rate African Americans as more defiant than Caucasian students. School psychologists may want to consider that since African Americans are at an increased risk

to receive out of school discipline; their missing instruction time may contribute to overrepresentation in special education and underrepresentation in gifted programs.

Erwin and Worrell (2012) examined what may be causing the achievement gap between ethnic minority and Caucasian students in gifted programs. The researchers hypothesized that a contributing factor to this achievement gap may be due to the use of cognitive and achievement assessments as a primary measure of intellectual functioning, which is usually the only means for gifted classification. Participants in this study were 877 students who attended the Academic Talent Development Program (ATDP). Approximately two-thirds of the participants were Asian American, while the rest of the participants were Hispanic (12.7%), African American (5.1%), and Caucasian (10.8%). The results showed that African American performed lower on the entry exam and as a whole they had lower GPAs. These two groups were also underrepresented in ATDP. The results supported the idea that a multimodal approach to gifted classification is one of the best ways to decrease the achievement gap.

Perceptions of Gifted Students

It is also important to examine the perceptions that gifted minority students have of themselves and the perceptions that others have of gifted minority students. Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, and Tavegia (2005) conducted a qualitative study to examine the African American parent's perspective on their academically gifted children. A total of 15 parents were interviewed for 60 to 90 minutes to gain an understanding of their experiences and perceptions of their children. Parents of gifted African American students reported two inadequacies in academic support: lack of gifted programs and teachers' lack of experience and training in working with gifted African American

students. Overall, parents in this study felt that there were not adequate gifted and talented programs available to their children. Parents also felt that teachers were not adequately trained to serve the needs of gifted African American students in an academic setting. Parent factors also seemed to contribute to the children's success, which included: level of parental education; parental involvement; and advocacy for their children's needs. This study provided a great overview of the parent's perspective of obstacles that gifted African Americans face, which is something that other studies did not acknowledge.

Characteristics of Gifted Students

Although there has not been a lot of research done exclusively on the characteristics of gifted minority groups who are underrepresented in gifted programs, there has been some research that has examined internal and external factors in gifted students (e.g., Jordan, Bain, McCallum, & Bell, 2012; Kerr, Colangelo, Maxey, & Christensen, 1992; & Konstantopoulos, Modi, & Hedges, 2002). Konstantopoulos et al. (2002) analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, and the researchers found that gifted students are more likely than non-gifted students to be focused on academic achievement, spend more time on homework, spend more time reading for pleasure, and perform higher on measures of self-esteem and locus of control. Jordan et al. (2012) conducted a similar study and found that gifted students were more likely to be rated higher on cognitive, creativity, and achievement scales by teachers than non-gifted students. Kerr et al. (1992) examined minority students who took the ACT and found a strong preference for science, technology, engineering, and math as opposed to liberal arts for the highest performing minority students. Based on the literature, there do

appear to be certain characteristics that all gifted students exhibit despite race and social class.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature, it appears that minorities, specifically African Americans and Hispanics, face many obstacles that may contribute to their lack of fair representation in gifted and talented programs. Students who make it into these programs despite the numerous odds are likely to have protective factors that contribute to their academic success. Due to lack of research on gifted and high achieving Black/African American students, the purpose of the current study was to see what factors contributed to the success of students who were enrolled in gifted programs and excelled academically. The researcher predicted that Black/African American students would:

- Likely to have an adult that they perceive as hardworking in their life.
- Likely want to go to college.
- Likely to have a high degree of self-determination. For the purposes of this study, self-determination was defined as the degree to which an individual believes s/he has control over situations and outcomes.
- Likely be high achieving as defined as having a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher.

The researcher expected other themes to develop upon interviewing students about their experiences.

Method

Participants

Black/African American high school students, who were identified as gifted in elementary school, from a medium-sized, suburban school district located in the District of Columbia metropolitan area participated in this study. The school district was an affluent area as defined by the median household income, education level of the residents, and the percent of the population below the poverty level. According to the most recent Census data, 93.4% of the population had a high school diploma and 57.9% of the population had at least a Bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The median household income was \$122, 068 and approximately 3.5% of the population was below the poverty line.

There were a total of nine participants; eight were female and one was male. There were four ninth grade students, two tenth grade students, and three twelfth grade students in the study. Students in this district are typically identified for the gifted program at the end of third grade, and they go to a once per week pull out program in fourth and fifth grade. Students have the option of remaining in the program when they enter middle school. Seven of the participants participated in the gifted program in both elementary and middle school. Two of the participants were in the gifted program for elementary school only.

Instrumentation

The materials used in the study included: a survey of open-ended questions that will be posed to the participants (see Appendix A); an informational flyer about the study (see Appendix B); a parental consent form (see Appendix C); and a youth assent form

(see Appendix D). The survey questions were developed by the researcher to measure the research hypotheses and address any other factors that may be contributing to the student's success.

Procedure

Once approval was obtained from both the researcher's university and school district where the research was conducted, the researcher contacted principals and assistant principals at all high schools in the school district. There was approximately a 67% response rate from the schools in the district. Based on the preference of the individual school and principal, consent and assent forms were distributed either by: giving forms with a return envelope attached to the student who met the study's selection criteria in person or mailing all information directly to the student's home with a return envelope enclosed. The consent and assent forms were mailed directly back to the participant if students and parents were interested in participating. There was an approximately 32% response rate. The interviews took place in a conference room at the participant's home high school before school, during study hall, or after school based on the preferences of the participants and their parents. When the student walked into the conference room, the researcher explained that they would be asked about their school experiences and their experiences participating in the gifted program. All participants and their guardians consented to having their responses audio recorded, so the participants' responses were recorded. The average interview time was approximately 15 minutes. At the end of the interview, the participants were thanked for their participation, and the researcher informed them that they would receive a copy of the final research paper when it was available.

Results

The researcher coded the nine interview transcripts for common themes using a qualitative analysis tool called NVIVO. The themes were related to the research hypotheses as well as any unexpected themes that emerged. Descriptive data related to the researcher's hypotheses were also collected.

Grade Point Average

The researcher predicted that African American students enrolled in the gifted program would likely be high achieving and have a GPA of 3.5 or higher. One-hundred percent of the participants had a GPA of at least 3.5 at the time the study was conducted. Additionally, 98% of the participants had a GPA of 3.75 or higher and 44% of the participants were in the top 10% of their graduating class.

Hardworking Adult

Morales (2010) found that many of the gifted and high achieving African American and Hispanic students in his study identified an adult that they perceived to be hardworking. In the present study, participants were asked if there were people in their lives that contributed to their academic success and what characteristics those people had. All participants identified one or both of their parents as the person who contributed to their academic success. Four participants identified teachers as individuals who contributed to their academic success and four identified siblings. Themes of support and high expectations emerged. One participant shared the following about her mom:

She was always like you have to get good grades. I mean even in elementary school, if we had a presentation, she would make us practice it over and over and over. Like we memorized it even if we didn't have to, my mom was like it looks

better if you do. You're gonna memorize it and you're gonna practice speaking and like enunciating and making sure your pace is good. Like making sure it's right in the time frame.

The participant's response indicates a high level of parental support as well as high parental expectations. One participant shared that his teachers had a major impact on his success in school. He shared the following:

I'm about to go to college, and I had two teachers junior year who wrote me letters of recommendation. And they were some of the most talented teachers that I ever had. And I had another English teacher who helped me revise my personal statement. I feel like I owe a lot to them.

The theme of supportive adults both at home and in school emerged in a lot of the participants' responses. When asked to describe the characteristics of the people that contributed to their successful academic performance, one participant said:

They are all very smart. They take care of business as it needs to get done. And they always analyze what's the best way to handle this situation. How can I manage my resources of time and output? They are always looking at how to improve things.

Like the respondent above, many of the participants often identified the people in their life that made an impact as hardworking, driven, and dedicated. One participant shared the following about her brother, "he's like a really hardworker and diligent and makes sure he gets his stuff done."

Desire to Go to College

All participants indicated a desire to go to a four year college, and many of them expressed interest in careers that would require graduate level training. Five of the participants indicated that they wanted to enter a profession that involved helping others (i.e., doctor, mental health professional, or teacher), two participants indicated interest in a math or science related field (i.e., engineering), and two indicated interest in arts-related or creative fields (i.e., music, writing, theater, and architecture).

Self-Determination

For the present study, self-determination was defined as the degree or extent to which an individual believes that she or he has control over a situation. The researcher predicted that gifted African American students would have a high self-determination based on previous literature (e.g., Morales 2010; Herbert and Reis 1999) indicating that gifted minority students have a high internal locus of control. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale of one to 10 how much control they believed that had over their performance in school and how much control they believed they had over their future.

All participants indicated that they believe that they have a lot of control over how they perform in school. All participants indicated at least an eight when asked how much control they believed that they had over how they performed in school. Many participants indicated that there are some things beyond their control such as teacher assignments and having difficulty understanding concepts, but they indicated that those things could be rectified through self-advocacy, studying, and completing homework. One participant said:

I think if I fail it's my fault. It's literally how do you prioritize your time. Maybe I'll change it to nine because maybe you think you're doing well on a paper and you get a little bit of a lower grade. Sometimes it is up to like (pause). Say maybe in English class, it's up to the teachers (pause) like do they feel that it was a well-written paper. You can't really (pause) I mean you can study for a paper by practicing, but you never know. I mean, you can be like I know all of these vocab words, I mean you don't really know how that's going to play out. But for the most part, everything is like here is the answer. It's set in stone. Here is the wrong answer. As long as you study and if you turn in your homework, there's your easy points. If you study for your tests and stuff it's like as long as you do what need to do, you can do well in school. It's like when I get bad grades, I can only be mad at myself. It's like hey you better study next time if you don't want to keep getting bad grades because I mean it's not their job to make sure that I study. They can tell me to, but if I don't that's on me not them.

This participant's response demonstrates a lot of themes that emerged in other participants' responses. She indicated that although some assignments have a level of subjectivity to them, for the most part the outcome of a test or assignment reflects the effort put in preparing for the test or assignment. Like many other participants, this respondent indicated that when she performed lower than expected, she acknowledged that it was up to her to change something in the future.

Participants were also asked by the researcher to rate on a scale of one to 10, how much control they believed they had over their future. Participant tended to rate the control they had over their future lower than the control they believed they had over their

performance in school. The main theme that emerged here is while participants believed that they had a lot of control over their future, they acknowledged that they had less control over unexpected life events. One participant said:

I'd say a seven probably because you can start now and you can plan, but you don't know what's going to happen. You can always uh get sick or you might get into an accident, so that can change your plan for the future. But as long as you have a plan or start to make one, you should be okay.

This participant, like many others, acknowledged that there are events in life that are out of one's control and may impact the originally planned trajectory. However, the participant identified the necessity of having a plan in place and making steps to stick to that plan.

Internal Protective Factors

Participants in the present study often indicated that there were inherent abilities or personality traits that helped them to succeed in school. The most common traits that participants mentioned during the interviews included time-management, self-advocacy, setting high expectations, and social skills. One participant stated the following, "I definitely do self-advocate and I am very social. I do talk to the counselors a lot. They know me well."

Another participant indicated that her high expectations for her academic performance is what helped her to perform well. She said, "I have really high expectations of myself. And like I wouldn't say that I'm a perfectionist, but if I start not doing well in a class, I know I can do better." Her response showed that she had both a high expectations of herself and a drive to meet those high expectations.

Another participant echoed similar sentiments. She the following expectations that she held for herself, “I’m really competitive. Not really against other people but against myself. Because if I get something, I say oh well I want to do it better next time or get higher next time.”

Additional External Protective Factors

In addition to having supportive and hardworking parents, teachers, and coaches, a few participants indicated that their participation in sports contributed to their academic success. One participant said, “Along with playing sports and stuff. That’s helped me learn discipline. And I mean just more social skills. And since it does take up time, I’ve learned time management.”

Perspectives on Underrepresentation

The researcher was also interested in gaining the participants perspectives on what would need to happen to increase the presence of Black/African American students in gifted programs. Their responses were insightful, and many participants indicated that negative stereotypes about Black/African American students, lack of family support, lack of positive role models, and lack of encouragement to do well academically. One participant responded:

I feel like they really tell themselves like oh I don’t need to be that smart. Oh, I’m only going to do this, I’m not going to get that far in life so I don’t need my education. I feel like the standards need to be raised to be like oh I can be a leading surgeon in the nation and I can be like a principal. I feel like they don’t think they can do anything, I feel like they’re categorized as not being strong enough or they’re too stupid they can’t do this.

The participant indicated that based on her experience, some African American students have had a degree of apathy and a lack of belief in themselves when it comes to school performance. Another participant added a poignant opinion as to what would need to happen to increase the presence of Black/African American students in gifted programs:

It's what the kid is exposed to when they are younger. In advertising and media, it's a bit of a reflection when you see grown up people who look like you and you think oh that can be me one day. But in particular tropes and roles, it's like that's all I can be one day... I think changing that is huge. When I first saw Neil DeGrasse Tyson talk about, talk at all, I was like why aren't you talking about rapping or professional sports because that's all I ever hear? Whenever you have a Black professional talking about something, all they tend to do is entertainment or sports (pause) that's it. You never see black professionals talking about math or straight up about literature or about politics.

The participant acknowledged the lack of Black/African American role models in the media in diverse fields. He spoke to the fact that if all one sees is notable Black/African American people in the entertainment business, then Black/African American children may start to get the message that that is the only option. Furthermore, he mentioned that there are Black/African American scholars, but they are not always accessible to children because they are not represented the same way that Black/African Americans in the entertainment industry are not represented. This may happen in twofold where not only Black/African American children see limited opportunities for themselves, but since the dominant culture in the America is exposed to the same media

they may not see examples of Black/African American individuals in diverse careers.

Another participant spoke to the lack of awareness that Black/African American parents may have about the presence of gifted programs in their children's school systems:

They need to know more about it because I went to private school and I switched the year that they started the gifted program. And my parents heard about it and they asked and they had to get me tested for it. So if they don't know about it ahead of time, then it would be kind of hard to get in it.

Discussion

Conclusions

When considering the addressing the representation of African American students in gifted programs, school psychologists and other educators may want to consider a number of factors. Morales' (2009) research and themes from the current study indicate that many gifted students have hardworking and supportive adults in their lives that contribute to their success in school. School psychologists and other educators can play a role in connecting Black/African American Students with adults in the school building that can provide academic support and encouragement. All students in the current study identified one or both parents as one of the people who contributed to their academic success. School psychologists can play an important role in fostering parent and school communication through educating the school community about barriers to parental involvement, choosing a form of communication that the parent prefers (i.e., email, phone call, face to face), and using a strength based approach when talking about the student with a parent. Some common barriers to parental involvement include: parents feeling that they are not being listened to, meetings about the student being scheduled at

times that may be inconvenient for parents, and a mismatch in values between the school and the families (Braden & Miller, 2007).

Many participants in the present study had a number of internal protective factors that contributed to their success in school, which included high academic expectations, time management skills and self-discipline, and high self-determination. School psychologists can play a role in fostering these skills in Black/African American students either through directly teaching skills or positive reinforcement of skills. Additionally, all of the participants in the present study were high achieving as defined as obtaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher, and all participants expressed a strong desire to go to a four year college.

From the participants' perspectives the lack of representation of Black/African American students in gifted programs stemmed from lack of knowledge of the existence of gifted programs; low academic expectations of Black/African American students by the students themselves, parents, and teachers; and lack of accessible Black/African American role models. School psychologists may be able to help address these issues by encouraging their schools to use ethnically and racially diverse examples of historical and current successful people. School psychologists can be a part of in-service training for teachers on how different cultures value different cognitive skills and culturally diverse students may express their skillsets differently than the dominant culture.

Limitations

The participants in this study provided a lot of useful and integral information about factors that contributed to their success as well as helping to explain why Black/African American students may be underrepresented in gifted programs. However,

there were only nine participants in the study, so while the study may have clinical significance, it does not have statistical significance due to the small sample size and lack of statistical power. The findings of this research study may not be generalizable to a wider range of Black/African American gifted students.

Additionally, most of the participants were not enrolled in gifted education classes because it is not offered at many of the high schools in the district. First year students may have had more of an ability to remember what their experience in the gifted program was like because they just finished middle school, whereas seniors may have had more of a difficult time remembering what their experience was like.

Future Research

Future studies on gifted Black/African American students may want to examine the referral source. There may be different outcomes for students who are referred by teachers versus students who are referred by parents. It may also be interesting to see if Black/African American students who make it into the gifted program are more likely to be referred by parents or teachers. Future researchers may also want to compare for similarities and differences the personality factors, environmental characteristics, and outcomes of high achieving and gifted; high achieving and not enrolled in a gifted program; low achieving and gifted; and low achieving Black/African American students. This research may help determine what factors contribute to the retention in gifted programs and if there are differences in future outcomes of students who participated in gifted programs versus students who did not.

Appendix A

Interview Questions:

1. What is your earliest memory of school?
2. How would you describe your school? Academically? Socially?
3. Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role. What characteristics does this person have?
4. What are some positive experiences that you have of school?
5. What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
6. What is it about you that helped you to do well in school? What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?
7. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?
8. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?
9. What do you believe makes a student successful in your school? Which of these do you believe that you have?
10. What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?
11. Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not? What would need to happen to make more African Americans be included in gifted programs?
12. What are your plans after high school?
13. When did you know that you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Appendix B

About the Study

Dear Parent/Caregiver of _____,

I am a School Psychologist Intern with XX County Public Schools, and I am in the process of completing my graduate studies at James Madison University. My research interests include learning more about the experiences of high achieving and gifted minority students. To learn more about these experiences, I would like to interview your child about (her/his) academic experiences. No identifying information will be connected to your child's responses (i.e. name, student ID number, etc.). Your child's participation in this study will contribute to research on factors that contribute to the success of high achieving and gifted minority students. If you are interested in your child participating in this study, there is a parent consent form and youth assent form attached for you to review. If you agree with the terms of the consent form and your child agrees with the terms of the youth assent form, please sign and return them in the enclosed return envelope. If you have additional questions for me, please contact me by phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email (jacksojk@dukes.jmu.edu). Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Janei Jackson

Appendix C

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Janei Jackson from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of high achieving and gifted minority students. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her Educational Specialist Thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview that will be administered to individual participants in your child's high school. Your child will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to his/her experiences in school, educational goals, and future goals. Demographic information such as age, gender, class standing, GPA, and race/ethnicity will be collected through the interview process and accessing your child's records if your child is unsure of some information (class standing, GPA). Your child's responses will be audio recorded, with permission, to ensure that their responses are captured without any researcher bias.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require a maximum of 30 minutes of your child's time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include furthering the understanding of factors that contribute to academic success in high achieving and gifted minority students.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University's Graduate Psychology Symposium. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Janei Jackson
Department of Graduate Psychology

Dr. Patricia Warner
Department of Graduate Psychology

James Madison University
jacksojk@dukes.jmu.edu

James Madison University
 Telephone: (540)-568-3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
 Chair, Institutional Review Board
 James Madison University
 (540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent for my child to be *audio* taped during my interview. ____ (parent's initial)

I would prefer the interview to take place: before school, during the school day (i.e. study hall), or after school.

 Name of Child (Printed)

 Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

 Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed)

 Date

 Name of Researcher (Signed)

 Date

Appendix D

YOUTH ASSENT FORM (Ages 13-17)

IRB # 14-0132

Protective Factors of Gifted and High-Achieving Minority Students

We are inviting you to participate in this study because you are a high school student enrolled in the gifted program and we are interested in your academic experiences.

This research will take you a maximum of 30 minutes to do.

First, you will be asked to provide some basic information about yourself, such as your age, gender, ethnicity, GPA, and year in school. Then you will be asked questions about your past and current experiences in school, your academic goals, and your future goals. If you agree, your responses will be audio-taped (with your permission) so that the researcher can capture all that you have to say.

The primary reason for doing this survey is to learn about factors that contributed to your success in school.

Your responses will be completely confidential. The audiotapes will only be heard by the researchers and no individual responses will be identified in the final presentation.

We have asked your parents for their permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask the researcher.

If you check "yes," it means that you have decided to participate and have read everything that is on this form. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form to keep. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

_____ Yes, I would like to participate in the study.

_____ Yes, I agree to be audiotaped.

 Signature of Subject

 Date

 Signature of Investigator

 Date

Janei Jackson

Department of Graduate Psychology

James Madison University

jacksojk@dukes.jmu.edu

Appendix E

Due to the small sample size, some information was removed to protect the participant's identity using "xx." Additionally, names of people, schools, and district specific programs were removed.

Participant A:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant A: Um, I guess like (pause) do you mean elementary school too? Um kindergarten (pause) I remember my birthday in kindergarten and bringing cupcakes in for my class

Researcher: Would you say that that's a pretty positive experience?

Participant A: Yeah. In elementary school, you always got to bring in like brownies or cupcakes in on your birthday and I remember that. And it was October, so it was pretty early in the year

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?

Participant A: I really like it. I like school, the environment.

Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?

Participant A: Really, I mean people know that they are going to get a good education here, and for the most part, people strive to do well in their classes because it's almost like, I mean I feel like you get looked at better if you take harder classes; You definitely want to take more AP classes... That looks good.

Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?

Participant A: It's not really (pause) there's not really cliques; everyone has their group of friends, some of those people branch to other groups. I guess there's like little divisions, but I mean everyone for the most part is pretty nice and can hang out with other people if they need

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.

Participant A: I guess my sister. She's one year ahead of me; a lot of the things I do is because she's told me to do it. So like classes. I never took any AP classes because I'm just (pause) I know that I wasn't really going to do the work (pause) I knew I wasn't going to do the work, so I knew it wasn't a good idea and so when I came to my senior year, my sister was like you have to take AP classes or you're not going to get into colleges. She always like. She did all of the stressing for me. Like it would stress her out because she's like afraid for me and if I'd get it done. She always stressed out and that was her thing. And so she'd be like you need to do this and you need to do this. This is how this is done and she guided me through.

Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?

Participant A: She's pretty easygoing, she had a lot of friends. She's definitely focused on her school work. Like very well-rounded, did track, was also the class xx for four years. She's doing well in college now... adapted very well. She kind of helped me like because I knew which classes to take because of her so if I was (pause) she definitely is more focused on her school work and is going to get everything done. So if I saw her stressing out on like AP US History. And I knew that if she couldn't handle all the work and she's super focused and she's going to get it all done then I know that I can't do it. I know that I'm not good at prioritizing

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?

Participant A: I guess like the people are really nice. I made a lot of good friends in high school. I'm also class xx all four years and doing that has been kind of nice. And then a lot of the teachers here I've become really close with so that's always nice and if I want someone to talk to. I enjoy going to my classes. I don't enjoy the work but I don't mind like coming to school. I'm not gonna say that Oh my gosh I hate it so much. When I come to school I really just dread it because of the work, but like everything else is perfectly fine

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?

Participant A: Bad friends. I just had a bad experience with my friend two weeks ago. Finding out who your real friends are is kind of like sucky. That's probably the worst part is that thing and if you're made at someone, you literally have to see them all of the time (pause) like it's really awkward then if you stop being friends with them

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?

Participant A: I'm pretty easygoing and I can adapt well to any situation. You know when it comes to orientation and people are going to their new classes, and they're like oh I don't have any friends. I can kind of like be friends with anyone, so I can make friends in my classes. That helps with making school a nice environment because I can just like talk to anyone.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant A: What gifted program? What is that?

Researcher: Did you participate in [district specific gifted education program]?

Participant A: Oh, I did. Um, I guess just being creative. Just creativity and thinking of new ways to do things. Brainstorming. I remember we took a test in elementary school. I don't remember the test but I guess I passed it. I guess being creative and being able to come up with good ideas

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant A: 10, I think if I fail it's my fault. It's literally how do you prioritize your time. Maybe I'll change it to nine because maybe you think you're doing well on a paper and you get a little bit of a lower grade. Sometimes it is up to like. Say maybe in English class, it's up to the teachers (pause) like do they feel that it was a well-written paper. You can't really (pause) I mean you can study for a paper by practicing, but you never know. I mean, you can be like I know all of these vocab words, I mean you don't really know how that's going to play out. But for the most part, everything is like here is the answer (pause) it's set in stone (pause) here is the wrong answer. As long as you study and if you turn in your homework, there's your easy points. If you study for your tests and stuff it's like as long as you do what need to do, you can do well in school. So it's really like (pause) people always try to blame the teachers and I hate that. It's not the teacher's fault that you don't go home and study. It's like when I get bad grades, I can only be mad at myself. It's like hey you better study next time if you don't want to keep getting bad grades because I mean it's not their job to make sure that I study. They can tell me to, but if I don't that's on me not them.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant A: I'll say 7, just because you never know. You can be doing your best, but there could be someone who is little better than you that's gonna get that job that you wanted. Getting jobs and stuff now is so competitive. So you could have done all the right things and taken the right steps but there's somebody else who took that one more step. So I think you can try hard and do your best. You will kind of have to wait and see what happens.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant A: I guess just doing your work. And definitely if you're struggling, going and getting help. You don't have to make school your entire life but you definitely have to prioritize well. If you play sports, you have to know that yeah play your sports but when you come home, you have to do your work. And not get behind, once you get behind, it's just like (pause) it's kinda difficult because you have so much more work. So you just really have to stay focused and know you wanna do this, but you have to get your work done and do whatever you want after that.

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant A: I mean, I guess kinda focused. I don't get terrible grades, but I definitely used to do a lot better in school. I mean even my mom said that school used to come naturally to me and now that I have to put in all this extra effort to study and stuff. It's like I really got to do a little bit better. It's like I know that I should do it but sometimes it's like I'm tired, I've been at school all day, I went to work. Like I really don't want to do this, so I may push it off. But it's like I know that I shouldn't so sometimes it's okay like, don't watch TV. Do your work. I guess just knowing that helps me do a little better.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant A: My mom then. She was always like you have to get good grades. I mean even in elementary school, if we had a presentation, she would make us practice it over and over and over. Like we memorized it even if we didn't have to, my mom was like it looks better if you do. You're gonna memorize it and you're gonna practice speaking and like enunciating and making sure your pace is good. Like making sure it's right in the time frame. I actually remember our projects, like she looked over them. And she knows our best work, so she'd be like this is sloppy. No you're going to do this over because I know you can do better and like (pause) I mean she would proofread our papers. I'd have my sister do it and she would check it and say fix this and this doesn't flow right. And even now sometimes I'll have her proofread my stuff and practice something for her because she knows what we can do and what's out best and what looks good. I guess having my mom always making us get good grades basically. I knew if I didn't get a good grade, I was going to get in trouble.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant A: Can I think about it? I knew that we had to take a test when we were younger. And basically we just stuck with it. A lot of the kids who were in it I see taking the harder AP classes and calc and stuff. So maybe it was just like they saw the potential in us when we were younger like. Like we were gonna be the ones who tried harder. And are like more involved. Something like that. Maybe you just see something in kids, I don't know. So maybe they pick at the kids who seem a little more gifted than the others at that age (pause) a little bit more developed.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant A: I guess encouragement. I think it depends on where you grow up. I lived here my whole life and I see kids transfer in. There's definitely a divide. Like so many stereotypes and things like that and so I guess it's kinda how you are brought up. Like my mom always made me study and blah blah blah. And I did really well in school and elementary school, so maybe it's like really just that push from home. Also the environment you're in. Maybe teachers don't care. Every school I went to, I always liked my teachers, so I think it's really like that chunk of the developmental period as you're starting to group up. Like okay does everyone around you actually care how you do in school because that's what's going to make you care? If your parents don't care how your grades are or you go play outside instead of doing your homework. I remember oh my gosh, one time my mom made me write "doing my homework is very important" because she found out that I didn't. Oh my gosh. She's not even that strict, but I do remember that. I think I was in first grade and she found out I didn't do my homework. And

I feel like maybe I didn't do it twice and she was like well instead of playing outside, you're going to do this now. My sister's outside and I'm just in the dining room like I didn't do my homework. Just having someone there like school is very important, you need to get an education to like do well in life. Because now a days you really do. People are like you don't have to go to college and this person does this. I mean it's not like that very everyone unless they lucked out. I mean they could have worked hard for it. That's not going to be everyone's situation. Don't use it as an excuse like this person's a billionaire and didn't go to college. Okay well, even if they have that job, it's better to have an education to fall back on in case something doesn't work out. Growing up knowing that education is really important and someone pushing you to do your best. I feel like if you have that when you are younger, you always realize that. If you care about your future you are gonna get a better education. If people tell you how important it is and kinda instill those skills in you.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant A: I'm going to go to [a university] for psychology. Become a psychiatrist right after. But I mean, I'm very indecisive, so that may change. But that's the plan right now.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant A: I think more in middle school. Like in elementary school, we went to is that [district specific gifted education program]? We got to go to the other school and do it. We were excited that we didn't have to go to class and we got to go to [district specific gifted education program] and so (pause) it was kind of like we did it through guidance. We would go do random little projects but it wasn't anything like. In [district specific gifted education program], it was a lot harder. In [district specific gifted education program], I remember doing things with shapes and random projects. It was something extra that we got to do. But I feel like in middle school everyone was like oh my god you're in [district specific gifted education program]. I knew we had to take math tests, sometimes we'd learn another language like sign language and it was a dead language, it's called Esperanto or something. My eighth grade year, we had to do this robotics thing. I think it was in middle school that people were like oh my gosh, you're in [district specific gifted education program]. Once that happened, it was like oh this is something special you know what I mean. In elementary school, a lot of kids went, so in middle school there would be like two classes. There were a lot more students in elementary. I think you got to choose if you wanted to continue or not.

Participant B:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant B: My earliest memory of school would be when I was in preschool. And we just played outside and everything.

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?
Participant B: Well I like it here. We have really good teachers. It's more of a cliquey school, people don't really socialize outside of their groups. But I have really good friends.
Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?
Participant B: I think we're pretty strong academically. And definitely having [school specific study hall] and open lunch which helps.
Researcher: What is [school specific study hall] exactly?
Participant B: It's just like a study hall and the teachers will help students that need help during [school specific study hall]
Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?
Participant B: Besides being cliquey? I mean there are a couple of students that will talk to anybody, but most people don't do that. I mean I have witnessed that the people who do want to talk to everybody, people do talk to them. It's not like they're totally off-standing.
3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.
Participant B: Well, academically I have to say my mom because every time I have a project that I'm working really late on at night, she really supported me and told me to hang in there. And she's always believed in me (pause) that I can do it. That's like a huge self-esteem thing. Socially, my volleyball coach. She has promoted a bunch of volunteer stuff. And I think that's really helped me be more involved with the community. That's my club volleyball coach.
Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?
Participant B: They're both really strong women. They are both really supportive. They kind of have a tough live type deal. They don't baby anybody. They push them to do their best. They set the bar pretty high.
4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?
Participant B: Making friends is huge thing. I love people. And I'm actually really shy, but when I have friends I'm more outgoing. And I really like going to games and stuff. And all the social events. Prom is coming up
5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
Participant B: Well, in high school we've had a lot of different principals here. And since we're a new school, we're just you know starting out. And the first year, my freshman year, we had open lunch every day. And that's when the whole school has lunch at the same time, so we get to eat wherever we want in the school and just do whatever for an hour. So it was a lot of freedom, but once we changed principals, things started getting taken away because it was a safety thing. And I want to be a teacher and go into the school system so I really

understand that, but it was really kind of hard having all the freedom your freshman year and then less your senior year. And then my AP History classes, I'm not really good at history, so I'm not completely sure why I wanted to take AP History. But I definitely struggled in those classes.

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?

Participant B: Well, along with my mom's expectations for me. I have really high expectations of myself. And like I wouldn't say that I'm a perfectionist, but if I start not doing well in a class, I know I can do better. Like why am I not perfecting this? So I've always done really well in school, since I was like in kindergarten. And my teachers have always said really great things about me. So like when I don't do well, it's just like whoa what's happening.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant B: Um the fact that I did do really well early on in school. And around middle school, people start slacking off because they're just like oh this is getting really hard. But to me middle school was still kind of easy. So I just really pushed it through middle school, and that just helped me a lot. I can't really tell you how I got into the program to begin with, but I know it had something to do [personally identifying information removed]. And I know when I was in first through third grade, they had been sending me to different teachers and I didn't know why. But I would do different stuff with them and I think that probably played a role in having me test into [district specific gifted education program].

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant B: I'd say about an 8. I would say higher, but I think it really just depends on what teacher you have and how your schedule looks. I know my brother (pause) he's a xx right now and he's trying to pick his classes for his junior xx and xx senior year and he's picking really hard classes. I was trying to tell him, take it easy because you're going to be really stressed, but um you have control of your schedule. There's a lot of pressure on you to take really hard classes because I know I was told that if I didn't take AP US History then I wasn't going to get into college. So I was like okay, I guess I'll take it. But I mean time management you definitely have control over. It's just a matter of whether you do it or not.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant B: I'd say a 9 only (pause) well, I just think that going off to college is a really big deal because you have a lot of freedom. If you just stay focused, I don't see what can really go wrong. Besides any major tragedies that you can't have control over.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant B: I think that you have to be successful (pause) in order to be successful you have to want to be successful. Because if you don't try, then you're not going to succeed. I've seen student here and they haven't tried. Like they just sit in class and don't listen. Don't pay attention. And then when they take a test, they wonder why they failed. You didn't take notes or anything. And even if you try hard and you fail, the teachers are there to back you up. They are willing to help you.

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant B: Well, I definitely do try hard in all my classes. Just because I'm that little perfectionist. Like I have to do it. I'm really motivated to do well because since I want to be a teacher, I want to be knowledgeable enough, so that I can teach other people. And I mean if I don't know my stuff, what's the point of me being a teacher?

Researcher: What do you want to teach or what age group?

Participant B: Elementary (pause) right now I'm working with a second grade class, but for one of my classes here I work for preschoolers.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant B: Well definitely all of the support that I have at home and just my family has really high expectations for both me and my brother. And he's my little brother, but I am kind of competing with him to see who gets all As on their report card. I mean I'm not a really competitive person, but it's kind of like a pride thing. Along with playing sports and stuff. That's helped me learn discipline. And I mean just more social skills. And since it does take up time, I've learned time management

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant B: Because when I started the program, I didn't really know what was going on. I think I remember in the second grade, they started pulling me out. And like okay you are going to go with these five other kids and you're going to work on analogies. And I was like okay, I'll be back later. But I didn't know why other kids weren't getting pulled out. Maybe because their parents didn't want them to participate in the gifted program because they may have thought that it was too much of a hassle. And there's other kids that didn't think that they were smart enough, so they just decided to go along with the other kids.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant B: I think just more people reaching out. And as a group, I think African Americans need to set the bar a little higher for themselves individually and say like I can do this. Like it's very possible for me to be in a gifted program.

Because it's not just for talented people who were born with brains, like if you work at it then you can be really smart.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant B: I got accepted into [university], so that's where I'm going to go. I plan to do the five year Master's of Arts in Teaching program. And I just heard that you have to keep your GPA up, which I totally think I can do. It just has to be above a 3.2. I want to become an elementary school teacher.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant B: 5th grade because that was my first year at that elementary school and my teacher asked me if I wanted to be tested to be put in the gifted and talented program and I was like sure. So I tested and I got in and they started taking me to a different school every Wednesday or something. We started doing really hard things that other people weren't doing.

Participant C:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant C: Kindergarten (pause) actually my first day of kindergarten. It was weird but also fun. We got to play with a bunch of stuff

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?

Participant C: I like it here. It's big, and I like the people here and it's just a cool school.

Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?

Participant C: The classes are good and the teachers, they help a lot.

Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?

Participant C: It's like. I have a set group of friends. It's pretty good.

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.

Participant C: My mom because if I was having trouble with something in school, she would help me with it. If I don't understand something in school, like with math. She's good in math.

Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?

Participant C: She's really nice and funny. And she's really helpful. She's weird

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?

Participant C: I guess that I'm not (pause) like I can talk to everyone. People here are really nice. Teachers actually help (pause) Like if you ask questions, they won't disregard it. They help you understand it.

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?

Participant C: I guess that not everyone is nice and math because it's my worst subject. It's okay now though

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?

Participant C: I think because I have always like academic stuff and I have strived to get As. And I guess because I don't hate school and I like to learn, so that actually helps to like what I'm doing. Because then I want to get As and stuff. I used to love school when I was little, but now it's just like oh school, but I still like to learn.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant C: I'm actually not sure. Maybe it's because I do my best on everything. And my grades are pretty good

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant C: Like an 8 because I like (pause) sometimes I will not do my work and my grades will go down. So I feel like if I try to do stuff, then I have majority of control over how I do in school.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant C: I think 7ish because I've had pretty much the same academic goals for a while. I feel like if I keep having the same goals, then I'll have a good outcome.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant C: I feel like if you actually pay attention (pause) because there's a lot of people I know that don't pay attention (pause) I guess being successful, you would have to be open to a lot of stuff. I'm open to a lot of things. I feel like if you're an open minded person and if you work hard, then you will do well in school.

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant C: I'm nice to everyone (pause) I'm not one of those people who talk during the entire class. I get my things done. And I'm focused I guess. And then I'm nice most of the time. I try to be nice.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant C: Maybe because I don't have a busy schedule, so it's easier to focus on school stuff. I don't play any sports, so I can get all my things done and I don't have to worry about going to a game. Most people in my family are academically driven. I have pretty smart people in my family. I feel like that's one of the things. Even if I don't get As or something, they'll ask did you do your best? And if I say yes, they're just like well that's okay, so I feel like since there's not pressure to be an A+ average student, then I'm here to do my best and not be disappointed if I get a B on something. It helps for me to not dislike school.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant C: I don't know. I remember in elementary school when there was like the recommendation thing to go into the gifted program, I was like I don't know what this is. But I guess because in the elementary school it was [district specific gifted education program] and seventh and eighth it was [district specific gifted education program] like logic stuff and you had to think deeper into things. So I feel like it's because since I'm an open-minded person it's easier to for me to think outside the box.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant C: Um, I actually not sure. I think I was the only one. I feel like they don't pick people based on race. I feel like (pause) I know a lot of African Americans, and a lot of them don't (pause) and it's not because of whatever race they are (pause) they just don't pay attention and they don't actually work. I feel like it's just certain people are more driven to do things than others.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant C: I want to go college. I want to not just to a local college, but one that's really good. I want to be a musician or a writer or an artist. Something that's not a concrete set of rules because I like to be creative. I like music and writing and art and stuff. I write a lot and I write songs and I'm in art. I play guitar and I sing.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant C: I think at the end of fifth grade. I started realizing that it was extra (pause) it wasn't really extra stuff but it was like a different way to do thing because it was more problem solving and logic and thinking. And then last year, I understood that it was completely different from other core subjects.

Participant D:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?
Participant D: Kindergarten and XX school
Researcher: What do you remember about it?
Participant D: I had a teacher named Ms. XX and I was one of the two people that graduated.

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?
Participant D: There are a lot of nice people.
Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?
Participant D: I think that they're good. More so than others. The teachers' pay more attention to their students. And my mom (pause) we moved to this area, so that I could go to this school. Other schools don't have as much going on. How
Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?
Participant D: Everyone that I've met is nice, and there are a lot of smart people here. A lot of people are going to Yale. People are focused on doing well and have other activities like band and drama

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.
Participant D: My mom because she'll push me to do better if she thinks that I'm not doing as best as I can. I guess teachers, they help me get (pause) they also push, they push differently. They're not as strict, they're encouraging.
Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?
Participant D: She's sort of laid back (pause) she won't push you over the edge. She might wary of someone when she first meets them (pause) I guess she won't trust them. She has to get to know them before she trusts them with personal things. Teachers (pause) If they don't like something, they'll tell you. They don't skirt around. If I get a bad grade on something, then they'll work with me to figure things out that I don't understand.

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?
Participant D: Meeting new friends and taking different courses.

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
Participant D: Sometimes teachers (pause) they'll yell about me, but I didn't do anything

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?
Participant D: I guess I understand things, but I also like visual things like writing.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant D: I didn't know I was in it.

Researcher: What can you remember about yourself that was unique that may have helped you get into [district specific gifted education program]?

Participant D: I got those presidential awards and academic ones, but I didn't think much of those.

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant D: 8 because I think I can do well. But I would pick something that I can do well in

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant D: 6.5 because if I work towards it I might be able to do it, but there's also financial. Like if I wanted to be a doctor, I would have to go to all these different schools

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant D: Being social, joining activities, working hard

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant D: I work hard, but I haven't joined any clubs

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant D: I go to (pause) during the summer, I go to programs that are held at colleges. I went to a science program with NASA. This summer I'm going to a national youth leadership conference that helps you figure out what you want to do

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant D: I just thought that they picked people from classes. Maybe people who did better than some others. I didn't know that you had to be selected to go.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant D: Maybe it depends on (pause) I think it depends on what state they live in and maybe places like Idaho probably don't have as much. I think they shouldn't base it on your skin color. They should base it on you, and your academic performance

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant D: I want to go to college. I want to be a doctor. I want to be a neonatologist.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant D: I just found out today.

Participant E:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant E: Probably preschool or elementary school like finger painting

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?

Participant E: I feel like they're really open to new ideas and the teachers are really helpful and they give us good ideas on what is right and what is wrong.

Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?

Participant E: They have really high standards here. You're expected to get good grades. It's not like oh congratulations, you got an A. It's like oh well good, you're supposed to get that grade.

Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?

Participant E: There are some cliques and there are different groups of people, but I mean (pause) it's high school.

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.

Participant E: My family has helped a lot. My brother went to the academy of science while he was here. I was trying to follow in his footsteps. I knew I had to be able to get good grades. My parents have really helped me to make sure that I study and get all my work done.

Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?

Participant E: My brother is really sporty, but he's like a really hardworker and diligent and makes sure he gets his stuff done. My family as a whole is diligent and hardworking.

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?

Participant E: I feel like going on fun field trips. There have been field trips where you learn new things. And in class activities. Even in group projects, you may not be with who you want but you might make a new friend. You learn something that you may not have known before. I know in fifth grade, we went on an outdoor field trip and there was a fieldtrip

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
Participant E: Friend groups. I feel like people kind of talk behind each other's backs. There are some people who will be fake to you, but you just kind of have to make the most of it and not let them get to you
6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?
Participant E: I'm a gymnast and I practice. Over the summer, I practiced 35 hours a week. Having/being strict with myself. I feel like being in the gym has made me do better in school.
Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?
Participant E: I think that it helped that my brother did it too. I think good grades helped and a teacher saw in me that I could more (pause) and they thought that it would be a good thing for me. I feel like I wasn't very focused as a child, I was always doing 10 things at once. Like I couldn't focus on one thing
7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?
Participant E: 8 because even like your teachers obviously effect you, but if you really wanted to you could change your teachers. You have a lot of control. There's some things you can't control, like you can't get a concept no matter what you do. But you do have a lot of control to make yourself succeed.
8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?
Participant E: 9; you really. All your choices tie into your future and what happens to you. I actually did a paper on this. The way I see it is like there is a fork in the road and it keeps forking off. So a different turn here can put you over there is the way I see it. So as long as you keep making the right choices you're going to be fine and get where you want to be.
9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?
Participant E: A good support system. You have to have teachers that want to help you. It helps to have a supportive family that can help you with homework and help you study. Having friends. It really helps when your social life is in check. Like there's no drama going around that might make you unfocused. But just a lot of support from the people around you.
Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?
Participant E: I know I definitely have a lot of support with my family and my friends are very supportive too. It's been really hard because I actually have early release so I leave at 2:15 every day to go to practice and I take an extra class in

the morning to make up for that. So a lot of times, I can't get out with friends and I can't do this or that but they're still able to help me and be supportive of the decisions that I make. I just feel like everyone is helping me to be successful.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant E: Gymnastics definitely. Like our coaches are actually really strict about us and our grades because most of our goals are to get a college scholarship. It doesn't matter how good you are in a sport if you don't have an education. You can't get into college obviously if you don't have good grades. They are always telling us that we can do better both in the gym and outside (pause) get good grades. Our head coach, I went to school in [specific state] through part of middle school, I had practice in the morning and I would have to get to school late. There were probably 10 of us who did that and she would write a note for each of us and send it to the head of the school board and get us excused from that. And help with schedules, so that we weren't missing anything important.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant E: I feel like some people are afraid to do it because they don't want to be categorized like oh that's the nerd who only studies. I feel like a lot of people think that if they do that they're going to lose their social life and they're going to lose their friends because they are not fully at that school anymore. But that really wasn't the case; I kept all of my friends in elementary school. Nothing really changed for me besides I went to another school a couple of days a week.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant E: I feel like they really tell themselves like oh I don't need to be that smart. Oh, I'm only going to do this, I'm not going to get that far in life so I don't need my education. I feel like the standards need to be raised to be like oh I can be a leading surgeon in the nation and I can be like a principal. I feel like they don't think they can do anything, I feel like they're categorized as not being strong enough or they're too stupid they can't do this. And they are not really stepping up to the plate.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant E: I hope to do gymnastics and I was actually thinking about being a psychiatrist because I like talking to people about their problems

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant E: It was actually in fourth grade, but I was in a class. I was the only fourth grader in a class of fifth graders, so I felt like it was really hard to keep up.

That year, I realized that I was in a class with a bunch of smart people. That's when I realized that I was something different.

Participant F:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant F: When I was in (pause) Does Preschool count? When I was in preschool, we lived in [specific state] and I remember something about markers. I remember using markers a lot. I remember getting in trouble a lot. In preschool through first grade, I was constantly in trouble.

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?

Participant F: It's kind of drab. I'm trying to think of a good word for it. It's kind of holding cell like. It feels like there aren't a whole lot of things that I can do. Um, if you ask the administration, it would be a completely different story. But for me (pause) it feels kind of (pause) if you compare it to other high schools in the county, this one kind of feels like I'm constantly being stopped from doing something. And also I think it suffers from a lack of vivacity; people walk in the door and they frown. It's pretty strong. I know I do and some of my friends do. And I have never walked into school and been excited for the school day and things that I have to do.

Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?

Participant F: It's like very much, each subject area is either a strength or a weakness. We have a lot of strong writers because the standards for writing is so high here. We have just very talented English teachers in our department. Our math department suffers from a lot of (pause) people hate math. Our science department suffers from a lot of, what I feel is against. I think it's because if you have a degree in math or science, then you are going to be a great scientist, mathematician, or engineer. But if you're going to school for history, then you love it (pause) people really have to love it. And we have really talented social science/English teachers. And with math and science teachers, it's usually not. And most of the time if you have a really talented one, they aren't teaching. If you have a younger math and science teacher, then you really have quality. And our foreign language department, I only took Latin. And it's very different from language to language. I took it for 6 years and had five different teachers. The standards would be constantly shifting around. I remember our first year, we had a teacher from London and the next year I had a teacher from around here. The shift in the teaching style was night and day. And then I had a teacher from England and she disappeared, I think she got fired. And then I remember the next year I had a really great teacher, she was Ivy League educated and she knew language like it was her first language. Which is incredible because it is a dead language. That's not just unique to this school, coast to coast finding Latin teachers has been a problem. Our arts are doing pretty well. I'm in both drama and band. We have gotten superior ratings for every arts category except for choir.

Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?

Participant F: It's hard to describe and then not compare it. You can kind of get the best information from someone who has been to more than one high school. I never seen people get bullied in person. And people tend to be pretty friendly. They're friendly to me (pause) I'm friendly. I'm a friendly person. Cyberbullying happens everywhere, and people tend to solve their own problems from what I have seen. It's very interesting because high school's such a weird (pause) it's like a weird gigantic mixer. You come in with either no friends or a group of friends that you've thought you would be best friends with and then you switch completely. I'm sucked into the drama group and we are all kind of strange.

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.

Participant F: That's a very scholarship essay question, so I have had to answer this question. I think that my drive to do well academically came from home, but it wasn't what you think it would be. My parents were in the military and it was very much a you know (pause) I'm not a very do as you're told type person. I'm very rebellious by nature. It's a very do what needs to be done type of mentality. So then um, like I said when I was younger I used to get in trouble a lot so I didn't used to do that. But then when I moved here back in second grade. And for some reason, the competition was very fierce when I moved here for attention. So I didn't want to get into trouble any more, I didn't want to not know what I was doing. Because when I moved in and I remember people were doing (pause) they were adding and subtracting four digit numbers in the second grade. And I was like what is happening? And I remember where I moved from, we were adding and subtracting two digit numbers. So I was like okay, I need to not be embarrassed. So I really made sure I was only getting through that. That just sticks in my mind for some reason. I credit a lot of that kind of stuff to my mom and now in the later stages. I'm about to go to college, and I had two teachers junior year who wrote me letters of recommendation. And they were some of the most talented teachers that I ever had. And I had another English teacher who helped me revise my personal statement. I feel like I owe a lot to them.

Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?

Participant F: They each have (pause) the English teacher that helped me revise my personal statement, I have a lot in common with her. We are very kindred spirits because we think the same way and we have a lot of the same opinions. We have a lot of the same ideals. They are all very smart. They take care of business as it needs to get done. And they always analyze what's the best way to handle this situation. How can I manage my resources of time and output? They are always looking at how to improve things. They have a lot of common sense. They have a lot of clarity. They are able to analyze and see things for what they are.

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?

Participant F: Doing well in classes is definitely rewarding to me. And it's not (pause) I tend to (pause) I very much have two separate (pause) not separate groups of friends, but it's me and I have a very good relationship with each person. And very rarely do they all come together and congregate. I can separate my friends into two groups (pause) either they are from drama or they excel academically. And for my friends who excel academically, it's kind of hard for us to wrap our minds around people who feel grades are a bane. For us, it is a reflection of how hard we work. So that's positive for me (pause) having that feeling of accomplishment. Another positive experience for me is anytime we perform for marching band or for drama. Performing is always great. And um and class trips

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?

Participant F: Dealing with administration here has what's been. And I didn't really start noticing until after I got into school. And I don't think it's something that's just here, people don't want seniors to check out. When we were in sixth grade, they said work had in middle so you'll be prepared for high school. They branded high school as what you needed to do in order to get into college. That's the only thing they branded it as getting into college. They didn't say anything about being a wiser well-rounded person, meeting new friends, finding what you liked, they didn't do any of that. It was all about college college college. SO when our grade got into college, we were like oh mission accomplished. And it was like, we did what you asked. Every year they have this show about where everyone in the US is going to college, and about 13 out of 392 are not going to college. We have a really high at rate of colleges. You have a real massive outbreak of senioritis. I remember one time I was on the phone, and I had to call a scholarship to find out when I needed to hear back. And I called them and my counselor came up to me, she was with one of the assistant principals, and they asked me who I was calling. And I was like the [scholarship program], and she was telling me not to use the phone. Things like that have been occurring. Another has been dealing with teachers, and every year there's four that I have a good relationship and four that I just don't or it's rocky. We don't connect, and that is weird to me because I thought that teachers are supposed to connect with the good students. When I got into [university], it took a teacher 3 months to congratulate me. I got a lot of negativity and I didn't know where it was coming from. I had this really bad conversation... at the end of junior year, I was deciding what my electives were going to be this year. I had two spaces for electives, but I had three arts classes that I wanted to take Jazz Band, Drama 4, and Choir. I couldn't take all 3 but I knew I had to take another AP class to keep my GPA where it needed to be. My choir teacher was getting anxious, and my band teacher could have claimed the same exact concern. I had great rapport with the band teacher, he just wanted me to have a good senior year. And I couldn't be a leader in the band if I didn't take the class, and this year I am drum major so I feel like that's worth it. I remember at the end of junior year, we were sorting sheet music. All of the sheet music had to be sorted... 8 years of sheet music that had to be

alphabetized. It was going really well; the choir teacher comes in the room, face orange as a carrot and starts screaming at me because he did not know of I was going to do choir next year. And I am sweaty because I'm running around the room and hungry because I am missing lunch and I wasn't in the mood to have someone yelling at me. It was loud because it was in the band room, and I told him (pause) I never had to raise my voice in this building ever. I was like I cannot talk to you like this. And I was like you have forth block planning and we can go to your office and talk after I've had lunch. And I came back forth block and had a nice conversation. It took like five minutes.

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?

Participant F: I have a really good memory. And I do pick up on things pretty quickly if I'm paying attention. Outside of that, I don't have a lot of innate intellectual ability. I watch a lot of documentaries and I retain bits and pieces of random knowledge and I can toss it in an essay here or there. That makes me appear more intelligent than I actually am. I think it's me and my work ethic because I like to get things (pause) typically I work really hard to make sure what I am turning in isn't bad. And I don't want to be embarrassed especially at the beginning of the year, I want to come in fast and strong so that teachers know who they are dealing with. I'm not here to goof around.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant F: I don't know. I took a random quiz (pause) Oh you know in third grade I had this thing called [district specific gifted education program]. We did weird things (pause) talked about anagrams circles and shapes. I remember taking this really weird (pause) I guess it was like an IQ test. And it was like Ronny has ten circles, how many circles does Ronny have? Dad wasn't the type to push me academically. I attribute it to mom, but she was never on top of it either because she knew that I was on top of it. I managed my own academics. I remember being in [district specific gifted education program] and thinking what is this because we did really weird things. In [district specific gifted education program], I had really good times.

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant F: I'd say nine. And the only reason I wouldn't say a 10 is because I have a lot of internal efficacy. I set out to achieve. A lot of willpower. It would have been a 10, but I feel like one I started taking AP classes, the ball was set against me because I hate AP (pause) I hate college prep (pause) I hate everything about it. The classes aren't designed for everyone to do well. I feel like some of the classes aren't accessible to everyone. AP World for example (pause) the way [school district] does it is that AP World is the first AP that students take and it's such a bad first impression for Aps because it's too much material. And to take the entirety of history and boil it down to 70 questions very very choice things. I don't like the way that happens. Sometimes you don't have control of your grade

because the curriculum is squeezed right into a high school class. I took AP comparative gov't this year. [School district] doesn't offer AP Government, just comparative and academic. And I think that needs to change. If there was an AP US Government I would have taken that in a heartbeat. If there was an honors government, I would have taken that.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant F: I would say 7.5 and that would have been a lot lower except for two things (pause) willpower like I was saying before and having. Faith and fate are two interesting things. It's very hard to control anything like. It's out of your control because anything can happen. Other than that the only thing that can stop you from what you want to do is an unscheduled death.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant F: I would say having a good rapport with teachers because even though they are supposed to be fair, there's always a human variable. If you miss class making sure that you are on top of what's happening. As far as what you can do outside. The only thing I can think of is taking an SAT Prep course. Or just buying a book and practicing yourself. Getting work done and in as quick of time as possible and taking it seriously. And taking courses that you like, so you don't approach them as a. Because I know people who take (pause) and I've taking arts classes all four years, but I know people who've taken nothing but GPA bumps to get a higher GPA. And it ends up not working because they don't enjoy it and don't do as well. I've taken classes that I like and there's a bump. Everyone in the top 10 all takes arts classes (pause) they do strings, art, band. I did drama. We have an outlet class. You need a class in the day (pause) you can't go hard all day unless you want to burn yourself out. I haven't learned the importance of relaxation until after I got into college. It's really important. This year, I was like if I don't get it done at 11, then I won't turn it in. I have been able sleep better and eat better and now I have dreams. I didn't dream before.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant F: Other than family, I'm not sure if there's anything

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant F: I don't know. They never explained to us what we were doing while we were doing it. I didn't know it was a gifted program until we finished. I thought we were just doing weird stuff. They did away with it in high school and I'm getting to know other people who weren't in it and they were just as smart but

in different areas. I think that it would have been cool to have people who were gifted in different areas to come in, then you can really hammer in collaboration. Because I have a friend who is a phenomenal actress and singer because her academics is not where everyone else's is. And really they don't need to be because I think she's going to make it. I was very similar to people in [district specific gifted education program], we all had similar strengths. It's nice to bond over that, but over an extended period of time it was like okay, we got it. It's like a crayon box and they're all shades of blue.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant F: I think it starts at home. I wrote a really interesting essay about that actually. But not with the family at home. It's what the kid is exposed to when they are younger. In advertising and media, it's a bit of a reflection when you see grown up people who look like you and you think oh that can be me one day. But in particular tropes and roles, it's like that's all I can be one day. So then you start set of these walls and think the only thing I can do is. So I think changing that is huge. When I first saw Neil Degrasse Tyson talk about (pause) talk at all, I was like why aren't you talking about rapping or professional sports because that's all I ever hear. Whenever you have a black professional talking about something, all they tend to do is entertainment or sports (pause) that's it. You never see black professionals talking about math or straight up about literature or about politics. And you definitely don't see that as a child. So if you saw Maya Angelou for example, just going on about something literary, you would be like I want to do that. That's what I will do. And that leads to the driven mindset that can probably land them in a gifted program. I'm trying to think, I don't remember there being very many other gifted African Americans in my gifted classes

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant F: I'm going to go to [university] and double major in architecture and theater. And I will pick one hopefully or I might do neither or I might try both. I love their theater atmosphere and I love it enough to probably go to grad school there. I want to be really open to possibilities.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant F: I didn't know. I had no idea

Participant G:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?

Participant G: Um I remember a little but about pre K. I remember the teacher was scary and the parents would stand by the door. We were supposed to sit down, but for whatever reason my little sister didn't listen and she would walk up to the door and go and sit in different people's seats.

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?
Participant G: It's really nice. There's a lot of things you can do outside of just school. Like you can do sports. They have a lot of different clubs. I do track and cross country, [school specific gifted education program] which is like the gifted program for high school and I do CT
Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?
Participant G: It has different classes for different things, so if you are better at one thing, you can take things for your skillset I guess.
Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?
Participant G: It's pretty inclusive. It's not like some schools were you just stay in one group because I have friends in running, school, and music and different things.
3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.
Participant G: My parents definitely. A lot of my teachers are really great, especially here because they really want you to do well, so then you do well.
Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?
Participant G: They are really hardworking. They are really supportive. They are really nice.
4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?
Participant G: I get to interact with everybody. I made a lot of good friends that I wouldn't have seen. Starting sports because I did not do any athletic things whatsoever until I started high school. You have to be signed up here, but you can do different orchestras. The set up for classes are really nice. It's a lot more discussion. If I were home-schooled, it would just be me and a book but here there's a lot more chances to see other people's perspectives
5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
Participant G: It's just really structured, so sometimes you can't learn about what you want to because you have to get ready for a test or exam and that makes it stressful. Waking up in the morning.
6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?
Participant G: I'm really competitive. Not really against other people but against myself. Because if I get something, I say oh well I want to do it better next time or get higher next time.
Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant G: I think very weird. I see things kind of differently and I guess that's what they are testing for. That's what they said. Because there are a lot of smart people that don't make it into the gifted program.

Researcher: How would you describe your thinking?

Participant G: Somebody will look at something and they will see one thing and I will see the complete opposite. I think something's easy that's really difficult. But when I think something's difficult other people may find it easy.

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant G: 9; because you don't have control over your teachers or if they assign stuff, but you do have control over how much you want to work on it or what classes to take.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant G: 8; because it's pretty much the same as before but now there are more variables.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant G: They have to want to be successful because I believe that if you try the teachers here a really nice and they want to help. If you don't want to, you're not going to be able to get it because the classes are pretty hard.

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant G: I think I want to do well, so that helps.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant G: Music because it teaches you that you have to work hard and eventually you'll get it. And church. I play violin. Church because it tells you have to do more than just win, you have to be a good person and balance your life and stay calm.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant G: I'm think it's about how you think because anybody can be smart. But it's about how you look at things. Like my teacher always said it's about thinking differently and how to continue thinking differently.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant G: I mean they need to have opportunities to do it because not all schools have gifted programs. And then they need to know more about it because I went to private school and I switched the year that they started the gifted program. And my parents heard about it and they asked and they had to get me tested for it. So if they don't know about it ahead of time, then it would be kind of hard to get in it.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant G: I want to go to college, but I am not sure exactly what I want to do. Probably engineering. Either computer or biochemical engineering.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant G: I knew from the beginning because I had to get all of the tests done. It wasn't in the classroom. My parents told me about it ahead of time and when I found out about it I was very excited that I made it because I knew about it.

Participant H:

1. **Researcher: What is your earliest memory of school?**

Participant H: Um let's see. I went to preschool at XX Children's house of XX and I remember preschool and I remember when I was really really tiny, I think I went to xx academy for a month or two. I didn't like it very much because my grandmother lived with us at the time and I would stay with her until preschool. Fun, show and tell. Like [preschool program] was set up in a funny way because when I went to kindergarten, they would have a preschoolish thing in the morning. And the kindergarten class would get together in the afternoon. And I also remember for preschool and kindergarten, I still had to stay there, so they had this thing called rest time, which was basically, you just had to lie there for hours and it wasn't very fun.

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?

Participant H: I like it here. It's a good school.

Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?

Participant H: Kind of intense, you can choose not to take it on but then why not? It's not easy, but it's probably good that I have the opportunity to take classes.

Researcher: Do you feel pressure to take high level classes?

Participant H: Yes because I think that they try to track you either lower or higher, so they took away the choice to take AP Lang senior year. So I'm ending up taking it junior year and stuff, so I got four APs next year.

Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?

Participant H: Socially it's fine. I'm probably not the best person to ask because I'm not (pause) like I don't get around the socially. I don't know. I don't know that many people. Like I usually stay in my own little bubble. I've got my friends that I've had since like (pause) most of my friends I've known since elementary school and then I have other friends that I know from middle school. The middle school feed directly into the high school and a few kids that come from private schools, so your friend group stays mostly the same.

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.

Participant H: Probably my parents because they a really intense and lots of pressure. I don't know. Apparently my family's super well-educated. My dad's all like your aunt went to Harvard, your grandfather went to Harvard, your cousin went to and they all did these wonderful things and now you have to go and do all of this wonderful stuff and get As. Bs are not good things in my house. Maybe my friends because they help me out and my sister because I see that she is trying to as well as I did.

Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?

Participant H: I guess supportive but also pressuring. I guess you can say nice, but parents aren't always nice. My parents and my mom definitely crazy... like good work ethic, but kind of like I never miss any school like ever. Even when I'm sick, so my mom just quit her job but before that she worked full time and she had us. My dad also works full time. And my friends, I have the ones that take of school whenever and the other ones that are always there kind of like me.

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?

Participant H: I get all of my friends from school so that is positive. I'd be very lonely if I didn't come to school. Also, learning stuff and also I wouldn't have any crazy stories if I didn't come to school. It would be very boring. I like learning most things, so like history I don't I kind of like English but not really. And then math, pretty good at math. And science, science is good.

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?

Participant H: Stress, constant stress because they always want you to do like okay come to class, do nothing, and now you have three hours of homework to do when you get home. So that's mostly just stress. And then I remember when I was elementary school, sometimes middle school, people weren't always that nice to me but I'm like I'm usually pretty good about flying under the radar and no one really cares that much about me. I don't really get picked on that much.

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?

Participant H: Well, like first I always show up to school which helps a lot. Also, this may sound bad, but I'm also naturally kind of smart at academics and stuff. Like I'm pretty good at multiple choice tests and stuff.

Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?

Participant H: If you were in [district specific gifted education program], you were automatically in [district specific gifted education program] and I just decided to stay there because a whole bunch of other people didn't like it. I didn't like it either, but I heard that all of the resource teachers were really horrible, so I was just like, I think I'll stay here. And then for [district specific gifted education program], [district specific gifted education program] was actually really fun and I think you had to take this test to get in there and it's like they've made the test scores higher every year after that you have to do to get in, so I probably wouldn't have made it in the year after me or the year after the year after me. Like my sister didn't get in, but she probably got around the same scores. And I guess, generally doing well. Although I wasn't always like that. I remember in first through third grade, never doing my homework, but I would always ace the tests. So they would kind of say that I studied and others would realize that I didn't study.

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?

Participant H: 8.5 because mostly it's how much time/effort I put into it

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?

Participant H: 8.5, so it's still up there because I have no idea what I want to do, it's probably still up there

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?

Participant H: I guess doing all of the homework and then studying because not everyone... some people need to study longer other people. And also knowing the people in your class because if you don't know the people in your class, you will constantly have questions, we constantly have questions because not all of the teachers are extremely explicit about stuff like you have to ask around or somebody knows.

Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?

Participant H: Probably just like effort, like trying to do all the stuff. I'm faster at memorizing stuff than some other people, so I might not have to study as long. And I also have my friends, like 6 or so people. I have one close friend in my classes than I can ask or text at midnight because I need help.

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?

Participant H: Family, and I don't know just random extra-curricular activities, but mostly family. They know a lot of stuff even though I think for math and stuff, I'm a little bit beyond what they remember. For history, my dad's really helpful because he is kind of like a walking encyclopedia because he does like international relations stuff, so he has all this stuff in his memory. I can ask him where an obscure country is and he'll know. I do basketball and I guess I don't do it anymore, I stopped in elementary school but I used to do tae kwon do, and it kind of taught me how to me tough. There weren't very many girls there and the guys were not nice. And then eventually you get to be a black belt and you get all this recognition.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant H: I don't know. Some of it gets a reputation. Like [district specific gifted education program] wasn't really that good but [district specific gifted education program] taught me a lot of stuff. I know how to make a rollercoaster out of paper. So parents felt like it was taking their kids away from school, but I remember with [district specific gifted education program] they didn't do anything once we left. Apparently it was party day.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant H: I don't know. For [district specific gifted education program], I don't know because I could probably count the amount of black kids on my hand in the whole school. I never noticed it when I was little, but I was always the only black in the class. Apparently they tried to diversify one in each class or less because there wasn't even that many in the grade. I think a lot of it is you're at home environment. Like some of them aren't necessarily as motivated and then others are motivated and they just don't have the opportunities. And then others just feel like people just tell them that they're not smart and they just give up too early. And then they kind of track you in this school system, so one you've been tracked to the lower class, like the lower classes you're kind of stuck there.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant H: Go to college. Somewhere on the east coast. I'm not really sure what I want to do except I ruled out engineering because I went to this engineering thing. It will probably end up being more science and math related because I don't really like English that much, but I like history.

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant H: When they said [district specific gifted education program] for gifted students and I guess it just meant that I was smart. I didn't know what it was exactly for

Participant I:

1. **Researcher:** What is your earliest memory of school?
Participant I: Um when I was three, I was in pre K and I remember falling out of the chair because I didn't know how to sit without handrails and the teacher kind of teaching me how to sit in the chair

2. **Researcher:** How would you describe your school?
Participant I: Um very diverse and uh the teachers are very helpful. The students are for the most part pretty nice and accepting to one another.
Researcher: How would you describe your school academically?
Participant I: The teachers are pretty easygoing as long as you self-advocate. They're pretty understanding of sports and stuff like that. Classes were pretty easy this year.
Researcher: How would you describe your school socially?
Participant I: It's really easy to make friend because we're a smaller school so most classes get along like sophomores and you know everybody gets along.

3. **Researcher:** Sometimes students have people in their lives that have played an important role in their academic success. Tell me about the people in your life that may have played that role.
Participant I: Definitely my mom and my dad because they push me to do my best and they give me incentives when I do good. Stuff like that. I had a science teacher this year named Mr. Gary that was really nice. He helped me a lot.
Researcher: What characteristics does this person have?
Participant I: Leadership definitely, they're very organized, they're very uh vocal. Like they voice their opinions and that's pretty much it
Researcher: How would you describe their work ethic?
Participant I: They have really good work ethic. They always like you know uh. Like my mom and my dad always have me do assignments like not at the last minute. Not procrastinating, so they are very proactive.

4. **Researcher:** What are some positive experiences that you have of school?
Participant I: Um, everything is pretty positive. Being on the honor roll every year is pretty positive. Pep rallies are really fun. Middle school, we had a banquet and I got a few awards. That was pretty fun. I've been in band for the past four years, and that's been a fun experience meeting people.

5. **Researcher:** What are some negative experiences that you have of school?
Participant I: Like, I tend to not focus on the negatives. But I'm pretty smart, so people call me nerd and stuff like that. But like that doesn't really bother me that much. I was bullied in the fourth grade, I don't know why this girl didn't like me,

but she was trying to take all my friends away from me. But I guess we're okay now. It hurt then, but now I'm over it.

6. **Researcher:** What is it about you that helped you to do well in school?
Participant I: Um, very social and I talk to teachers if I need help. I'm not afraid to like ask for help. I'm pretty good at making friends and stuff.
Researcher: What is it about you that helped you get into the gifted program?
Participant I: Because I'm different. I'm not Indian or white, I'm probably one of the few black people in that program and my mom helped to put together a really good portfolio because I went to a Spanish immersion school when I was in pre k through the beginning of second grade that helped get me into the program. And I did well on my test. Like not a lot of those kids play sports and stuff. They don't do a lot of activities outside of schoolwork and tutoring. I play soccer.

7. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over how you do in school?
Participant I: 9 pretty much because it's up to you to get your work done. Or a ten because it's up to you to get your work done. Let me take that back. 9 because you may not understand how the teacher teaches, but at the end of the day it's your responsibility to ask for help and do you work on time and that kind of thing.

8. **Researcher:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much control do you believe you have over your future?
Participant I: I'd say a seven probably because you can start now and you can plan, but you don't know what's going to happen. You can always uh get sick or you might get into an accident, so that can change your plan for the future. But as long as you have a plan or start to make one, you should be okay.

9. **Researcher:** What do you believe makes a student successful in your school?
Participant I: Working hard, studying, self-advocacy, being social, talking to your counselor. That helps a lot with class schedules and once when my grandma passed away, I was away for a week and they helped me get back on track.
Researcher: Which of these do you believe that you have?
Participant I: I definitely do self-advocate and I am very social. I do talk to the counselors a lot. They know me well. I do my work on time and that kind of thing

10. **Researcher:** What outside of your school do you believe has played an important role in your academic success?
Participant I: Structure at home. My mom has me and my brother do my work after school and then we go to sports. If that structure wasn't there, I don't think I

would succeed. Family support as well. My cousin stayed with us, she helped me get to and from school while my dad was in Afghanistan.

11. **Researcher:** Why do you believe that you participated in the gifted program and others have not?

Participant I: Um, I think I have because I guess I don't know if this is true or not but it seemed like my mom really wanted me to go into this program and she thought it would be good for me, while some of my friends were like what's that. Why is your mom doing that? I guess their parents hadn't even talked to them about it. So my mom really wanted me to be in this program and they saw that I was doing well and my tests and stuff like that.

Researcher: What would need to happen to make more African Americans included in gifted programs?

Participant I: Um, help from the parents and like. A lot of people I know, there parents don't care what they do. Sometimes the parents just don't care enough to help their students do well in school or get in the gifted program. Probably help from the school too because to the school we're just another number, a minority.

12. **Researcher:** What are your plans after high school?

Participant I: I want to go to college. I want to be an occupational therapist and stuff like that. I like helping people and I like listening to other people's problems. My mom (pause) we were doing some research, I'm really into music, so they said that said that one way you could help your patients is through music therapy. And I like science a lot too

13. **Researcher:** When did you know you were in the gifted program and what that meant?

Participant I: Third grade and me and two other students kept getting pulled out of class to do special activities. And everybody was like why are you leaving, and I was like I don't know I'm just doing fun things and learning stuff. And that's when I learned that I was in the gifted program. And in fourth and fifth grade, I learned that I was in [district specific gifted education program] and then I really understood because I was learning all this math and we were learning about the judicial system and doing mock trials and building bridges and stuff. I was like wow, we don't do this in the regular class.

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