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An Analysis of the Representation of Hispanic Students in Gifted Programs in Florida's K-12 Public Schools

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF HISPANIC STUDENTS IN GIFTED PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA'S K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study was conducted to investigate characteristics influencing the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs across Florida K-12 school districts. Characteristics included school district enrollment, school district poverty level, school district percentage of minority students, grade level, and policies and practices relevant to gifted identification. Results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between school district enrollment and the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted education in 2016-2017, indicating that Hispanic gifted representation was higher in Grades 6-8 than in Grades K-5 or Grades 9-12. Qualitative methods were utilized to analyze exceptional student education (ESE) policy manuals in two purposively sampled school districts and data from interviews with gifted coordinators in those same districts to determine how policies influenced school-level practices in increasing Hispanic representation in Florida's K-12 gifted programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Federal and state provisions have been enacted to appropriately identify students in specialized populations and render services for their success in the classroom (EEOA, 1974; ESSA, 2015; Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03019; Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.0331; FEEA, § 1000.05, 2015). Despite these provisions, researchers have indicated that equitable representation among the gifted population has never existed and that there is a pronounced underrepresentation among gifted minority groups (Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

Originally, a committee report (Marland Report, 1972) issued by then U.S. Commissioner of Education, S.P. Marland, became the first federal document to raise public awareness of the challenges in gifted education, specifically in serving disadvantaged populations, such as minorities. The report encouraged schools to define giftedness in terms of its relevance in their communities and to utilize the federal definition in the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1969 (1970) as a potential framework. The first federal law defined gifted children as, “those who have outstanding intellectual ability or creative talent, the development of which requires special activities or services not ordinarily provided by local educational agencies" (ESEA, 1970, p. 152).

The Marland Report (1972) elaborated on this definition by stating that giftedness was also manifested in high achievement and/or potential ability in one or a combination of areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and/or psychomotor abilities (p. 2). The Marland Report (1972) reported that a minimum of 3-5% of the school population encompassed these criteria and acknowledged resurfacing issues in the implementation of gifted services. Such

issues included the cost of gifted testing as well as the apathy and hostility of teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and psychologists (Marland Report, 1972).

Gifted Education continued to receive the attention of the federal government through the enactment of the Gifted and Talented Children Act (1978). Several years after the publication of The Marland Report (1972), the Gifted and Talented Children Act stated that gifted and talented children were the "nation's greatest resource for solving critical national problems in areas of national concern" but that their educational needs were not being met (p. 150). The act also granted federal funding for the establishment, maintenance, operation, and improvement of programs for gifted students K-12 (Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1978). Additionally, the needs of disadvantaged gifted and talented children were addressed through targeted funding initiatives (Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1978).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the federal government continued to establish provisions for underserved populations in K-12 public schools. The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program (1988) reiterated the idea that meeting the needs of gifted and talented students was a matter of national interest. The act noted that economically disadvantaged families posed the greatest risk of being unrecognized (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 1988). Local agencies had the responsibility of providing in-service training to retain historically under-represented groups such as females, minorities, limited English Proficient (LEP) students, the physically handicapped, and gifted and talented students. The intent of this act was to implement practices for students in these special population groups so they could be identified and appropriately placed into gifted programs. At this stage of the initiative, the priority was on identifying gifted students who would not have been identified through traditional identification procedures. The intent was not to assess degrees of representation

among specific racial/ethnic groups. The federal and state education initiatives suggest a continued importance in increasing the representation of historically marginalized gifted students. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 1993) stated that gifted talent is present in all sociodemographic groups regardless of their levels of English proficiency or socioeconomic status. The most recent reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) reenacted the Javits program to continue the mission of appropriately identifying gifted students, providing them with specialized services, and training school personnel to provide high-quality instruction for this population group. The Act continues to support the identification of high-ability students who have not been previously identified or would not have been identified through traditional assessment practices (ESSA, 2015). The Florida Plan for K-12 Gifted Education (2013) and the Florida Administrative Code (FAC) 6A- 6.3.019 (2002) reported a statewide and school district-wide initiative to increase gifted identification among under-represented groups called “Plan B.”

Statement of the Problem

The state of Florida has one of the largest K-12 minority populations in the United States; moreover, it is also one of the four states where gifted education is mandated and fully funded (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016; Support for Gifted Programs, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a disparity between the representation of white students and minority students (i.e. Hispanic, African American, and American Indian/Alaska Native groups) in gifted programs (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). The current study focused on the representation of one minority population of interest, Hispanic students, for two primary reasons: (a) the Hispanic population is the fastest growing demographic group in the United States, and (b) the Hispanic

population in Florida is among the largest, in absolute and proportional terms,in the U.S. (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016).

Researchers have suggested that proportionate representation among the gifted population has never existed (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). A 1991 addendum to FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) established an alternative identification plan called Plan B to reduce the degree of underrepresentation across the state of Florida. The plan specified boundaries of eligibility among historically under-represented groups to include English learners or students from low-socioeconomic standing (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). Despite state measures to increase gifted representation across racial groups in gifted programs, the problem has persisted (Lord & Swanson, 2016). At the time of the current study, there was scant research examining the effects and potential influences of school policy pertaining to gifted identification, specifically from a state to local level (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; McBee, Shaunessy, & Matthews, 2012). Thus, there was a need to examine potential influences that may contribute to the representation of Hispanics in the gifted population across Florida K-12 public school districts.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate several characteristics of Florida K-12 school districts that might influence the representation of Hispanic populations in gifted programs. Characteristics to be investigated included school district enrollment (a structural characteristic that manifests a salient element of the organizational setting), school district poverty level and percentage of minority students (i.e. non- white; contextual characteristics that manifest salient elements of the student population), and relevant policies and practices (procedural characteristics that manifest expectations that guide and govern the processes for gifted identification). The investigation of structural and contextual characteristics focused on a sample

of 44 (of 67 total) Florida K-12 school districts for which there was viable data. The investigation of procedural characteristics focused on two school districts identified using an equity threshold calculation (Ford, 2014a, 2014b).

Research Questions

Three overarching questions guided the study,

1. In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percentage of minority students)?
2. To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])?
3. What identification procedures and practices are in place in a sample of two Florida K-12 public school districts identified using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) methodology as (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold) and (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold)?
    a. In what ways and to what extent do school district policies address measures to adequately identify Hispanic students who may be potentially gifted?
    b. In what ways and to what extent do school district practices align with school district policies and/or established best practices with regard to identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs across two Florida K-12 public school districts?

Definition of Terms

Operational definitions facilitate the understanding of concepts. Following are the operational definitions used to analyze the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs across K-12 Florida school districts.

Administrative practices. School-level processes for implementing school districts' administrative procedures and school board policies.

Bilingual students. Hispanic K-12 students attending Florida's public school system who are not enrolled in a school district's ESOL program but are dual language speakers.

Equity Index. A formula for determining the minimally accepted level of underrepresentation for gifted enrollment (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). An equity threshold of 20% determines minimal levels of underrepresentation while controlling for allowances that contribute to group differences. When underrepresentation surpasses the 20% Equity Index (EI) threshold, underrepresentation is beyond statistical chance and human-made barriers may be at play (Ford, 2014a, 2014b).

Gifted. Students in the K-12 Florida public school district who have "superior intellectual development" and show a need for special educational services (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). Students have been admitted into a gifted program in Florida's K-12 public school district using a traditional identification process (Plan A; Florida Plan, 2013, 2017) or through a state-approved alternative identification program (Plan B; Florida Plan 2013, 2017).

Policies. Written documents that guide the procedures and day-to-day operations in public school districts. The school districts' school board representatives enact policies.

Grade levels. Grade-cluster comparison of gifted representation in elementary, middle, and high schools across 67 Florida school districts. The study utilized the grade level

configuration used in Johnson, Godwyll, and Shope (2016): elementary grades (K-5th), middle grades (6-8th), and secondary grades (9-12th).

SES. A measure of poverty level that captures families that are economically disadvantaged. Students eligible to receive free or reduce lunch (FRL) and participate in their schools' FRL program for the 2016-2017 school year under the National School Lunch Program (Definitions, 2017; Income Eligibility Guidelines, 2015). Students who receive or are eligible free or reduced meals through an approved Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school based on Direct Certification or household family size eligibility (Definitions, 2017; Income Eligibility Guidelines, 2015).

Underrepresentation. The proportional representation of one population of interest in a particular program (in this study, the percentage of Hispanic students who participate in gifted education) is less than the proportional representation of another population of interest (in this study, the percentage of White students who participate in gifted education) within that same program (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). Ford (2014a, 2014b) utilized a 20% equity threshold methodology to investigate minority (i.e., all non-White) underrepresentation; here it is utilized to investigate Hispanic representation.

Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is an appropriate framework to analyze potential factors that influence the racial/ethnic representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. The purpose of this section of the literature review is to demonstrate how tenets of critical race theory explain gifted identification practices in America's K-12 public school system.

CRT arose as a result of the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights movement which dismantled race-based discrimination in every facet of American society (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-

Billings, 2009). This movement was significant in America's legal system through affirmative action initiatives (Taylor et al., 2009). In 1980, Bell, an African-American tenured professor at Harvard's School of Law, resigned because the university refused to implement hiring practices that included women of color on the faculty (Taylor et al., 2009). Harvard students requested a Black professor to teach classes and, once the school failed to respond positively to the request, the students created an alternative class that became the premise for CRT as a field of study (Taylor et al., 2009). Many student-led protests and boycotts resulted due to the lack of representation among Latino/a professors, African Americans, or Asian Americans (Taylor et al., 2009). The result was a system-wide institutional criticism of policies meant to increase the representation of minority groups in every facet of American society (Taylor et al., 2009).

LatCrit Theory

An extension of CRT called Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit). CRT originally addressed the continuous subordination of Black students, but the initial focus of CRT has expanded to include other members of marginalized populations such as the Latina/o community (Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Huber, 2010; Solorzano, 1997; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Taylor et al., 2009). Both CRT and LatCrit support the increased representation of marginalized groups across all sectors in education (Owens & Valesky, 2015).

CRT and LatCrit have provided the basis for efforts to gain representation of marginalized groups in education (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995) described CRT in a school setting using three central propositions. The first central proposition is that race continues to determine inequities in the U.S. The second central proposition is that property rights drive society, and the third is that race and property provide a method of analyzing school and social equities (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995).

An understanding of CRT and LatCrit means acknowledging that racism still exists (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Researchers have suggested that CRT explains low expectancy levels among minority groups and perceptions of cultural deficits (Solorzano, 1997). Under the CRT and LatCrit construct, racism is re-defined as "not the acts of individuals, but the larger, systemic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment" (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 4). Therefore, there are outlying factors contributing to the racial/ethnic representation of minority, specifically Hispanic, students in gifted programs.

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in theoretical and empirical work on the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs. Such work explores systemic and human-made factors associated with the representation of under-represented population groups in gifted programs, and directly frames the investigation. This section presents an overview of salient work on minority representation in gifted programs and possible school district influences on representation.

Researchers have proposed thresholds of racial/ethnic representation in gifted programs. Originally, Terman et al. (1926) believed gifted students were found only among those who scored in the top 1% in general tests of intellectual ability, such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence scale. However, researchers have suggested that only 2-3% of the general population would be identified as gifted if the minimal threshold was determined by a measure of intelligence alone (i.e., Intelligence Quotient of 130 or higher) and that Blacks and Hispanics would still be under-represented (Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012). Florida's population has grown increasingly diverse in recent decades (i.e. 2000 - present), and with that have come increased

concerns for high-achieving, low-income, minority students (Ford, 2014a, 2014b; McBee et al., 2012).

The literature has illuminated several options to increase the representation of minority students into gifted programs. The most recent alternative identification plan, Plan B, has broadened the gifted eligibility criteria of potentially gifted students so that low-SES or English Learners have a greater probability of participating in gifted programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016; FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002; McBee et al., 2012). In McBee et al.'s (2012) research, identification placements doubled because of Plan B's implementation, specifically among Black students and those from low-SES statuses. In Card & Giuliano's research, a district-wide universal screening measure and a Plan B alternative identification plan led to a 174% increase in gifted identification, with an 118% increase for Hispanics, and a 74% increase for Blacks (Card & Giuliano, 2016). All second graders in a large urban school district who completed the ability test were considered for gifted screening if their IQ fell between 130 or 115 points and they were English Learners and Free or Reduce Lunch (FRL) students (Card & Giuliano, 2016). This alternative program supplemented the traditional teacher and parent nomination system because researchers have suggested that disadvantaged students are historically under-referred by both educators and parents (Card & Giuliano, 2016). The results suggested that language barriers among English learners may have contributed to the increase of gifted identification in Plan B-eligible students. Additionally, the data have suggested that traditional referral systems overlook disadvantaged students with the highest achievement levels, regardless of cognitive ability (Card & Giuliano, 2016).

A multi-criteria approach has also been proposed as an alternative identification method to identify underserved populations in gifted programs from low SES backgrounds (Lord &

Swanson, 2016). A multi-criteria approach has three or more subjective and objective measures to identify giftedness among high-ability students (Lord & Swanson, 2016). Researchers who distributed a survey on the status of gifted programs in elementary and middle schools across 2,000 school districts found a decrease in school districts' initiatives to provide equitable identification plans for of gifted students (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2013a; 2013b). The elementary school survey reported that 49 % of responding school districts had strategies for talent development in under-represented populations, 58.5 % had alternative identification plans, and 15.14% reported they did not need to identify under-represented students because the school districts' demographics did not serve that population or lacked the resources to do so. Overall, 30.6% of participating school districts reported that the overarching goal in elementary schools' gifted programs was to identify students whose learning needs were not being met and to equitably identify gifted students from diverse backgrounds. The results of middle school surveys indicated that 43% had strategies to develop talent and 40% had alternative identification plans; however, 27.2% did not report a need to identify under-represented students because the school district did not have a representative population or resource to do so. Overall, 24.6% reported that the overarching goal in middle schools' gifted programs was to identify students whose learning needs were not being met and to equitably identify gifted students from diverse backgrounds (Callahan et al., 2013b).

The current extant literature shows how cultural and ethnic diversity has continued to be an issue in the representation of minority students in gifted programs. Additionally, researchers have proposed possible options to address the underrepresentation within the parameters of school-district and school-level characteristics (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Card & Giuliano,

2016; McBee et al., 2012). In this study, the researcher sought to understand how systemic and human-made factors influenced the representation of minority students in gifted programs.

Overview of the Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was used to examine the potential influence of school district characteristics and policy/practices on gifted minority representation. Phase One of the study utilized multiple regression analysis to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between (a) independent variables measuring school district characteristics and (b) dependent variables measuring the percentage of Hispanic students accepted into gifted programs. The purpose of a multiple regression analysis is to allow for the simultaneous assessment of the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and multiple independent variables and the relationship between the dependent variables and each independent variable separately while controlling for the influence of other independent variablea (Steinberg, 2011). Additionally, cross tabulations were used to explore the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs by grade configuration (i.e., K-5, 6-8th, 9-12th). Specifically, data presented in cross tabulations showed the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs across all 67 Florida school districts. Cross-tabulation is a matrix table that allows for descriptively presenting the relationship between two variables (Green & Salkind, 2008). Table 1 presents an overview of the independent and dependent variables for the Phase One research questions as well as the analyses used to respond to Research Questions 1 and 2 in this study. The results of the analyses permitted the identification of factors associated with the proportional representation of Hispanic students in gifted education programs among Florida school districts.

Table 1

Phase One: Research Questions 1 and 2, Variables, and Instrumentation

Research Questions	Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Tests/Analyses
1	School District Characteristics (Total enrollment, % of FRL, % of minority students).	% Hispanic G/T students % of Total Hispanic Students	Multiple Regression
2	K-12 Grade Configurations (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)	% of Hispanic G/T students	Cross tabulations

A mixed-method research design was utilized to examine the potential influence of school district characteristics on the representation of Hispanic students identified for gifted education. The results of the quantitative phase were used to further examine the strength and direction of relationships between school district enrollment, socioeconomic status (the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals in 2016-17), and minority enrollment (the percentage of non-white students in 2016-17). A descriptive view of Hispanic representation in gifted programs, using cross tabulations, disclosed statewide patterns and trends of representation by K-12 grade configuration (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12]).

Phase Two extended the Phase One analyses, using qualitative techniques as shown in Table 2, to explore the extent to which school district policies and school district practices influence the representation of minority students in gifted programs. The researcher conducting the study used Ford's (2014a, 2014b) equity index formula as a sampling frame to select two school districts that are (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold) and (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold). The school districts' placement

policy manuals for placement of low-income and/or minority gifted students was used to investigate identification procedures. Furthermore, the researcher interviewed two school district coordinators from those same two school districts to investigate how school district policy guidelines inform and influence school-level practices in placing Hispanic students in gifted programs.

Table 2

Phase Two: Research Question 3 Focus, Research Methods, and Data Sources

Research Questions	Topic	Research Methods	Data Source
3a	School Districts' Gifted Identification Practices	Equity Formula Content Analysis Protocol Content Analysis (N=2; substantially below the equity index and at or near the equity index)	Ford's (2014a, 2014b) Equity Index Formula[a] Archived primary documents (e.g., ESE Manual, state laws, administrative codes, FDOE)
3b	School District Policies and School-level Practices	Content Analysis Semi-structured interview (N=2) with school district research specialists in pre-selected school districts.	Extant analyses of archival data and data from research questions 1-3a (e.g. Content Protocol, multiple regression, cross tabulations)

Source. Ford, D. Y. (2014a). Segregation and the underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics in gifted education: Social inequality and deficit paradigms. *Roeper Review*, *36*(3), 143-154.
[a]20% Equity Index formula is the basis for identifying relevant school districts.

Target Population

The target population was the 67 Florida public school districts during the 2016-2017 school year. Fifty school districts had identified gifted students per FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002), but

only 44 reported viable data that allowed them to be included in the study. Sixteen school districts reported 10 or fewer cases of Hispanic gifted students; data for these districts were masked following FLDOE protocols. An additional seven school districts did not report data on their number of Hispanic students identified for gifted education. Thus, the sample of districts used in the analyses includes only those districts reporting 11 or more Hispanic gifted students.

Sampling Method

All school districts with viable data were included in the Phase One quantitative analyses. The FDOE reports data on 74 school districts. Of the 74, 7 were excluded due to lack of viable data. For the purpose of this study, a school district was excluded because it served very specific student populations (Deaf/Blind, Virtual School, university-affiliated lab schools). Schools excluded were Florida A&M University Laboratory Schools, Florida State University Laboratory Schools, University of Florida Laboratory Schools, Florida Atlantic University Laboratory Schools, Washington Special School District, Florida Virtual Schools, and Schools for the Deaf/Blind (FDOE, 2016).

The sampling method used for Phase Two (qualitative analyses) was maximum variation purposive sampling (Stake, 1995) in an attempt to identify differences in policy and practice between school districts that meet equity expectations and school districts that do not. Ford's (2014a, 2014b) 20% Equity Index (EI) formula was calculated for all 67 Florida public school districts. The formula determined the minimal levels of underrepresentation for gifted enrollment by calculating the percentage rate of enrollment of a racial group to determine the degree of underrepresentation (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). A 20% equity threshold determines a school district's desired percentage to reach minimal levels of representation across racial groups (Ford, 2014a 2014b). Ford's EI formula is calculated in two steps: (a) the proportional size of the population

of interest (in this study, the percentage of Hispanic students in the total student population) is multiplied by a threshold of 20%; (b) the value obtained is then subtracted from the value for the proportional size to obtain the Equity Index. Thus, the formula is *Percent Hispanic students in the general population – (Percent Hispanic students in the general population x 20%) = Equity Index*. The equity index should represent, at minimum, the percentage of students from the population of interest that should be represented in gifted programs. Then, the EI for each district was subtracted from the actual percent Hispanic students within the gifted population to determine the extent to which school districts met or exceeded the expected minimal level of representation. Two school districts were selected to be included in the study, utilizing the results of the Equity Index computation: (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold) and (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold).

Data Collection

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) public database was used as the primary data source. Using FDOE data, the 2016-2017 student membership, gifted student exceptionality report, and lunch status report (measure of SES) were populated. Grade level configurations (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) were obtained from Johnson, Godwyll, and Shope (2016).The school districts' policies and guidelines were obtained online through the school districts' public websites.

After analyzing the school district policies of two pre-selected school districts against the categories, the researcher contacted and interviewed two school district coordinators from the same school districts to learn how school district policy guidelines drive school-level practices in placing Hispanic students in gifted programs. The interview items were flexible based on preliminary results from Research Questions 1-3a (i.e., quantitative results might inform

qualitative analysis such as patterns suggesting dramatic differences across school levels might prompt a question exploring that dynamic). The items assisted the researcher and participants in their reflections as to how school district ESE placement guidelines and policies guided school-level practices. The interviews determined if, and to what extent, gifted underrepresentation had been addressed in policy guidelines and what actionable practices were in place to leverage the factors contributing to this underrepresentation.

Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using quantitative (in Phase One) and qualitative (in Phase Two) methodologies for data analysis. Specific steps and processes for the two phases are explained in the following paragraphs.

Phase One

To address Research Questions 1 and 2, Phase One of the study explored school district characteristics that were associated with the percentage of Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 gifted programming and investigated whether the percentage of Hispanic student population in Florida's K-12 gifted programming varied across grade configuration (i.e., elementary school [K-5], middle school [6-8], and high school [9-12]). For Research Question 1, multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the independent variables, school district enrollment (total student enrollment for 2016-17), socioeconomic status (the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals in 2016-17), and minority enrollment (the percentage of non-white students in 2016-17) predicted the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs. For Research Question 2, cross tabulations were utilized to present the

frequency distributions of Florida gifted student enrollment across grade configuration (i.e., elementary school [K-5], middle school [6-8], and high school [9-12]).

Phase Two

To address Research Question 3, Phase Two of the study used two school districts that have been purposively sampled as previously described to represent one under-represented and one minimally represented school district. The researcher created a content analysis protocol (Appendix A) to analyze the school districts' ESE policy manual for placement and identification provisions to identify low-income and/or minority high-ability students into gifted programs.

The content analysis protocol was created using archived primary documents (e.g., state laws, administrative codes, and FDOE materials) as well as scholarly journal articles that evaluate the most appropriate and current practices for increasing the identification of underserved groups of students. FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) was used to define potentially gifted students. For the purpose of this study, these students included minority members, specifically Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 public schools. The conceptual themes used in the content analysis protocol were cross-referenced against the evidence-based practices in "Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards 2: Assessment" (2010) to determine the extent to which characteristics of adequate representation were addressed by the categories in the content analysis protocol.

The researcher used nine categories representing conceptual themes (Appendix B) that assist in identifying potentially gifted students from underserved populations. The categories were: (a) Multiple Criteria for Identification (number of criteria), (b) Varied Criteria for Identification (different types of criteria), (c) Gifted Identification Committee, (d) Gifted

Program Design and Procedures, (e) Gifted Program Evaluation, (f) Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability, (g) Parental Advocacy and Involvement, (h) Community Advocacy and Involvement, and (i) Gifted Program Goal Specification. The categories were matched to the specific standard and evidence-based practice(s) reported on the "Pre-K- Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards" (2010).

This mixed-methods study utilized qualitative content analysis of archived primary documents, data, and interview items (Appendix C) to address the research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The researcher determined exploratory themes by identifying key words or categories that were replicated in the content analysis protocol (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Broad codes were assigned to those themes after tallying the frequencies of their occurrences during the analysis. Findings that yield inadequate results were disclosed in tables with results to support the descriptions (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2015; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Credibility techniques were used to verify the results after completing content analysis. Peer-faculty debriefing was utilized to determine whether inferences from the data were plausible and if the categories and themes answered the research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This was achieved by comparing participants' interview responses to the content analysis protocol checklist in school districts that were (a) under-represented and (b) minimally represented and vice-versa. The researcher also used audit trail and triangulation to review, evaluate, and report on findings (Fraenkel et al., 2015). These techniques allowed the researcher to solicit feedback from stakeholders, including participants in the study, to help reduce validity threats, biases, assumptions, and misinterpretations in content analysis (Maxwell, 2004). The study was initiated only after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Central Florida (Appendix D).

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will disclose potential influences that contribute to the underrepresentation of Hispanic students in gifted programs across Florida K-12 public school districts. State and district-level decision makers have had little guidance in addressing trends in gifted underrepresentation, and there has been a lack of coherence in state gifted programming policies (Lord & Swanson, 2016; McBee et al., 2012). According to Lord and Swanson (2016), legislative mandates and state policies should be "significant equalizers of opportunities" (p. 2) and should provide equitable access to education for all students. Thus, the researcher aimed to identify factors contributing to the inequitable distribution of student talent between Florida school district lines.

Delimitations

1. The school district population was delimited to the state of Florida.
2. The study focuses on the representation of one student population (Hispanic students) historically under-represented in gifted programs.
3. The population was delimited to school districts that reported more than10 cases of students in the population of interest. School districts that reported less than 10 student cases were masked from the FDOE report and, subsequently, eliminated from the sample data. The school district population was also delimited to exclude school districts that served very specific student populations (Deaf/Blind, Virtual School, Washington Special School District, university-affiliated school labs).

Assumptions

1. Each Florida school district has accurately reported from the racial/ethnic groups in question (total number of Hispanics, Hispanic gifted, total number of minority, gifted minority).
2. The local educational agency appropriately followed FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) guidelines to determine gifted eligibility (through traditional Plan A or alternative means Plan B).
3. All school districts have a state-approved School District Policy and Procedural Handbook for ESE placement, which would include gifted placement, and it is the most current version.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, theoretical framework and extant literature, overview of methodology, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, and the assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review. Topics discussed include existing research on representation and underrepresentation of the population of interest, as well as demographic and policy analyses of gifted education in the state of Florida. Additionally, Chapter 2 explains factors that impact gifted identification such as school level and school-district characteristics, minority inclusion, socioeconomic status, self-fulfilling prophecy, and parental advocacy.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. It includes the selection of data used in the study, statistical analysis, qualitative analysis and credibility techniques, and methods used. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings including the results from quantitative and

qualitative analyses along with findings synthesizing the two. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

Summary

Little research investigating whether school district characteristics influence the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs has been conducted. Additionally, there are no data that show whether Hispanic students in gifted programs are more under-represented in certain grade configurations (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) across all Florida school districts. In this study, the researcher investigated potential influences for gifted underrepresentation in the Hispanic student population. Current school district policy guidelines and practices were also analyzed to determine how school districts were addressing the increased participation of marginalized racial/ethnic groups in gifted programs.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Racial/ethnic representation in gifted programs has been a concern in the field of education since the 1930s (Bernal, 1974; Jenkins, 1936; Wright, Ford, & Young, 2017; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Education remains a state function. Yet, local educational agencies have discretion as to how students in gifted programs are identified and serviced in their school districts (Zirkel, 2005). Ford (2003) indicated there is a lack of research showing that White middle-class students are being denied gifted services but there is a wealth of studies whose findings demonstrate a disparity in the representation of white and minority students in gifted programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Yoon & Gentry, 2009), especially Hispanic students (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012). There has been little research into the characteristics that influence the representation of Hispanic student in gifted programs. The present study examined factors contributing to the distribution of Hispanic students in gifted programs across Florida school district lines using 2016-2017 Florida Department of Education (FDOE) data on student enrollment in K-12 gifted programs.

The state of Florida has one of the largest K-12 minority student populations (4.8 million) and one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the United States (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016, U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Florida's Hispanic population in 2000 through 2010 grew more than 50% and represented 24% of the general state's population (Stepler & Lopez, 2016; Vogel, 2013). The state of Florida has one of the highest percentages of Hispanic/Latino membership (24.5%) comparable to only five other states: New Mexico (48%), California (38.8%), Texas (38.8%), Arizona (30.7%), and Nevada (28.1%) in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Additionally, Florida is also one of the four states where gifted education

has been mandated and fully funded (Support for Gifted Programs, 2016). Given Florida's increasingly diverse population, there has been a growing concern and focus on establishing equity in gifted educational programs across all sociodemographic groups (US Department of Education [USDOE], 1993; Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Thus, Florida provided an ideal setting for the study given the state's demographic characteristics, as well as its unique gifted programming initiative.

The extant literature has explored challenges in defining and identifying gifted students in underserved populations. Researchers have indicated that contextual characteristics may influence the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Carillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Castellano, 2004; Lakin, 2016; McBee, 2006; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003). Examples of contextual characteristics discussed in this literature review include poverty level, race and ethnicity, self-deficit thinking, minority inclusion, advocacy, and language barrier. The literature review also traces structural characteristics that may influence gifted representation within the context of Florida, such as Florida's demographic trends and minority (i.e., non-white) gifted representation at a school district and school-level (Florida Plan, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Finally, studies are reviewed that highlight procedural characteristics and the effect of Florida's school district policies in increasing the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs (McBee, Shaunessy, & Matthews, 2012).

Representation of Hispanic Students in Gifted Programs

An interest in the racial/ethnic representation of students in gifted programs started in the early 1900s through the first intelligence tests (Brown et al., 2005; Terman et al., 1926). Terman, a professor at Stanford University, revised an instrument called the Binet-Simon scale as a measurement of mental competence in the United States (Brown et al., 2005). Terman used this

new instrument to quantify giftedness in children who scored at the top 1% of the population or met a cutoff score in intelligence test scores of at least 135 (Brown et al., 2005). The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale is still used to-date as a viable instrument in gifted assessment as an intelligence test (Carman, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003). This test measures five weighted factors: knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, working memory, and fluid reasoning (Becker, 2003). Researchers have suggested that gifted programs' identification processes place more weight on traditional tests of cognitive abilities than non-traditional measures (Carman, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003).

Nevertheless, the American population has been increasingly diverse since the early 20th century, as waves of immigrants migrated and established new roots in this country (Skiba, 2012). The definition of "giftedness" and the representation of gifted students has changed with the changing social demographics (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Hatt, 2007). Researchers have maintained that the American public education system strives to Americanize children who speak a different language and/or adopt varying cultural beliefs in its public schools (Borland, 2005; Brown et al., 2005). Intelligence tests were a means to classify students into groups of cognitive abilities where certain students were predictably ranked by their intelligence (Borland, 2005). Students' high test scores on intelligence tests were used to track their academics in schools, provide them with unique educational opportunities, and place them into specific occupational/career paths (Borland, 2005). Those with genetic intellectual superiority had better prospects for advantageous career tracks and high social status than those who performed poorly (Borland, 2005).

Although the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale was revised in 1972 to include minorities in the norm sample, research on minority representation in gifted programs dates back to the

1930s (Bernal & Reyna; Jenkins, 1936; Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). Jenkins (1936), in a study of African-American children of superior intelligence, explored the development of giftedness through age, grade-level, and gifted characteristics. Students in Grades 3-8 who had attended seven all-black public schools in Chicago participated in the study. Of the 512 nominated students, 103 scored an IQ of 120 or above on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. The results of this study showed that age did not affect the number of Black gifted students across grade levels, disproving research suggesting that degrees of representation decreased after primary school (Jenkins, 1936). Findings also implied that differences in intellectual test scores were not due to race, that gifted Black children manifested giftedness similar to other American students of superior intelligence (Jenkins, 1936). Jenkins stated that Black students of superior intelligence benefit from environments that render appropriate educational opportunities to develop gifted talent. In contrast to past findings, Jenkins found that African American children with a high IQ were present in those environments. However, the sample of students in Jenkins' study was predominantly Black. Therefore, the findings were not generalizable to communities with heterogeneous populations.

Research on gifted education in the 1960s and 1970s focused on expanding the definition of giftedness, proposing eligibility criteria, and selecting assessment measurements to capture all intellectually gifted students, including those in special education programs (Bernal, 1974; Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). Researchers believed identification should begin in kindergarten and continue throughout students' K-12 schooling (Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). They also believed identification measures should include multiple-criteria, as well as program planning based on knowledge base, abilities, achievement levels, and personal attributes (Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). Additionally, they advocated that identification measures should grow more

complex as students move from lower to upper school levels (Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). Patterns of behavioral traits were deemed more important in identifying gifted characteristics than a static list of traits all potentially gifted students should possess (Bernal, 1974). Spanish speaking countries relied on the United States' verbal and nonverbal tests of intelligence and creativity to identify potentially gifted students (Bernal, 1974), and these definitions and identification measurements were not culturally sensitive (Bernal, 1974; Bernal & Reyna, 1974). Professionals translated or adapted assessments to fit their needs (Bernal, 1974). In the 1970s, specific behavioral traits were generally accepted as true signs of giftedness regardless of students' cultural background (Bernal, 1974).

Ford's (2003) and Stein, Hetzel, and Beck's (2012) research have provided additional insight in explaining racial/ethnic representation in gifted programs. Stein et al. (2012) argued that the racial composition of the minority population of interest in school districts should approximate the school district's demographic and USDOE (1993) stipulated that gifted talent is present in all sociodemographic groups regardless of students' levels of English proficiency or socioeconomic status. Researchers have suggested that social ills influence the underrepresentation of culturally diverse students (Ford, 2003). Examples of such ills include biases and attitudes, differences in gifted definitions and assessment practices as well as varying gifted policies, procedures, and gifted programming models (Ford, 2003).

Researchers have proposed two schools of thought to explain issues of racial/ethnic representation in gifted programs. One rationale for gifted under-representation is the presence of "inappropriate identification procedures, limited definitions of intelligence and giftedness, and prejudices from members of the educational community" (California Association for the Gifted, n.d., p. 1; Stein et al., 2012). The theory postulates that school districts' racial composition

should equal the district's demographics (Stein et al., 2012). Another rationale provides that there has been an unequal distribution of minority students in gifted education, and certain students have contrasting systems of support that benefit majority (i.e. White) ethnic/cultural groups (Borland, 2005; California Association for the Gifted, n.d.). A lack of resources and limited perceptions of gifted talents also contribute to the inequitable access to gifted education (California Association for the Gifted, n.d.; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Stein et al., 2012). This is evident in the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic groups, specifically Hispanics (California Association for the Gifted, n.d.; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Stein et al., 2012).

Researchers have observed that racial/ethnic representation of students in gifted programs varies by grade level (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). Teachers are less inclined to nominate students for gifted programming in their later years of schooling because of the influence peers of similar age groups have on their social and personal development (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Peterson and Colangelo (1996) explored patterns of gifted underachievement using students' school files. Student files contained students' attendance, tardies, achievement, and behavioral records. Gifted students in the study were White, middle class, and in Grades 7-12 (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). The researchers found that junior high years (i.e., Grades 7-9) were critical in identifying patterns of underachievement and that the transition into high school did not contribute to a decline or improvement in achievement (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). Walker and Pearsall (2012) reported that, in middle school more than in high school, Latino students intentionally withdrew from academic endeavors to compensate for peer acceptance and were wary of racial bias and ethnic labeling in their environment. These underlying differences show potential factors that influence the gifted representation in elementary, middle, and high school (Callahan, et al., 2014; Moon & Brighton, 2008).

According to some researchers, students have been under-represented in gifted programs (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Yoon & Gentry (2009) studied the overrepresentation of Asian Americans in the United States by analyzing primary and secondary school survey data from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Civil Rights Data Collection for 2002, 2004, 2006. The data showed that Hispanics have been under-represented in gifted programs, but their representation has gradual increased since 1994 (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, and African American students were continuously under-represented; in 2006, Hispanic were under-represented in 43 of 50 states (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Even though White and Asian gifted students have been overrepresented in most states since 1978, this trend has continued (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Researchers conducting the study confirmed disproportionality in gifted programs by race and ethnicity, with increased Hispanic representation among Hispanic students in several states, including the state of Florida (Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

Conflicting Definitions of Giftedness

Researchers have studied factors contributing to the underrepresentation of minority and bilingual students in gifted and talented programs. These factors include conflicting definitions of giftedness and uncertainties in how it is manifested in increasingly diverse student populations (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012). Callahan et al. (2014) found there was a limited transferability between gifted research and school practice. The discrepancy is evident in the semantics of how giftedness is defined in state-by-state definitions (Lord & Swanson, 2016). State or local educational agencies are not required to adopt a widely accepted definition of giftedness and school districts' gifted learning approaches depend on the state's educational initiative toward gifted learning (Callahan et al., 2014; Support for Gifted Programs, 2016). Therefore, school

districts have been independent in implementing their gifted programs, including which gifted learning models to use (Callahan et al., 2014). The following sections explore extant literature on the characteristics of gifted students with particular emphasis on Hispanic students.

Characteristics of Gifted Students

In the early 1900s, Binet constructed a test used by educators, physicians, and military personnel to measure mental competency (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). The test utilized an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) which calculates intelligence through a normative sample of age-level peers and provides an IQ based on a comparison of intelligence with peers of similar age groups (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). Lewis Terman, a professor at Stanford University, revised the Simon-Binet Scale, renamed it the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale and used it to measure intelligence across five factors: knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, working memory, and fluid memory (Becker, 2003; Terman, 1973). Terman determined that giftedness was measured using cut-off criteria and that students who scored in the top 1% (i.e., IQ of at least 135) would qualify (Renzulli, 1978). The results of intelligence tests would be used to determine students who needed special educations services, track their academics based on ability, and justify racial superiority (Hatt, 2016; Skiba, 2012).

A review of extant literature revealed that intelligence tests have continually placed racial/ethnic groups (i.e., minorities, Blacks, and Native Americans) and immigrants (i.e., Mexicans, Eastern and Western Europeans) as inferior to a dominant racial/ethnic group (Jensen, 1969; Skiba, 2012). The Eugenic Movement (1900-1930s) led to a period where measures of intelligence were used to compare IQs to those of the average white male (Skiba, 2012; Terman, 1922). Intelligence was linked to White superiority and the denial of access to schooling to those who had lower intelligence (Hatt, 2016; Terman, 1922). Terman disapproved of the

individualized approach to educational reform and stated that the purpose of intelligence tests was to identify mental inferiority and segregate individuals from the rest of society (Skiba, 2012). As minorities and immigrant subjects continued to score low IQ results, researchers believed that hereditary traits and genetic superiority were attributed to giftedness. Nevertheless, IQ results were compared using European normative samples and did not use minorities until 1972 (Terman & Merrill, 1973).

In Terman's (1926) longitudinal study, 1,000 highly gifted students ages six to 13 were chosen to participate after scoring 140 and above on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test. The first volume of this 30-year study, *Genetic Studies of Genius*, confirmed traditional views of giftedness as a measure of above-average intellectual and physical ability. Terman (1926) determined that students' superiority was evident at the onset of their growth and development and proposed that hereditary traits were responsible for gifted potential. In Terman et al.'s (1959) later findings, he recognized that scores on intelligence tests were not viable measures to distinguish highly successful participants (i.e., socioeconomic status and education level) from least successful. Findings from his follow-up study showed four overarching traits most successful people in his study possessed: (a) persistence in accomplishing tasks, (b) integration toward goals, (c) self-confidence, and (d) freedom from feelings of inferiority (Renzulli, 1978; Terman, 1959). The least successful and most successful participants had significant differences in their emotional and social adjustment, and drive to succeed (Renzulli, 1978; Terman, 1959).

This study paved the way for a broader definition of giftedness and a path for multiple forms of intelligence (ESEA, 1970; Marland Report, 1972; Renzulli, 1978). Federal law defined giftedness as an ability found in children who had outstanding intellectual ability or creative talent (ESEA, 1970). Those students benefited from differentiated educational programs that

were not provided in their regular school curriculum to develop those talents (ESEA, 1970). In 1972, the U.S. Commissioner of Education published a federal committee report called the Marland Report (1972) to explain different gifted achievement indicators as forms of intelligence: (a) general intellectual ability, (b) specific academic aptitude, (c) creative or productive thinking, (d) leadership ability, (e) visual and performing arts, (f) psychomotor ability (p. 2).

Renzulli (1978) proposed a Model of Giftedness called the "Three-Ring Conception" (p. 182) where factors such as motivation, creativity, and leadership skills interact together to cultivate gifted talent. This model groups gifted students into three clusters: above-average abilities (i.e., capable of processing information), high levels of task commitment (i.e., demonstrating high levels of endurance, focus, academic interest), and high levels of creativity (i.e., showing flexible and creative thinking). His research on gifted education placed less emphasis on cut-off scores as determinants of talent and ability. According to Renzulli (1978), giftedness is not measured only through hereditary traits of intelligence (i.e., high IQ). He stated that gifted programs favor high achievers and efficient test-takers over students who overcompensate for low test scores through high levels of task commitment and creativity. Renzulli (1978) corroborated earlier findings by Ripple & Mar (1962), which stated that highly gifted students showed little relationship between creativity and intelligence, but those same relationships were present in samples of students with heterogeneous IQ levels (i.e., low, average, high). Renzulli believed gifted characteristics interact and overlap with each other. Therefore, gifted characteristics may not be manifested in isolation.

As issues in the representation of minority and disadvantaged students in gifted programs persisted, the federal government continued to expand on the definition of giftedness and

provided initiatives to identify talent across all sociodemographic settings (ESSA, 2015; Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 1988). The USDOE (1993) stated that giftedness was found in "all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor" (p. 26). Yet, a traditional definition of giftedness as an innate hereditary trait has been reframed, so experience also plays an instrumental part in the developing talent and intelligence (Castellano, 2011).

Characteristics of Hispanic Gifted Students

Researchers have suggested that Hispanic students manifest giftedness in ways that deviate from the traditional characteristics (Bernal, 1974; Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Chang, 2017; Hatt, 2016; Lara-Alecio & Irby, 2000; Pereira & Gentry, 2013). Extant literature has highlighted Hispanic student characteristics and habits related to giftedness. These characteristics include the ability to interpret and relay communication in multiple languages (Pereira & Gentry, 2013), acquire a second language rapidly and form strong communal ties (Granada, 2003), respect authority figures, and maintain familial connections (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012). Additionally, researchers have demonstrated that Hispanic students in gifted programs resist traditional conceptions of giftedness and intelligence (Chang, 2017; Hatt, 2016). They also have keen abilities to code-switch through performative uses of language and manipulated specific dialects in sophisticated ways, depending on societal expectations and environmental settings (Martinez, 2017). Finally, Hispanic students in gifted programs are aware of the ethnic/racial and cultural stereotypes surrounding their "smart" identities (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016).

Lara-Alecio and Irby (2000) added a fourth dimension to Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness. They purported that Hispanic gifted students not only possess above-average ability, high levels of task-commitment, and creativity but also have sociocultural-linguistic/analytic characteristics. The researchers believe that characteristics of giftedness are

perceived differently because of how intelligence is viewed within the ethnic/racial groups' socio-linguistic cultural context (Lara-Alecia & Irby, 2002).

Bernal and Reyna (1974) highlighted gifted characteristics in their studies on gifted manifestation among Mexican students. Bernal and Reyna (1974) sought to define giftedness within small Texan towns that had high populations of Mexican families. Gifted definitions were limited to high IQ scores and high verbal or scientific abilities, and mental tests were used as the basic criterion for gifted selection (Bernal & Reyna, 1974). An interview and questionnaire were given to Mexican American children and their parents to assess communal perceptions of giftedness. The results showed that parents valued "verve," perseverance, and the ability to thrive in an incompatible educational and social environment as key indicators of intelligence (p. 33). Bernal and Reyna found that Hispanic gifted students valued other characteristics as measures of intelligence rather than solely academic pursuits. For instance, they valued pride, maturity about intellectual content, and the utilization of their talents and intelligence to service to others. In addition, they sought self-improvement (i.e., inquisitive), were expressive both in social and academic language, and valued class participation and collaboration more than academic grades as descriptors of intelligent behavior (Bernal, 1974).

Granada's (2003) research on gifted bilingual students demonstrated that this minority population of interest acquired secondary language at a faster rate than non-gifted students. In addition, their rate of acculturation in school settings and their ability to mediate socio-cultural and linguistic differences in home and school environments have been found to be common characteristics of Hispanic gifted students (Granada, 2003). Cultural awareness (i.e., social and religious), familial (i.e., commitment to home-life roles and responsibility) and community involvement are characteristics and habits of Hispanic gifted bilingual students (Granada, 2003).

Chang (2017), in an ethnographic study, explored how traditional definitions of intelligence are perceived in different sociocultural contexts. The study took place in a Western state with a majority White (80%) population and a relatively small Hispanic (i.e., 27.2%) community (Chang, 2017). Counter-story telling was utilized to portray the experience of 10 Latina students living in a white-dominated community. The participants were freshmen and sophomore high school students who had earned at least a 3.0 grade point average (Chang, 2017). Like previous studies on perceptions of giftedness in Hispanic communities, Chang's participants saw "smartness" as a label that misrepresented their true talents and abilities (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Granada, 2003, Hatt, 2016). Hispanic students believe smartness was manifested through divergent talents and skills such as "street smarts" and *facultad* or intuition, the capacity to see beyond the surface level (Chang, 2017, p. 36). The participants in Chang's study possessed a resistance to orthodox labels and traditional perceptions of smartness. Instead, they valued common sense, critical thinking, moral shrewdness, and resiliency rather than labels prescribed by White dominant groups that had the power and status to define who they were in a school setting (Chang, 2017).

Extant literature implies that gifted characteristics are defined based on the perceptions of assigned racial/ethnic groups. Researchers have postulated that giftedness among Hispanic students is influenced by familial values pertinent to their socio-linguistic cultural context (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Granada, 2003; Lara-Alecio & Irby, 2000). Such findings contribute to a greater understanding of the factors that influence the representation of this minority group in gifted education.

Best Practices to Identify Hispanic Students into Gifted Programs

Researchers have proposed best practices that support an increase in the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Extant literature demonstrates evidence in support of multi-criteria approaches to identify gifted students (Identifying and Servicing, 2016). Examples include matrices (Callahan et al., 2013a), behavioral characteristics checklists, universal screening (Lakin, 2016), cultural-fair tests (Lara-Alecio & Irby, 1996; Shaunessy, Karnes, & Cobb, 2004), cumulative school files (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996), and alternative identification plans (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002) to identify traditionally under-represented gifted students.

Researchers have determined that intelligence and achievement tests are more frequently used and more heavily weighted than non-traditional measures (Carman, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003). Traditional measures include intelligence, aptitude, and academic achievement tests, whereas non-traditional measures include teacher, parent, and self-nomination, as well as classroom grades (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b). Traditional identification procedures indicate that giftedness is a static form of intelligence (i.e., IQ), but this stance limits the eligibility criteria of potentially gifted students from diverse backgrounds who may manifest giftedness differently (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Granada, 2003).

A multiple criteria approach consists of three or more subjective and objective measures to identify giftedness, and it is often managed through a matrix (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Lord & Swanson, 2016). A matrix identifies students who are dominant in certain areas of giftedness over other areas. According to Callahan et al. (2013a), “The use of a matrix with a cut-off score likely places an over-emphasis on test scores, combines scores in arbitrary ways that violate sound assessment practices that do not reflect matching student characteristics to

program services" (p. 16). In some cases, matrices are used inappropriately in that students are identified gifted by first assigning ranges of score tests and rating scales, ranking the scores from highest to lowest, and choosing top scoring students for the gifted program until slots are filled or cut-off scores are chosen (Callahan et al., 2013a). The manner in which multiple criteria approaches and matrices are used may influence the ethnic/racial representation of students in gifted programs (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Lord & Swanson, 2016).

Card and Giuliano (2016) suggested that a multiple criteria approach has the ability to broaden the eligibility criteria for some but deny access to others (Ritchotte, Suhr, Alfurayh, & Graefe, 2016). The intent of this approach varies by state, school district, and school, but it has been designed to apply multiple cut-off scores on specific measures (e.g., achievement scores) or indicators (e.g., teaching ratings) as an admission criterion into gifted programs (Ritchotte et al., 2016). Ritchotte et al. compared the self-perceptions of non-identified and identified gifted students, finding similarities in scores as measured by the School Attitude Assessment Survey–Revised (SAAS-R) Subscales. Results indicated that students who would benefit the most from gifted services were not identified due to an overreliance on predetermined cut-off scores on ability and achievement tests (Ritchotte et al., 2016).

Overall, researchers have supported the use of non-traditional and traditional approaches to identify high-ability students through the use of alternative identification plans (Card & Giuliano, 2016; FAC, 6A-6.03019, 2002). Extant literature has revealed that intelligence and ability tests capture some potentially gifted students but using varied measures of gifted assessments broadens the eligibility criteria to include culturally and/or linguistically diverse populations and economically disadvantaged students (Callahan et al., 2014; Ritchotte et al., 2016).

Culture-fair tests identify giftedness in students who may show intellectual dominance in non-verbal or visual-spatial abilities but score low on verbal reasoning and reading comprehension (Shaunessy et al., 2004). Students with English language deficiencies and speakers of a second language often used these tests (Carman & Taylor, 2010; Shaunessy et al., 2004). Cultural-fair tests such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability test (NNAT) offer a valid and reliable way to identify diverse students, including Hispanic students with or without limited English proficiency (Naglieri, Winsler, & Booth, 2004; Naglieri & Ford, 2003). The intent of NNAT has been to create a culture-free and, therefore, bias-free assessment (Warne, 2009). Nevertheless, researchers have contended that the presence of culture adds a "multidimensional sociopsychological quality" (p. 49). This forms an essential part of an individual's knowledge-base and contributes to his or her intelligence (Warne, 2009).

A more ethnically biased method is evident in a gifted identification instrument called the Hispanic Bilingual Gifted Screening Instrument [HBGSI] (Fultz, Lara-Alecio, & Irby, 2013; Irby, Lara-Alecio, & Milke, 1999). The HBGSI is a teacher-rating scale that consists of a 78-item questionnaire arranged in a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire lists Hispanic gifted characteristics grouped into 11 clusters: motivation for learning, social and academic learning, cultural sensitivity, familial, collaboration, imagery, achievement, creative performance, support, problem solving, and locus of control (Irby et al., 1999).

Scant research has been found on the effectiveness of the HBGSI in increasing the presence of Hispanic students. In one study, the HBGSI and NNAT were administered to K-4th bilingual students (Irby et al., 1999). The results showed favorable similarities in scores between instruments, and the findings demonstrated a potential for capturing unique Hispanic gifted characteristics (Irby et al., 1999). The most recent study showed evidence of reliability and

concurrent validity of the HBGSI with the Bilingual Verbal Ability Test (BVAT) when administered in schools in predominantly bilingual Hispanic schools in Texas (Fultz et al., 2013).

Card and Giuliano (2016) utilized a combination of universal screening and intelligence testing as part of a district's alternative plan to increase the representation of minority students (i.e., low income, Black, and/or Hispanic students, English language learners). By using universal screening, all grade-level students were administered at least one formal assessment for initial identification (Card & Giuliano, 2016). This method has proven to be more effective in identifying historically under-represented students (i.e., African American, Hispanic, female, low socioeconomic status, and English learner students) than teacher or parent referral (Lakin, 2016).

In Card and Giuliano's study, all second graders in a large urban school district completed a nonverbal screening test (i.e., Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test-NNAT) and an intelligence test. The researchers followed the school district's Plan B eligibility requirement, which lowered the referral threshold from 130 to 115 points. This alternative program supplemented the traditional teacher and parent nomination system because disadvantaged students have been known to be historically under-referred by both educators and parents. The results of the study showed that Plan B compliers were 21 points more likely to be Hispanic and 27 points less likely to have parents who speak English (Card & Giuliano, 2016). This information reveals that language barriers among English learners may have contributed to the representation of Plan B eligible students in gifted programs. Traditional referral systems overlook disadvantaged students with highest achievement levels (Card & Giuliano, 2016). Overall, the use of universal screening led to a 174% increase in gifted identification, with a 118% increase for Hispanics, and a 74% increase for Black students (Card & Giuliano, 2016).

Minorities' intelligence and academic achievement tests have been determined by culturally-loaded and biased assessments that effectively identify white middle-class students as gifted (Ford & Grantham, 2003). The multiple criteria approach has shown to be the best way to help increase the representation of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Callahan et al., 2013a; Card & Giuliano, 2016; Irby et al., 1999)

Conceptualizing Underrepresentation

The ethnic/racial representation of students in gifted education has been concern for the past 40 years due to the underrepresentation of Hispanic students and the overrepresentation of dominant majority groups, or non-minority White students (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). The Marland Report (1972) proposed that the percentage of gifted and talent students should represent a minimum of 3-5% of the total student population. However, as observed by Mayfield and Young-Eun (2012), only 2-3% of the general population would be identified as gifted if the minimal threshold was determined by a measure of intelligence alone (i.e., IQ of 130 or higher). Consequently, Blacks and Hispanic students would remain under-represented (Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012). With society's increasingly diverse population, the trend of underrepresentation among minority students in gifted program has continued (Ford, 2014a, 2014ba; McBee et al., 2012). Racial composition thresholds have been used to conceptualize underrepresentation in order to identify potential inequities in the representation of racial/ethnic groups in gifted programs (Ford, 2014a, 2014b; Wright et al., 2017).

Ford's (2014a, 2014b) research in the representation of Black students in gifted programs has proliferated to discussions about the underrepresentation of other minority ethnic/racial groups. Her research has indicated that high-potential Hispanics and Black students are placed in homogenous educational settings that limit their access to advanced placement opportunities

(Ford, 2014a, 2014b; Wright et al., 2017). Wright et al. (2017) purported that the current trend of underrepresentation leads to the exclusion of ethnic/racial groups in gifted education programs and the preservation of seats for historically served white students.

Therefore, underrepresentation is best conceptualized by defining it. Ford (2014b) stated that underrepresentation is present when the proportion of ethnic/racial groups to the general population in gifted education is less than the portion of that ethnic/racial group to the general population. The Relative Difference in Composition Index (RDCI) is used to determine the difference in composition between the gifted and general populations, expressed as a percentage, in order to find degrees of representation (Ford, 2014b). By calculating RDCI, researchers have confirmed that equity has not been achieved for Hispanic students (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). In 2006, Hispanic students comprised 20.41% of enrollment in public schools but had a 37.3% underrepresentation and remained under-represented from 2002 (41.5%) through 2004 (34.9%; Ford, 2014a, 2014b).

Ford (2014a, 2014b) proposed an equity index formula to calculate a school district's desired percentage to achieve minimal equity across racial subgroups in gifted programs. Extant literature discussing the equity index formula has clarified the difference between a racial quota and thresholds of minimal representation (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). Ford stipulated that racial quotas lead to a representation of Hispanic gifted students that equal the percentage of Hispanic students in the general population, and that such practice was illegal (2014a). Instead, according to Ford (2014a, 2014b), a 20% equity index threshold calculates minimal levels of representation while controlling for group differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, gender). Ford (2014a) stated that if the percentage of ethnic/racial representation exceeds the threshold, it is "beyond statistical

chance that human error is operating (attitudes, biased, or inappropriate tests, and instruments), and policies are potentially discriminatory against Hispanic or black students" (p. 106).

Ford's EI formula is calculated in two steps: (a) the proportional size of the population of interest (in this study, the percentage of Hispanic students in the total student population) is multiplied by a threshold of 20%; (b) the value obtained is then subtracted from the value for the proportional size to obtain the Equity Index. Thus, the formula is *Percent Hispanic students in the general population – (Percent Hispanic students in the general population x 20%) = Equity Index*. The equity index should represent, at minimum, the percentage of students from the population of interest that should be represented in gifted programs. Then, the EI for each district was subtracted from the actual percent Hispanic students within the gifted population to determine the extent to which school districts met or exceeded the expected minimal level of representation. Zirkel (2005) indicated that local educational agencies hold great discretion as to how gifted education services are implemented. Wright et al. (2017) defined equity as being "fair, responsive, and impartial, especially for those who have the fewest resources and least advocacy, and who have experienced structural inequality due to historical exclusion" (p. 50). Researchers have indicated that disproportionate representation of ethnic/racial groups is not attributed to IQ scores alone but to different patterns of thinking, to unfair selection processes, and real differences in the characteristics of the population of interest (Jenkins, 1936; Jensen, 1969). Important questions for the future of equity and excellence in gifted education include how severe underrepresentation should be in order to ignite change in school district policies and school-level practices and when this underrepresentation risks becoming discriminatory (Ford, 2014b). Ford (2014a, 2014b) proposed a method to acquire minimal levels of representation, but

it is unclear how such processes have contributed to identifying school districts' levels of representation in the state of Florida.

Factors Influencing Representation in Gifted Programs

Poverty Levels

Existing literature has confirmed that poverty level influences students' educational opportunities in gifted programs (Ford, 2003; Olszewski- Kubilius, 2003; Wyner, Bridgeland, & Diiulio, 2007). High-ability students from low-income households have struggled to maintain academic achievement throughout their elementary, middle, and high school years (Castellano, 2011; Renzulli & Park, 2000; Wyner et al., 2007).

Researchers have suggested that gifted underrepresentation is greater among minority students (i.e., Black or Hispanic) from low-SES households (Callahan et al., 2013a; 2013b, 2014; Renzulli & Park, 2000). Wyner et al. (2007) observed that when high achieving students enter the first grade, most of them (i.e., 72%) come from higher-income families rather than low-income families (28%). Wyner et al. also noted that lower level achievers from higher-income families are twice as likely to rise to the top academic quartile by Grade 5. Furthermore, between Grades 1 and 5, low-income high achievers (44%) lose their top achievement ranking more readily than higher-income high achievers (31%). These patterns, according to Wyner et al. worsen in high school. In fact, educational disparities remain persistent through Grades 8 and 12, college, and post-graduate years. Even though proportional representation of high-ability learners is more likely in primary elementary school grades than in late elementary, middle, and high school, disparities between high-SES and low-SES are evident before K-12 schooling begins (Wyner et al., 2007)

Gifted funding allocations benefit school districts with higher numbers of families with high-SES status (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004; Castellano, 2011). Baker & Friedman-Nimz (2004) found that gifted mandates and gifted funding were more likely to be awarded to schools with fewer low-income students. They explained that gifted funding allocation and distribution are controlled by the state. If the state reports that the top five percent of gifted students come from higher-income families, those school districts would receive greater funding for gifted services than school districts with less impactful percentages of low-income gifted students (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004).

Low-income students faced outside stressors that may influence their propensity to overachieve and demonstrate the potential for gifted talent. Researchers have found that high performing students come from families with higher income status, greater educational attainment, and exposure to a variety of educational opportunities (Castellano, 2011). Students living in low-income households may lack social systems of support that recognize their gifted potential and seek educational resources to develop their talents (Olszewski-Kulilius, 2003).

High poverty levels affect English language proficiency development; therefore, these students may not demonstrate giftedness through traditional identification measures (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Wyner et al., 2007). Castellano (2011) maintained that, “The further away from mainstream America poor Hispanic students are, the more resiliency and perseverance they need to demonstrate in order to overcome the challenges of gaining access to gifted educational programs” (p. 256). Minorities, specifically Hispanic low-income students, struggle to balance the demands of two cultures, both at home and at school (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Wyner et al., 2007). However, intelligence levels have shown to influence resiliency and coping abilities to mediate the effect of these stressors (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Wyner et al., 2007).

Peters and Engerrand's (2016) study on equity and excellence showed that poverty levels widen the gap in students' Opportunities to Learn (OTL) in gifted programs. Students' OTL has been defined through age, grade level, and ability and intelligence tests (Peters & Engerrand, 2017). Researchers stipulate that OTL are not equally distributed across all demographic groups, as the federal definition of giftedness suggests (USDOE, 1993). Unless universal means are found to mitigate OTL among low-income students, school districts with higher percentages of gifted high-income students will continue to have greater access to gifted programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Peters & Engerrand, 2017).

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity impacts gifted representation in public schools. Lesser, Fifer, and Clark (1965) research on the mental abilities of children from various social and cultural groups has revealed that students exhibit differences in the level and patterns of mental ability by ethnic-group membership. In Lesser et al.'s study, social-class placement was not associated with ethnic-group patterns of mental ability. It did produce differences in absolute scores (i.e., levels) of mental ability but not in patterns among them. Lesser and colleagues found that Puerto Rican and Chinese subjects possessed the weakest scores in verbal skills, which may be attributed to multilingual forms of communication. Additionally, group differences across ethnic/racial composition show a widening gap in representation between White and Hispanic gifted students (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011; Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, & Gold, 1992; Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

In a study conducted to explore characteristics of gifted high school dropouts, almost half of gifted dropouts (48.18%) were from lowest SES households, whereas fewer gifted dropouts (3.56%) were from the highest SES households (Renzulli & Park, 2000). However, a study that controlled for IQ score (i.e., academic achievement) and SES variable showed no statistical

significance in the degree of underrepresentation of Blacks, Hispanics, or Native American students, and Whites (Warne, Anderson & Johnson, 2013). When controlling for SES, Hispanics and Native Americans were still more likely to dropout from school than Whites (Renzulli & Park, 2000). This evidence shows that minority groups' representation in gifted programs may be influenced by other contributing factors that lead to their lack of persistence in school (Renzulli & Park, 2000).

Studies exploring racial group differences between minority and white families showed a large discrepancy in the parental referral rates of White versus non-White students (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Scott et al., 1992). Scott et al. surveyed Black, Hispanic, and White families whose children were enrolled in gifted classes (Grades 3-5) and identified as gifted. Families received a survey of gifted characteristics determined by current literature. The characteristics were organized by categories that included students' academic and nonacademic attributes such as talents and overall temperaments (Scott et al., 1992). White parents played a more active role in their child's referral process than Black or Hispanic parents (Scott et al., 1992). Such findings complement those of Card & Giuliano (2016), whose universal screening and alternative identification plans were used to broaden the eligibility criteria of high-ability, low-income Black, Hispanic, and English learners because parents and teachers were least likely to recommend them for gifted testing.

There has been an underrepresentation of minority groups, especially Hispanic bilingual students (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Warne et al., 2013). Esquierdo and Anderson (2012) revealed in their research that the gap in underrepresentation was too great, the growth of minority groups over the years too pronounced, and the definitions of giftedness too varied (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016; Terman, 1926). Yet, research

indicates there are other factors that contribute to the racial/ethnic representation of diverse students.

Self-Deficit Thinking

According to Ford (2003), attitudes affect how culturally diverse students are identified and placed in gifted programs, and researchers have found that minority students leverage the dichotomous form of identities between school and home (Carillo & Rodriguez, 2016). Hispanics are more resistant to orthodox labels of intelligence (Chang, 2017) and are aware of cultural stereotypes and expectations within their Hispanic and mainstream/White communities (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Hatt, 2016; Martinez, 2017; Pereira & Gentry, 2013). Nevertheless, intelligence has remained largely defined through traditional measures of IQ scores (Ford, 2003; Harris & Ford, 1999). Societal perceptions influence one's opportunities to participate in educational programs that nurture one's gifted potential because teacher nomination continues to play a primary role in how students are referred for gifted screening (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Ford, 2003; Harris & Ford, 1999).

Ford & Grantham (2003) defined deficit thinking as a thought process that occurs when "educators hold negative stereotypes and counterproductive views about culturally diverse students and lower their expectations accordingly" (p. 217). They also expressed the belief that gifted or high-achieving minority groups are aware of how society perceives them and their academic potential. These belief systems lead students to act in ways that validate stereotypical beliefs (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010). Consequently, these thought patterns lead students to underperform (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). In turn, self-deficit thinking prevents stakeholders from valuing group differences; therefore, stakeholders

allow their thoughts and beliefs influence their behavior and actions (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008).

Ritchotte et al. (2016) suggested that self-deficit thinking inhibits students' own perceptions of intelligence. Ritchotte et al.'s (2016) study on the self-perception of gifted and non-gifted high achieving students showed that non-gifted students' psychosocial and academic self-perceptions resembled those of gifted students. Students labeled gifted had higher values on the Academic Self-Perception Subscale than a non-gifted high ability group (Ritchotte et al., 2016). This finding corroborated deficit-thinking orientations because giftedness as a label preserves students' self-worth and perceptions of their ability to obtain high academic achievement (Ritchotte et al., 2016).

Ford and Grantham (2003), in their investigation focused on a Black gifted student population, reported that this racial/ethnic group adopted self-deficit thinking and self-sabotaged their high academic abilities by engaging in attention seeking behavior. Furthermore, they belief that society's race and ethnic-based stereotypical belief contribute to cognitive dissonance among Black gifted students. Students internalize "acting White" with school achievement and "acting Black" with low intelligence (Ford, 2014a, 2013b; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson; 2010, p. 60). These findings demonstrate the impact culture and ethnicity have on students' overall self-perceptions and motivation to perform in school.

Researchers have demonstrated that self-deficit thinking influences minority groups, specifically Hispanic students. Hispanic gifted students often hide their talents as a coping mechanism in order to blend in with the societal expectations in their immediate environment (Castellano, 2011). However, Eurocentric culture, values, behavioral patterns, and language contrasts with those in Hispanic students' home life (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Mayfield &

Young-Eun, 2012). For instance, researchers have found that African Americans and Hispanics recognize the importance of maintaining high academic performance to go to college and pursue a career but are less motivated to excel in school (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012). Several factors may contribute to a defiance of school culture and traditional views of intelligence. Among these factors are: a resistance to smart labels or stereotypical expectations of the dominant White social class, a deficit view of Latinos, and the miseducation of minority groups in schools' Eurocentric curricula (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Hatt, 2016; Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012).

Several descriptive ethnographic studies on the sociocultural definition of smartness demonstrate that self-deficit thinking arises from a need to act or behave in ways that are counterintuitive to one's self-identity. Chang (2017) explained that in Hispanic communities, "smartness" is synonymous for "street smarts" (p. 36) and for demonstrating assertiveness in one's self-identity without self-imposed labels. In the literature reviewed, the Hispanic community defined smartness in terms of acting White, as someone who passed the gatekeeping points (i.e., enrolling in honor classes and earning high grade point averages), reads the *Wall Street Journal*, and listens to classical music (Hatt, 2016). Hatt (2012) proposed that smartness is "done" onto others as a form of social positioning within the politics of exceptionality (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016). In such a scenario, Mexicans are viewed as intellectually inferior to Whites (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Terman, 1922). Those who are intelligent or gifted are the exception, because they "mastered linear assimilation" in spite of their "Mexicaness" and were valued "[once they] excelled on the terms of the dominant class" (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016, p. 1,241).

Minority Inclusion

The final two decades of the 20th century witnessed an increase of minorities in the United States (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016). The number of bilingual children ages 5-17 speaking a language other than English at home has risen from 10% to 21%; and more than 85% of these students were of Latino origin (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In 2015, Florida's K-12 student population was comprised of 60% minority students (i.e., non-White) and 40% of Caucasian students (Student Membership, 2017). This demographic shift in the Hispanic student population has been projected to increase, whereas the White student population has been projected to decrease through 2025 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Gifted programs strive to increase the representation of Hispanic students in their programs, as the Hispanic population is expected to increase across the Northeast, Midwest, Southern, and Western regions of the United States (Castellano, 2011; Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Pereira & Gentry, 2013).

Research on minority inclusion has been limited to narrative that explain best practices in increasing the representation of minority students (i.e., Black and Hispanic) in gifted programs and bridging the gap between those of low-SES and high-SES backgrounds (Lakin, 2016; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Peters & Matthews, 2016). It has been suggested that minority participation in gifted programs is accomplished through a deliberate action plan that target states, school districts, and schools with such inequities in representation (Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Wright et al., 2017). Wright et al. (2017) defined inequity as the act of "being fair, responsive, and impartial, especially for those who have the fewest resources and least advocacy, and who have experienced structural inequality due to historical exclusion" (p. 1). Researchers have intimated that achieving equity will be challenging if educational institutions track students based on

ability (i.e., advance classes, GPA, intelligence test, SAT, etc.) without considering their varying educational and cultural experiences (Hatt, 2016; Skiba, 2012). Often, students' intelligence levels are compared to those of same grade-level peers under the assumption that grade-levels are indicators of shared backgrounds, experiences, academic potential (Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

Federal programs have provided initiatives to promote minority inclusion in gifted programs. The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program (2015) has funded school district and university-based projects for historically under-represented gifted students. The Jacob K. Javits Act's (2015) goal has been to increase the representation of minority, limited English proficient, and disabled, as well as those from low-SES backgrounds. The act, reenacted through ESSA (2015), funded the National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE) to examine gifted programming in several phases and in three states (Colorado, Florida, and North Carolina; NCRGE, 2017). Phase One focused on identifying, serving, and retaining students from underserved groups (i.e., African Americans, Hispanic or Latino, Native Americans, low-income, small-town or rural communities) and assessing their academic growth in gifted programs (NCRGE, 2017). Phase two explored gifted service models in mathematics and reading/language arts (NCRGE, 2017).

Jacob K. Javits funding ceased from 2011-2013 but was reenacted after ESSA (2015) drafted a funding initiative to target early identification, gifted services, and appropriate programs, especially among those groups that would not otherwise be identified. The Javits grant has doubled its funding from $5 million (2014) to $10 million (2015) and received a projected $12 million for the 2017 fiscal year, the same as in 2016 (Jacob K. Javits, 2015).

In the past, the Jacob K. Javits grant funded projects such as Project SPARKS which promoted advanced placement and college readiness among minorities, low-income, and English language learners (ELLs) through the Young Scholars Model (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015). Also, the act funded the STEM project, Twice Exceptional Students Achieving and Matriculating (TEAMS) to increase the number of high school students with disabilities who were "scientifically promising" and assist students who were planning on or enrolled in postsecondary STEM programs (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015). Students would be provided with academic enrichment, mentoring, college transition support in 100 after-school hours using Renzulli's school wide enrichment model (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015).

Advocacy

There is a wealth of knowledge regarding the importance of student advocacy in gifted programs from parents, teachers, and counselors (Bessman, Carr, & Grimes, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003; McBee, 2006). Schools' methods of communication and the extent to which parents are informed of gifted services influence students' referral rates (McBee, 2006) and academic self-perceptions (Shaunessy, McHatton, Hughest, Brice, & Ratcliff, 2007), especially among low-income minority students (Card & Giuliano, 2016). In the following section, literature and research focused on the impact parents and teachers have on the representation of students are reviewed.

Teacher Advocacy

Teacher nomination remains the most common initial step in recommending students for gifted screening in elementary (86.5%) and middle (91.2%) schools (A Manual for the Admission, 2015; Callahan et al., 2013a, 3013b). Teachers' perceptions of race, social class, and

stereotypes influence the lens through which they interact with students. In Hyland (2005), teachers reflected on their roles as educators in schools that lack cultural diversity, how they readjusted their own cultural belief-systems, and the impact it had on their teaching. In Hyland's (2005) three-year ethnographic research project, teachers in a predominantly Black, low-income school were interviewed about White teachers' understanding of their roles as educators, exploring how teachers viewed the students, their families, and the racial dynamics in the classroom. Some participants had assimilated the role of a White person in order to deny their native heritage and combat negative racial/ethnic stereotypes (Hyland, 2005). Some also became intercultural communicators to mimic the cultural expressions of those in their surrounding environment, while others used Whiteness as a political end to advocate for white dominance and maintain the status quo (Hyland, 2005). This research showed that teachers' personal belief-systems and cultural orientations influenced their expectations of students, their perception of students' families, and their overall role as educators (Hyland, 2005).

Numerous researchers have expressed the belief that teacher nomination may be an ineffective practice in identifying gifted and talented students (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Pegnato & Birch, 1959; Pereira & Gentry, 2013; Siegle & Powell, 2014). Traditional referral systems overlook disadvantaged students with the highest achievement levels, regardless of their cognitive ability (Card & Giuliano, 2016). This evidence suggests that parental and teacher biases continue to limit gifted nominations (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Siegle & Powell, 2004). Classroom teachers overemphasize students' weaknesses rather than strengths with regard to minority and low-income gifted candidates and teachers possess traditional views of giftedness among high-ability students (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Siegle & Powell, 2004).

In a mixed-method study that was conducted to explore K-12 teacher beliefs and attitudes on gifted manifestation, teachers valued students who possessed strong reasoning skills, had a robust vocabulary, and were language dominant (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Teachers were less likely to assume gifted potential in students with limited vocabulary, those that had an inability to work independently, or lacked motivation and persistence (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Findings also indicated that teachers expect those not fitting traditional characteristics of giftedness to overcome these deficits before considering them for gifted nomination (Moon & Brighton, 2008). These assumed shortcomings add additional barriers that prevent minority students from being nominated and referred to gifted programs.

Another facet of research shows that teacher referrals contribute to the underrepresentation of minority and low-SES students in gifted programs (McBee, 2006). A 2004 school district database containing students enrolled in a Georgia school district was used to study gifted nomination patterns based on race, SES, sources of referral (i.e., teacher referrals, parent referrals, self-referrals, peer referrals, and other referrals), and status of nomination (McBee, 2006). McBee (2006) indicated that Hispanic and Black students received fewer teacher nominations than Asian, White, and Native American students. Findings also showed that nominations were less accurate for students with low-SES than students with high-SES status families (McBee, 2006). The researcher stated that low rates of teacher nomination may have been cause by racism, classism, or cultural ignorance, whereas low rates of parent nominations may have been caused by an overall distrust of school culture and a lack of awareness of school services (McBee, 2006). This research reiterates teacher-to-student influences on how giftedness is manifested in culturally diverse students (Hyland, 2005; McBee, 2006).

Parental Advocacy

Parental advocacy is an important factor in the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Researchers have revealed that parental advocacy determines the extent to which gifted students are serviced (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Fleming, 2013). Because traditional nomination systems under-refer disadvantaged students, educational equity is compromised, as not all high-achieving students are accounted for in gifted programs across the K-12 public education system (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Fleming, 2013; Roth, 2013).

Parents of culturally and linguistically diverse students face challenges in advocating for their children. Some overarching obstacles in parental advocacy include language barriers, a lack of information about gifted services, and issues when voicing concerns and opinions relating to gifted programs (Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martinez, 2009; Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012). Hispanic students possess strong communal/familial support, but perceptions of giftedness often differ from mainstream definitions (Bernal, 1974; Granada, 2003). Individualistic mentality and competition (Granada, 2003) is frowned upon in some Hispanic families (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016). Overall, parents have high aspirations for their children and expect them to excel in school through traditional measures of intelligence (i.e., social and academic pursuits; Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016).

Parental expectations affect gifted students' self-perceptions, attitudes, and overall motivation toward school (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2012; Shaunessy et al., 2007). Hispanic bilingual students in gifted programs feel a sense of pride in speaking more than one language (Shaunessy et al., 2007). They experience anxiety from meeting their parents' high expectations (Bernal & Reyna, 1974) and report a desire to feel more accepted among their Anglo-American teachers and peers (Shaunessy et al., 2007). However, low-income gifted

students have unique opportunities to learn and cultivate their talents (Peters & Engerrend, 2016). Parents lacking resources and networks of support may rely on out-of-school experiences such as "street smarts" and home responsibilities/expectations to develop their talents (Chang, 2017; Granada, 2003). In addition, they may utilize their "street smarts" and *facultad* or intuition, not school environment, to cultivate their talent (Chang, 2017, p. 36; Granada, 2003).

Researchers have indicated that parents' attitudes and behaviors shape their child's academic and gifted orientation (Koshy, Brown, Jones, & Portman Smith, 2013; Koshy, Smith, Brown, 2017). Extant literature show that parental advocacy is inhibited by parents' inability to provide appropriate educational opportunities because of limited educational experiences, expertise, and financial burdens (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Koshy et al., 2013, 2017). Parents also expressed concern for their child's academic success due to peer influence (Koshy et al., 2013, 2017). Parents realize that peers mitigate or capitalize on racist and race/ethnic stereotypical banter evident in communities with high crime rates, and they show concern with how such perceptions influence their child's academic progress in school (Koshy et al., 2013, 2017).

A lack of communication between schools and parents may influence the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. High achieving Latino children and families are not aware of the resources available to them in schools (Bessman et al., 2013). Additionally, there is a lack of communication between key stakeholders in gifted education (Bessman et al., 2013). When channels of communications are broadened through public or media relations, marginalized groups can analyze institutional and societal influences that impact their children's education and take proactive steps to include themselves in the decision-making process (Owens & Valesky, 2015).

Nevertheless, Fleming (2013) suggested that gifted education is not accessible in every district, in every school, and to every child. Ford recognized that school districts fail to inform historically under-represented students and their families about gifted services (Fleming, 2013). Therefore, few parents advocate for their child to participate in gifted programs, as only families with access to appropriate channels of communication, the knowledge base, and the education understanding of the gifted identification process (Fleming, 2013; Ford, 2014a, 2014b). The researcher explored the influence parental and teacher advocacy plays in support of racial/ethnic representation of students in K-12 gifted schools in Phase Two of the present study.

Bilingualism

"Latinismo" is a term used in the literature to explain the bilingual experience of Hispanic students in reclaiming their dominant social role in gifted programs (Shaunessy et al., 2007). Latinismo is defined as "an intergroup identity reflecting consciousness of a collective uniqueness derived from shared cultural characteristics such as language and awareness of being different from other social groups in the United States" (Padilla, 1984, p. 653). Teachers' conceptions of giftedness reflect the belief-system of the dominant culture (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Shaunessy, et al., 2007). Characteristics of giftedness are often overlooked among bilingual students that are developing their English language proficiency (Stein, Hetzel, & Beck, 2011). Additionally, a lack of communication between home and school contribute to the emergence of two contrasting environments that lead to negative academic and social experiences (Bessman, et al., 2013; Harris, et al., 2009, Koshy et al., 2013, 2017; Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012; Pereira & Gentry, 2013; Siegle & Powell, 2004).

Shaunessy et al. (2007) investigated the experience of bilingual, Latino/a middle school students, Grades 6-8, in gifted and general education populations in a large urban school district

in the southeastern United States. Student participants who met the state gifted eligibility requirements were previously served in an ESOL program and were first-generation Americans (Shaunessy et al., 2007). Bilingual gifted learners demonstrated greater student-initiated dialogue, as well as greater depth and complexity of discussion than general education learners (Shaunessy et al., 2007). They also valued hard work, determination, and effort in their educational endeavors as well as cultural acceptance by teachers/staff when speaking Spanish in school (Shaunessy et al., 2007). Bilingual gifted students were unaware of intelligence assessments that utilized their Spanish-speaking abilities and experience as a measure of giftedness. This finding implies a potential lack of communication between key stakeholders (i.e., families, students, administrators, and teachers) as to culturally sensitive options to identify students in Hispanic populations (Shaunessy et al., 2007).

Castellano (2004) suggested using multiple sources for gifted identification. Examples include English language proficiency test results, acculturation scales, prior academic performance, feedback from cultural group, portfolio assessments, and student observations, year-round identification process, characteristic checklist (Castellano, 2004; Identifying and Servicing, 2016). Students' English proficiency level can be used as a supplementary tool to build the student's educator profile and make decisions about gifted placements (Identifying and Servicing, 2016). In addition, their overall proficiency in their native language may be an indicator of their potential in learning a second language and contribute to academic proficiency (Dixon et al., 2012).

Current and past federal guidelines on gifted education imply that gifted talent is found across all sociodemographic groups; therefore, one does not need to speak English in order to be gifted or academically talented (Castellano, 2004; USDOE, 1993). Yet, researchers have

indicated that giftedness is largely defined through traditional perceptions of intelligence (Callahan et al., 2013a). Teachers hold biased views of gifted manifestation that favor the White dominant cultures (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Extant literature has revealed factors that influence the representation of students in gifted programs such as poverty levels, race/ethnicity, self-deficit thinking, minority inclusion, and parental/teacher advocacy (Ford, 2014a, 2014b; McBee, 2006, Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Nevertheless, it is still unclear how these factors contribute to the Hispanic representation of students in the state of Florida, in its school districts, and in its K-12 public schools.

The Florida Context

Social Demographic Trends

As of 2016, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, and Oklahoma were the only states with legislation (i.e., gifted mandates and fully funding) that was supportive of gifted education (Support for Gifted Programs, 2016). Some states have state mandates but receive no gifted funding (Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island; Support for Gifted Programs, 2016). Per the U. S. Census Bureau (2015), the state of Florida had one of the highest percentages of Hispanic/Latino membership (24.5%) comparable to five of the 50 states in the United States: New Mexico (48%), California (38.8%), Texas (38.8%), Arizona (30.7%), and Nevada (28.1%). Overall, gifted students represent the top 5-10% of the nation's overall population or about 6% of students in Florida (NGCA, 2007). Additionally, Florida's Department of Education (FDOE) recognizes diverse demographic trends by segregating its K-12 public school's racial/ethnic groups into several categories: White, Hispanic, two or more races, Asian, and American Indian (Student Membership, 2017).

Hispanic representation in gifted programs and in the general student population has increased between 2013 and 2016 (Florida Plan, 2017). A 2013-2014 comparison of Florida's K-12 public schools (Florida Plan, 2017) showed that gifted programs were comprised of predominantly White students (53.7%), in contrast to Hispanic students (27.5%). The most recent published report from FDOE (Florida Plan, 2017) showed that White students (52.6%) continue to be overrepresented in gifted programs, compared to Hispanic students (28.6%). This overrepresentation is evident when comparing the racial/ethnic make-up of gifted and non-gifted students in Florida's schools (Florida Plan, 2017). In 2015-2016, White students represented 39.46% of the general student population compared to 31.54% of Hispanics (Florida Plan, 2017). The contrast between White and Hispanic student representation in general and gifted populations legitimize concerns over racial/ethnic representation in Florida schools (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Florida Plan, 2017).

Minority (i.e., non-White) K-12 enrollment has increased drastically between 2013 and 2016 (Florida Plan, 2017). The state's gifted student enrollment has remained predominantly White (52.6%), compared to 47.37% of non-White minority students. These data show that, even though Florida's general population has become increasingly diverse from 2013, with a minority rising from 57.14% to 60.51% in 2016, the racial/ethnic representation of White and Hispanic students in the gifted population has remained relatively stagnant (Florida Plan, 2017).

Giftedness in Florida

To date, there has not been a federal definition that mandates national norms for student participation in gifted programs (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b, 2014). The federal definition of giftedness has been adapted by individual states, and therefore lacks uniformity s across the 50 states (Oakland & Rossen, 2005). In the Florida Plan (2013), Florida's state department of

education has addressed goals to increase the representation of all students in gifted programs, including those that are historically under-represented through an alternative identification plan (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). Furthermore, FDOE has advised school district leaders to: (a) strive for proportionate representation or try alternative strategies to increase participation of underrepresentation groups, (b) establish alliances with ELL staff members, (c) train all educators on the different characteristics of giftedness, (d) form a review team for gifted placement, and (e) be proactive instead of waiting for nomination or referral (Florida Plan, 2013). FDOE has had an initiative to maintain a system of accountability that tracks students' progress in gifted programs (Florida Plan, 2013, 2017). These goals include "higher student achievement, seamless articulation and maximum access, skilled workforce and economic development, and quality efficient services" (Florida Plan, 2017, p. 3). These goals provide a framework upon which Florida school districts implement their gifted programs.

In 1977, Florida state policy makers established eligibility criteria for K-12 gifted programs (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). FAC 6A-6.03019 defined gifted students as those who have superior intellectual development (i.e., average IQ score of 130 or two standard deviations above the mean IQ of 100, at any age) and are capable of high performance (Florida Plan, 2013). Additionally, students must demonstrate a need for a special program and possess a majority of the characteristics of gifted students determined by teacher, staff, or nominating personnel (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). The state offers gifted programs and services in various areas: creativity, leadership, performing/visual arts, intellectual, general academic, and specific academic (State of the States, 2015).

Florida's identification process follows a four-step process: nomination, screening, referral, and evaluation (Florida Plan, 2013). First, a parent/guardian, school personnel,

community member, or self nominates a student (Florida Plan, 2013). Students are screened individually or in groups, depending on the school district's chosen process (Florida Plan, 2013). Furthermore, the school district staff refers students for individual evaluation with parent consent; finally, the student undergoes intellectual evaluation via a psychologist (Florida Plan, 2013).

Florida has different eligibility criteria for the identification of under-represented groups such as English learning students and students from low socioeconomic households (Lord & Swanson, 2016). In 1991, state legislatures added an addendum to rule FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) that broadened the gifted eligibility criteria of potentially gifted students in under-represented groups. An alternative identification plan, Plan B, was added to the Florida Administrative Code 6A-6.03019 (2002) "*Special Instructional Programs for Students who are Gifted*." Plan B provided Florida school districts the option to create a non-traditional identification process for students who met the school districts' state-approved alternative plan (FAC 6A – 6.03019, 2002). FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) defined members of an under-represented group as students in a Florida K-12 public school, who were limited English proficient (LEP), Black, or from a low socio-economic status family (OPPAGA, 2008). The most recent amendment to FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) eliminated racial/ethnicity as eligibility criteria (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; OPPAGA, 2008).

The Florida Plan (2013) aimed to implement a K-12 program that was "comprehensive, structured, and sequenced between, within, and across grade levels" (p. 47). Grade-level tracking by racial/ethnic group is evident in the state's plan for goal criterion (i.e., Goal 1: Identification of Gifted learners; Indicators 1, 2, 3). Indicator 1.1 mimics the intent of Ford's (2014a, 2014b) equity index formula by stipulating an approximate 20% difference between the percentage of

eligible gifted students and the general student population, and such representation would be tracked (Florida Plan, 2017). The plan states that district-wide screening strategies should be used at a district-level to track students' progression through the gifted program and measure percentages of racial/ethnic representation in those programs in elementary, middle, and high school (i.e., Indicator I.2. A, I.2.B). These goals and systems of accountability could influence the representation of students in gifted programs and serve as a critical tool for tracking future participation of under-represented students in gifted programs (Florida Plan, 2017).

Researchers have suggested that gifted identification and gifted services vary greatly across school levels (Florida's Plan, 2017; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). For instance, there are more students enrolled in advanced classes and fewer in self-contained gifted classes in middle and in high school. Consultation remains popular in Grades 9-12, but less in elementary and middle school (Florida Plan, 2017). Elementary school (K-5) students utilize five or more hours of contact per week, whereas middle school students (6-8) utilize one class period or more a week (Florida Plan, 2017). These differences may influence the racial/ethnic representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs, but there is no extant literature that discussed how gifted services rendered at varying school levels have influenced the representation of such groups.

School Districts

Hispanic representation in Florida's school districts should reflect that of the general population with specific allowances for group differences (Ford, 2014a, 2014b). Despite the increase of the Hispanic and minority population over the years (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016), Florida has pockets of school districts with greater Hispanic representation than other school districts (Vogel, 2013). In 2013, Vogel wrote that the counties with the largest Hispanic

population included Hendry County (49.2 %), Hardee County (42.9%), and Miami-Dade (65.0%). The counties with the lowest Hispanic population include Pinellas (8.0%), Duval (8.0%), and St. Johns County (5.2%).

Zirkel (2004, 2005) noted that Florida's school districts have discretionary power as to how gifted services are implemented. Yet, Florida school districts have increased their efforts to diversify their gifted programs (Florida Plan, 2017; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; OPPAGA, 2008). In 2005-2006, 46 of 67 (68.6%) of Florida school districts had a state approved Plan B (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). In 2006-2007, 53 out of 67 (79%) of Florida school districts had a state approved Plan B (OPPAGA, 2008). The most recent data from Florida Plan (2017) in *Goal V.1.A*: *Program Administration and Management* stated a goal to increase the number of school districts with a plan for gifted education and an initiative to provide technical assistance, guidance, and materials to support the school districts. Florida Plan (2017) data (a sample of the population) showed an increase in the number of school districts with a gifted plan from nine in 2010 -2011 to 37 in 2015-2016. Despite past goals to increase racial/ethnic representation in public schools, Florida's school districts have utilized research-based decisions to address issues of underrepresentation (Florida Plan, 2017; OPPAGA, 2008).

Past research has shown a limit on the transferability of theory-to-practice within the realm of gifted education (Callahan et al., 2014). The discrepancy is evident in the semantics of how giftedness is defined by varying states (Lord & Swanson, 2016). State or local educational agencies are not required to adopt a single widely accepted definition of giftedness; therefore, school districts have some liberties as to how gifted services will be implemented (Callahan et al., 2014). In the past, school districts often did not use universal screening methods to determine gifted eligibility (OPPAGA, 2008). FDOE has utilized research and best practices to require

school districts to report on district-wide screening practices as a way to determine rates of identification and representation by grade and racial/ethnic group (Indicator I.2; Florida Plan, 2017).

Overall, school districts use a combination of traditional (intelligence, aptitude, academic achievement measures) and non-traditional (teacher, parent, and self-nomination, classroom grades, portfolio) measures to test diverse students for giftedness (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Frasier, 1991). For instance, school districts in Florida adopt Plan B (2013) to increase participation of gifted students in under-represented groups (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2012). An example includes Seminole County Public Schools (SCPS) which uses two matrices as their plans for gifted identification (A Manual for the Admission and Placement for Exceptional Students, 2015). Matrix A highlights gifted program eligibility for all students (A Manual for the Admission, 2015). Matrix B highlights gifted program eligibility for under-represented groups of students (A Manual for the Admission, 2015). The identification process for students under Matrix B includes academic evaluation percentile scores, academic performance, gifted characteristics checklist average, intellectual test, and student portfolio total score (A Manual for the Admission, 2015).

State policies, regulations, and rules should change in tandem with students' needs as well as research based and practice-based knowledge (Lord & Swanson, 2016). At the district level, gifted education should move away from a one-size-fits-all approach (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012). Frasier (1991) stated,

> What is frequently not recognized is the wide variation in the kinds and amounts of environment stimulation provided by families in different socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial groups…if we are to succeed in identifying gifted children from all cultures, we must resist the tendency to compare them to dominant culture standards (pp. 236-237).

School Level Gifted Representation

There has been scant research on school level representation in Florida's gifted schools. Attempts to increase the participation of minority (Hispanic and Black) students has been limited to school districts with federal or state approved grants, university partnerships, and schools with a large minority, low-SES socio-demographic make-up (Martin, 2016; Postal, 2017; Roth, 2013).

The efforts to diversify gifted programs in Florida school districts such as Seminole, Orange, and Miami-Dade have been reported and reviewed (Postal, 2017; Winsler, Karkhanis, Kim, & Levitt, 2013). Miami-Dade schools have the largest minority Hispanic enrollment in Florida (Vogel, 2013). This school district's staff has stated that parental involvement and advocacy influenced the extent to which gifted services are offered to students, and added that this perspective benefited high-income families more than low-income families (Roth, 2013). In 2003, Orange County reported a decline in the representation of minority students in middle schools (Roth, 2013). One public school, Blanker K-8, offered full-time classes for highly gifted students, Grades 3-5, and utilized a program called Academically Accelerated Individualized Model (AAIM) to meet students' needs (Blankner, K-8, 2015). Researchers have observed that school level gifted offerings are typically limited to elementary grade levels (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011; Roth, 2013; Winsler et al., 2013).

Seminole County Public Schools (SCPS) has undergone significant changes in its K-12 racial/ethnic composition in recent years. Its minority and low-income student population (Black, Hispanic, English-learning) has doubled, and its elementary school student enrollment has increased by 34% since 2013 (Postal, 2017). Despite these changes, according to Postal (2017), its gifted programs are composed of predominantly White students (67%). The district's overall student population is also predominantly White (52%) in contrast to its Hispanic student

population (25%). The district was awarded a five-year federal grant and partnership with the University of Central Florida (UCF) to increase the gifted representation of minority, low-income, and English language learning students in the district's poorest, least diverse, predominantly Hispanic or Black elementary schools (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015; Postal, 2017).

SCPS's Project ELEVATE (English Learner Excellence eVolving through Advanced Teacher Education) was designed to utilize the district's Plan B processes as one of many components to identify gifted and talented students in under-represented groups (Samuels, 2017). Project ELEVATE's funding has been used to analyze recent research-based practices and alternative identification methods (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015). The project offers professional development on cultural and linguistically responsive curricula and provides a guide on how to teach advanced content areas (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015). The project also provides instructional tools on how to meet students' needs and instills an awareness of how poverty influences student learning (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015). Project ELEVATE has helped to increase the participation of low-income and/or limited English proficient students in gifted programs in the school district's local elementary schools (Postal, 2017). The program's five-year grant is scheduled to include Title I middle schools in SCPS during the last three years of implementation (Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented, 2015).

Florida School District Policy

Gifted education is not accessible in every state (Support for Gifted Programs, 2016), in every school district (Samuels, 2017), in every school (Martin, 2016), and to every child (Postal, 2017). School board policies set school districts' direction in addressing reoccurring issues in public schools, such as those evident in gifted programs (Rebore, 2015). Rebore defined policy

as, “guidelines that [establish] authority and [provide] the means for attaining school districts’ goals and objectives” (p. 372). According to Haddad and Demsky (1995), policies offer suggestions, reveal board members’ educational philosophies, and set the tone for future school district directives so that current decisions are re-evaluated to service all students.

F.S. 1001.32 (2016) explained the role of school board members when drafting school policies. It states that district school board members represent the state, possess no legal authority outside of officially constituted meetings, and “operate, control, and supervise all free public schools in their district” (F.S. 1001.32 , 2016, p. 19). Education remains a state function. Therefore, the state department maintains minimal regulatory authority over school districts’ educational programs. The school board members’ policies possess language that may suggest a need for specific programs, activities, or initiatives to meet school districts’ goals and objectives (Rebore, 2015).

Starr (2016) indicated that leaders within the school system struggle to balance prescribed issues voiced by the community with mandates from federal and state regulation. Florida’s initiative toward gifted education has indicated a goal to increase the representation of under-represented students in gifted programs via state-approved alternative identification (Florida Plan, 2013). Researchers have suggested that establishing alliances with English Learning or bilingual community, implementing culturally sensitive staff training, forming a review team for gifted placement, and remaining proactive in nominating students are ideal steps to meet the state’s goal (Florida Plan, 2013, 2017).

McBee et al. (2012) showed the importance of a Plan B school district policy as a proactive way of increasing the representation of Black, low-SES status, Hispanic, and/or English learning that would not have been identified as gifted through traditional means. McBee

et al. collected 42 Plan B manuals from the 46 reporting Florida school districts. The researchers utilized race, free or reduced lunch (FRL) as a poverty threshold, and ELL status as controlled independent variables in a quantitative statistical design to show that identification placements doubled because of Plan B's implementation (McBee et al., 2012). Even though race and ethnicity were removed from Plan B's policy in 2002, findings showed that this underserved group would benefit from Plan B's implementation (McBee et al., 2012).

Matthews & Shaunessy's (2010) study on Florida Plan B educational policy showed a lack of coherence on the verbiage used in local, district, and national standards. Researchers collected 43 Plan B policies from Florida's school districts and created an instrument to compare identification processes with those from the national *NAGC Pre-K --Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards*. None of the selected Plan B policies met at least 80% of the 27-item checklist (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). The results of the study suggest that school districts were not receiving policies in a timely manner and those policies used various terms interchangeably to mean different things, such as nomination versus screening (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). The findings suggested that district level decisions are capable of impacting state and national guidelines on state mandates as to how students are identified and placed in gifted programs (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). In addition, the findings demonstrated a need to revisit how gifted mandates influenced student-level outcomes in terms of representation in the program and overall academic achievement (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010).

Summary

Research on gifted policies offer little guidance on how to evaluate policy-to-practice implementation at the local level (Brown, Avery, VanTassel-Baska, Worley III, Stambaugh, 2006; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; McBee et al., 2012; Peters &Matthews, 2016). There has

been scant research conducted to explore the extent to which school district policies achieve Florida's proposed goal to increase the participation of underserved groups in school districts' gifted programs (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; McBee et al., 2012; Peters & Matthews, 2016). Current literature on gifted programming show that gifted programming' inconsistent policies and practices leave room for programs that are "needlessly exclusive…this cannot be supported from the standpoint of predicting success in the program" (Peters & Matthews, 2016, p. 151). Without some level of alignment in adequate identification processes, researchers and policy makers will remain blind-sided by uninformed and premature decision making in an educational climate of high accountability (Peters & Matthews, 2016).

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Florida State Plan for K-12 Gifted Education (2013) stated that school district leaders should aim for "proportionate representation of all groups of a local population…and consider alternative assessment tools or strategies if current methods are ineffective" (p. 36). Despite efforts over the last four decades to increase the proportionality of gifted minority populations, equitable representation remains an issue of concern both nationally and in the state of Florida (Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; Warne, Anderson & Johnson, 2013; Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

The population of Florida has grown and become increasingly diverse (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016, U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In 2016, Florida's K-12 public school district was comprised of 38.6% White students and 32.5% Hispanic students. Non-White minorities comprised 60% of the student population (FDOE, 2016). These percentages are not evident in Florida's K-12 public school gifted population in (Florida Plan, 2017). The most recent published report from Florida Department of Education (FDOE) showed that White students (52.6%) continue to be overrepresented in gifted programs compared to Hispanic (28.6%) students (Florida Plan, 2017).

Attentive to the relevant demographic and policy contexts, this study was guided by three overarching questions:

1. In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percent minority students)?

2. To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])?
3. What identification procedures and practices are in place in a sample of two Florida K-12 public school districts identified using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) methodology as (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold) and (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold)?
    c. In what ways and to what extent do school district policies address measures to adequately identify Hispanic students who may be potentially gifted?
    d. In what ways and to what extent do school district practices align with school district policies and/or established best practices with regard to identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs across two Florida K-12 public school districts?

The methodology employed to answer these research questions is presented in this chapter. The chapter has been organized into five sections: (a) design of the study, (b) selection of the participants, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection, and (c) data analysis.

Design of the Study

This mixed-methods study utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore structural, contextual, and procedural characteristics that influence the representation of Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 public school gifted programs. In Phase One, quantitative methods for data analysis were used to identify factors associated with representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Qualitative methods were used in Phase two to extend and expand on findings from Phase One. According to Rossman & Wilson (1985), the mix of

quantitative and qualitative methods provides richer data, enables corroboration of findings through triangulation, and may reveal unexplored schools of thought from findings.

Phase One utilized regression analysis to assess the direction and strength of the association between the school district percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in gifted programs (i.e., the dependent variable) and school district enrollment, minority status, and student poverty (i.e., independent variables). Additionally, cross tabulations were used to explore the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs across three grade designations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12]) across Florida school districts. The intent of a school-level comparison was to investigate whether Hispanic representation in gifted programs varied by grade-level designations.

Phase two of the study utilized a qualitative approach to analyze the school district exceptional student education (ESE) policy manual for placement and identification guidelines from two purposively sampled schools representing under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) school districts. School district gifted coordinators from the same two school districts were interviewed regarding how school district policies influenced school-level practices related to increasing the representation of underserved populations in Florida's K-12 gifted programs.

Selection of Participants

Phase One

Phase One of the study used viable data obtained from the census of public school districts in Florida (n = 44) for both the regression and the cross-tabulation analysis. FDOE reports data on 74 school districts in the state of Florida, but seven were excluded from the study. For the purpose of this study, school districts were excluded if they served very specific student

populations (Deaf/Blind, Virtual School, university-affiliated lab schools). Schools excluded were Florida A&M University Laboratory Schools, Florida State University Laboratory Schools, University of Florida Laboratory Schools, Florida Atlantic University Laboratory Schools, Washington Special School District, Florida Virtual Schools, and Schools for the Deaf/Blind (FDOE, 2016). Therefore, the data were identified with 67 Florida school districts.

Additionally, 16 school districts where excluded from the state data because they reported 10 or less cases of Hispanic gifted students: Bradford County, Calhoun County, Columbia County, Dixie County, Franklin County, Gadsden County, Gilchrist County, Glades County, Jackson County, Lafayette County, Levy County, Madison County, Taylor County, Union County, Walton County, Washington County (Student Enrollment, 2016). An additional seven school districts did not report data on the number of Hispanic students identified for gifted education: Baker County, Gulf County, Hamilton County, Holmes County, Jefferson County, Liberty County, and Wakulla County (Student Enrollment, 2016). Therefore, the multiple regression and cross tabulation analyses were conducting using data from the remaining 44 Florida school districts that reported 11 or more Hispanic students identified for gifted services

Phase Two

Ford's (2014a, 2014b) 20% Equity Index (EI) was utilized as a sampling strategy to identify two school districts operationalizing (a) underrepresentation (a school district substantially below the equity threshold) and(b) minimal representation (a school district at or near the equity threshold). Ford (2014a, 2014b) defined underrepresentation as the disproportionality that results when gifted representation in racial/ethnic subgroups is less than in the general population. Overrepresentation is evident when there is a disproportionality between the gifted representations of racial/ethnic subgroups that is greater than that in general population

(Ford, 2014a, 2014b). The EI is calculated in a two-step process: (a) the proportional size of the population of interest (in this study, the percentage of Hispanic students in the total student population) is multiplied by a threshold of 20%, yielding "A" value; (b) the value obtained is then subtracted from the value for the proportional size to obtain the Equity Index. Thus, the formula is *Percent Hispanic students in the general population – A (Percent Hispanic students in the general population x 20%) = Equity Index*. EI represents, at minimum, the percentage of students from the population of interest that should be represented in gifted programs to achieve minimal racial/ethnic representation. Then, the EI for each district was subtracted from the actual percent Hispanic students within the gifted population to determine the extent to which school districts met or exceeded the expected minimal level of representation. Table 3 presents the results of the EI calculation for the 44 participating school districts by degrees of representation.

Table 3

School District Distribution of Representation in Florida (n = 44)

School Districts	Percent Hispanic	A	Equity Index (EI)	Hispanics in Gifted Program	Degrees of Representation
DADE	70.08%	14.02%	56.07%	66.61%	-10.55%
BROWARD	32.95%	6.59%	26.36%	29.46%	-3.10%
FLAGLER	13.91%	2.78%	11.13%	14.01%	-2.88%
ESCAMBIA	6.15%	1.23%	4.92%	5.21%	-0.28%
BAY	7.81%	1.56%	6.25%	6.40%	-0.15%
ST. LUCIE	29.53%	5.91%	23.62%	23.65%	-0.02%
CLAY	11.70%	2.34%	9.36%	9.32%	0.04%
ALACHUA	9.66%	1.93%	7.73%	7.67%	0.06%
NASSAU	5.59%	1.12%	4.47%	4.38%	0.09%
CHARLOTTE	14.96%	2.99%	11.97%	11.51%	0.46%
LEON	5.62%	1.12%	4.49%	3.76%	0.73%
ST. JOHNS	8.79%	1.76%	7.04%	6.12%	0.91%
09-CITRUS	7.82%	1.56%	6.26%	5.32%	0.94%
SUWANNEE	17.70%	3.54%	14.16%	13.07%	1.10%
SANTA ROSA	6.89%	1.38%	5.51%	4.35%	1.16%
BREVARD	13.97%	2.79%	11.18%	9.75%	1.42%

School Districts	Percent Hispanic	A	Equity Index (EI)	Hispanics in Gifted Program	Degrees of Representation
DUVAL	11.44%	2.29%	9.15%	7.38%	1.77%
SUMTER	13.94%	2.79%	11.15%	9.06%	2.09%
COLLIER	49.82%	9.96%	39.86%	37.58%	2.28%
HERNANDO	19.09%	3.82%	15.27%	12.92%	2.36%
MONROE	37.79%	7.56%	30.23%	27.78%	2.45%
MARION	21.81%	4.36%	17.45%	14.79%	2.66%
LAKE	24.02%	4.80%	19.22%	16.47%	2.75%
OSCEOLA	60.01%	12.00%	48.01%	44.63%	3.38%
PASCO	21.96%	4.39%	17.57%	13.64%	3.93%
OKALOOSA	9.57%	1.91%	7.66%	3.71%	3.95%
PUTNAM	17.28%	3.46%	13.83%	9.77%	4.05%
PINELLAS	16.43%	3.29%	13.14%	8.84%	4.30%
VOLUSIA	19.28%	3.86%	15.43%	10.22%	5.21%
SARASOTA	19.75%	3.95%	15.80%	10.49%	5.31%
HARDEE	62.57%	12.51%	50.06%	44.66%	5.40%
SEMINOLE	25.37%	5.07%	20.30%	14.13%	6.17%
HILLSBOROUGH	36.22%	7.24%	28.97%	22.09%	6.88%
INDIAN RIVER	22.36%	4.47%	17.89%	10.86%	7.03%
POLK	33.05%	6.61%	26.44%	19.21%	7.23%
DESOTO	44.86%	8.97%	35.89%	28.07%	7.82%
ORANGE	39.77%	7.95%	31.82%	22.59%	9.23%
MANATEE	33.34%	6.67%	26.68%	17.31%	9.37%
LEE	39.71%	7.94%	31.77%	22.24%	9.53%
PALM BEACH	33.31%	6.66%	26.65%	17.09%	9.57%
HIGHLANDS	34.16%	6.83%	27.33%	16.36%	10.97%
MARTIN	28.63%	5.73%	22.91%	10.71%	12.19%
HENDRY	63.87%	12.77%	51.10%	38.00%	13.10%
OKEECHOBEE	40.12%	8.02%	32.10%	13.15%	18.95%

[a] Representation was calculated using a 20 percent threshold (Ford, 2014a, 2014b).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Phase One

Data for Phase One were obtained from the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) using the public-facing data access site for the entity. Specifically, the FDOE's (Student Enrollment, 2016) *EdStats* portal and FDOE PK-12 Public School Data Publications and Reports (Lunch Status, 2017) were used to obtain data for the dependent and independent variables in the regression analysis. The dependent variable was the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs across 67 Florida school districts. Researchers have suggested that this population of interest continues to be under-represented in gifted programs, both nationally (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012), statewide (OPPAGA, 2008), and locally in Florida school districts (Martin, 2016; Postal, 2017; Roth, 2013).

Independent variables for the regression analysis were selected based on findings from extant literature. Identified factors influencing the representation of minority students in gifted education include structural (school district enrollment) and contextual (poverty and minority enrollment) characteristics (Bernal, 1974; Callahan et al., 2014; Card & Giuliano, 2016; Renzulli & Park, 2000; Shaunessy et al., 2007).

Independent variables operationalizing these characteristics were downloaded from *EdStats* by, first, obtaining the total student enrollment in Florida for the 2016-2017 academic year as the determinant of school district enrollment (Student Enrollment, 2016). Minority student population data were collected by selecting "race" as a criterion and adding the number of non-White students in each school district (Hispanic, Black, Two or more races, Asian, American Indian, Pacific Islander). Poverty levels were analyzed as a measure of socioeconomic status through an FDOE published report, the FDOE *Lunch Status by District: Final Survey 2*

(Lunch Status, 2017). The report provided total number of students who received free or reduced lunch (i.e. Lunch code status "D" and "F", "E" and "3"), and were eligible for free or reduced meals (i.e. Lunch code status "C" and "R"). Students receiving free or reduced meals were used as indicators of economically disadvantaged students to capture socioeconomic status in Florida school districts.

The categorical variable for the cross-tabulation analysis mirrored the predominant grade span configurations in Florida schools (Johnson, Godwyll, & Shope, 2016). Students were categorized as being in elementary grades (K-5), middle grades (6-8), or secondary grades (9-12). Extant literature has supported increasingly complex identification measures as students are promoted through grade levels (Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). Yet, middle and high schools have had fewer self-contained gifted classes and more advanced classes (Florida Plan, 2017). Gifted placement and identification models have varied across K-12 grade levels (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Roth, 2013); therefore, grade level was a viable independent variable to explore issues of representation in gifted education.

Phase Two

In Phase Two of the study, qualitative techniques were used to explore the presence of responsive school district policies and the influence of such policies on practices related to increasing the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. In a mixed-methods design, qualitative data help to contextualize quantitative results and provide new schools of thought to analyze the phenomenon (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014); therefore, a content analysis protocol was created based on extant resources including state laws, administrative codes, and FDOE materials and scholarly journal articles that evaluate the most appropriate and current practices for increasing the identification of underserved groups of students (Callahan et

al., 2014; FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002; FDOE, 2016; Florida Plan 2013, 2017; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). The conceptual themes were cross-referenced against standards for evidence-based practices in "Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards 2: Assessment" (2010) to determine which characteristics of adequate representation were addressed by the themes in the content analysis protocol.

A rating scale was used to characterize the extent to which nine identified conceptual themes, have been addressed in school district policy documents. The rating scale used the designations Fully Addressed, Partially Addressed, or Not Addressed to describe and characterize school district policy initiatives to increase the representation of Hispanic students in Florida's gifted programs.

There were nine categories used to represent conceptual themes: (a) Multiple Criteria for Identification (number of criteria), (b) Varied Criteria for Identification (different types of criteria), (c) Gifted Identification Committee, (d) Gifted Program Design and Procedures, (e) Gifted Program Evaluation, (f) Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability, (g) Parental Advocacy and Involvement, (h) Community Advocacy and Involvement, and (i) Gifted Program Goal Specification. The Content Analysis Protocol (Appendix A) and description of themes (Appendix B) were based upon these themes.

Data collection for the policy analysis involved accessing the school district ESE policy manual for placement and identification through the FDOE Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services database (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). The researcher also reviewed the selected school districts' ESOL compliance policy manuals for the presence of gifted identification processes; none was found (District English Language Learners, 2018).

School District Program Coordinator Interviews

A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C) guided the process of collecting data from school district gifted education coordinators. The purpose of the interviews was to determine if and to what extent policies have been implemented to address issues of gifted representation in the selected school districts. The gifted coordinators of gifted education programs from the same two school districts were used in the policy analysis (i.e., under-represented and minimally represented based on Ford's [2014a, 2014b] Equity Index calculation) to learn how school district policy guidelines drive school-level practices in placing Hispanic students in gifted programs. If the gifted coordinator from the purposively selected school districts does not consent to the interview, then the gifted coordinator for the next representative sample would be contacted.

In Section I of the interview, participants were asked about their current school district position, years of experience in that position, as well as years of classroom experience with the Hispanic, gifted, and Hispanic gifted population before serving in this position. The participants were given the option to elaborate on their selected answers, but elaboration was not required. This closed-ended approach served as an informal introduction and a way for the participants to feel at ease by answering questions that were factual, short, clear, and neutral (Dillman et al., 2014). This section also provided background information on participants' educational experiences with the population of interest and their unique experiences in the field of education.

The interview items were divided into categories. The first category addressed the participants' perception of barriers that influenced students' educational opportunities in gifted programs. Researchers have suggested that gifted programs would benefit from equity and excellence where appropriate identification yield positive student-level learning growth and

academic achievement despite the obstacles to which students may have been exposed in the past (Peter & Engerrand, 2016).

The second category addressed the interplay of political barriers that participants have experienced in servicing economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth (i.e., minority, non-white student populations). FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) excludes race/ethnic subgroups as members of under-served populations in gifted programming. Nevertheless, recent researchers (Yoon & Gentry, 2009) have indicated that Black and Hispanic students continue to be under-represented across the United States. Additionally, Matthews and Shaunessy (2010) have suggested that Black students' gifted and talented potential, specifically, were being captured at increasing rates through non-traditional gifted identification plans like Plan B (FAC 6A.6.03019, 2002).

The third category of interview items addressed school districts' initiatives to evaluate the effectiveness of gifted and talented programs in identifying and servicing high-ability students. Florida's Goal VII: Program Evaluation affords Florida school districts a Self-Assessment Tool to document student progress and appropriate programming, but it lacks a research base to substantiate it as a reliable and valid instrument (Florida Plan, 2017). Peters and Matthews (2016) stated, "…Measures should be taken to ensure adequate identification processes and benefits from gifted placement as compared to potentially-gifted students who are not in the program or barely missed the cut-off" (p. 155).

The fourth category of interview items gauged awareness of school district policies guidelines, mandates, and school-level practice concerns with regard to gifted representation. These items were used to explore participants' perceptions regarding severe underrepresentation--what it looks like and when a lack of representation in gifted programs become discriminatory toward students in that subgroup.

Data Analysis

Phase One

In Phase One, a multiple regression analysis was used to determine the direction and strength of the association between school district characteristics and the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in gifted education programs. The use of multiple regression allows for investigating both the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables collectively, and the relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable separately while controlling for the influence of other independent variables (Steinberg, 2011). Additionally, cross tabulation tables were used to present variation in the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs across the categories of elementary, middle, and high school grade levels.

Research Question 1

Multiple regression analysis was used to address Research Question 1: In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percent minority students). Specifically, the regression analysis sought to predict district-level percentages of Hispanic students identified for gifted education in 2016-17 (the dependent variable) from the independent variables, school district enrollment (total student enrollment for 2016-2017), socioeconomic status (the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals in 2016-17), and minority status (the percentage of non-white students in 2016-17).

The distribution of values for these variables was reviewed prior to analysis using histograms and Q-Q plots to show the distribution of data for skewness and kurtosis (Field,

2016), with the results indicating a relatively normal distribution of values. A regression analysis was then conducted using the above-described variables and models, with results interpreted to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variables and each of the three independent variables (using B coefficients) and to assess the robustness of the model as a whole in predicting Hispanic gifted representation (using the r^2 coefficient).

The study design did not support making inferences from a sample to a larger population; thus, statistical significance had limited value (i.e., among these 44 school districts, any relationships which differed from zero were, by definition, "real," and no attempt is made to extend the results beyond those 44 school districts). Significance levels have, nevertheless, been reported (using a threshold of $p<.05$), and interpretation treated statistical significance as a marker indicating that an observed relationship might be of practical significance (Bickel, 2007).

Research Question 2

Research question 2 guided the cross-tabulation analysis: To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])? Data were categorized based on the frequency or number of unique cases that match predetermined characteristics (Green & Salkind, 2008), and cross tabulation tables were used to present the frequencies for the dependent variable measuring district-level numbers of Hispanic students and all other (i.e., non-Hispanic) students identified for gifted education in 2016-17 within each of the grade level categories comprising the independent variable (i.e., elementary school, middle school, and high school). Specifically, data were disaggregated by grade level to present the statewide number and percentage of Hispanic and all other students identified for gifted education in 2016-17 in Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Results were then compared to investigate the possibility of patterns that suggest variations

in identification outcomes at different grade levels. Microsoft Excel was used to organize and analyze data for this analysis.

Phase Two

Phase Two of the study utilized qualitative research methods to analyze relevant policy and practice within two school districts (i.e., under-represented [UR] and minimally represented [MR] in Hispanic gifted enrollment). The purpose was to characterize the extent to which school district policies and practices represent an understanding of ways to increase the representation of Hispanic students that are presented in the extant literature. Qualitative methods play an important part in "interpreting, clarifying, describing, validating, grounding, and modifying findings from quantitative results" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, Turner, 2007, p. 115).

Using the previously described Equity Index (EI) methodology (Ford, 2014a, 2014b), the under-represented (UR) school district was substantially below the EI threshold with a 13.10% difference between the EI and the actual percentage; the minimally represented (MR) school district adequately represented Hispanic students in gifted programs with a 0.28% difference between the EI and the actual percentage. For the purpose of completing Phase Two, the school district policy manuals for school districts designated as UR and MR were obtained for data analysis.

Policy Analysis

The ESE school district policy manuals from the two Florida school districts were examined for the presence of exploratory themes. The categories were: (a) Multiple criteria for identification (number of criteria), (b) Varied Criteria for Identification (different types of criteria), (c) Gifted Identification Committee, (d) Gifted Program Design and Procedures, (e) Gifted Program Evaluation, (f) Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability, (g)

Parental Advocacy and Involvement, (h) Community Advocacy and Involvement, and (i) Gifted Program Goal Specification. Archived primary documents (e.g., state laws, administrative codes, and FDOE materials) as well as scholarly journal articles were used to create the themes in the content analysis protocol. The conceptual themes were cross-referenced against the evidence-based practices in "Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards 2: Assessment" (2010) to determine the extent to which characteristics of adequate representation were addressed by the categories in the content analysis protocol.

Key words, phrases, and categories were identified in the content analysis protocol (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The themes' reoccurrences were counted during the analysis. Descriptive statements were coded based on their relation to the conceptual themes (i.e. similarities, differences, language usage, etc.; Johnson, et al., 2007). Findings were presented in tables to show how the themes were addressed in the school district policy manuals and to promote credibility and trustworthiness of interpretation via transparency (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2015; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

The content analysis protocol was used to identify the sections of the school district ESE policy manual addressing each theme. A three-column table was used to analyze the data. The first column listed the nine themes. The second column labeled the under-represented (UR) school and the third column labeled the minimally represented (MR) school district. The school districts' Plan B manual, called "The District Plan to Increase the Participation of Under-represented Students in the Program for Students who are Gifted" were used as a starting point in the data analysis (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). If the school districts' Plan B policy manual described the criteria for the theme(s) in the content analysis protocol, the unique characteristics were notated in the assigned column. In the case where the school districts' Plan B policy

manual partially addressed or did not address the themes, several other sections were referred in the school district policy manual. For instance, the school district policy manual, Part I. General Policies and Procedures, Section C.1. Exceptional Student Education Procedural Safeguards, Section H.1. Initiating an Evaluation for Exceptional Student Education, and H.2. Conducting Student Evaluations and Reevaluations offer additional insight on the school district's general process for gifted referrals, evaluation procedures, and parental consensual rights.

Additionally, Part III: Policies and Procedures for Students who are Gifted, Section A: Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students who are Gifted, and Section B. Educational Plan for Students who are Gifted provided insight on parental consent and district process for documenting parent contacts.

Finally, key words and phrases in Part V: Appendices, Appendix B: Unique Philosophical, Curricular, or Instructional Considerations were reviewed to acquire information about qualified evaluators, philosophy, and the districts' gifted program evaluation design. In occurrences where key words and phrases were present in other sections but not in Plan B, the section in which the information was located was identified on the table.

Then, the content analysis protocol was utilized to determine the extent to which recommended practices for increasing the representation of Hispanic students were represented and described in the school districts' policies and procedures. A school district ESE policy manual that received a rating of Fully Addressed had key words and phrases in the school district Plan B policy manual and/or other sections of the district manual that met the criteria in the themes of the content analysis protocol. A school district ESE policy manual that received a rating of Partially Addressed had some, but not all, language in evidence-based practices or extant literature in the content analysis protocol (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; Pre-K-grade 12

Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Partially addressed also indicated that the school district manual had incomplete data such as unclear guidelines for addressing the theme's criteria, incomplete information in the Plan B policy manual and in other parts of the school district policy manual. School district policy manuals that received a rating of Not Addressed did not possess the language used in the standards for evidence-based practices or extant literature (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Additionally, the school district ESE policy manual did not have guidelines for gifted eligibility, did not mention key words or phrases in the district's manual to increase representation of underserved populations (Plan B), and had missing procedures to measure criteria in each theme in other parts of the manual.

School District Gifted Coordinator Interview

The school district gifted coordinators from under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) school districts were contacted for an interview to learn how school district policy guidelines were driving school-level practices in support of an increase in the representation of Hispanic students. One interview was recorded and transcribed for accuracy and the second interview was conducted via electronic communication using a secured university email (Fraeankel et al., 2015).

Tables were used to categorize, code, and apply thematic analysis of school districts' interview responses (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). The intent of the data analysis was to understand, describe, and explain patterns with and among school districts related to the identification and representation of Hispanic students in their gifted programs (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). School district profiles were created from interview responses to develop a narrative of participants' professional or personal experiences with the population of interest

(Seidman, 2006). According to Seidman (2006), profiling preserves the integrity of interview responses by creating narrative accounts of participants' experiences in gifted programming. This is achieved by transcribing and purposively marking responses of interest through text-segmenting to create a narrative profile of school policy to school-level practices (Seidman, 2006).

Interviews were transcribed in full to produce qualitative data for analysis, and recordings were replayed multiple times for accuracy in transcribing responses. Once the researcher transcribed the interview, the audio recording was listened to in its entirety while reading the transcription. After transcribing the first interview, the researcher found specific items that needed elaboration. Several guided questions were asked in subsequent interviews as the need arose. When appropriate, interview responses were compared with data sources (i.e. Phase One findings, FDOE membership reports, and extant documents) as a form of methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2003, 2007).

Interview data were organized into two separate tables to facilitate the analysis of demographic data in section one and interview responses in section two. The first table in section one of the qualitative analysis included data regarding participants' professional background and experience working with the population of interest (i.e. gifted, Hispanic, and Hispanic-Gifted students) in their school districts. The first column of that table consisted of items 1-5 (Appendix C). For instance, the first column had items such as, "What is your current position?" "How many years have you served in this position?" The second and third columns consisted of the transcribed school district responses to interview items. The data in these columns was comprised of multiple choice answers and voluntary open-ended responses from each of the two school districts (under-represented and minimally represented) respectively. The fourth column

consisted of categories or grouped subtexts of like data that emerged in the interview responses to assist in developing themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2012; Saldaña, 2009).

A procedural coding method was used to create a priori codes from the research question and extant literature (Coding Qualitative Data, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). The a priori codes were practice to policy alignment between district practices and district policies (PP), practice to literature alignment between district practices and best practices (PL), barriers to identification and representation (Barriers), facilitators of identification and representation (Facilitators), and evaluation of identification and representation (Evaluation). Text segments of interest were highlighted and tagged to a priori codes. Although interview responses were reviewed, instances arose where previously coded data needed to be reclassified into different categories (Saldaña, 2009). Consequently, open codes or emergent codes were added and assigned (Coding Qualitative Data, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). The open codes that were added and assigned were "personal philosophy of representation" and "background and experience of gifted programming." Through axial coding, both a priori codes and open codes were reviewed for accuracy in representing the interview responses (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Saldaña, 2009). The researcher combined codes whose responses were closely related (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Saldaña, 2009). Therefore, open codes were combined into "background and philosophy."

A second parallel table was created as a template to organize the analysis of school districts' participant responses in Section Two. Individual tables were created for each a priori code and open code (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Saldaña, 2009). In each separate table, columns one through four had text passages that pertained to each code. The fifth column included categories, or words or phrases that explicitly described and compared two or more cases or school districts (Leech & Onwueghuzie, 2017). Responses were marked, assigned a code, and grouped together

in sequential order to help create the narrative account of gifted representation in the school districts or "district profiles" (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). According to Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2012), conceptual ordering is the first step to developing themes.

The groups of coded text passages were analyzed to create tentative themes after coding, categorizing the data, and analytically reflecting on coded responses (Saldaña, 2009). The third research question was used to develop tentative themes. The third research question addressed how the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs varied in a sample of two school districts and how the pertaining school district's policies and practices affected such representation. Once data were coded, categorized, and analyzed for themes, a narrative account of gifted representation was created within each school district profiles (i.e. UR and MR school districts). Subsequently, credibility techniques were used to promote credibility and trustworthiness of the themes (Creswell, 2003, 2007).

During the interview process, school district and participant confidentiality were protected. Interviewees were assigned a pseudonym and their job responsibilities were described. Codes were assigned to represent the chosen school districts and a general description of each of the school districts' sociodemographic characteristics was provided. Descriptive labels were used for the under-represented school district (UR) and minimally represented school district (MR).

The school district gifted coordinators from the UR and MR school districts were contacted for an interview to learn how school district policy guidelines drive school-level practices in support of an increase in the representation of Hispanic students in the pertaining school district. One interview was recorded and transcribed for accuracy and validity and the second interview was conducted via electronic communication using a secured university email (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

A total of 2 four-column matrices were used to conduct the analyses and find conceptual patterns and trends between text segments in the transcribed interview (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). The first four-column matrix consisted of Section 1: Demographic Information of the two school districts. Section 1 of interview responses provided descriptive data on the interviewers' professional background in working with the population of interest, both gifted, Hispanic, and Hispanic-Gifted students in K-12 public schools. School district profiles were created based on disclosed information regarding their job title and description, years of experience in the position and in the classroom setting, among information that participants voluntarily shared (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). The first column in the matrix consisted of the demographic interview items 1-5 (Appendix C). The second through fourth columns consisted of school district responses to section one-interview items.

A second four-column matrix was used in the data analysis. Columns 1-2 contained relevant text segments from the UR school district (first column) and the MR school district (second column) that were assigned codes. The third column consisted of categories that emerged within the text segments to help assist in the development of themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2012).

After interview responses were transcribed, the researcher started the coding process. A priori codes were derived from the research questions and extant literature to provide transparency in the analysis (Coding Qualitative Data, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). A priori codes were generated to conceptually order the interview responses into groups for further interpretation (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). The transcribed interviews were read and assigned a priori codes. The a priori codes were practice to policy alignment between district practices and district policies (PP), practice to literature alignment between district practices and best practices (PL),

barriers to identification and representation (Barriers), facilitators of identification and representation (Facilitators), and evaluation of identification and representation (Evaluation). Open codes or emergent codes arose through repetitive key words or phrases that were not addressed through a priori codes (Coding Qualitative Data, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). Open codes or emergent codes were assigned as needed (Saldaña, 2009). Examples of emergent codes that arose were personal philosophy of representation and background and experience.

Assigned a priori codes and open codes were reviewed and combined as needed (Creswell, 2003, 2007). Four-column matrices were created for each a priori code and emerging code. Similar coded text segments were grouped together by school district and added to its assigned four-column matrix (Creswell, 2003). Trends such as similarities and differences, underlining issues, concerns, or bias were indicators of emerging patterns (Nadin & Cassell, 2004). The fourth column contained tentative categories or words, phrases, sentences that explicitly described the data (Leech & Onwueghuzie, 2012; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013; Saldaña, 2009). The groups of coded text passages were analyzed to create tentative themes after coding, categorizing the data, and analytically reflecting on coded responses (Saldaña, 2009). Finally, credibility techniques were used to gauge the credibility and trustworthiness of the themes (Creswell, 2003, 2007)

During the interview process, school district and participant confidentiality was protected. Interviewees were assigned a pseudonym and description of their job responsibilities. Codes were assigned to represent the chosen school districts (i.e., District 1, 2, 3) and a general description of school districts' sociodemographic characteristics was provided.

Credibility Techniques

Faculty-peer debriefing, audit trails, and triangulation were used to ensure credibility in Phase Two of the study. In analyzing the content analysis protocol's themes against school districts' ESE policy manuals, frequent debriefing was used in checking findings (Dillman, et al., 2014; Fraenkel, et al., 2015; Shenton, 2004).

The researcher met with a faculty supervisor to review interpretations, challenge assumptions about findings, and recognize biases that may have inhibited her analysis if left unfound (Shenton, 2004). Issues of validity were discussed with the faculty supervisor by reviewing the manner in which district policies and procedures fully, partially, or did not address the themes in the content analysis protocol. The faculty supervisor independently reviewed how school district policies and procedures were described and characterized using the previously described table to evaluate the appropriateness of assigned codes and assess the credibility of interpretations.

Another credibility technique used was triangulation to reduce the chance of investigator bias (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation was achieved by comparing participants' interview responses to the content analysis protocol checklist. These attempts were made to analyze the data and reduce validity threats, biases, assumptions, and misinterpretation in the analysis process (Maxwell, 2004). Therefore, trustworthiness was enhanced through the credibility techniques and processes.

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description and explanation of the methods and procedures that were used in conducting a study on the representation of Hispanic students identified for gifted education in Florida's K-12 public schools. The chapter began with a

description of the design of study and a restatement of the research questions. The study was mixed-method in its approach, and its methodologies were discussed separately. Phase One required the use of quantitative methods (a regression model and cross tabulations) to respond to Research Questions 1 and 2. In Phase Two, qualitative methods were employed utilizing two researcher-developed instruments to meet the needs of the study and to respond to Research Question 3. The procedures for each type of data collection were discussed. Lastly, faculty-peer debriefing, audit trails, and triangulation were used for analyzing the content analysis protocol and responses to interview items. Chapter 4 contains a summary of the results of the data analysis accompanied by tabular displays of the results as needed.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the structural, contextual, and procedural characteristics of Florida's K-12 school districts that might influence the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs in the 2016-2017 school year. Phase One of the study utilized quantitative methods to investigate whether the representation of Hispanic students identified for gifted programs was associated with school district enrollment, socioeconomic status, and minority (i.e., non-white) enrollment and whether representation varied by grade configuration (i.e., K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). Phase Two utilized qualitative methods to investigate procedural characteristics of two school districts selected to represent under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) school districts. Specifically, school district policies were analyzed in the ways and the extent to which school district manuals address the increased participation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Gifted education program coordinators from UR and MR school districts were interviewed to assess the extent to which school district policy was driving school-level practices in placing Hispanic students in gifted programs.

The following research questions guided the analyses of this study.

1. In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percent minority students)?
2. To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])?

3. What identification procedures and practices are in place in a sample of two Florida K-12 public school districts identified using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) methodology as (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold) and (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold)?
    a. In what ways and to what extent do school district policies address measures to adequately identify Hispanic students who may be potentially gifted?
    b. In what ways and to what extent do school district practices align with school district policies and/or established best practices with regard to identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs across two Florida K-12 public school districts?

This chapter has been organized to present results obtained from the various analyses in the following sequence: (a) descriptive analyses, (b) results of school district characteristics, (c) results in the analysis of representation by grade configuration, (d) analysis of ancillary data, (e) document analysis, (f) interview findings, (g) credibility techniques (h) summary of findings.

Phase One Results

Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables were computed using the previously-described sample of districts with viable data for the number of Hispanic gifted students (i.e., 44 cases that reported 11 or more Hispanic students identified for gifted services—the 67 regular Florida districts minus the 16 school districts reporting 10 or fewer Hispanic gifted students and the seven that did not report). A brief discussion of findings from these descriptive analyses is presented in the following text and in Tables 3 and 4.

The dependent variable measured the percentage of Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 public schools. In 2016-2017, the state of Florida reported 5.21% Hispanic students identified for gifted education of the total Hispanic population (Student Enrollment, 2016). Representation rates among the 44 school districts with valid data ranged from 1.07% to 11.83%, with a mean value of 3.28%. A summary of descriptive statistics for the dependent variable is presented in Table 3.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for the Percentage of Hispanic Students in Gifted Programs

Dependent Variable	N	M	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Hispanic Gifted	44	3.28	2.22	1.07	11.83

The independent variables measured the total district enrollment, percent minority (i.e. non-white) students, and socioeconomic status (i.e., percent students eligible for free or reduced meals). Values for school district enrollment ranged from 4,906 to 357,311 students (M = 61,820, SD = 76,198). Values for percent minority students ranged from 17.54% to 92.95% (M = 49.78%, SD = 17.60%). Values for percent students qualifying for free or reduced meals ranged from 22.89% to 82.46%, M= 55.71%, SD = 10.62%). A summary of descriptive statistics for the independent variables is presented in Table 4.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

Independent Variables	N	M	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
School District enrollment	44	61,820	76,198	4,906	357,311
Minority	44	49.78	17.60	17.54	92.95
FRL CEP	44	55.71	10.62	22.89	82.46

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted education in Florida's K-12 public school district based on school district enrollment, percent minority students, and percent students qualifying for free or reduced meals. A significant regression equation was found ($F[3, 46] = 5.670$, $p < .002$), with an R^2 of .27. School districts' predicted Hispanic gifted representation is equal to 4.385 - .053 (FRL CEP) + .016 (Minority) + 1.277E-5 (enrollment), where FRL CEP is measured as the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals, Minority is measured as the percentage of non-White students in the district, and enrollment is measured as the total district enrollment.

Among the three independent variables, school district enrollment was the only statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable measuring Hispanic student representation in gifted education. Results for the district enrollment B coefficient can be interpreted to suggest that, all else equal, each increase of 10,000 students in district enrollment is associated with an increase of .1277 points in the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted education. The difference represented 5.8% of one standard deviation. The adjusted R^2 coefficient indicated that 22% of the variance in the percentage of Hispanic students identified

for gifted education is explained by the three independent variables collectively. Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis.

Table 6

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Percentage of Hispanic Students in Florida's K-12 Public Schools

Variables	B	SE B	β
District Enrollment	1.277E-5	.000	.404*
Minority	.016	0.21	.134
FRL CEP	-.053	.031	-.246

Note. $R^2 = .27$, adjusted $R^2 = .22$, * $p<0.05$

Cross Tabulation

Cross tabulation Table 6 was created to display the representation of Hispanic students identified for gifted education in Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 using a state-wide data set with all students reported by grade (i.e., not disaggregated by school district). The percentage of Hispanic students in Grades K-5 identified for gifted education were 4.27%. The percentage of Hispanic students in Grades 6-8 identified for gifted education were 7.08% and those in Grades 9-12 represented 5.35% of gifted population. The lowest representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs was in Grades K-5 and the highest representation was in Grades 6-8. The percentage of Hispanic students that were not identified for gifted programming ranged from 92.92% to 95.73%.

Table 7

Summary of Results of Cross-tabulations for Hispanic Student Representation in Gifted Programs by Grade Configuration

	Hispanic Students		
Grade Configurations	Gifted Identified	Not Identified	Total
Grades K-5			
Count	18,935	424,994	443,929
% of Category	4.27%	95.73%	100%
Grades 6-8			
Count	14,295	187,593	201,888
% of Category	7.08%	92.92%	100%
Grades 9-12			
Count	14,085	249,057	263,142
% of Category	5.35%	94.65%	100%
Total	47,315	861,644	908,959
	5.21%	94.79%	100%

Ancillary Analysis

An ancillary analysis was conducted to provide a more descriptive view of school district characteristics in school districts with varying degrees of representation in the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted education. Extant data from the same 44 school districts included in the regression analysis were aggregated into two groups (n = 22 each) to compare school districts at or above the median percentage of gifted representation (2.68% - 11.83%) and school districts below the median percentage of gifted representation (1.07% - 2.64%). Table 7 presents a summary of these results.

Table 8

Ancillary Data Analysis

Categories	Hispanic Gifted	Enrollment	Minority	Socioeconomic Status
Higher Representation	4.68%	99,438	52.41%	53.28%
Lower Representation	1.88%	24,203	47.15%	58.14%

Note. Higher representation = at or above median (2.68% - 11.83). Lower representation = below median (1.07% - 2.64%)

The ancillary analysis revealed that the characteristics of school districts with Hispanic gifted representation rates at or above the state median (M = 4.68% Hispanic students in gifted programs) differed in terms of key variables from school districts with Hispanic gifted representation rates below the state median (M = 1.88% Hispanic students in gifted programs). On average, school districts with higher representation were larger (M = 99,438 total students) than those with lower representation (M = 24,202 total students). School districts with higher representation had slightly higher rates of minority enrollment (M = 52.42% minority students), on average, than school districts with lower representation (M = 47.15% minority students). School districts with higher representation also demonstrated higher socioeconomic status (i.e., lower poverty levels) (M = 53.28%), on average, than school districts with lower representation (M = 58.14%).

Phase Two Results

A content analysis protocol was utilized to determine the extent to which the under-represented (UR) school district and the minimally represented (MR) school district policy manuals provided guidelines that were supportive of increasing the representation of Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 public school gifted programs. A rating scale was used to categorize

the extent to which the nine conceptual themes were addressed in school districts' policy documents. School districts were analyzed individually and collectively by rating the frequency of themes that were fully addressed in their policies and procedures.

To protect the school districts' confidentiality, codes were assigned to represent the chosen school districts. Descriptive labels were used for the under-represented (UR) school district and minimally represented (MR) school district. The following results provide descriptions, statements, key words, and phrases that were coded based on their relationships with the conceptual themes (Johnson et al., 2007).

Policy Analysis

The school district exceptional student education (ESE) policy manual from UR and MR school districts were reviewed for presence of the exploratory themes. The themes were based on extant resources including state laws, administrative codes, and FDOE materials and scholarly journal articles that evaluate the most appropriate and current practices for increasing the identification of underserved groups of students (Callahan et al., 2014; FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002; FDOE, 2016; Florida Plan 2013, 2017; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). The resulting themes were: (a) Multiple Criteria for Identification (number of criteria), (b) Varied Criteria for Identification (different types of criteria), (c) Gifted Identification Committee, (d) Gifted Program Design and Procedures, (e) Gifted Program Evaluation, (f) Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability, (g) Parental Advocacy and Involvement, (h) Community Advocacy and Involvement, and (i) Gifted Program Goal Specification.

Policy analysis results demonstrated that UR school district fully addressed eight of nine themes in the school district manuals. Nevertheless, the MR school district fully addressed four of the nine themes. Findings from the policy analyses are explained in narrative form through

two school district profiles for the under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) school districts.

In theme one, *Multiple Criteria for Identification,* and theme two, *Varied Criteria for Identification*, several key words, and phrases repeated. For instance, "Intellectual assessment", "Achievement tests," "Checklist of Gifted Characteristics," and "Environmental Factors" were frequent terms used to describe the eligibility criteria for students applying for gifted programming under Plan B. Additional phrases that were repeated were "Gifted Eligibility Determination Form," "Matrix," and "GEM" (Gifted Eligibility Matrix).

Theme three, *Gifted Identification Committee*, was the usage by three or more stakeholders of Key words such as "Teams," "Committees," and "Evaluators" in the school district manuals.

Theme four, *Gifted Program Design and Procedures,* determined the extent to which school districts had gifted identification processes and guidelines in Plan B. Manuals that elaborated on gifted identification processes (in Part I: H.1. General Policies and Procedures, Initiating an Evaluation for Exceptional Student Education of the manual) were also considered. The researcher looked for "Plan B Gifted Eligibility Form," or "Plan B Gifted Eligibility Matrix" (Plan B) of school district policy to evaluate design and procedures (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). Gifted Program Design was called "Student Evaluation Procedures" in Plan B manuals.

Theme five, *Gifted Program Evaluation*, sought specific guidelines and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of each of the school district's gifted program. Theme six, *Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability,* indicated goals and strategies to reach an increased representation of students in gifted programs. Additionally, theme six suggested

specific timelines for data analysis, benchmarks, and personnel roles to ensure compliance in reporting.

Theme seven, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement*, involved parental advocacy in the gifted identification process (i.e. nomination, pre-referral, referral, and evaluation procedures). Terms used to indicate high degrees of Parental Advocacy and Involvement included: workshops, surveys, attempts (i.e. oral or written) to communicate with parents in their home language, involvement in a school-child study team, and input in the Gifted Indicator's Checklist. The school districts' Plan B manuals were used as a point of reference. Additionally, theme seven determined the extent to which school districts had procedures for parental appeals, consensual rights, and gifted identification processes for underserved students. The presence of "Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students Who are Gifted" (FAC 6A-6.03313, 2016), and feasibility in obtaining information on parental appeals and consensual rights were considered.

Identifying theme eight, *Community Advocacy and Involvement*, included reviewing school districts' plans to increase communal awareness in identifying and serving gifted students from underserved populations. The researcher looked for statements in policy manuals that described specific strategies for accomplishment of this goal.

Theme nine, *Gifted Program Goal Specification*, focused on key words and phrases pertaining to measurable goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish the goals. District goals were measurable and explicitly indicated an objective. School districts' Plan B manuals referenced program and district goals to increase the representation for underserved students in gifted programs (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

There were several instances where the school district policy manuals of UR and MR school districts utilized the same state laws and procedures. In addressing theme four, *Gifted*

Program Design and Procedures, the two school districts followed similar procedures to communicate parental appeals and consensual rights. The school districts used Florida Administrative Code 6A-6.03313 (2016) *Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students who are Gifted* to ensure parental involvement in their child's education. Florida statute FAC 6A-6.03313 (2016) explains that parents receive notification of students' gifted nomination in a language(s) understood by the public and parents via interpreters and other modes of communication. The school district provides written documentation of meeting these requirements. Procedures for identifying gifted students were found in each school districts' Plan B policy manual and partially in Part I. General Policies and Procedures, Section H.1. Initiating an Evaluation for Exceptional Student Education (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). Areas in this section included screening and referral procedures, criteria and instruments for evaluation, programming, philosophy, and design to increase representation of under-represented groups (Plan B). Gifted program design and procedures were called Student Evaluation Procedures in both school districts.

The two selected school districts followed the same guidelines to address themes five, *Gifted Program Evaluation*, and six, *Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability.* The school districts had procedures for developing Educational Plans (EP) for gifted students in Part III: Policies and Procedures for Students Who are Gifted, Section B – Educational Plans for Students Who are Gifted (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). These plans included statements of goals, project dates of services, the names and roles of the Educational Plan (EP) teams, timelines for developing the educational plan, parents' role in those meetings, and guidelines for implementation the education plans. In addition, the school districts followed the same guidelines for tracking student eligibility progress (Part I, Section H.2: General Policies

and Procedures- Conducting student evaluations for ESE students) through the District Referral Log/ESE database (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). Additionally, the two school districts addressed theme seven, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement, in a similar way*. The school districts maintained written documentation of parent contacts and forms of communication made in each attempt (FAC 6A-6.03313, 2016).

The two school districts referred to theme eight, *Community Advocacy and Involvement*, in Part III: Policies and Procedures for Students who are Gifted, Section A: Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students who are Gifted (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). The section of the district policy manual stated that "Support services are provided in coordination with local school district student services and community agencies such as Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Center as well as special projects funded by agencies and state and local government" (p. 2). The two school districts also addressed theme nine, *Gifted Program Goal Specification*, using similar language in Part III: Section A, Exceptional Student Eligibility for Gifted Students who are Gifted. The gifted program philosophy in this section stated that students were entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), specially designed instruction, services, and programs with various delivery models, taught by trained teachers, with supportive administration to meet students' special needs (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). School district considerations were dependent on the school districts' initiatives to involve the community and on the content of program/district goals to increase the participation of under-represented students in gifted programs.

The Under-represented (UR) School District

Ford's (2014a, 2014b) EI showed that UR school district had an underrepresentation of Hispanic students identified for gifted programming. The school districts percentage of Hispanic

students in gifted programs for the 2016-2017 school year was 38.00% and the EI was 51.10% at a 20% threshold (Membership in Programs, 2016).

The UR school districts' ESE policy manual fully addressed themes one and two. The UR school district's identification process met multiple criteria in theme one – Screening through nomination forms, as well as achievement and intellectual test scores, gifted characteristics, and environmental indicators. The school district fully addressed Varied Criteria for Identification because traditional methods such as intelligence and academic achievement measures were used as well as non-traditional methods such as environmental indicators for students that received Free/Reduced Lunch and/or were limited English proficient (LEP). Students were required to earn 10 points or higher on the Gifted Eligibility Matrix (GEM) Plan B and at least one point in gifted characteristics and intellectual abilities category (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

The UR school district fully addressed theme three, Gifted Identification Committee. The school districts' panel of in-field experts were referred to as "multi-disciplinary committee of professions at the elementary, middle, and high school" (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). The committee included classroom teacher, teacher of the gifted, ESE specialist, a Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative, the school psychologist, an ESOL designee when appropriate, and other school staff aware of students' gifted potential.

The UR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed theme four, *Gifted Program Design and Procedures*. The school districts' Plan B included screening/referral procedures, student evaluation, eligibility procedures, program goal, and evaluation design as a guide for the program design. The school district used a different notice of procedural safeguards for parents

of gifted students in Appendix A.2. When the researcher looked for the notice in Appendix A.2., the school manual indicated that safeguards were posted on the school website.

The UR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed theme five, *Gifted Program Evaluation*. The school district conducted an annual review of grades and standardized test scores from students in under-represented groups. The school district also evaluated the effectiveness of each component of gifted eligibility through progress evaluations and feedback surveys from parents, students, general education teachers, and gifted teachers. In Part I: General Policies and Procedures, H. 2. Conducting Student Evaluation and Reevaluation, students' ESE eligibility documentation was time stamped and uploaded into the ESE Referral Log (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

The UR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed theme six, *Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability*. The Gifted Assessment team maintained records of students recommended for program placement. The ESE specialist or gifted point person at the school level maintained records of students nominated, screened, referred, and evaluated. Finally, data were analyzed every summer to review the success of the program and make modifications. The data were segregated by Limited English Proficient and SES status, and the percentages of students from each under-represented group were compared to previous years.

The UR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed theme seven, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement*. Parents were surveyed to evaluate the success of the program, and parents were encouraged to nominate students to gifted services and provide input in their child's Gifted Indicator ratings. The school districts' Plan B policy manual provided the intention of involving parents in school districts' workshops and activities. The nomination form was translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese to comply with FAC 6A-6.0908 (2009)

which states that parents of current or former LEP students shall be informed in their primary language or other feasible mode of communication.

The UR school district ESE policy manual partially addressed theme eight, *Community Advocacy and Involvement*. The Plan B policy manual referenced community advocacy and involvement by stating that community involvement was promoted through awareness workshops and program activities. The school district achieved this goal by utilizing mentorship and partnership between school and the community as well as through materials provided through the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System and Multicultural/Foreign Language/ESOL Education Department of the School Board of the County.

The UR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed theme nine, *Gifted Program Goal Specification*, by stating the district goal to increase the participation of under-represented students in gifted programs by 10%. The gifted program goal was to "develop and enhance critical thinking, creative thinking, planning, achievement, evaluation, independence, social responsibility and service… Common Core Standards, Grade level expectations, and multicultural content and issues will be a major focus" (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

The Minimally Represented (MR) School District

Ford's (2014a) EI showed that the minimally represented school (MR) district had a 5.21% representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs for the 2016-2017 school year. The EI was 4.92% at a 20% threshold (Membership in Programs, 2016).

The MR school district ESE policy manual fully addressed themes one and two, *Multiple and Varied Criteria for Identification*. The school district utilized a matrix system of evaluation where gifted characteristics, academic performance, intellectual assessment, and environmental factors play a role in the gifted identification process. Students earned 8 points or higher on the

Plan B Gifted Eligibility Determination Form and at least one point in Gifted characteristics, intellectual functioning, and environmental factors to qualify (2016-2019, S & P, 2018). Academic performance required no points for gifted eligibility through Plan B. Students from under-represented populations that received scores of 115-129 on a psychological assessment (as opposed to 125 or higher on IQ scores). Part I: General Policies and Procedures, Section H.1: Initiating an Evaluation for Exceptional Student Education indicated that evaluators of referred students complete a Student Interest Survey and submit it to the ESE Director/Designee for determination of eligibility.

The MR school district fully addressed theme three, *Gifted Identification Committee*. The committee members included the classroom teacher, guidance counselor, psychologist, and someone aware of students' gifted potential. Although the information was not present in the Plan B manual, it was mentioned in Appendix B, Part III. Policies and Procedures for Students who are Gifted, Section A (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). The other team was involved in creating/reviewing students' Educational Plans (EP) for gifted students (Part III, Section B, 2016-2019 S & P, 2018). This team consisted of at least one teacher of the gifted, a parent, a regular education teacher, a school district representative qualified to provide and supervise instructional implications of evaluation results, an interpreter (regular or gifted teacher or district representative), an individual who has knowledge or special expertise, and the student, if possible (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

The MR school district fully addressed theme four, *Gifted Program Design and Procedures* but did not fully address theme five, *Gifted Program Evaluation*. The school district's eligibility categories had specific cut-off scores to measure gifted eligibility. Plan B had description and procedures for the screening/referral procedures, student evaluation procedures,

and eligibility criteria. The school district's evaluation plan was not indicated in the Plan B manual. Part III Policies and Procedures for Students who are Gifted Section A, Appendix B, suggested a program evaluation model that lacked strategies and directive (2016-2019 S & P, 2018). The evaluation design stated that, "Every effort will be made to continuously monitor the effectiveness of gifted students in [overrepresented] school district" (2016 – 2019 S & P, 2018). The process would include analyzing student achievement data, monitoring progress toward mastery of individual goals and objectives, completing parent/student questionnaires, administrative observations, documentation of teacher performance, and state reviews and audits. The intent was to modify and improve the gifted program. However, there was no indication of specific guidelines and procedures for performing said evaluation. Part I. H. 2: Conducting Student Evaluations and Reevaluation established procedures to track and log gifted eligibility meetings, referrals/nominations, and gifted identifications in the school district's referral log.

The MR school district did not fully address theme six, *Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability*, as timelines for evaluating the gifted program were not provided. The MR school district also did not fully addressed theme seven, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement*, because parents' role in the identification process was described as requesting a Checklist of Rating Scale for K-12th grade students when the achievement test scores did not fall within the recommended range. Parents were already allowed to nominate their child(ren) for gifted identification (Florida Plan, 2017). Guidelines for parent communication were limited to Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students who are Gifted, FAC 6A-6.03313 (2016).

The MR school district did not address theme eight. The Plan B policy manual did not reference community advocacy and involvement in the school district's Plan B policy manual

(2016-2019 S & P, 2018). These statements were not guidelines that explained how the initiative would be implemented.

The school district partially addressed theme nine, *Gifted Program Goal Specification*. The school district Plan B policy manual had a district goal but did not have a program goal. The school district's goal to strive for "continuous progress in identifying diverse gifted population" (2016-2019, S & P, 2018, p. 1). The school district ESE policy manual also stated that the student population should reflect the community demographics which was within a 5% range of its community total (2016-2019 S & P, 2018).

In conclusion, content analysis demonstrated that the UR school district fully addressed eight of the nine themes. Further analyses of school district policies, procedures, and practices are needed to understand why the under-represented school districts' content analysis substantially addressed themes on the content analysis protocol despite underrepresenting Hispanic students in gifted programs during the 2016-2017 school year. The MR school district fully addressed four of the nine themes. Table 8 contains the results of the policy analysis of the policy manuals of two school districts with (under represented [UR] and minimally represented [MR]) Hispanic populations in their gifted programs. School districts were determined to have fully addressed (FA), partially addressed (PA), or not addressed (NA) the nine themes.

Interviews

Expanding on the analysis of school district policies and procedures from selected school districts, the investigator explored best practices for identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs among those responsible for its implementation. The first sections of the gifted coordinator interview included demographic items about the participants. The information was obtained from preselected school districts with under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) Hispanic students in gifted programs. The responses assisted in describing and creating school district participant profiles based on their experience and school district practices in identifying the population of interest.

School District Participant Profiles

The participant from the under-represented school district (PUR) held the current position as gifted pull-out teacher for 3½ years. The participant had been an employee for the school district for 21 years of which 10 years were spent working with Hispanic and gifted student population, including Hispanic students identified for gifted programming. PUR's teaching background included working in the high schools as an Advanced Placement (AP) teacher. The participant was involved in the Summer Migrant Institute where students from rural school districts in Florida attended tutoring at a private university within the state. The participant was also involved in a program through Heartland Consortium where gifted high school students participated in STEM-related projects and field trips. This experience shaped PUR's teaching philosophy regarding diversity and cultural awareness. PUR indicated, "We are doing virtual field trips this week where the students visit South America…. I want them to know about different cultures specially coming from [this town]. The world is so much bigger than this tiny little city."

UR school district did not have a gifted specialist, but PUR's position required the participant to serve the role as teacher and acting specialist for other gifted teachers in the school district. At the time of the interview, PUR taught gifted classes at the elementary level (K-5) three times a week and middle school (6-8) gifted elective classes daily. PUR attended all gifted Educational Plan (EP) meetings for the school district (K-8) and oversaw the documentation for proper placement and gifted services. The participant's communication with the District Coordinator for ESE was limited to a few times a year.

PUR philosophy of representation was evident in interview responses. PUR stated that the gifted population should mimic the total overall population by stating, "It should not be a ration. So, of course, if the total Hispanic population is 63%, then the gifted Hispanic population should also be 63%." PUR reiterated the importance of representing groups of people from "all facets of the community" and elaborated by saying, "I think we're doing a better job, but I think it could be better."

PUR described the school district as a highly economically distressed county. Additionally, the school district's student population of 7,404 in 2016-2017 was the smallest (Student Membership, 2017) and with a significantly larger Hispanic population (63.87% than MR school district (Student Membership, 2017). Despite the percentage of Hispanic students in its student population, Hispanic students in gifted programs comprised only 1.21% of general Hispanic student population.

The interview for the MR school district was completed via electronic communication. Therefore, the responses for demographic data were limited to multiple choice options and information voluntarily shared via digital correspondence. The PMR held the current position as full-time gifted district specialist for between four and nine years. The participant previously had

similar years of classroom experience with the gifted population before serving in this position. The participant had served less than three years working with Hispanic and Hispanic gifted student populations in the classroom. While a gifted specialist, the participant provided training and support services to accomplish district goals and priorities. PMR also coordinated gifted curriculum programs and staff development services (i.e., planning to evaluation phase) and assisted in managing and writing grants. The participant also coordinated and managed the school district's Gifted Endorsement Plan and certification, maintained the ESE webpage, supervised itinerant gifted teachers, and served as liaison between state, district, school personnel, family, and community members. PMR's job description included the possession of knowledge of federal and state laws, rules, policies, and best practices/trends relevant to gifted education as well as maintenance and submission of reports and records.

PMR described the demographic representation of race/ethnicity as one with a small percentage (6.15%) of Hispanic students (Student Membership, 2017). PMR stated, "Our district has a very small Hispanic population. We have two students identified within the ESOL programs' identified program. Our country is located on the western border of Florida by the Panhandle. Our Plan B population is low-socio-economic". PMR stated that the school district was the only one of all neighboring school districts utilizing Plan B as an alternative gifted identification process in surrounding school districts. Of the preselected school districts, the school district's 2016-2017 student population of 40,384 was the largest of two sampling school districts (Student Membership, 2017). The percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs was 5.21% of the gifted population. Table 9 shows representative excerpts the UR and MR ESE school district policy manuals that fully addressed the nine exploratory themes.

Table 9

School District Policy Analysis Results

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
1. Multiple Criteria for Identification	Present in Plan B Manual- District Plan to Increase the Participation of Underrepresented Students in the Program for Gifted Students A total of 10 points or higher on GEM matrix and at least one (1) point on the Gifted Characteristics section of the GEM and intellectual abilities category. • Measures of intellectual functioning – Nonverbal cognitive test are viable alternative choice • Academic performance • Gifted characteristics- leadership, creativity, and motivation) Parental input should be part of rating process • Environmental indicators • Need for special program will be established based on Gifted Eligibility Score (GEM).	Present in Plan B Manual District Plan to Increase the Participation of Underrepresented Students in the Program for Gifted Students A total of 8 points or higher on GEM. Must score at least 1 point in gifted characteristics, intellectual abilities, and environmental factors. • Gifted Characteristics* • Academic Performance • Intellectual Functioning* • Environmental Factors • Need for special program will be established based on Gifted Eligibility Score (GEM).
2. Varied Criteria for Identification	Traditional • Intellectual functioning • Academic and Achievement scores Non-Traditional • Gifted Characteristics • Varied Nomination (Teachers, school staff, students, and community.	Traditional • Intellectual function • Academic and Achievement Scores Non-Traditional • Gifted Characteristics Checklist Varied • Nomination (Teachers, school staff, students, and community.

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
3. Gifted Identification Committee	Present in Plan B Manual: A multi-disciplinary committee of professionals will be established at each elementary, middle and high school. classroom teacher • The teacher of the gifted • Exceptional Student Education Specialist • Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative, the school psychologist • An ESOL Designee where appropriate and other school staff who spend significant time with the student The eligibility committee at each school will be responsible for the review and analysis of evaluation data and the recording of the data on the Gifted Eligibility Matrix (GEM).	Not Present in Plan B Manual Appendix B- Part III, Section A Characteristics of the gifted may be evaluated by a • Classroom teacher • Guidance counselor, • Psychologist, or • Someone with knowledge of the child's academic strengths, interests, and needs
4. Gifted Program Design and Procedures	Present in Plan B Manual • Screening • Referral • Student Evaluation • Determining Eligibility	Present in Plan B Manual • Screening and Referral Procedures (nomination and pre-referral) • Student evaluation procedures • Eligibility Criteria
5. Gifted Program Evaluation	Present in Plan B Manual • Annual review of students' grades and standardized test scores for all students from underrepresented groups • Additional evaluation activities will include evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of each component screening and referral procedure, criteria for eligibility, measurement instruments for student	Not Present in Plan B Manual Part I General Policies and Procedures • Referral is logged in database and assigned to school psychologist to conduct evaluation. • Evaluation report and referral information are submitted to ESE director/designee for an eligibility determination

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
	evaluations, instructional program philosophy, curriculum modifications or adaptations, and support services and evaluation design—in achieving the goal of increased participation of underrepresented groups and ensuring the success of students in these groups and their continued participations in the gifted program • Participating students, parents, gen education classroom teachers, and gifted teachers will be surveyed to evaluate the successful and continued participation of students from underrepresented groups and existing students in groups for the gifted. Part I General Policies and Procedures • Documents are time stamped and given due date. • Documents are delivered to school ESE specialist who access and uploads the evaluation through online system. • ESE specialist is responsible for scheduling the meeting within "due date" period.	Part III, Section A, Appendix B-Program Evaluation Design did not indicate procedures or mentioned underserved population • Program Evaluation Design "Every effort will be made to continuously monitor the effectiveness of services to gifted students in Escambia County. The evaluation process will include analyzing student achievement data; monitoring progress toward mastery of individual goals and objectives, conducting parent and student questionnaires, administrative observations, documentation of teacher performance and state reviews and audits. Data collected will be used for program modifications and improvements" .
6. Gifted Program Reporting and Accountability	Present in Plan B Manual • Annual formal evaluation addressing increase participation of under-represented groups' successful and continued participation. • ESE specialist or gifted point	Not Present in Plan B Manual

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
	person at each school maintains record of students, nominated, screened, referred and evaluated. • Gifted assessment team will maintain record of recommended students. • Data is collected annual (i.e. the summer term) to review the success of the plan. Revisions are recommended for the following year. • Example of data analysis: 1) Students categorized by LEP and SES 2) Percent of students from each underrepresented group is compared to previous years.	
7. Gifted Program Parental Advocacy and Involvement	Present in Plan B Manual • Family involvement through awareness workshops and activities. • Participating students, their parents, general education classroom teacher s and teachers of the gifted will be surveyed to evaluate the successful and continued participation of students from underrepresented groups and existing students in programs for the gifted • The parent community nomination forms are sent home with the student to be completed by one of the following: parent, legal	Present in Plan B Manual • Parents/guardians or teachers may request a Checklist Rating Scale of Gifted Characteristics be completed for all students, kindergarten through 12th grade, \if the achievement test scores do not fall within the recommended range • Parental written consent on the Escambia County School District Gifted Screening Matrix (GSM

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
	guardian, or surrogate, or a member of the community that knows the student well. A sample letter has been included to ensure that parents are informed about the screening and referral process. The form and sample letter have been translated into Spanish, Haitian-Creole, and Portuguese (FAC 6A-6.0908) All written/oral communication between parents of current or former LEP students shall be made in parents' primary language or other mode of communication that is feasible. • The Gifted Indicators Checklists is to evaluate the student's demonstrated ability or potential in the areas of leadership, motivation, creativity, adaptability, and learning. Educators with primary observational opportunities will rate the student. When rating the child, parental input should be part of the rating process	
8. Gifted Program Community Advocacy and Involvement	Partially Present in Plan B Manual • To ensure the successful participation and continuation of the program goals of students from underrepresented groups, family and community involvement will be promoted through awareness workshops and program activities, mentorship and partnership between school and community, access to	Not Present in Plan B Manual

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Evidence from Under-represented School District	Evidence from Minimally Represented School District
	technology, and materials provided through FLDRS and Multicultural/Foreign Language/ESOL Educations Department of the school district.	
9. Gifted Program Goal Specification	Present in Plan B Manual • District Goal The district would like to increase the participation of students from under-represented groups in programs for students who are gifted by 10%. • Program Goal The development and enhancement of critical thinking, creative thinking, planning, achievement, evaluation, independence, social responsibility and service, as outlined in Special Programs and Procedures for exceptional students are appropriate instructional goals for all gifted students, In addition, common Core Standards, Grade level Expectations, and multicultural content and issues will be a major focus of the future gifted programs.	Partially Addressed in Plan B Manual • District Goal The School District will strive for continuous progress in identifying its diverse gifted population. That population should reflect community demographics; therefore, the District will endeavor to maintain the level of potentially gifted underrepresented groups within 5% range of its community total. • No Indicated Program Goal

Themes

Results from the qualitative data collected via interview sessions with school district gifted coordinators revealed four themes: (a) Early Identification and Targeted Strategies, (b)

Advocacy and Support, (c) Adequacy of Resources, and (d) Understanding of School District Demographic Characteristics.

Early Identification and Targeted Strategies

Early identification measures and targeted strategies for identifying students in high poverty schools were seen in the MR school district. In 2017-2018, the school district started a new program called Community School Initiative where students in the school district's Title 1 elementary schools could apply for gifted programming through Plan B. Nevertheless, PMR school district limited its universal screening options by screening second graders who would qualify for Plan B if IQ eligibility was met through the Plan B Matrix.

School district's adherence to state policy and perceptions of Plan B as an identification process was a reoccurring subject in the interview responses. PUR indicated that, "we [the school district does] not have a perfect Plan B" and explained that an overreliance on IQ scores in the school district limited students' eligibility among high poverty and English Learning populations. Although the change in gifted representation had been slow, the school district gifted personnel were identifying more of the Hispanic population through Plan B.

Overall, interview responses showed that Plan B's access in public schools had gradually increased Hispanic gifted representation, especially among ELL and students from low-socioeconomic status. For instance, PUR school district stated that the sixth grade Hispanic student representation had risen to 44% of gifted population since Plan B was implemented; Grades 7 and 8 students increased to 33%; and K-5 students increased to approximately 50% (i.e., 63% of K-12 students were Hispanics).

PMR recognized that offering an alternative option to apply for gifted services broadens the eligibility criteria from a selected group of students based on economic status and limited

English proficient designations (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). According to PMR, this choice presented “an unequal advantage [because] they [students] have a greater opportunity than other kids because we’re trying hard to identify them.”

The MR school district promoted additional provisions for the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. PMR school district stated that Plan B compensated for potential obstacles in identification by offering alternative options through Community Eligible Program schools and to students receiving free and reduce lunch. UR school district did not elaborate on additional provisions or strategies used to increase Hispanic representation beyond Plan B.

Tracking students’ representation levels was limited to state mandated requirements. School districts practiced professional discretion in informally tracking students by race/ethnic background or other criteria. For instance, PUR met yearly, instead of every three years as state policy requires, to keep track of students by reviewing and updating Education Plans (EP). One way the school district tracked students in UR school district was by administering a *Google Doc* survey to gifted students to inquire about progress in the program. It is unknown if surveys are utilized for the purpose of tracking the representation of Hispanic students.

PMR stated the use of Plan B via matrix, universal screening qualifying second-grade students, and FSA data from fourth- and eighth-grade students as its form of targeted strategy to increase the participation of under-represented groups. Because the nature of the PMR’s interview was limited to email correspondence, this mode of communication limited the elaboration of interview items compared to responses from oral interviews.

Advocacy and Support

School Board Support. Participants' responses suggested that school district leadership reflected a culture that was supportive of an increase in participation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Schein (1992) defined culture as,

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p.12)

Overall, participants from school districts that at least minimally represented Hispanic students in gifted programs acknowledged greater support from school board members.

PMR shared a philosophy on representation in that expressed concerns over unequal opportunities among students who were not eligible for gifted programming and did not qualify for Plan B. The participant from the MR school district stated, "Sometimes, I am concerned our 'over-represented' groups aren't given nearly the opportunity as our under-represented." Despite minimally representing Hispanic students in gifted programs, school districts recognized that Plan B overcompensated for an overreliance on IQ scores (PUR), especially among English language learners (ESOL) and "students' limited exposure to text, vocabulary, and conversations, etc." (PMR).

Parent and teacher support. Parental advocacy and support was evident in interview responses when discussing parental academic expectations and access to resources to encourage participation in school-related activities. Also evident was teacher professional efficacy as someone with the knowledge to affectively identify gifted students. Additionally, overall confidence in teachers' ability to identify students in gifted programs was a characteristic in school districts with varying degrees of representation. Parental advocacy and support was also

evident in interview responses when participants discussed parental academic expectations and access to resources to encourage participation in school-related activities.

First, access to resources and parent-home communication were issues that contributed to parental and teacher advocacy. PUR stated transportation was provided to remedy travelling expenses, but not for after-school academic activities students might want to join: "That is harder in our district because we are 100% free and reduced. So, we cannot just have this conversation with parents because it could get very uncomfortable sitting in meetings and asking about their income." PUR indicated parental communication was ideal for FSA testing and general school news not geared toward the gifted population. PUR promoted parental and instructional advocacy administering a *Google Doc* survey to gifted students to inquire about their progress in the gifted program and reflect on EP goals.

PUR shared a narrative of one Hispanic student in a gifted program whose parental support was a contributing factor in their student's success in pursuing college. According to PUR, the student was fluent in native language at home, assisted parents by translating in English, excelled academically, and attended an Ivy League university. The participant attributed the students' success to parental support. The student was part of Heartland Consortium, but the program ceased when the grant expired. The participant elaborated,

> I had a student who ended up going to Brown University. He was in the high school group from the Consortium. She [the mother] worked hard getting him from place to place. She lived way out of town in places where a lot of migrant families lived and worked. I think she might have even been a single mom….

Then, the participant stated, "That's the golden ticket, when parents are heavily involved in gifted EP meetings. I look at [a] parent's face in those meetings, and I think it does make a difference".

PUR expressed a lack of inquiry from parents and stakeholders. In Educational Plan (EP) meetings, students would adopt one or two gifted goals to measure learning gains in the program based on the gifted standards. Comments would be added to gifted students' progress reports and sent home to parents. The participant would print progress reports every nine weeks to show students' learning gains. The participant elaborated, "But, then again, nobody really looks at that. I put in so much work and I feel like no one looks at it even if it's on the DOE website…no one really questions it or asks me about it."

PUR indicated the importance of highly qualified, supportive, and adequate instructional school staff to assist in meeting district goals in gifted representation. PUR stated that hiring staff that "understood the challenges that this [Hispanic gifted of low-SES status] face" was an asset to the school district and indicated that "one elementary out of the three in this side of the district does a really good job at hiring staff that are bilingual".

PMR alluded to advocacy as a factor that helped increase the participation of Hispanic students in gifted programs but did not indicate parental or teacher advocacy in interview responses. Because of ample references on parental involvement in the UR school district, it was a noteworthy finding to include. PMR did state that exposure to resources and experiences were contributing factors for gaps in student representation of educational programs. The participant explained, "Exposure to resources and experiences definitely contribute to the gaps between students who are provided with a variety of educational resources they can relate to and share with their families." Furthermore, the MR school district did advocate for an increase in participation of Hispanic students in gifted programs by providing a state-approved Plan B alternative identification plan. PMR elaborated, "We [the school district] do our best to overcome these obstacles [i.e. poverty level, limited language proficiency, racial/ethnic

membership, and disability] by offering a Plan B option." PMR expressed, "We are proud that we can make an effort to identify as many students as we can." The MR school district was located in a region in western Florida where neighboring counties did not adopt a Plan B for gifted identification. In this case, advocacy was evident by comparing gifted provisions in neighboring school districts.

Teachers' perceptions of giftedness were another reoccurring subject shared in the literature on gifted representation (Hyland, 2005; Solorzano, 1997). PUR stated that teacher bias can be detrimental in representing Hispanic students in gifted programs if not remedied by ongoing training, feedback, and support. This is evident in the school district's overreliance in IQ scores instead of other means of identification such as teacher interviews. The participant stated, "I don't think it's a good process to just use IQ scores…IQ scores make up 90% of the decision when placing a student in gifted services." PUR added, "Teachers [have] bias about things they may or may not be aware of." However, the participant clarified it was the teacher's responsibility to provide for a cultural orientation and a knowledge-base that recognizes nontraditional manifestations of giftedness. The participant stated that teachers had been identifying more Hispanic population but that, although Plan B had helped, the process was slow. The gifted specialist in the MR school district did not allude to teachers' perceptions as an indicator of instructional advocacy and support.

Adequacy of Resources

The presence of adequate resources includes both fiscal and human resources that are associated with gifted services. Participants from UR and MR school districts stated funding was a primordial barrier in adequately identifying Hispanic students into gifted programs. PUR said it best: "We lose money coming into the district. If we don't get the grade, we'll lose our

control…I think there is an issue across-the-board this year." PUR indicated parental communication was limited because of staffing concerns. PUR explained that parental communication was ideal when communicating FSA and school-related news but not information related to the gifted population. The participant indicated, "Part of the reason is that we are understaffed." The participant believed that parental communication was best with adequate staffing because there would be a variety of ways to inform and assist the public about the gifted services offered by school districts. PUR's experience in working for Heartland Consortium provided a good example of how adequate staffing can lead to better parental communication through parent meetings to share and inform parents of available resources. The program was effective while it was funded.

PUR indicated that the school district did not have a gifted specialist. The participant elaborated,

> There used to be another person below her [ESE Director] but he no longer works there so the ESE director is taking the job of two people. I have the job of two teachers. It's like that. It's a small county. So, no…there is no specialist.

PUR stated that the ESE director was currently performing the job of two individuals because the subordinate position was left vacant. Additionally, PUR stated the school district was in a "state of flux because of insufficient staffing." However, PUR added that schools in specific regions of the district were hiring staff who understood the challenges of Hispanic students in gifted programs. PMR did not mention funding or adequate staffing in responses.

School District Demographic Characteristics

School district characteristics such as racial/ethnic demographics and gifted representation trends were reoccurring topics in participants' responses. Within the sample of participating school district employees, the UR was the smallest in school district size in terms

of enrollment: 7,404 and the highest poverty level: 22.88% (Student Membership, 2017). UR also had a greater Hispanic population (63.87%) than MR (6.15%).

Participants' responses to items in this area focused on the size of the school district and demographic make-up several times during the interview. PUR stated, "I have the jobs of two teachers…It's a small county." PUR indicated the school district was comprised of families that were "very economically distressed," adding that, "…It has 8% of the population with a college education," and compared the data to the college attainment in developing countries. PUR mentioned that the school district constituency had a higher-poverty level and a predominantly English learning population that lacked educational experiences to envision life outside of their surroundings. The participant mentioned, "When you come from a very economically depressed place, you won't have as many opportunities. The kids don't travel and traveling, going to the city, museums, libraries, and experiences help [develop and stimulate] the brain." From PUR's responses, one could infer that smaller counties with homogenous demographic variables (i.e., high percentage of Hispanic, English Learners, and poverty levels) may influence the availability of adequate resources to service the students in that population.

PMR stated, "Our district has a very small Hispanic population. We have two [gifted] students identified within the ESOL programs. Our county is located on the western border of Florida by the Panhandle. Our Plan B population is low-socio-economic." PMR elaborated by stating the school district had a large number of students living in poverty within each racial/ethnic group. The participant reported that 5% of the gifted population was identified through Plan B, all of whom were representative of students from low-SES status households. The neighboring school districts did not adopt a Plan B. In fact, surrounding school districts either did not report data on the number of Hispanic in gifted programs or reported less than 2%

Hispanic gifted representation as noted in the selection of participants discussed previously in Chapter 3.

Table 10

School District Interview Analysis Results

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
1. Policy to Practice	*"We do not have a perfect Plan B. The cut off for Plan B is 116 on IQ score."* *"Districts/schools define gifted differently. Our district relies heavily on IQ. That can be racially biased. I don't think it's a good process to just use IQ scores. I think we need to use teacher interviews and other processes. IQ scores are 90% of the decision when placing a student in gifted."* *"We [Student Study Team] are only required by the state to meet every 3 years for the EP plan, but we meet every year, so I think that helps with keeping them on track, and keeping in contact with the parents."*	*"We do our best to overcome these obstacles by offering a Plan B option"* *"Plan B in our district considers IQ of a points matrix, along with gifted characteristics and performance on a district achievement test."* *"We also screen all students at second grade that would qualify for Plan B should they score enough points on the IQ portion of the Matrix. We also look at 4th and 8th grader using FSA data."*
2. Practice to Literature	*"I think that, as a district, we are hiring people who understand the challenges that this group faces. Yes, I do think that it could become discriminatory, but they are very aware of it, they make sure families always have someone to translate in those meetings, aware of their families that they service and what they need. Now, one Elementary out of 3 in this*	*"Plan B in our district considers IQ of a points matrix, along with gifted characteristics and performance on a district achievement test. Five percent of our gifted population is identified within Plan B. We also screen all students at second grade that would qualify for Plan B should they score enough points on the IQ portion of*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	side of the district does a really good job at hiring staff that are bilingual. In my elementary school, both the guidance counselor and staffing specialist are bilingual." *"The ESE director is taking the job of two people. I have the job of two teachers. It's kind of like that. It's a small County. So, no answer your question there is no specialist."* *"Teachers having bias about things that they may or may not be aware of."* *"Teachers are identifying them more and more of the Hispanic population, but it is slow, but Plan B is helping with that."* *"Before Plan B, if you work for the gifted population it was mainly the white population. There were very few Hispanic students."* *"That's the golden ticket when parents are heavily involved in gifted EP meetings. 99.9% of the parents understand that opportunity."* *"I think it's a money thing. We will lose money coming in to the district if we don't get the grade and we'll lose our control. I think in some of our*	*the Matrix. We also look at 4th and 8th grader using FSA data."*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	high schools are middle schools if they don't get the grade, people from the state come in and your you are dictated to what you must do. People don't want that gifted as an afterthought." *"A lot of times older siblings will have to take care of younger siblings. They would not have the ability to participate in after-school programs or the robot club for instance. They may not be able to participate because they do not have a ride home. For extra help the county does provide transportation but for all the clubs, things that they are really interested in, they don't provide transportation for. So that is an issue."*	
3. Barriers to Identification and Representation	*"The ESE director is taking the job of two people. I have the job of two teachers. It is a small county. So, no answer your question, there is no [gifted] specialist."* *"The [school] district is in a bit of a flux right now. The person who probably could have answered [your question] that is our Deputy superintendent, now. She was part of the ESE last year."* *"If you look at the statistics for [the school district], it is a*	*"Yes, the greatest obstacle for many of our students is the level of poverty where they live. The IQ test we use as a part of eligibility is biased for students with limited exposure to text, vocabulary, conversations, problems, pre-school, etc."* *"We have a large number of students living in poverty within those racial/ethnic groups"* *"Yes, exposure to resources and experiences definitely contribute to the gaps*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	very economically distressed county. You can compare to the country of Iraq with 8% of the population having a college education. ELL [student population] is a big. When you come from a very economically depressed place, you won't have as many opportunities." *"Our district relies heavily on IQ. That can be racially biased. I don't think it's a good process to just use IQ scores."* *"[Hispanic Families] They would not have the ability to participate in after-school programs or the robot club for instance. They may not be able to participate because they do not have a ride home. For extra help, the county [school district] does provide transportation but for all the clubs, things that they are really interested in, they don't provide transportation for. So that is an issue."* *"I think the district does a very good job at communicating with parents regarding FSA testing and regular school issues. For the gifted population, no. Getting the information out about gifted services and programs, no, they do not. Part of the issue is that were understaffed."*	*between students who are provided with a variety of educational resources that they are able to relate to and can share with their families."*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	"But gift it is very low on the totem pole. If you look at the grades, our primary focus is on school grades and improving all the students who impacts the school grades. Gifted is last on the list." *"Every 9 weeks, I print progress reports so I keep track of how the students are performing .Every student in gifted has one or two goals gifted goals. A progress report then goes home with comments. But, then again, nobody really looks at that. I put in so much work and I feel like no one looks at it even if it is on the DOE website. No one looks at it; no one really questions it or asks me about it."*	
4. Facilitators of Identification and Representation	*"In the past few years, they've hired a guidance counselor and the staffing specialist at one of the elementary schools at the school with the largest Hispanic population. I think that, as a district, we are hiring people who understand the challenges that this group faces."* *"Teachers are identifying them more and more of the Hispanic population, but it is slow. Plan B is helping with that."*	*"Our Superintendent and School Board is supportive of our Plan B identification model. Our neighboring counties do not have a Plan B and we are proud that we make an effort to identify as many students as we can."* *"We do our best to overcome these obstacles by offer a Plan B option."*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	"The cut off for Plan B is 116 on and IQ score. They look more at the whole student when they consider Plan B."	
	"They [students] do get an extra tiered support and [assistance from] the guidance counselor, but they also have the gifted teacher and specialist to help them in social development and emotional support, even if they are on grade level. Because I write their EPs and must have contact with them, I do ask them via Google doc how things are going [in relation to the program] in a survey form."	
	"I think a teacher that knows what to look for in identifying giftedness would know that that is an indicator."	
	"We [Student Study Team] are only required by the state to meet every three years for the EP plan, but we meet every year. I think this helps with keeping them [students] on track, and maintain contact with the parents."	
	"I think it's important that you have people that are representing all facets of race and ethnicity from all parts of the community."	
	"Yes, that's the golden ticket when parents are heavily	

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	involved in gifted EP meetings. 99.9% of the parents understand that opportunity."	
5. Evaluation of Identification and Representation	*"The 7th and 8th graders were at 33% are Hispanic Gifted. The K through 5 about 50% are Hispanic gifted. So, it's going up every year. As you go younger you can see this trend."* *"[School] districts define gifted differently. Our district relies heavily on IQ. That can be racially biased. I don't think it's a good process to just use IQ scores. I think we need to use teacher interviews and other processes. IQ scores is 90% of the decision when placing a kid and gifted."* *"The cut off for Plan B is 116 on and IQ score. They look more at the whole student when they consider Plan B."* *"If the teacher is supportive and understands how students decode words to create meaning in other languages, then the teachers can identify more of these students."* *"We [school level] meet every year, so I think that helps with keeping them [students] on track, but evaluation like how you're talking about, I don't think*	*"Our district has a very small Hispanic population. We have two students identified within the ESOL programs identified program. Our county is located on the western border of Florida in the Panhandle. Our plan B population is low-socio economic."* *"Five percent of our gifted population is identified within Plan B."* *"The IQ test we use as a part of eligibility is biased for students that limited exposure to text, vocabulary, conversations, problems, pre-school, etc."* *"The way Plan B is defined/structured in our SP&Ps is a matter of law. Therefore, we will follow the policies and procedures outlined within our plan. Our plan is data driven. The information is plugged into a Matrix."*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	that they keep track of it at the County office."	
6. Background and Experience	*"Three and a half years as a gifted pull out teacher. I've been 21 years in the district. Before that, I have taught high school. My role is a gifted teacher. I have a gifted endorsement. I have AP training. Mainly I was a social studies teacher."* *"Right now, we [teachers] are doing Virtual Field Trips period this week went to South America. So yes, that is a very big deal to me. I want them to know about different cultures specially coming from LaBelle the world is so much bigger then this tiny little city. In the Middle School, there was a very big 6-grade group. There were 18 -sixth graders who were gifted just to give you an idea. In 7th grade, there are like 6 - 8th graders. The 6th grade group is more than double than the other two groups in Middle School. The second half of the year, they can take me or another teacher."* *"The gifted population should mimic the total [overall] population; it should not be a ratio. So of course, of the total Hispanic population is 63% then the gifted Hispanic population*	*"Full-time gifted district specialist with 4-9 years as a gifted coach, 4-9 years in the classroom with gifted population before this position as self-contained gifted third grade, 0-3 years in the classroom with Hispanic population. The school district has a very small Hispanic population."* *"Our neighboring counties do not have a Plan B and we are proud that we make an effort to identify as many students as we can."* *"All are given the same consideration under our plan. Sometimes I am concerned our 'over-represented' groups aren't given nearly the opportunity as our under-represented."*

A Priori Themes from Protocol	Example data from Under-represented School District	Example data from Minimally Represented School District
	should also be 63%." *"I think it does make a difference. I think it's important that you have people that are representing all facets of the community. I think we're doing a better job, but I think it could be better."*	

Credibility Techniques

Faculty-peer debriefing, audit trails, and triangulation were used as credibility techniques in Phase Two of the study. Peer-faculty debriefing was utilized to determine whether inferences from the data were plausible and if the categories and themes answered the research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Participants' interview responses were compared to the content analysis protocol checklist in school districts that were (a) under-represented and (b) minimally represented and vice-versa in regard to the representation of the Hispanic population in gifted programs.

Interview responses that reported school district enrollment, poverty, Hispanic representation, and Hispanic gifted representation were confirmed from results in Phases One and Two. For instance, interviewed participants mentioned the size of the school district in relation to the number of students enrolled when discussing adequacy of resources. Thus, results obtained from the Phase One quantitative analysis helped to corroborate results obtained from the analysis of interview data. Similarly, the percentage of Hispanic representation was referred to when participants elaborated on the school district's student demographic profile (i.e., small

Hispanic and/or large English learning population). Also, Hispanic gifted representation was referenced when discussing identification procedures and strategies, such as Plan B, as well as overall Hispanic representation in gifted programs. Therefore, interview responses were cross-referenced with the school districts' ESE policy manuals to assist in confirming the results.

Triangulation (both cross-method and cross-data source) was used as a credibility technique to promote trustworthiness of the results. Methodological triangulation was pursued by cross-referencing interview data with data from Phase one of the study and results from the school district policy analysis. Data source triangulation was pursued by utilizing the "Find" search key function in Microsoft Word to look for key words, phrases, or categories within the context of the original interview transcriptions to gain contextual insight in the responses. Key words such as "identification, parents, teachers, funding/money, staff/position, representation, and little/large" for school district characteristics were used to search and distinguish differences and similarities between school districts.

Audit trail is a credibility technique that involves recording and reviewing the documents of a study for the purpose of promoting trustworthiness in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In Phase Two, the faculty supervisor completed an audit trail of the school district policy. Following Creswell & Miller's process, a systematic procedure was established for completing an audit trail of the policy analysis. The researcher identified specific sections of school board district manuals that documented gifted identification, programming, and placement of students as noted in the previous discussion of Phase Two: Policy Analysis. In the interview, as in the policy analysis, the inquiry process was documented, and data analysis procedures were recorded via text-coding (i.e. a priori, emergent coding, and axial coding; Creswell, 2003, 2007; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013; Saldaña, 2009). Once again, the faculty supervisor independently reviewed the

coding and themes for redundancy, vagueness, and appropriateness of coding and credibility of interpretations, thereby completing an audit trail.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, the researcher first described the purpose of conducting this mixed-methods study. Also included was a reiteration of the research questions which guided this study. A short description of the targeted sample of school districts was explained along with a brief discussion of the dependent and independent variables for the quantitative methods in Phase One of the study.

Phase One included results from multiple regression and showed that school district enrollment was the only statistically significant predictor of gifted representation among Hispanic students in 2016-2017. Next, summary results of cross tabulations for Hispanic student representation in gifted programming by grade level (K-12) showed that the lowest representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs was in Grades K-5 and highest in Grades 6-8. The percentage of Hispanic students that were not identified for gifted programming ranged from 92.92% to 95.73%. Results from ancillary data analysis revealed that characteristics of school districts with Hispanic gifted representation rates at or above the state media differed. School districts with higher representation were larger than those with lower representation, had slightly higher levels of minority enrollment than smaller school districts, and had higher socioeconomic status (i.e., lower poverty rates) than smaller school districts.

Phase Two results and credibility techniques were explained. Findings for the content analysis protocol showed that UR school district predominantly addressed the themes in the protocol (i.e. eight of nine themes were fully addressed). In contrast, the MR school district addressed four of the nine themes in the content analysis protocol. Finally, interview results

revealed four overarching themes from UR and MR school districts. The themes were: (a) Early Identification and Targeted Strategies, (b) Parental and Teacher Advocacy and Support, (c) Adequacy of Resources, and (d) School District Demographic Profiles. Faculty-peer debriefing, audit trails, and triangulation were used as credibility techniques in both phases of the study.

In Chapter 5, the findings presented in this chapter are discussed. Chapter 5 also presents implications to consider in the inequitable representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Recommendations for future research in this area are also proposed.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 1 of this research report, the researcher discussed the background, statement of problem, and purpose of the study. The research questions were introduced along with the conceptual framework grounding the study. Chapter 2 provided an extensive review of literature that focused on patterns and trends in the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. The content in the chapter elaborated on the conceptual understanding of underrepresentation as well as nation-wide and Florida statewide factors influencing representation in gifted programs. Chapter 3 detailed the instrumentation used in this study as well as the data collected, and its analysis.

Chapter 4 included the results from the mixed-methods study. The introduction provided a brief description of the targeted sample of school districts along with a discussion of independent and dependent variables in the study. Phase One of Chapter 4 presented the results of the quantitative analysis of data accomplished using multiple regression and cross tabulation. The next section, Phase Two, presented results from data analysis using qualitative research methodology (i.e., policy document analysis of two school districts and interviews) among those responsible for the implementation of school district gifted policies.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings for each research question. The chapter includes a discussion of factors influencing the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs using two purposively sampled school districts. Findings in the school districts' ESE policy manuals and interviews with gifted coordinators in those school districts were used to create Florida school district profiles using results from school districts that had under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) Hispanic students in gifted programs. The

chapter includes a discussion of the implications of the researcher's findings for practice in K-12 public school districts and populations of Hispanic students in gifted programs. The concluding section of this chapter includes recommendations for further research and conclusions.

Summary of the Study

This mixed-methods study was conducted to investigate the targeted school districts characteristics in Florida's K-12 public schools that might influence the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs during the 2016-2017 school year.

Despite state measures to increase gifted representation across racial groups in gifted programs, the problem has persisted (Lord & Swanson, 2016). Scant research has been conducted to examine the effects and potential influences of school policy pertaining to gifted identification, specifically from a state to local level (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; McBee et al., 2012). Additionally, there has been scant research analyzing gifted representation across grade levels in the state of Florida (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Matthews & Kirsch, 2011). Attempts to increase the participation of minority (Hispanic and Black) students have been limited to school districts with federal or state approved grants, university partnerships, and schools with a large minority, low-SES socio-demographic make-up (Martin, 2016; Postal, 2017; Roth, 2013). State and district-level decision makers have had little guidance in addressing trends in gifted underrepresentation as there has been a lack of coherence in state gifted programming and curriculum policies (Brown, et al., 2006; Lord & Swanson, 2016; McBee et al., 2012).

According to Lord and Swanson (2016), legislative mandates and state policies should be "significant equalizers of opportunities" (p. 2) and should provide equitable access to education for all students. Thus, the researcher aimed to identify factors contributing to the inequitable distribution of student talent among Florida school districts. Florida was an ideal state to study

this problem because it had one of the largest K-12 minority populations in the United States; moreover, it was also one of the four states where gifted education was mandated and fully funded (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016; Support for Gifted Programs, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Additionally, at the time of the study, (a) the Hispanic population was the fastest growing demographic group in the U.S., and the Hispanic population in Florida was among the largest—in absolute and proportional terms—in the U.S. (Brown, 2014; Stepler & Lopez, 2016).

This mixed-methods study was conducted in two phases. Phase One used quantitative methods. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted programing in Florida's K-12 public school district based on school district enrollment, percentage of minority students, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals. A cross tabulation table was created to show the representation of Hispanic students in the state of Florida across varying grade configurations: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Phase Two used qualitative methods to determine the extent to which the school district policy manuals of two purposively -selected school districts (under-represented and minimally represented) contained provisions that supported increasing the representation of Hispanic students in Florida's K-12 public school gifted programs. Expanding on the document analysis of school district policies and procedures from selected school districts, the investigator explored best practices for identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs by interviewing those responsible for its implementation.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percent minority students)?

2. To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])?
3. What identification procedures and practices are in place in a sample of two Florida K-12 public school districts identified using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) methodology as (a) severely under-represented and (b) minimally represented?
    a. In what ways and to what extent do school district policies address measures to adequately identify Hispanic students who may be potentially gifted?
    b. In what ways and to what extent do school district practices align with school district policies and/or established best practices with regard to identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs across two Florida K-12 public school districts?

Discussion of Findings: Phase One

Phase One of this mixed-methods study used quantitative research methods to predict the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs in Florida's K-12 public school district based on school district enrollment, percentage of minority students and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduce meals. Grade-level representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs across Florida's public schools was analyzed to determine statewide patterns and trends (i.e. K-5, 6-8, and 9-12).

Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables were computed using viable data from 44 school districts. In 2016-2017, 5.21% Hispanic students of the total Hispanic student population were identified for gifted education in the state of Florida (Student Enrollment, 2017). This was less than a 1% difference from the suggested gifted and talented

representation in the United States reported more than 45 years ago (Marland Report, 1972). In this study, the average gifted representation among the 44 school districts in Florida was 3.28%). Additionally, the average size of the 44 school districts included in the study was 61,820, which was higher than the state average of 28,241(Student Membership, 2017). The percentage of minority students was 49.78%, which was lower than the state average of 61% (Student Membership, 2017). The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduce meals was 55.71%, which was close to the state average of 56.32% (Lunch status by District: Final Survey 2, 2017).

Research Question 1

In what ways (i.e., in terms of strength and direction) is the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education associated with school districts' structural and contextual characteristics (i.e., enrollment, socioeconomic status, percentage of minority students)?

A multiple regression analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between (a) the dependent variable measuring the percentage of Hispanic students accepted into gifted programs, and (b) independent variables measuring school district characteristics. The purpose of a multiple regression analysis is to allow for the simultaneous assessment of the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables collectively and the relationship between the dependent variables and each independent variable separately while controlling for the influence of other independent variables (Steinberg, 2011).

Results revealed a statistically significant relationship between school district enrollment and the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Results can be interpreted to suggest that an increase of 10,000 students in school district enrollment was associated with an increase

of .1277 points in the percentage of Hispanic students identified for gifted education (5.8% of one standard deviation).

Even though the multiple regression model showed that school district enrollment was a statistically significant predictor of Hispanic student representation, the researcher found scant evidence in the literature review indicating that school district enrollment, alone, impacted the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs (Baker, 2001; Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b). This was an important finding because school district size, in terms of enrollment, may influence gifted representation among elementary and middle schools in Florida (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b).

Callahan et al.'s (2013a, 2013b) survey results from Florida school districts showed that larger school districts did not have a change in the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs that were enrolled in elementary schools (i.e. 1-10%) but did have a change in participating middle schools (i.e. 11-20%; Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b). Furthermore, Callahan et al., (2013a, 2013b) reported that Hispanic students in middle school gifted programs were more readily identified (i.e. 1%-10%) in urban, suburban, rural school districts, whereas Hispanic students in elementary schools were more readily identified in urban and suburban school districts than in rural ones. On the contrary, white students identified in gifted programs were more evenly spread out in middle schools, but not in elementary schools where a greater number of students (i.e. 50% or more) were identified gifted despite level of urbanicity (Callahan et al, 2013a, 2013b). Therefore, data on the state's participating middle schools showed that larger school districts had a greater Hispanic gifted representation than smaller school districts Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b).

Based on results from the regression analysis, there was no statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic status and the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs. This conflicts with extant research showing that the socioeconomic status contributed to an increase in the representation of the population of interest (Card & Giuliano, 2016; McBee, et al., 2012; Olszewski-Kulilius, 2003). For instance, researchers have suggested that gifted underrepresentation is greater among minority students (i.e. Black and/or Hispanic) from low-SES households (Callahan et al., 2013a; 2013b, 2014; Renzulli & Park, 2000). Additionally, gifted aid allocations tend to benefit school districts that have a greater number of families with high-SES statuses (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004). Similarly, Callahan et al.'s (2013a, 2013b) research into middle schools in Florida showed that larger school districts had greater poverty levels among the gifted student population and general population than smaller school districts. Such patterns of gifted representation and school district size, in terms of enrollment, were mixed among Florida's elementary schools (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b).

Results in Chapter 4 showed no statistically significant relationship between the percentages of minority students and Hispanic students in gifted education. This result did not align with extant literature suggesting there are fundamental differences in how minority and non-minorities perform academically in relation to intelligence scores (Lesser et al., 1965). The exception was Jenkins' (1936) study of African American children of superior intelligence, where differences in intellectual test scores were not due to race. Minorities and non-minority differences in relation to intelligence were apparent in perceptions of intelligence labels (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Chang, 2017; Ford, 2014a, 2014b; Hatt, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010; Richotte et al., 2016), self-deficit thinking (Ford & Grantham, 2003), and gifted representation (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011; Scott et al., 1992; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Only when

controlling for IQ scores and/or SES variable was the degree of representation among Blacks, Hispanics, or Native American students, and Whites not statistically significant (Warne et al., 2013).

Research Question 2

To what degree does the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs vary across the following K-12 grade configurations (i.e., elementary [K-5], middle [6-8], and high [9-12])?

Cross tabulations were used to explore the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs by grade configuration (i.e., K-5, 6-8, 9-12). Results showed that the Hispanic representation in gifted programming was the lowest in Grades K-5 (4.27%) and highest in Grades 6-8 (7.08%). The percentage of Hispanic students that was not identified for gifted programming ranged from 92.92% to 95.73%.

These findings somewhat align with extant literature. Researchers suggested that identification measures should grow more complex as students are promoted through grade levels and that gifted placement and identification models have varied across grade level (Martinson & Lessinger, 1960; Moon & Brighton, 2008). Additionally, grade-levels are indicators of shared backgrounds, experiences, and academic potentials (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Students' intelligence levels have often been compared to those of their same grade-level peers (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Proportional representation of high-ability learners has been determined to be more likely to occur in primary elementary schools than late elementary, middle, and high school; and school level gifted offerings have typically been limited to elementary grade schools (Winsler et al., 2013, Wyner et al., 2007). Indeed, in Callahan et al.'s

(2013a, 2013b) studies, more elementary schools had strategies for developing talent among under-represented populations and adopted alternative identification plans than middle schools.

Ancillary analysis showed that school districts with a higher representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs were larger, had slightly higher rates of minority enrollment, and higher socioeconomic status, and therefore, lower poverty rates than school districts with lower representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. The results were supported by researchers stating that the representation of Hispanic students in gifted education has been influenced by school district enrollment in terms of strength and direction; specifically, larger school districts are associated with higher representation (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b) and lower-SES status families (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004). The researcher, in her literature review, identified no studies reporting that the proportional size of minority student enrollment was associated with gifted representation. Research on minority inclusion has been limited to narrative that explain representation gaps between historically underrepresentation minority groups (i.e. race/ethnicity and low SES students) and non-minority counterparts (Lakin, 2016; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Peters & Matthews, 2016).

Discussion of Findings: Phase Two

Phase Two of this mixed-methods study used qualitative research methods to analyze the school district ESE policy manual for placement and identification guidelines from two purposively sampled schools representing UR and MR school districts. School district coordinators were interviewed to expand on the analysis of school district policies and explore best practices for identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs.

Research Question 3

What identification procedures and practices are in place in a sample of two Florida K-12 public school districts identified using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) methodology as (a) under-represented (i.e., substantially below the equity threshold), (b) minimally represented (i.e., at or near the equity threshold)?

The research question was answered using data gathered from two sources. School district policy analysis and school district practices were considered.

School District Policy Analysis

In what ways and to what extent do school district policies address measures to adequately identify Hispanic students who may be potentially gifted?

Ford's (2014a, 2014b) equity index (EI) formula was used to calculate minimum levels of representation among Hispanic students in gifted programs across 44 Florida school districts by determining the EI threshold in each school district. In this study, the EI thresholds were used to determine under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) designations by calculating the difference between the EI (at 20%) and the actual percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs in each school district.

Using content analysis, the researcher examined the UR and MR school districts' ESE school district policy manuals for the presence of nine exploratory themes based on extant resources including state laws, administrative codes, and FDOE materials and scholarly journal articles that evaluate practices for increasing the identification of underserved groups of students (Callahan et al., 2014; FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002; FDOE, 2016; Florida Plan 2013, 2017; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). The purpose of the analysis was to determine the extent to which

recommended practices for increasing the representation of Hispanic students were represented and described in the school district' policies and procedures.

The policy analysis results showed that the UR school district fully addressed most of the themes (eight of nine). It was unclear why, despite its underrepresentation, the UR school district's content analysis substantially addressed the themes, yet MR school district fully addressed four of the nine themes in the content analysis. These variations did not align with what might be expected based on the literature (i.e., the expectation that the MR school district would address most of the themes). Although the literature review revealed no studies that were conducted to directly investigate the relationship between policies and representation levels, the analysis protocol focused on standards that the professional field puts forth as those most likely to promote equity in representation.

Theme one, *Multiple Criteria for Identification*, theme two, *Varied Criteria for Identification*, and theme four, *Gifted Program Design and Procedures*, criteria were fully addressed in both school districts. These results aligned with literature reviewed that investigated multiple-criteria identification measures and procedures as well as gifted programming based on knowledge base, abilities, achievement levels, and personal attributes (Florida Plan, 2013; Martinson & Lessinger, 1960). The results presented in Chapter 4 of the present study were aligned with the research on Florida's four-step identification process: nomination, screening, referral, and evaluation (Florida Plan, 2013). Furthermore, multiple and varied identification measures assist in determining unique patterns of behavioral traits, a broader definition of giftedness, a path for multiple forms of intelligence (ESEA, 1970, Bernal, 1974; Marland Report, 1972, Renzulli, 1978). Existing literature highlights characteristics Hispanic students in gifted programs exhibit related to giftedness such as abilities as multilingual speakers and translators

(Pereira & Gentry, 2013), rapid second language acquisition and strong communal ties (Granada, 2003), and sophisticated manipulation of language (Martinez, 2017). Although the results in the present study suggested that varied and multiple criteria for identification broaden the eligibility criteria for under-represented groups (Card & Giuliano, 2016), a multiple criteria approach, such as a matrix, have often been used inappropriately (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b). Ethnic/racial representation of students in gifted programs may depend on the way multiple and varied approaches are used (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b; Lord & Swanson, 2016).

Theme three, *Gifted Identification Committee*, was fully addressed by the UR and MR school districts. Theme five, *Gifted Program Evaluation* was fully addressed by the UR school district but not addressed in the MR school district. These results somewhat aligned with the literature, showing a lack of coherence on the verbiage used in local, district, and national gifted standards and identification procedures in gifted education policy (Brown et al., 2006; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010). Gifted identification committees were named "teams" or "evaluators" and were found in inconsistent locations within the school district manuals, if at all. The term "Gifted Program Evaluation Procedures" showed gifted eligibility criteria instead of specific guidelines and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the school districts' gifted program. These findings, which aligned with current literature, showed that inconsistent policies result in uninformed and premature decision making in the realm of gifted education (Brown et al., 2006; Peters & Matthews, 2016).

Theme six, *Reporting and Accountability*, was only fully addressed by the UR school district. The MR school district did not address it. Theme six results were supported in the literature as showing an exclusion of under-represented ethnic/racial groups in gifted programs through a disaggregation of outcome data and a lack of accountability for program quality

control (Brown et al., 2006). This mechanism corroborated the findings in the present research, suggesting that the best way to conceptualize underrepresentation and address it is by defining it (Ford, 2014a, 2014b; Wright et al., 2017). The under-represented (UR) school district had specific goals, strategies, and timelines for data analysis in the school district's plan B policy manual that aligned with the FDOE initiative to maintain a system of accountability for tracking future participation of under-represented students in gifted programs (Florida, 2017). The MR school district did not indicate a timeline or purpose in Plan B or anywhere in the school district policy manual.

Theme seven, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement*, was also fully addressed by the UR school district only, but not addressed in the MR school district. This finding aligned with research indicating that parental involvement and advocacy influence the availability and range of gifted services offered students, and this perspective benefits high-income families more than low-income families (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Fleming, 2013; Roth, 2013). Parental advocacy was evident in the school district manual with explicit mention of family involvement through awareness workshops and activities (Bessman et al., 2013), participation in a gifted program survey (Harris et al., 2009; Mayfield & Young-Eun, 2012), family input in the identification process (Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Fleming, 2013; Koshy et al., 2013, 2017), and varied forms of communication in parent's native language (FAC 6A-6.0908, 2009). The MR school district did not fully address this theme because there was no mention of parents' role in student's gifted program in Plan B aside from choosing to complete a checklist of gifted characteristics for their child. Theme nine, *Goal Specification*, was only fully addressed by the UR school district and partially addressed in the MR school district. The results presented in Chapter 4 were somewhat aligned with the reviewed literature. School district policy manuals indicated district goals were

aligned with Florida statute FAC 6A-6.03019 (2002) in that measurable and long-term plans were addressed as a way to increase the rate of gifted representation among underserved student population. School district policy manuals also aligned with other researchers findings in that indicators and strategies for measuring and tracking a goal were present to assist in meeting it (Florida Plan, 2017). Goal specification has also been referenced in NAGC (2010) as a critical role in learning progress and outcomes, as well as evaluation of programming. The results did not align with the literature in that there was inconsistency in the Plan B policy manual requirements, and it was suggested in the research when creating alternative identification plans (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; NAGC, 2010). The MR school district partially addressed this theme in that the Plan B policy manual indicated a district goal but not a program goal.

Theme eight, *Community Advocacy and Involvement*, was not fully addressed in any school district. It was partially addressed by the UR school district, but not addressed in the MR school district. The UR school district manual stated an objective to involve community members through awareness workshops and program activities, but did not provide guidelines for how they would implement it. The MR school district did not indicate community initiatives in their Plan B manual. All school districts' manuals had the same verbiage in Part III. Section A. which indicated support services through local and community agencies such as the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System associate centers and special state/locally-funded projects (S & P, 2018). This finding did not align with research that promotes community involvement. Florida Plan's (2017) Goal II: Program Design/Service Delivery established advisory group members that include community continuants to ensure the continuity of services and learning growth of gifted students. In Florida, educators, parents, and the community share in this responsible (Florida Plan, 2017).

School District Practices

In what ways and to what extent do school district practices align with school district policies and/or established best practices with regard to identifying Hispanic students in gifted programs across two Florida K-12 public school districts?

This question expanded on the findings from UR and MR school district policy analysis to learn how such policy guidelines drive school-level practices in support of an increase in the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. The gifted coordinators from participating school districts were interviewed. School district profiles were created based on participants' experiences and school district practices in identifying the population of interest. Overall, the participants from the UR school district had at least 10 years working with the gifted population and at least 15 years working in the school district. The participant from the MR school district had 4-9 years working with the gifted population and 0-3 years working with Hispanic and Hispanic gifted student populations in the classroom due to the very small Hispanic population in the school district.

This section explains how UR and MR addressed four overarching themes revealed in the interview sessions and how such findings align with extant literature on the topic. A procedural coding method was used to create (a) a priori codes from the research question and extant research, (b) open/emergent codes from the interview responses, and (c) axial codes for accuracy in representing the interview responses (Coding Qualitative Data, 2012; Creswell, 2003, 2007; Saldaña, 2009). Thematic analysis was derived after the interview responses were categorized and coded (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2013). The four themes are: (a) Early Identification and Targeted Strategies, (b) Advocacy and Support, (c) Adequacy of Resources, and (d) Understanding of School District Demographic Characteristics

The Under-represented School District

Early Identification and Targeted Strategies. The participant from the under-represented school district (PUR) stated that the school district had an overreliance on IQ scores in its identification processes. The reviewed literature indicated that an overreliance on predetermined cut-off scores, on ability and achievement test scores affect the identification of students who would benefit the most from gifted services (Ritchotte et al., 2016). PUR's Education Plan (EP) team met on a more frequent basis than the state required to keep track of students and review the students' plans. An annual survey was administered to gifted students to inquire about their progress in the gifted program although it was unclear as to whether the survey was voluntary or if it was used to track representation levels. These findings appeared to be similar to Florida's Self-Assessment Tool documenting student progress and appropriate programming, but the instrument lacked a research base to substantiate it as a reliable and valid instrument (Florida Plan, 2013, 2017).

Advocacy and Support. Parental and teacher advocacy was an issue in the under-represented school district. There is a wealth of research stating that parental advocacy and support contribute to students' academic successes and gifted services offered (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Fleming, 2013). A five-state analysis of gifted education policies and the relative strength, limitation, and effects on practice indicated that building sufficient staff capacity is important because specific policies and funding initiatives are led by those advocating at state, regional, and local levels (Brown et al., 2006). PUR's personal experience with the population of interest has been favorable in regard to parental advocacy and support and setting academic expectations regardless of race/ethnicity or parents' educational attainments. PUR experienced a lack of inquiry from parents and stakeholders in response to gifted students' academic progress reports,

which are sent home for parents to review. Students' academic progress reports and comments on students' progress were also found online. This finding was supported by researchers who stated that high achieving Latino children and families are not aware of the resources available to them in schools (Bessman et al., 2013). PUR disclosed that home-school communication was best used to communicate FSA-related or general school news that was not geared toward the gifted population. These findings on parental advocacy and support have been explained by researchers studying school methods of communication and the extent to which parents are informed of gifted services as it impacts referral rates (McBee, 2006), especially among low-income minority students (Card & Giuliano, 2016).

The participant recognized the importance of highly qualified, supportive, and adequate instructional school staff that understand students' challenges and are from similar backgrounds (i.e. bilingual). Overall, PUR was aware of the detrimental effects of teacher bias if it was not remedied by ongoing training. These findings were supported by Hyland (2005) who investigated teachers' reflections on their roles as educators in schools that lacked cultural diversity and the impact it had on their own cultural belief-system as well as their teaching. PUR's responses alluded to teachers' professional responsibility to be culturally sensitive, utilize inclusive teaching practices and be informed of various different cultures and their impact on teaching.

Finally, PUR recognized the challenge in servicing students whose families experienced economic distress. PUR indicated that 100% of the students who were serviced in the school district received free and reduced lunch. Transportation was provided to remedy travel expenses, but this service was not available for high-interest after-school academic activities. The repercussions associated with high poverty levels, especially related to levels influencing

resiliency and coping abilities to mediate the effect of these stressors, were discussed by researchers, (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Wyner et al., 2007).

Adequacy of Resources: The theme includes fiscal and human resources. Funding was a critical barrier to gifted representation in the school district in one school district, but was not mentioned in the other. There was added pressure for students to perform well on state assessments or risk losing its funding. This finding was aligned with research conducted to investigate gifted funding allocations in school districts of families with high-SES status (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004; Castellano, 2011). PUR stated that inadequate staffing had limited parental communication. Although there was no study that investigated inadequate staffing in relation to parental communication, Baker and colleagues (2004) found that gifted funding was readily awarded to schools with fewer low-income students. Also, PUR associated the size of the district with insufficient staffing. No studies were found in which these similar associations were investigated.

School District Demographic Characteristics. The UR school district size, in terms of enrollment, was relatively small, and UR school district had families that were severely economically distressed with little to no college education. Although no study was found that was directly focused on the effects of school district enrollment in relation to gifted representation, poverty level, and/or parents' educational attainment, Callahan et al.'s (2013a, 2013b) raw data showed that though larger school districts did not change the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted programs in participating elementary schools, it did so in middle schools. Unlike the results presented in Chapter 4, larger school districts had greater poverty levels in participating middle schools in Florida, but patterns were mixed among participating elementary schools (Callahan et al., 2013a, 2013b).

The Minimally Represented School District

Early Identification and Targeted Strategies. The participant from the minimally represented school district (PMR) stated second graders were universally screened based on their eligibility to apply through Plan B and qualifying IQ scores. No other provisions were mentioned in support of an increase in the representation of Hispanic students in the school district's gifted programs.

Advocacy and Support. PMR stated that its Plan B alternative identification plan may offer preferential treatment to some but create a disadvantage for other students. However, historically, students receiving high intelligence test scores had their academics in school tracked, had better prospects for advantageous career tracks, and were of a higher social status than those who performed poorly (Borland, 2005). Additionally, gifted talent is present in all sociodemographic groups (USDOE, 1993) and should be given equitable educational opportunities (Peters & Engerrand, 2016) despite the social ills that influence the underrepresentation of culturally diverse students (Ford, 2003). PMR did not allude to teacher perceptions as an indicator of instructional advocacy and support despite the wealth of research regarding the topic (Hyland, 2005; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Pereira & Gentry, 2013; Siegle & Powell, 2014). Teacher and parental advocacy were frequently mentioned in the UR interview, but not in this interview session. These differences may be related, in part, to the nature of the interview (i.e., email correspondence).

Adequacy of Resources. PMR did not mention funding or adequate staffing in the interview responses.

School District Demographic Characteristics. The school district had a very small Hispanic population with a large number of students living in poverty within each racial/ethnic

group. According to PMR, students identified through Plan B alternative identification methods were low-SES, as well. The school district was in a region of Florida where neighboring counties have not adopted a Plan B, reported less than 10 cases, or less than 2% Hispanic students in gifted programs (Student Membership, 2017). These findings are inconsistent with the findings of prior research in that there has been an increase in the Hispanic student population compared to White student population (Castellano, 2011; Esquierdo & Anderson, 2012; NCES, 2016). Researchers have suggested that minority participation is accomplished through deliberate action plans that target states, school districts, and schools experiencing such inequities in representation (Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Wright et al, 2017).

Limitations

1. Results from the Phase One analyses have limited generalizability to the state, as a whole, due to the unavailability of data for school districts with fewer than 11 Hispanic gifted students and school districts that did not report data. Specifically, results do not reflect the status and conditions of school districts with the state's fewest Hispanic gifted students (n = 16), nor of those districts for whom the number of Hispanic gifted students is unknown (n = 7).
2. Students coded as Gifted and Hispanic may have other educational impediments that were unreported on the 2016-2017 FDOE student enrollment data. Students who have multiple exceptionalities may manifest giftedness differently than those captured in this study, and these differences could affect the degree of representation of the population of interest.
3. The use of only two school districts (purposively sampled using Ford's [2014a, 2014b] EI threshold) was illustrative and intended to suggest possibilities for

investigating policy and practice on a larger scale in the future; results derived from the Phase Two analyses are not generalizable to a larger population or transferable to other settings.

4. In Phase Two, the reliance of email responses for one of the interviews prevented the researcher from asking probing questions and/or capturing non-verbal nuances. This limited the depth and nature of the inferences that could be drawn.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have far-reaching implications for many people interested in the topic of gifted representation in the state of Florida.

1. Phase Two results indicated the presence of underlying barriers for an increase in representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs (e.g., poverty level, insufficient staffing, inadequate parent-home communication, and access to resources for gifted services). School and district level support that is cohesive and transparent is crucial. This support is shown through adequate funding and staffing in gifted services and the use of programs that provide financial assistance for high ability minority gifted students in need. Additionally, support is shown through inclusive training on giftedness for parents, teachers, and members of the community. Without such support, opportunities for equitable representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs will remain a low priority in under-represented school districts.
2. The results of this study show a lack of coherence in the language used in school district policy manuals and a lack of accountability for program quality control that pose implications for school districts' gifted evaluation plans. A comprehensive gifted evaluation plan is needed at the district and school level that uses annual plan

reviews that are conducted internally by local educational agency advisory committees (Brown et al., 2006). Such information should be frequently shared with school district gifted coordinators as a collaborative attempt to re-train, re-teach, and modify gifted programs as needed. Additionally, the evaluation plan should explicitly indicate strategies and periodic assessments of progress. School and district level evaluation plans that are not routinely shared, reported on, revisited, and revised hinder ability to check inconsistencies in policies, their implementation, and outcomes in meeting gifted identification and servicing goals.

3. Additional implications of this study relate to the impact of unique school district characteristics, namely school district enrollment, on student-gifted representation. Phase One results indicated a significant relationship between school district enrollment and Hispanic gifted representation in the state of Florida. Phase Two results suggested that provisions for gifted services, such as adequate funding and sufficient staffing, were limited because of the size of the school district. School districts should consider school district enrollment to gauge gifted needs, as this variable influences the capacity to build leadership resources, such as full-time staff for the management of gifted identification processes and services of high-ability Hispanic students in gifted programs (Brown et al., 2006).
4. Finally, Florida Plan (2013, 2017) proposed a Self-Assessment Tool for school districts to document student progress and appropriate programming but there has been no research to attest to its reliability and validity in evaluating gifted programs. Researchers have suggested that policies should be created in a way that makes sense to educators because policies “legitimize the perceptions of the need for gifted

services and set the stage for misconceptions associated with giftedness" (Brown et al., 2006, p. 12). School district self-assessment tools may provide an opportunity for a systematic evaluation plan to exercise quality control of programs and services, to track students' representation and progress in gifted programs, and make recommendations for change as needed.

Recommendations for Further Research

The goal of this study was to investigate the school district characteristics that predicted the percentage of representation of Hispanic students in Florida K-12 gifted programs and to investigate whether such representation was more pronounced in Grades K-5, 6-8, and/or 9-12. The researcher also analyzed the ESE school district policy manual of two school districts that under-represented (UR) and minimally represented (MR) the presence of Hispanic students in gifted programs and to what extent the policies guided school district practices in support of such representation. The research questions addressed this gap in literature related to gifted education. The study supports several recommendations for future research.

1. The available FDOE reports on gifted education did not report school-level data on gifted students that had multiple exceptionalities. Instead, the FDOE reports showed students coded as "Gifted," "Hispanic," or "Hispanic Gifted" who may have had other educational impediments that were not revealed in specific student enrollment data. The lack of available data to respond to Research Question 1 motivated this recommendation for further research. Elaborating on findings from Phase One, school-level qualitative analysis of gifted students would allow further exploration on non-traditional manifestations of giftedness (Chang, 2017; Hatt, 2016) and how giftedness is perceived within that racial/ethnic group (Lara-Alecia & Irby, 2002).

2. Phase Two interview items focused on policy to practice implementation from the perspective of gifted educators responsible for executing it. Therefore, interview responses did not provide information on the interplay between students' academic self-perceptions as minority members in gifted programs and gifted representation levels in the school. Such findings encourage the exploration of social and academic development (i.e., self-deficit thinking, race/ethnic-based stereotypes, and cultural awareness) of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Researchers have indicated that Hispanic students' defiance and resistance to smart labels are worsened by negative views of Latinos and the miseducation of minority groups in schools (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016; Hatt, 2016). A mixed-methods study would offer additional insight into the effectiveness of policies and practices in addressing students' perceptions associated with giftedness and would inherently support their participation in gifted programs.
3. Further research on representation should also attempt to include data from all 67 school districts. In this study, Phase One analysis were conducted using 44 school districts for which data were available. Eliminating the 16 school districts that reported fewer than 10 Hispanic gifted students and the seven districts that did not report data imposed limitations on the school-level analyses that may have impacted the results. To accomplish this task, the researcher might need to obtain the data directly from the district.
4. The researcher examined the school district ESE policy manual of two purposively selected school district using Ford's (2014a, 2014b) EI threshold as a sampling strategy. A similar avenue of research could focus on more than one representing

school district from UR and MR designations. This would help reduce validity threats, biases, assumptions, and misinterpretations in content and interview analysis as well as expand on the inconsistencies present in gifted policies and practices (Maxwell, 2004; Peters & Matthews, 2016).

5. Important questions that were left unanswered in this study included the effects of community advocacy and involvement on gifted representation (Bernal, 1974; Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Granada, 2003). Community involvement and advocacy was not fully addressed in any of the participating school districts in findings from Phase Two. Yet, the support from school board members, parents, and the community formed an important part of the school culture in the minimally represented school district. An unexplored area in gifted literature also included the effects of gifted funding on inadequate staffing in school districts of various sizes and socioeconomic variables (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004; Castellano, 2011).

Conclusions

The findings of this study have expanded on the work of researchers in the field of gifted education who have investigated issues of representation over the past 40 years (Bernal, 1974, 2002; Castellano, 2004, 2008, 2011; Ford, 2003, 2014a, 2014b; Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010); McBee et al., 2012). This investigation revealed a statistically significant relationship between school district enrollment and Hispanic gifted representation in the state of Florida. Ancillary analysis of school district demographics showed that school districts with greater Hispanic gifted representation were larger in size, had a greater percentage minority student population, and higher SES/lower poverty than those with smaller Hispanic gifted representation. Additionally, statewide patterns and trends in Hispanic gifted representation across grade levels revealed that

the lowest representation occurred in Grades K-5 and the highest occurred in Grades 6-8. However, Hispanic students remain largely unidentified in gifted programs compared to the general Hispanic population within the state of Florida (i.e. 92.92% to 95.73%).

Phase Two findings showed that the MR school district fully addressed four of nine themes and the UR school district met most of the themes in the content analysis protocol. All school districts used multiple and varied criteria approaches to identify potentially gifted students, but only a third fully addressed reporting and accountability measures, parent advocacy and involvement, and goal specification. None of the participating school districts' ESE policy manuals fully addressed community advocacy and involvement criteria as a theme. The interview of gifted coordinators revealed four overarching themes across UR and MR school districts: (a) Early Identification and Targeted Strategies, (b) Advocacy and Support, (c) Adequacy of Resources, (d) School District Demographic Characteristics.

The literature on the representation of gifted students acknowledged challenges and issues that could influence underrepresentation levels among minority groups (Yoon & Gentry 2009). Researchers have suggested that examples of such influences may include how giftedness is defined (Lord & Swanson, 2016) and how giftedness is manifested in increasingly diverse student populations (Esquierdo & Andersons, 2012; Ford, 2014a, 2014b).

The reality is that gifted education is not accessible in every district, in every school, and to every child (Fleming, 2013). The research defines equity as, "…being fair, responsive, and impartial, especially for those who have the fewest resources and least advocacy, and who have experienced structural inequality due to historical exclusion" (Wright et al., p. 50). Providing equitable access to education involves evaluating the potential influences of policy on the implementation of practices at the state, district, and school level to help leverage factors

contributing to the underrepresentation of Hispanic students in Florida's gifted programs (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010; McBee, et al., 2012).

APPENDIX A
CONTENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

CONTENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

Conceptual themes that assist in adequately identifying potentially-gifted students from underserved populations [1]					
Themes	Standards for Evidence-based Practices (NAGC, 2010)[3]	Fully Addressed*	Partially Addressed*	Not Addressed*	Score
Multiple Criteria for Identification (1+)	2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.3.1				
Varied Criteria for Identification (Different Types)	2.2.3, 2.3.1				
Gifted Identification Committee	2.2.1				
Gifted Program Design and Procedures	2.2.1				
Gifted Program Evaluation	2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3				
Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability	2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3				
Parental Advocacy and Involvement	2.1.2, 2.2.6, 2.4.5				

Community Advocacy and Involvement	2.6.2				
Gifted Program Goal Specification	2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.1.2, 2.2.6, 2.4.5, 2.6.2				

* Items are operationally defined to mean: Fully Addressed – the language in policy meet the expected standards, Partially Addressed – some but not all of the language in policy meet the expected standards, Not Addressed – none of the language in policy meet the expected standards.
1. Underserved populations are operationally defined as students that are members of an under-represented group (i.e., limited English proficient or from a low socio-economic status family). For the purpose of this study, underserved students are minority members of racial/ethnic groups in low-SES status households. Source: Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03019
2. Evidence-based practices is based on 2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standard 2: Assessment (2.1-2.6; 2010)

Sources:

2010 Pre-K-grade 12 gifted programming standards (2010). National Association for Gifted Children. Retrieved from http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/standards/K-12%20programming%20standards.pdf

Callahan, C., Moon, T. R., Oh, S., (2014). National surveys of gifted programs: Executive Summary. *National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*. Retrieved from http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key%20reports/2014%20Survey%20of%20GT%20programs%20Exec%20Summ.pdf

Callahan, C.M., Gubbins, E. J., Alimin, M., Brodersen, A. V., Caughey, M., Langley, S. D., Luria, S. R., … Park, S. (2017). Using state district program plans to analyze district policies in identifying and delivering services to gifted students. NCRGE. Retrieved from http://ncrge.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/982/2016/01/2017-NAGC-March-Affiliates.pdf

Florida plan for K-12 gifted education (2013). *Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education.* Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7567/urlt/stategiftedplan.pdf

Matthews, M., & Shaunessy, E. (2010). Putting standards into practice: Evaluating the utility of the NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 gifted program standards. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *54*(3), 159-167.

APPENDIX B
THEMES: CONTENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

Content Analysis Protocol: Themes

The first theme, *Multiple Criteria for Identification*, considers how school district policy guidelines influence the placement of low-income and/or minority gifted students. Multiple criteria were in evidence-based practices 2.2.2, 2.2.3, and 2.3.1 in NAGC's Standard 2: Assessment (2010) to gauge "knowledge in all forms by using multiple types of assessments so that all students are able to demonstrate their gifts and talents" (p. 2). A multi-criteria approach has three or more subjective and objective measures to identify giftedness among high-ability students (Lord & Swanson, 2016). For the purpose of this study, multiple criteria were fully addressed if there were more than three measures to identify potential giftedness. Examples of multiple criteria assessments include performance-based assessments (subject area grades for 2-3 years), parent interviews, English and foreign proficiency levels of bilingual students, teacher observation, rating scales, and student portfolios (Florida Plan, 2013; Granada, 2003).

The second theme, *Varied Criteria for Identification*, addresses school district policy guidelines on the use of different types of assessments to increase the representation of low-income and/or minority gifted students. Varied Criteria for Identification were found in evidence-based practices 2.2.2, 2.2.3, and 2.3.1 (Pre-K- grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Varied criteria broaden potential areas of giftedness for more appropriate instructional programming and for a more diverse representation of giftedness that reflects school districts' total student population (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). School district educational leaders apply varying weighted added-values to criteria for gifted identification

(Yoon & Gentry, 2009). For instance, researchers have acknowledged that intelligence, aptitude, and academic achievement tests are frequently used and weighted more heavily than non-traditional measures (Callahan et al., 2013a; Carman, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003). Non-traditional measures include teacher, parent, and self-nominations, as well as classroom academic performance (Callahan et al., 2013a). For the purpose of this study, Varied Criteria for Identification were fully addressed if there were more than three measures to identify potential giftedness including traditional and non-traditional measures.

The third theme, *Gifted Identification Committee*, considers the presence of a team of educators to review students' documents for placement into gifted programs (Florida Plan, 2013). The school district guidelines in establishing a Gifted Identification Committee were addressed in evidence-based practice 2.2.1 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). A gifted identification committee "establishes comprehensive, cohesive, and ongoing procedures…" (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010, p. 2). The input of various stakeholders provides efficient communication between individuals who may possess diverse thoughts and beliefs on how giftedness is manifested across different racial/ethnic social groups (Bessman et al., 2013; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). The presence of a Gifted Identification Committee was considered to be fully addressed if school districts required a gifted committee that involved three or more stakeholders. FDOE recognizes Gifted Committee members as parents, teachers, Local Education Agent (LEA) representatives, and/or evaluation specialists (Houston & Howard, 1998).

The fourth theme, *Gifted Program Design and Procedures*, explores school district policies and processes for entry and exit from gifted program services. Gifted Program Design and Procedures were found in evidence-base practice 2.2.1 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Researchers have suggested that these provisions enable feasible tracking of student learning and talent development at every stage of gifted programming from identification to servicing (Callahan, Oh, Moon, 2014; Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). For the purpose of this study, this theme was fully addressed if school district policy manuals explained procedures for identifying students from gifted programs and addressed parent appeals and their consensual rights.

The fifth theme, *Gifted Program Evaluation*, addresses forms of measuring student level progress because of appropriate gifted programming. The presence of Gifted Program Evaluation is found in evidence-based practices 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Evaluating gifted programs for their ability to achieve their goals increases the accessibility of identification among underserved student populations (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Valid and reliable methods for identification are achieved through purposive instrumentation, multiple perspectives on gifted manifestation, and multiple indicators to measure mastery, achievement, and learning growth (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Florida Plan (2017) indicated several initiatives to evaluate gifted program's effectiveness. First, Goal I: Identification of Gifted Learners aimed to increase the representation of diverse students in gifted programs through

district-wide screening methods (Florida Plan, 2017). Goal V of Florida Plan (2017), *Program Administration and Management*, outlined state plans to increase the number of school districts with a developed and implemented school district gifted plan (Florida Plan, 2017). Goal VII: Program Evaluation stated that Florida school districts should be provided with a Self-Assessment Tool to document student progress and appropriate programming (Florida Plan, 2017). Program evaluation was fully addressed if school district policies contained guidelines for evaluating gifted identification among underserved populations.

The sixth theme, *Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability*, considers school district processes for segregating, tracking, and evaluating the identification of students in gifted programs. Gifted Program School District Reporting and Accountability are in evidence-based practices in 2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). The Florida Plan (2017) specified an initiative in Goal I: Identification of Gifted Learners to increase the representation of students in each racial/ethnic subgroup so that those eligible would be proportional to the general student population within a 20% EI (Goal I, Indicator I.1., Florida Plan, 2017). The state of Florida's Goal I: Identification of Gifted Learners also requested school districts to track all identified students, reporting on school districts' screening strategies and grade levels in which screening strategies took place (Goal I, Indicator I.2, A., Indicator I. 2.B., Florida Plan, 2017). School districts would also report on gifted students at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels while proposing an early intervention approach to increase the number of K-2 students eligible for gifted services (Goal I,

Indicator I. 3. A., Florida Plan, 2017). Therefore, Gifted Program Evaluation was addressed if processes were in place for disseminating, evaluating yearly identification progress, and analyzing data results with the intent to create a plan to improve the identification of Hispanic students in gifted programs (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010).

The seventh theme, *Parental Advocacy and Involvement*, measures parents' participation in various aspects of their child's gifted programming. Measures of parents' participation include guidelines for parent appeals and informed consents (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Parental Advocacy and Involvement in evidence-based practices 2.1.2, 2.2.6, 2.4.5 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). FAC 6A-6.030191 (2016) outlines parents' roles in creating their child's Educational Plan (EP). Parents play an important role in reporting their children's strengths and areas of concerns as well as discussing educational services the school district can provide to meet their educational needs (FAC 6A-6030191, 2016). Parents are afforded the opportunity to participate in EP meetings and are notified via oral and written forms of communication (FAC 6A-6030191, 2016). If the parent(s) or guardian(s) are unavailable, the school district provides alternative methods such as individual or conference telephone calls, and video conference (FAC 6A-6030191, 2016). Researchers have suggested that schools' methods and attempts at communicating with families influence parents' and/or guardians' levels of school participation (Bessman et al., 2013; McBee, 2006). For this study, Parental Advocacy and Involvement were fully addressed if school district policy manuals had procedures for communicating with parents about their gifted identification processes. The theme

was considered to be well addressed if teachers were required to obtain parental/guardian permission for gifted assessments and communicated and interpreted information to both students and parents/guardians (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Finally, Parental Advocacy and Involvement was fully addressed if policies specified alternative modes of communication and used multilingual narrative for families who speak a language other than English at home (Granada, 2003, 2004. 2008, 2011).

The eighth theme, *Community Advocacy and Involvement*, considers school district policy guidelines to seek participation from community members in recruiting and identifying underserved students into gifted programs. *Community Advocacy and Involvement* are addressed in evidence-based practice 2.6.2 as a purposeful component of gifted education programming (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Researchers have suggested that communal perceptions of giftedness are instrumental in defining gifted and talented students and their characteristics (Chang, 2017; Granada, 2003; Hatt, 2016; Marland Report, 1972). For instance, the Marland Report (1972) encouraged local educational agencies to define giftedness as it was relevant in their communities. Bernal (1974) and Bernal and Reyna (1974) suggested that Hispanic students in gifted programs often use their talents and intelligence to service others. Therefore, Community Advocacy, as a conceptual theme, was deemed to have been addressed if school district policies provided guidelines for recruiting non-school affiliated personnel(s) and organizations to assist in the mission of increasing the representation of Hispanic students in gifted programs.

The ninth theme, *Gifted Program Goal Specification*, considers the extent to which school district policy manuals identify and define their goals. The theme was in evidence-based practices 2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.1.2, 2.2.6, 2.4.5, 2.6.2 (Pre-K-grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, 2010). Goal specification is an important part of Florida's system of accountability (Florida Plan, 2017). F.S. 1008.33 (2017) stated that accountability requirements are established to improve the academic performance of school districts, schools, and students. Florida's school district goal is to increase the percentage of under-represented groups of students in gifted programs and report on the progress toward accomplishing this goal (FAC 6A-6.03019, 2002). The Florida Plan (2017) delineated seven goals for school district plans. Each plan had indicators and strategies for measuring/tracking the goals (Florida Plan, 2017). For the purpose of this study, Gifted Program Goal Specification was fully addressed if school district policies indicated objectives, measurable goals, and suggested strategies to achieve the goals.

APPENDIX C
SCHOOL DISTRICT GIFTED PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I give my informed consent to participate in this study by completing this survey.

a. Yes
b. No

Interview Questions

Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and ability.

Section I:

1. What is your current position?
   a. Full-time ESE District Coach
   b. Full-time Gifted District Specialist
   c. Part-time ESE District Coach
   d. Part-time Gifted District Specialist
   e. Other:_____

2. How many years have you served in this position?
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-9 years
   c. 10+ years
   d. Comment: _____

3. How many years of classroom experience have you had with the gifted population before serving in this position?
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-9 years
   c. 10+ years
   d. Comment: _____

4. How many years of classroom experience have you had with the Hispanic population before serving in this position?
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-9 years
   c. 10+ years
   d. Comment: _____

5. How many years of classroom experience have you had with Gifted Hispanic population before serving in this position?
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-9 years
   c. 10+ years
   d. Comment: _____

Section II:

	Interview Question	Source
1.	(a) From your experience, does students' access to educational resources and opportunities contribute to gaps in their gifted representation? If so, please explain in what ways. (b) Do you believe these obstacles are attributed to students' poverty level, dual-language speaking abilities, racial/ethnic membership, or disability? If so, please explain in what ways. (c) In what ways do these obstacles create a misalignment between students' educational needs and gifted services provided in your school district?	Peters, S. J., & Matthews, M. S. (2016). Gifted education research from the economists' perspective: What have we learned? *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *27*(2), 155. doi:10.1177/1932202X16637398

Interview Question	Source
2. (a) What political barriers, if any, does your school district face in implementing policies and practices for identifying potentially-gifted learners? (b) How do the existing gifted programs in your school district address the educational needs of gifted students that are Hispanic and from low-socioeconomic status families?	Peters, S. J., & Matthews, M. S. (2016). Gifted education research from the economists' perspective: What have we learned? *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *27*(2), 155. doi:10.1177/1932202X16637398
3. (a) How are gifted identification protocols evaluated for their educational, social, and effective influence on students who are already on grade-level proficiency? (b) Is the allocation of resources for the schools' gifted programs analyzed with regard to how it influences students who are not in those programs?	Peters, S. J., & Matthews, M. S. (2016). Gifted education research from the economists' perspective: What have we learned? *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *27*(2), 155. doi:10.1177/1932202X16637398
4. (a) Other than statistical evidence, what indicators do you use to gauge representation/underrepresentation in your school district? (b) What factors have you found to be in place when underrepresentation became severe? (c)What factors have you found to be in place when underrepresentation becomes severe enough to warrant discussion and revision of school district policy and school-level practices? (d) Based on your personal experience working with gifted populations, do you think underrepresentation has the capability of becoming discriminatory toward specific racial/ethnic groups? How would that look like in your school district?	Ford, D. Y. (2014a). Segregation and the underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics in gifted education: Social inequality and deficit paradigms. *Roeper Review*, *36*(3), 143-154.

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Dalena Luis**

Date: **September 25, 2017**

Dear Researcher:

On 09/25/2017, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	An Analysis of the Representation of Hispanic Students in K-12 Gifted Programs in Florida Public Schools
Investigator:	Dalena Luis
IRB Number:	SBE-17-13416
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Renea C Carver on 09/25/2017 09:59:53 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW CONSENT LETTER

An Analysis of Cultural and Ethnic Representation among Hispanic Students in Florida's K-12 Gifted Programs in Public Schools

Dalena Luis, Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership Ed.D. Program, College of Education and Human Performance

Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Jerry Johnson, School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, University of Central Florida

September 22, 2017

School District Gifted Coordinator

Interview Consent

Dear [Recipient]:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Your participation in the interview is voluntary. The purpose of this research is to identify how characteristics (i.e. school size, minority enrollment, and poverty level) influence the representation of Hispanic students in Florida K-12 gifted programs. The study will also explore how school district policy and district-level practices are supportive of an increase in Hispanic student gifted identification in a sample of three Florida school districts.

As the district gifted coordinator for their district, you are being invited to participate in a 30 minute interview at the location of your choosing and asked about your experience on how school board policies influence school level practices in placing Hispanic students in gifted programs. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed to assist in analyzing and documenting the data. The audiotapes will be deleted after transcription. The data will be stored on a computer that is accessible to the principal investigator only and maintained for my research purposes until completion of study (May 2018).

If interested in being a part of this study, please reply back, "I consent to participate in this study" and an available location to complete the interview.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact Dalena Luis, Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership Ed.D. Program, College of Education and Human Performance, (386) 569-4487 or Dr. Jerry Johnson, Faculty Supervisor, School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, University of Central Florida at (407) 823-3278 or by email at jerry.johnson@ucf.edu

Sincerely,

Dalena Luis

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