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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

USING TOPS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED HISPANIC STUDENTS

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

BARBARA MARTIN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2016

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my family. I am grateful for the sacrifices made so that I could pursue doctoral level studies, and am cognizant that this is a privilege not accessible to all. My husband Stu and children Silvia and Troy tolerated my long hours of work and absence from other activities. To my children, I hope that I have set a good example to inspire you to persevere towards whatever goals you may set for yourselves.

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have noted an underrepresentation of Hispanic ELL students in gifted education. A literature review revealed several problems encountered when assessing and identifying gifted Hispanics and have also suggested a variety of solutions including use of non-standardized alternative assessments. In this project, the researcher explored the attitudes of educators regarding the addition of a non-standardized tool. The TOPS is a non-standardized tool used to systematically gather and document qualitative observational data within the context of instruction (Harradine, Coleman, & Winn, 2014). The researcher used both a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview through a focus group in the qualitative case study design. The researcher studied the educator's backgrounds and perceptions regarding the addition of a more qualitative tool. Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze responses. The following research questions were addressed: (1) How did incorporating TOPS influence the gifted assessment panel's identification of Hispanic ELL students as gifted? (2) What were the gifted assessment panel's attitudes regarding use of TOPS in the identification process? (3) What were the gifted assessment panel's views of the gifted assessment process for Hispanic ELL students? The researcher used a predetermined category and emergent categories to answer research questions. The researcher found that in the district studied, use of TOPS did not result in any changes in decisions made by the panel. The researcher also found that panel members had low levels of training in issues related to second language acquisition. Panel members identified several themes during the focus group discussions.

These themes included: (1) time effort and difficulty of use, (2) need for collaboration, (3) differentiating between gifted versus other learners, (4) fairness of process, and (5) subjectivity of process. Perceived barriers and practices to overcome these barriers are discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for Study

The number of children living in immigrant families has risen from 6% in 1960, to 20% in 2000 (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009). Hernandez et al. described a shift away from European origins to immigrants mainly from Latin America (62%) and Asia (22%), with another 2% each from Africa and Canada. Conversely, between 1910 and 2000, the proportion of immigrants from Europe and Canada decreased from 97% to 14%. As a consequence of this immigration pattern, racial, ethnic and cultural diversity has increased within the United States. By the year 2035, the majority of the children in schools will be students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds (Hernandez et al., 2009).

According to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of students in public school that are considered English language learners (ELL) continues to increase with 9.2% identified for the 2012-13 school year. According to the U.S. Department of Education National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), over five million school-age children are categorized as English Learners (NCELA, 2007). The National Center on Immigration Integration Policy (2015) reported that the most recent available data from the 2013 Census Bureau

indicated Spanish was spoken by 71% of ELL students and was the language most often spoken within the ELL population.

Across all regions in our nation, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in public education is increasing at a high rate (NCES, 2015). Overall, from 2002 to 2012 the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 18% to 24% (NCES, 2015). Despite the growing number of Hispanic and ELL students, Hispanic and ELL students continue to be underrepresented in gifted programming. Ford (2013) examined underrepresentation of Hispanic students enrolled in gifted education and found that comparing the percentage of Hispanic students in general education with the percentage of Hispanic students in gifted education resulted in proportions that showed significant underrepresentation. Ford's equity formula indicated that, nationally, there was a 36% underrepresentation for Hispanic students in gifted programming. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) reported that in schools offering gifted programming in the 2011-12 school year, 40% of the student population was Black or Latino, but only 9% of the total number of gifted students were Black/African American and only 17% were Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Assessment practices that researchers consider unfair to the ELL Hispanic population continue to be implemented and contribute to the inequitable representation in gifted services (Bialystok, Luk, Peets, & Yang, 2010; Carman, 2013; Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Fairbairn & Fox, 2009; Flanagan & Ortiz, 2001; Flanagan, Ortiz, & Alfonso, 2007; Ford, 2013; Fultz, Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Tong, 2013; Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martínez, 2009; Helms, 2002, 2006, 2009; Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996; Lakin & Lohman, 2011;

Lohman & Gambrell, 2012; Lohman, Korb, & Lakin, 2008; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

There are myriad variables that affect fairness in assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students. When assessment for CLD students is not fair, it results in inaccurate interpretations that could affect ability to access different educational opportunities (Edl, Jones, & Estell, 2008; Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, & Damico, 2013; Lakin, & Lohman, 2011; Masten, Plata, Wenglar, & Thedford, 1999; Rhodes et al., 2005; Sotelo-Dynega, Ortiz, Flanagan, & Chaplin, 2013). Research indicates that providing integrated classroom supports for gifted students in regular classrooms is hampered by a myriad of barriers (Schroth, 2014). Thus pull out programs help reduce the negative impact of heterogeneous grouping (Schroth, 2014). Access to these programs is usually dependent on identification as a gifted student. Within the Hispanic group, there are unique variables such as acculturation and language proficiency that impact assessment (Collier, 1987, 1988, 1989; Gonzalez, 2006; Harris, 2014; Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996; López, 2009; Macswan & Rolstad, 2006; Marin & Gamba, 1996; Plata & Masten, 1998; Pray, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2005; Ruiz, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Valdes & Figueroa, 1996). In order for Hispanic students to be better represented in gifted programming, issues regarding proper assessment need to be addressed. Yet, it is also important to note that in removing Hispanic ELL students from their regular classroom setting new social pressures are introduced which need to be considered and addressed by the schools (Schroth, 2014).

Terms

This study will occur in a district that will be referred to as “Midwestern Suburban District.” In the Midwestern Suburban District, multiple measures are used for identification of students for gifted services. A description of each measure is subsequently provided.

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is a group administered norm referenced test that yields standard scores in verbal, nonverbal and quantitative domains to assess cognitive ability. This assessment battery is administered to all second graders in the district.

STAR Reading and STAR Math profiles are also examined during the identification process. The STAR tests are computer adaptive, norm-referenced academic assessments developed by Renaissance Learning. STAR Reading and Math tests measure a wide variety of literacy and mathematics skills. These assessments are used to screen all students in the district and are administered three times per year. These assessments are utilized to measure students’ academic achievement in both Reading and Math (Renaissance Learning, 2015a, 2015b)

Propensity scores are growth rates provided to the district by the consulting firm Education Consulting Research Analytics (ECRA). They are utilized to determine the expected individual growth rates of each student based on their previous achievement.

The Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) is a norm referenced rating scale used to measure observational data in five areas including general intellectual ability, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. This information is quantified and designed to assist in identifying students for gifted services. This tool is

used to measure observational data. Both parents and teachers complete the SIGS (Ryser, & McConnell, 2004).

Dynamic performance-based assessments through Kingore's Planned Experiences have also been attempted in grades K-2. Brady (2008) described these planned experiences as a way for teachers to provide enriching experiences while identifying and documenting characteristics of gifted students. This type of high-level, open-ended activity has the potential to address the issue of early and continuous access to advanced curriculum prior to the formal identification process. However, in the district in which the study will occur, these opportunities have been limited, and have not yet been systematically incorporated into the identification process.

Local and subgroup norms are used during the process of identification. Student performances on the CogAT and STAR tests are compared to local subgroup norms. Subgroup norms are available for the Hispanic population and for the ELL population. However, no norms are provided for Hispanic ELL students.

English Language Learners (ELL) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the Midwestern Suburban District are defined by performance on an English Proficiency test. Teachers administer the MODEL (Kindergarten) or ACCESS (1st through 8th grade) tests to determine levels of English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students who do not obtain an overall composite proficiency of 5.0 as well as a reading proficiency of 4.2 and writing proficiency of 4.2 on either the MODEL or ACCESS test are considered English Learners and coded as Limited English Proficient (LEP) in the district database. These students are eligible for services for English Language Learners.

A transitional bilingual program in the Midwestern Suburban District is a term used to refer to a self-contained classroom with native Spanish language support for grades Pre-K to 2. Students are expected to transition to an all-English environment by grade 3. In the transitional bilingual program, students are exposed to literacy instruction in both English and Spanish.

A gifted student in the Midwestern Suburban District is defined as a student who performs or shows the potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. A gifted student is also defined as exhibiting high performance capacity in intellectual ability, creativity, leadership and/or a specific academic field. In the Midwestern Suburban District it is further stipulated that gifted students can be identified in any cultural group or within any economic stratum and require special instruction, services and/or activities not ordinarily provided by the general education program.

Contribution of the Study

In a position statement by the National Association of Gifted Children (2011), NAGC recommends developing culturally sensitive identification protocols. NAGC (2011) recommends gathering both quantitative and qualitative information and using instruments that are culturally and linguistically sensitive (NAGC, 2011). Some of the methods utilized in the district in which the study will occur follow these guidelines. For example, cut-off scores for identification include use of local subgroup norms for CogAT and STAR. Use of ECRA propensity scores identifies students with faster growth rates within particular subgroups. However, students with Hispanic and limited English background may not be fairly assessed within these particular subgroups. The subgroups

used for comparison are either Hispanic or ELL. These subgroup norms may include a wide variety of backgrounds within the subgroup measured. For example, aspects such as country of origin, level of acculturation or level of English language skill may affect the average scores for the ELL population (Collier, 1989; Fairbairn, & Fox, 2009; Patterson, Pearson & Zurer, 2004; Rhodes et al., 2005; Solano-Flores, & Li, 2008; Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013) To explain, a student with high potential who has recently arrived to the country with limited acculturation and no English skills is less likely to do as well on English reading tests than a student more familiar with the culture and with higher English language skills (Collier, 1989; Fairbairn, & Fox, 2009; Patterson et al., 2004; Rhodes et al., 2005; Solano-Flores & Li, 2008; Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013). Students that have been in the country longer and have English skills that are closer to ELL program exit criteria may do better on these achievement tests regardless of thinking skills. Within the Hispanic subgroup, fluent English language speakers may be compared to students with very limited English. In other words, even within the ELL and Hispanic populations, there are multiple subgroups that can have an affect on the average scores for the Hispanic ELL populations (Collier, 1989; Fairbairn & Fox, 2009; Patterson et al., 2004; Rhodes et al., 2005; Solano-Flores & Li, 2008; Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013).

While some of the instruments used for identification are developed for diverse populations, this may not be the case for the behavioral rating scale. To explain, SIGS may not capture some of the unique characteristics of CLD students. Ryser and McConnell (2004), the developers of SIGS claim to have eliminated any items that showed bias towards ethnic groups. In the *Scales for identifying gifted students* manual, Ryser and McConnell describe several studies to support the reliability and validity of the

rating scales. They used logistical regression to identify differential item functioning of three groups (African American versus non African American, Hispanic versus non Hispanic and male versus female). Although significant items were removed, validity of the instrument has been established with correlations to cognitive tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence scale for Children, Third Edition (WISC-III), Tests of Cognitive Skills, Second Edition (TCS-2) and Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). While a description of each SIGS subtest correlation is beyond the scope of this paper, several of the studies that can be found in the SIGS manual (Ryser & McConnell, 2004) will be described. Fifty-three students, ages 6 through 16 participated in the WISC-III correlation study. A correlation coefficient of .67 was obtained when the SIGS General Intellectual Ability (GIA) scale was compared to intelligence as measured by the WISC-III Full Scale IQ. Twenty-seven students, ages 7 through 9, participated in a study to correlate the SIGS with the Test of Cognitive Skills second Edition Total Battery (TCS-2) with a resulting correlation coefficient of .73. Twenty-three students, ages 6 through 11, participated in a study to correlate SIGS General Intellectual Ability Scale with the Cognitive Abilities Test Verbal Battery (CogAT), which resulted in a correlation coefficient of .48. When the SIGS GIA scale and the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) were compared, a correlation coefficient of .60 was obtained. The test developers used Cohen's (1988) guidelines to describe two of the correlations as large (WISC-III and TCS-2) and the correlation with CogAT as moderate. Other correlations between the SIGS academic scales and WISC-III and TCS were also found to be moderate to large (Ryser & McConnell, 2004).

While Ryser and McConnell (2004) have attempted to validate the SIGS measure through correlational studies, an examination of the technical qualities outlined in Chapter Three of the SIGS manual (Ryser, & McConnell 2004) raises several concerns when considering implementation in the district being studied. If gifted CLD students do not typically perform well on standardized tests of cognitive ability, then they may also not be identified by the SIGS. Furthermore, examination of the technical qualities of the SIGS indicated that a smaller proportion of Hispanic and African American students are represented in the SIGS norm sample than are represented in the study's district. For example, 13% of the SIGS School Rating Scales (SRS) norm sample was Hispanic while 9% was African American. White students made up 87% of the SIGS SRS norm sample. Current demographics published in the state report card for the district being studied indicated that only 45% of the students in the district are White, while 29% are Hispanic and 14% are African American. In addition, the SIGS tool had limited information regarding reliability for Hispanic and African American students. There is a small sample size for its reliability as well. Two reliability studies were completed with the SIGS SRS. The first study included 61 elementary and middle school students, while the second study included 46 high school students. For the home rating scale (HRS) only 37 children and adolescents were included in the study. A final concern regarding the SIGS is that there are no subgroup norms. Therefore, during the identification process, there is no systematic procedure for the panel to take into account cultural or sociolinguistic context.

Another area of weakness in the measures collected by the district is that tests are not necessarily administered in the student's dominant language. All of the measures collected are administered in English. Therefore, Hispanic ELL students do not have the

opportunity to demonstrate their problem-solving skills in their native language. Finally, although a variety of measures are used, all the measures collected for the identification panel to review are norm-referenced. There is limited qualitative information included in the identification process. Inclusion of more qualitative data may provide a wider range of information regarding the strengths of Hispanic ELL students. In this study, the researcher will explore how the addition of more qualitative data affects the gifted identification process for Hispanic ELL students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze educator perceptions regarding the difference between a traditional gifted assessment process and a traditional gifted assessment process that also includes Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) when identifying Hispanic ELL students for gifted education. The TOPS is a non-standardized tool used to systematically gather and document qualitative observational data within the context of instruction (Harradine et al., 2014). The following research questions will be addressed:

1. How does incorporating the TOPS influence the gifted assessment panel's identification of Hispanic ELL students as gifted?
2. What are the gifted assessment panel's attitudes regarding use of TOPS in the identification process?
3. What are the gifted assessment panel's views of the gifted assessment process for Hispanic ELL students?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the National Research Council's report regarding minority students in special and gifted education (NRC, 2002), the Committee on Minority Representation described the underrepresentation of minority children in gifted education as a national problem. Several theories have been proposed to explain the cause of this underrepresentation; however, the issue is complex and multidimensional. Researchers have identified several contributors to the problem, including the need to improve processes of identifying CLD (Baldwin 2005; Briggs & Reis 2008; Castellano 1998; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008), the need for early exposure to quality curriculum (Diaz, 1998), the need to include supports to access the curriculum (Baldwin, 1987; Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008; Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, & Strickland, 2004), and the need to retain CLD students who have already been identified for gifted services (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2014). Embedded within these contributing factors is the need to address barriers such as poverty and social stress, including bias and discrimination (Ford et al., 2008; Karnes, Troxclair, & Marquardt, 1997).

The purpose of this project is to address the need for improved identification of CLD students for gifted services. Within the CLD group, the study focuses on the Hispanic ELL population. Researchers have identified deficit thinking, lack of definition

for giftedness, standardized tests, cultural background, and linguistic background as factors contributing to the under-identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students (Brown & Pinell, 2013; Carman, 2013; Ford, 2013; Ford et al., 2008; Gyll, Madon, Prieto, & Scherr, 2010; Hamayan et al., 2013, Harris, 2014; Lakin & Lohman, 2011; Lohman & Gambrell, 2012; Rhodes et al., 2005; Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013; Tomlinson, & Jarvis 2014; Valencia, 2010).

Problems Identifying Gifted Hispanic ELL Students

Deficit Perspective

Social, economic and political structures often affect educational policy (Valencia, 2010), and educational policy can affect the cultural milieu of school personnel. If educators do not recognize how policies related to methods of measurement, segregation (Valencia, 2010), immigration or bilingual education (Ovando, 2003) affect how culturally and linguistically different groups are viewed and/or accepted, educators may not recognize the presence of deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010). Ford et al. (2008) described deficit thinking as “negative, stereotypical, and prejudicial beliefs about CLD groups that result in discriminatory policies and behaviors or actions” (p. 292). Deficit thinking previously led to interpreting lower IQ scores as a problem within a particular group of CLD individuals (Valencia, 2010), rather than due to other factors such as the environment or context (Ford & Grantham 2003; Tomlinson & Jarvis 2014). For example, in an early study of Mexican American students cited by Valencia (2010), Rollen Drake (1927) found that as a group, Mexican American students obtained a lower test score mean on the Stanford Achievement Test than their White peers. However, in this study, the researcher ignored the amount of overlap with White peers (Valencia,

2010). Valencia described this disregard of data that indicated some Mexican American students scored higher than some of their White peers, as an example of how methodology can lead to stereotyping groups. Valencia believes this type of reporting perpetuated the idea that there were racial hereditary differences in measured intelligence. Valencia explained that when stereotypes are formed, individuals view differences as originating from deficits within the individual. William Ryan (1971) coined this deficit view as “blaming the victim.” “Blaming the victim” has resulted in programs and policies that attempt to change the individual rather than making changes to the external structures that exclude various populations (Valencia, 2010).

In addition to the racial differences in intelligence perspective, deficit thinking manifests itself through labeling cultural differences as cultural deficits. Valencia (2010) criticized the popular conception of “the culture of poverty” perpetuated by Ruby Payne (1996). Valencia (2010) claimed Payne’s perspective was based on an inadequate research base and her conception of the “norm” in families from low socio-economic status has also perpetuated negative stereotyping. For example, one stereotype that was communicated to teachers is the idea that families of CLD students do not value education (Payne, 1996).

Guyll et al. (2010) delineated various ways in which deficit thinking may affect Hispanic students. They described how self-fulfilling prophecies, stigma consciousness, and stereotype threat interact with each other and contribute to lower performance by Hispanic students. Limited knowledge regarding student culture may lead to stereotype-based beliefs. Since the Hispanic stereotype suggests lower ability (Niemann, 2001), reliance on the stereotype can lead to lower expectations and may set in motion self-

fulfilling prophecies. A meta-analysis by Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found that teachers held lower expectations for Hispanic students (Guyll et al., 2010). If a teacher holds a false belief about a student's potential, a student may internalize this belief and perform accordingly. Guyll et al. explained how stigma consciousness, which is when one is self-conscious about being a member of a group and expects to be stereotyped (Brown & Pinel, 2003), could lead to stereotype threat. Internalizing stereotypes may lead Hispanics to be vulnerable to stereotype threat (Guyll et al., 2010). Stereotype threat is fear that one's behavior may confirm a negative stereotype (Steele, 1997), and the anxiety felt may negatively impact performance (Guyll et al., 2010).

Educational policy may perpetuate this kind of thinking. For example, the policy of tracking students may lead to Hispanic students being placed into less challenging instruction. This may occur because it is assumed they have less academic ability (Guyll et al., 2010). This, in turn, reduces their educational opportunity and could contribute to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Another example of how educational policy could lead to deficit thinking is the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation that punishes educational institutions for not meeting certain academic benchmarks. Because Hispanic students tend to score lower on standardized tests, they may be viewed as liabilities (Guyll et al., 2010), setting in motion aspects of deficit thinking.

Gonzales (2006) attempted to counter deficit thinking through research that demonstrated the advantages of being bicultural and bilingual. In her quasi-experimental research, she studied kindergarten students that had been referred for a gifted evaluation. Gonzales first used qualitative methods to examine the performances of students on an alternative developmental scale, the Qualitative use of English and

Spanish Tasks (QUEST). She then used a psychometric approach to compare differences between groups and to examine the influences of culture, language, and socio-economic status (SES) on performance. She found that all the children performed at a higher level on nonverbal tasks as opposed to verbal classification tasks. Bilingual children from families with low SES showed comparable means of performance on nonverbal tasks as their monolingual English speaking peers. Moreover, on nonverbal tasks the upper bounds attained by bilingual children were generally higher than monolingual English middle to high SES counterparts.

When analyzing the verbal tasks, even though mainstream monolingual English speaking students from middle to high SES backgrounds obtained higher means than bilingual Hispanic children, some Hispanic children reached the highest levels of metalinguistic ability that could not be attained by any monolingual English speaking counterparts. In short, Gonzales (2006) found different patterns for students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She found continuities (similar strengths and weaknesses) within the nonverbal domain, but discontinuities in the verbal domain. In other words, in each group, different strengths and weaknesses emerged within the verbal domain. Gonzales points out the need for alternative measures that show some of the unique strengths of bilingual individuals.

Interpretations such as group differences in intelligence and cultural deficits can affect how teachers view CLD students. How teachers view Hispanic students may affect the likelihood that they would refer them for gifted identification. McBee (2006) analyzed data from all public schools in Georgia and found that teachers tended to refer African American and Hispanic students from low SES backgrounds at low rates in

comparison to Caucasian and Asian students. One possible explanation given by McBee is that there is “severe bias in the nomination and testing procedure” (p. 109). He further stated, “the low rate of teacher nominations could indicate racism, classism, or cultural ignorance on the part of teachers” (p. 109).

For this reason, it is important to be vigilant regarding how educational policies can affect researchers’ and educators’ thinking patterns. Using methods of data analysis that highlight strengths may help counter deficit thinking. It is important to recognize how aspects of deficit thinking can permeate other factors that contribute to under-identification of gifted Hispanic students. For example, researchers believe IQ based definitions of giftedness are symptoms of deficit thinking (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002).

Definition of Giftedness

Operationalizing the construct of giftedness has been complicated by competing definitions from scholars, states, and even different cultures. The history of defining intelligence has played prominently into the field of gifted education, with controversies surrounding the issue of how much intelligence and giftedness are due to genetics versus environment (Esping & Plucker, 2008). Social and political context and events have also shaped definitions developed by federal or state organizations (Sisk, 2008). Finally, different cultures may perceive giftedness differently than the mainstream American culture, further complicating the identification of giftedness for culturally diverse students (Sternberg, 2007). The reason definitions are important, is that the definition a district adheres to have an effect on the inclusiveness of gifted programming. In other

words, the definition guides educators in determining who will or will not receive gifted services.

First, scholars have not always agreed upon the definition of giftedness, resulting in some controversy within the field. In their summary of the history of intelligence, Esping and Plucker (2008) reviewed how Galton (1962) researched family lineage and concluded that eminence was highly related to genetics. Esping and Plucker (2008) described how after statistical measurement tools became more sophisticated. Terman furthered the research of gifted students by using tests of intelligence. Terman defined the population as individuals with IQs of at least 135 or in the top 1% of measured intelligence (Stephens & Karns 2000).

Traditionally, giftedness was determined by a psychometric test of intelligence, which had the advantage of measuring and classifying giftedness in an objective, efficient manner. Within the psychometric field, researchers debated the structure of intelligence and whether intelligence was a single, unitary biologically based entity (Spearman, 1904), a construct with two structures such as fluid and crystalized intelligence (Cattell, 1941), or consisted of a wider range of second order group factors (Horn, 1965).

More contemporary scholars in the field have begun to question narrow definitions and subsequently developed broader theories of multiple intelligences. In his theory, Gardner (1983) proposed seven distinct types of intelligences. Sternberg (1985) also developed a Triarchic theory that expanded the concept of intelligence, adding practical and creative abilities to analytical abilities. He believes these abilities work together within a sociocultural context (Esping & Plucker, 2008). Along with these expanded views of intelligence came expanded views of giftedness.

Renzulli has been a prominent contemporary scholar in the field of gifted education. Both he and Gagne developed theories that implied a process or transformation impacted by psychosocial variables (Subotnik & Calderon, 2008). Renzulli (1982) explained that researchers with a narrow approach to giftedness include the top 3-5% of the normal IQ distribution in their definition. Renzulli believed this view of academic intelligence was too narrow, too exclusive, and inaccurate in perceiving gifted students as a fixed preselected population. In contrast, Renzulli's theory conceptualized giftedness as a three-ring model and added components such as task commitment and creativity to the more traditional definition of high ability. Renzulli rejected the notion that one is either born gifted or not and advocated for a more flexible approach to identification. His model begins by identifying the top 15% to 20% of students, which is a much more inclusive view than the more traditional top 3% to 5% of students (Renzulli & Reiss, 1987). Renzulli's model also expanded the concept of giftedness by proposing that gifted students were not only those that were capable of performing at high levels, but also those that possessed the potential for high level performance.

Renzulli's conceptualization of giftedness led to more inclusive models of identification such as the Enrichment Triad Model (1977) and the Revolving Door Identification Model (Renzulli, Reis & Smith, 1981). The Revolving Door Identification Model conceptualized giftedness as a more transitory construct (Borland, 2014). Students from a pool of above average ability first revolved into a program when they demonstrated creativity by developing an idea for a project. Students then demonstrated task commitment by completing the project and then revolve out, making room for other

students in the pool. Research regarding the quality of completed projects indicated no significant difference between students who scored in the top 5% on standardized tests, and those that scored 10 to 15 percentile points lower than the cutoff for the first group (Reis & Renzulli, 1982).

Researchers field-tested these initial models, which led to further refinements of what is now termed the School Wide Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli & Reiss, 1994). In his review of field tests regarding implementation of the School Wide Enrichment Triad Model, Renzulli (2015) provided evidence of positive outcomes for students involved. However, he also acknowledged difficulties determining effectiveness, since most studies were non-experimental and lacked a comparison model. In addition, he indicated measures had been more qualitative in nature. Despite the lack of studies with comparative programs, Reis (1981) demonstrated positive perceptions of educators by analyzing their responses to questionnaires and interviews. Over the years Renzulli's (2015) model of giftedness has been more widely accepted by educators.

In addition to differing definitions within the field of psychology, educational policies have dictated definitions used by districts. Federal definitions and intentions have changed over time. For example, in 1972 the Marland Report definition seemed broader than a previous definition since it listed six types of giftedness, including psychomotor skill (which was taken out in a later definition). After the 1988 Javits Act, performing arts was eliminated from the definition. The definition continued to be modified particularly after the 1994 report by the U.S. Department of Education "National Excellence: A case for Developing America's Talent." The 1994 definition added the statements (a) "Students must be compared with others of their age, experience, or environment"; and

(b) “Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor” (p. 26). It also eliminated the term “gifted” and replaced it with “talent” reflecting more contemporary thought regarding the influences of environment in the development of ability (Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

Through a survey, Stephens and Karnes (2000) analyzed the terminology of definitions being used by various states. They found that the majority of states were continuing to use some form of the 1978 federal definition, with three states using a form of the even earlier 1972 Marland definition. One state was using the Javits definition, and one state was using the Renzulli definition. Four states were using the most recent federal definition, stemming from the National Excellence report. Five states did not have a definition. Within the definitions, use of the terms “gifted” and “talented” varied from state to state. Other terms such as “learner of high ability”, “highly capable student”, and “exceptional student” indicated an attempt to move away from the terminology “gifted.” Some definitions included reference to test scores, percentile ranks, standard deviations, or specific IQ score requirements. The research by Stephens and Karnes (2000) indicated that despite newer conceptualizations of giftedness in the scholarly community or at the federal level, many states had not updated their definitions. This resulted in a wide variety of state definitions and terminology. A study by Carman (2013) found that over a 15-year period, researchers also operationalized giftedness in different ways. Despite a shift in the scholarly community, she found researchers most commonly used IQ testing as a method of identifying gifted students. The chances that CLD students are included in gifted programming could depend on whether the definition of giftedness is narrowly

operationalized as IQ, or inclusive of other factors, as well as whether it is conceptualized as innate or malleable.

Another issue with defining giftedness is that different cultures may conceptualize giftedness in different ways. Sternberg (2007) reviewed research regarding how different cultures have different conceptions of giftedness and suggested that educators should take this into consideration during the identification process. Studies of intelligence with children in Kenya (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1996) compared traditional measures of fluid intelligence with measures of crystalized intelligence and with what Sternberg described as practical intelligence. These researchers found negative correlations between crystalized intelligence and practical intelligence as well as between fluid intelligence and practical intelligence. Grigorenko, Meier, Lipka, Mohatt, Yanez and Sternberg (2004) found similar results when studying Inuit children in Southwestern Alaska. Sternberg and Grigorenko (1996) noted that the test of practical knowledge best predicted skills that were most important in the children's lives. These researchers concluded that different expectations of families resulted in children spending more time learning the knowledge needed to adapt to the culture in which they live. They point out that although some of these students would not perform well on tests standardized in our culture, American students would most likely not do well on tests developed within a different cultural context. The idea that giftedness is culturally bound is relevant to CLD including Hispanic ELL students, because they may have high abilities not measured by standardized tests.

Despite theories regarding broader conceptualizations of giftedness, school personnel that espouse traditional conceptualizations of academic giftedness continue to

negatively impact identification of CLD including gifted Hispanic ELL students.

Researchers have described how standardized tests continue to be the primary means of identification. Due to a variety of reasons that will be explained in subsequent sections, Hispanic students and English language learners tend to score below the mean on these types of tests. Therefore, relying on these tests would limit their eligibility for gifted identification. Interpretation of standardized tests has been affected by both deficit thinking and limited conceptions of giftedness. The call for expansion of conceptions of giftedness has been in part due to lack of fair assessment for CLD students, including those with a Hispanic ELL background.

Standardized Tests

As mentioned previously, defining giftedness has traditionally been tied to use of standardized tests. Use of standardized tests with CLD students has had a controversial history. Historically, tests of cognitive ability showed differences in mean scores between racial and ethnic groups (Thorndike, 1997), with Hispanic students scoring a standard deviation lower than the norm (Flanagan & Ortiz 2001; Flanagan et al., 2007; Ford, 2013). As a group, bilingual students also tend to obtain full scale intelligence quotients (FSIQ) that are about one standard deviation lower than monolingual English speaking students (Bialystok et al., 2010; Valdez & Figueroa 1994). Initially, these scores were interpreted to mean there were differences between race and ethnicity (Helms, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2005) and that Hispanic students were less capable (Ford, 2013). This type of interpretation could lead to negative consequences when cut scores are used to make important decisions regarding selection, placement, and treatment (Helms, 2006). This practice can lead to restricted educational opportunities such as lack

of opportunity for gifted services (Ford, 2013). More recently, research has indicated that rather than race or ethnicity, exposure to mainstream culture can be the mediating variable in these tests (Rhodes et al., 2005).

To address some of the disparities found on results of tests of intelligence, a popular method used to improve fairness has been to utilize nonverbal tests. Lohman and Gambrell (2012) indicated that nonverbal ability tests are the primary tool used to identify ELL students for gifted services. Researchers claimed that while bilingual students still tended to score lower than the mean on tests of verbal ability, they scored closer to the mean on tests of nonverbal ability (Cummins, 1984; Figueroa 2005; Jenson, 1980). Nonverbal tests have been used to reduce the impact of not speaking the language of a test. Believing nonverbal tests were more culture neutral (Naglieri & Ford 2003) practitioners then began using nonverbal or language-reduced tests as an alternative for general intelligence scores (Lohman et al., 2008). Although nonverbal tests have been viewed as culture free and fair assessments (Ford, 2013), the research regarding whether they improve representation of CLD students is mixed (Obi, Obiakor, Obi, Banks, Warner, & Spencer, 2014). Lakin and Lohman (2011) found nonverbal ability tests to have less predictive validity for academic success than tests of verbal ability. While analyzing the predictive validity of various tests used for identification of gifted students, Lakin and Lohman also analyzed the effect on the diversity in a gifted program. The authors concluded that tests of nonverbal ability did not produce the expected increase in CLD diversity for the program.

Lohman et al. (2008) compared the distributions, means, and variances on three nonverbal tests including the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), the Raven's

Progressive Matrices Test (Raven) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), to determine if there were differences between ELL and non ELL students. Large differences were found between ELL and non ELL Hispanic children with ELL students scoring lower. In addition, there was greater variability of scores within the ELL population especially with the NNAT (Lohman et al., 2008).

The issue regarding appropriate use of nonverbal tests may depend on what kind of nonverbal test is used (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). Lohman and Gambrell reported that the NNAT and the Raven are primarily tests of figural ability. Lohman and Gambrell advocated choosing tests of nonverbal ability that measure more than figural reasoning abilities. Lohman and Gambrell reported how previous research by Anastasi and Urbina (1997) showed figural reasoning tests to be more culturally loaded than translated verbal tests. In more recent research, Weiss, Saklofske, Prifitera, and Holdnack (2006) compared scores on the Spanish WISC-IV and showed that more schooling in the U.S. had a larger impact on nonverbal scores (Perceptual Reasoning Index) than on verbal scores (Verbal Comprehension Index). Lohman and Gambrell (2012) concluded that acculturation affects not only verbal ability, but somewhat surprisingly, also affects nonverbal abilities. There is current controversy regarding how to use nonverbal tests in assessment of ELL students. Researchers such as Pierce, Adams, Speirs, Numeister, Cassady, Dixon, and Cross (2006) are continuing to study the use of nonverbal assessment in identification of gifted ELL students, and most researchers continue to advocate using nonverbal tests as one component of an evaluation.

In addition to studying nonverbal tests, researchers have studied variability within verbal tests. Cummings (1984) researched the Verbal Index of the Wechsler Intelligence

Scale for Children – Revised (WISC-R) and found that for bilingual students, there was much variability between subtest scores within the Verbal Index. Bilingual students scored lower on subtests relying more on cultural knowledge and language development. Rhodes et al. (2005) also explained how the higher the cultural loading and language complexity on a test, the lower the performance of ELL students tends to be. Cummings (1984) concluded that when a child's background is primarily from a different culture, a test can exclude their particular type of learning experiences.

Helms (2006) also pointed out some issues related to using race and ethnicity as a variable when conducting research regarding standardized tests. She considered race to be a proxy for other cultural/socialization experiences. In her opinion, correlation coefficients and regression lines for an external criterion may indicate test validity, however she argued that this type of validity did not necessarily mean a test was fair. Helms suggested that validity is necessary, but not sufficient in determining fairness. She urged researchers to investigate whether and how cultural factors impact test scores. To assist researchers in this endeavor, Helms put forth a model to remove construct irrelevant variance (racial or cultural factors that the researcher did not intend to assess) from a measure, hoping this would reduce negative effects of unfair testing.

Sotelo-Dynega et al. (2013) conducted research that showed how language proficiency interacts with tests in the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities III (WJ-III) in a systematic and predictable manner. They proposed that the systematic manner in which the interaction occurs helps support accurate interpretations. A student with low English proficiency is not expected to obtain similar test results as proficient monolingual peers. Sotelo-Dynega et al. do not believe psychometric bias is present. In

their interpretation, rather than attributing bias to the test, Sotelo-Dynega et al., as well as and Rhodes et al. (2005), suggest differences exist because of the experience of being exposed to two languages and cultures. These experiences result in different developmental levels of the individual being assessed and the normative sample of the test. Sotelo-Dynega et al. (2013) and Rhodes et al. (2005) propose that rather than the test itself being biased, the interpretation could be biased. They point out how important it is to consider differences in the norming sample's exposure to cultural and linguistic demands of the test. This thought is in alignment with the National Association of School Psychologists (2015) recent position paper regarding the provision of school psychological services to bilingual students. NASP's position paper indicated that underrepresentation could occur due to inappropriate psycho-educational assessment practices. In other words, in addition to statistical and technical considerations of a test, interpretation of scores needs to be fair by taking into consideration background and experience (Ford, 2013).

Due to these considerations, researchers studying intelligence tests have developed more contemporary methods of interpretation that take into account a student's norm group, interaction with test norms, and language (Rhodes et al., 2005). However, more criticism regarding standardized tests has emerged with the development of our current climate of accountability testing (Fairbairn & Fox, 2009). Although standardized tests of intelligence have become more sophisticated over time with many claiming that psychometric bias has been eliminated (Sattler 1992; Valdes & Figueroa, 1996), Fairbairn and Fox (2009) expressed concern regarding the psychometric properties of large scale achievement assessments. Fairbairn and Fox point out that for CLD students,

language proficiency is confounded with content knowledge. This lack of content validity can lead to inaccurate conclusions regarding skill level. Abedi, Leon and Mirocha (2003) showed that when achievement tests are developed and normed for native English speakers, reliability and validity is lower for LEP students. Pappamihiel and Walser (2009) criticized accountability systems for not taking into consideration the complexities of second language learning. While accommodations such as translating to native language or changing the test format are sometimes used to address second language issues, these accommodations may introduce even more measurement error (Solano-Flores & Li, 2008). Solano-Flores and Li provided an example of one of the problems with translated achievement tests. They examined how the interaction between student item and language or dialect affected dependability of measures on a translated math test. The authors concluded that idiosyncratic differences in first and second language proficiencies resulted in much variability and lack of consistency in responses to items in both first and second languages. Both levels of native language proficiency and dialect could impact performance. Solano-Flores and Li concluded that the subtle linguistic differences in language might have a large impact on measurement error. They also suggested that because of the large amount of variability, the number of items needed to obtain reliable results may differ depending on the particular subpopulation. Researchers such as Solano-Flores and Li emphasize the complex nature of testing and the amount of measurement error present in results, even with accommodations. Pappamihiel and Walser (2009) state that current accountability systems “employ a simple assessment solution to a complex assessment problem” (p. 136).

To further complicate matters, research in academic testing can be difficult to interpret because researchers tend to group bilingual students without regard to their different levels of development in the two languages they speak (Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013). In other words, research often groups ethnic background or ELL status without acknowledging the heterogeneity of these groups (Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013). As mentioned for cognitive testing, knowing the characteristics of a sample group is also important for large scale academic testing. Otherwise, it is difficult to interpret results for an individual that may or may not have similar cultural or language experiences.

In summary while the psychometric qualities of standardized tests continues to improve, there are still concerns that affect the fairness of these tests (Helms, 2006). Debates surrounding bias in cognitive tests are not so much related to psychometric bias but rather whether standardized tests are valid and/or fair for CLD students. Validity of both content (whether or not students have been exposed to cultural content) and construct (whether or not the test is measuring what was intended) continue to affect results on administered assessments. Furthermore, use of accommodations introduces the potential for less reliability (Rhodes et al., 2005; Solano-Flores & Li, 2008). Understanding a student's background and experience is necessary to interpret results in a fair manner. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies to collect additional background information when making decisions about CLD students.

Social and Cultural Factors

If it is true that tests do not display psychometric bias (Rhodes et al., 2005) and differences in test scores reflect constructs other than race (Helms, 2006; Valencia, 2010) then what accounts for group differences in mean scores? Rather than view differences

as due to race, some scholars believe test scores reflect differences in culture (Helms, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2005). Ford (2013) defines culture as “values, beliefs, attitudes, habits, and customs common to a group bound by race, gender, age, geography, religion, income, and/or social class” (p. 14). Other related contextual variables such as language spoken at home, parents’ level of education, quality of relationship with family members, and number of siblings, are subsumed within culture (Gonzalez, 2006). These variables can affect how a student performs, not only on tests, but also in the classroom and school environment (Gonzalez, 2006). Knowing that high potential is present in every culture, researchers have been studying how culture may affect the identification of gifted students. While there is the issue of culture affecting performance on standardized tests (Helms, 2003), researchers have also noted that different cultures may associate different behaviors with the concept of giftedness (Peterson, 1999). Not only does the student’s exposure to culture affect identification, but also a teacher’s own culture may impact identification. How a teacher views giftedness has consequences for which students they refer for gifted identification (Peterson, 1999). Different conceptualizations of giftedness could lead to disagreements regarding who should receive those services (Peterson, 1999).

To begin, one difficulty in taking culture into account during gifted identification is lack of knowledge regarding fairness when using normative comparison (Helms, 2006). To explain, tests naturally reflect the culture and values of those that created them (Rhodes et al., 2005). Differences in exposure to and experiences in the culture represented on the test, will affect student performance on tasks presented in the test (Rhodes et al., 2005). To place a student’s performance in context and determine

whether the test was fair, an evaluator must consider the group to which the individual is being compared (Helms, 2003). Knowing whether one's cultural background is fairly represented can be complicated. To explain, sometimes, educators assume norms are fair because they reflect current racial and ethnic demographics in the United States.

However, a test that was developed on national norms may not be reflective of the norms in the community of the student. In addition to assuming local norms reflect national norms, another problem arises due to how race and ethnicity are categorized (Helms, 2003). Just because a test includes race in proportion to a certain population does not mean that an individual's culture is adequately represented, and therefore one cannot assume the test is fair (Helms, 2006). Various cultures may be subsumed within each racial group, making each group rather heterogeneous (Rhodes et al., 2005) and adding to the complexity of measurement when using racial or cultural norms. To further explain, three examples of how a black student's culture may vary are: (1) the student could be considered Hispanic, speak Spanish, and be from the Dominican Republic; (2) the student may be bilingual and from a region in Africa; or (3) the student may speak English and be of African American descent. In each of these cases the student's racial background could be considered black, however, their cultural experiences would vary widely. Even terms meant to describe culture (rather than race) can be ambiguous. For example, the term Hispanic is meant to describe a part of the cultural heritage of an individual.

However, a student may be: (1) of biracial Black/White Puerto Rican descent, (2) of American Indian descent from an indigenous Peruvian tribe, or (3) from the European country of Spain. Each of these students may be monolingual or bilingual, speaking combinations of English, Spanish, and native indigenous languages. Thus, although there

may be some commonalities between students categorized as Hispanic, there might also be some important cultural differences. These differences may affect how they perform in school. For example, a Hispanic student who had early school experiences in a metropolitan city in Spain may have a different level of exposure and familiarity to culture represented on an American test than a student who lived in a small rural Indigenous community in the mountains of Peru and attended school only sporadically. To reiterate, these differences in experience are not accounted for when grouped under the term “Hispanic.” Thus, when an educator compares performance or behavior of a student to Hispanic norms, they may still be comparing them to students that have had very different experiences and backgrounds. Assumptions or lack of knowledge regarding the comparison norm can lead to misinterpretation of performance. If educators merely examine test scores obtained on standardized tests, it is difficult to infer that a student does not have high potential.

Because of difficulties that present themselves when relying on standardized tests of cognitive or academic ability for identification of gifted CLD students, researchers have studied the use of behavior rating scales as an alternative objective measure that can be used during the identification process. For example, Renzulli and Hartman (1971) developed the Scales for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS) as a supplementary means. Several newer scales such as the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale – GATES (Gilliam, Carpenter & Christensen, 1996), the Gifted Rating Scale – GRS (Pfeiffer & Jarosewich, 2003), Scales for Identifying Gifted Students – SIGS (Ryser & McConnell, 2004) and HOPE (Peters & Gentry, 2009) are available for use. However, rating scales do not completely resolve the issues related to

culture. Because these tests are also normed, all of the previously mentioned considerations regarding normed tests also apply.

In an early study comparing results for Hispanic versus Anglo students, Plata and Masten (1998) compared teachers' ratings on the Scales for Rating Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCC) (Renzulli et al., 1971), as well as the rates of nomination for gifted services. Plata and Masten (1988) found that mean scores on the teacher rating scale were not different between Anglo and Hispanic students that were nominated, but were significantly different for those students that were not nominated. In addition, Plata and Masten found that White students were nominated at a significantly higher rate than Hispanic students. The researchers concluded that teachers were using similar criteria when nominating Hispanic and Anglo students, but that teachers viewed Hispanic students' behavior differently than they perceived Anglo behavior. Plata and Masten suggested that teachers might need assistance in recognizing giftedness in Hispanic students. For this reason, there has been an effort to develop tools to help teachers incorporate culture into the gifted identification process.

Although it has been mentioned that the term Hispanic can describe a rather heterogeneous group, there are researchers who believe that there are still enough commonalities to warrant studying them as an aggregate. Even if some contextual variables such as geography, schooling, and income may differ amongst Hispanic individuals, some scholars feel that certain values, habits, and customs are common within the group (Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996; Ruiz, 2005). Harris (2014) described how a Mexican conceptualization of giftedness emphasizes personal characteristics including motivation, interest, and a positive self-concept more than the American

culture. Drawing from research regarding cultural values or “scripts” of the Hispanic culture, Ruiz (2006) explained how a Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) can provide an alternative for traditional personality theories that do not take into account cultural values such as collectivism (collaboration and interdependence), *simpatia* (maintaining harmonious and positive relationships), *personalismo* (personal contact and social interactions), *respeto* (being respected by others) and *familismo* (priority on family relationships) . Similar to the problem of misinterpreting ability based on the results of tests based on the dominant culture, Ruiz (2006) explained that misinterpretation of personality can also occur when we compare behavior to traditional (mainstream dominant culture) theories of personality. Ignoring certain cultural values or scripts in the Hispanic culture can lead to unnecessarily pathologizing behavior (Ruiz, 2005). Ruiz’s work is a reminder of the dangers of viewing culture from a deficit perspective, and points out how knowing about Hispanic/Latino culture may result in a different interpretation of behavior.

In order to avoid interpretation errors and make gifted identification more culturally relevant, researchers Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996) developed the Hispanic Bilingual Gifted Screening Instrument (HBGSI). In contrast to other rating scales used for gifted identification, the HBGSI was developed to measure characteristics that Irby and Lara-Alecio determined are unique to the Hispanic culture. The tool includes such factors as social and academic language, cultural sensitivity, familial perspective, motivation for learning, collaboration, imagery, achievement, support, creative performance, problem solving, and locus of control (Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996).

Researchers Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996) conducted a mixed method study, which began with an exploratory qualitative analysis in which they coded and categorized characteristics. These researchers then added a quantitative component and completed descriptive analysis. From this study, they identified eleven clusters that became the framework for the HBGSI. Once the HBGSI was developed, Irby, Lara-Alecio, and Rodriguez (n.d.) conducted a multivariate analysis of the tool (as cited in teachbilingual.com). Researchers determined that the HBGSI was significantly correlated with the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). Regression analysis was utilized to determine that the best predictor of the NNAT was the total score of the HBGSI. Researchers, Fultz et al. (2013) completed a different validation study in which they further examined the psychometric properties of the HBGSI. The student population utilized in the study all resided in the state of Texas. A smaller sample was used to examine test-retest reliability. Analysis was also completed to determine concurrent validity with BVAT, which measures bilingual verbal ability.

Researchers indicated that HBGSI had substantial evidence of reliability and concurrent validity. However, similar to the previous discussion regarding standardized intelligence and academic tests, concurrent validity does not confirm that the test is fair or predictive. While this tool could be a promising addition to the identification process for bilingual Hispanic student, it should be noted that the researchers collected all the data regarding HBGSI from only one state (Texas). The generalizability of the results to other geographic locations is still relatively unknown. In addition, no studies indicating outcome measures were found. In other words, it is unknown whether use of HBGSI has actually increased identification after implementation. Furthermore, because the test was

correlated to the NNAT, and there is some recent research indicating lack of predictive validity with the NNAT for gifted identification of Hispanic students (Lohman et al., 2008), its utility for gifted identification may come into question. Therefore, further outcome evidence needs to be collected to confirm its ability to accurately predict which students would benefit from gifted services.

Rather than studying the culture of the student being tested, another approach regarding the study of how culture affects gifted identification is researching how a teacher's cultural background can affect the process. Peterson (1999) reviewed previous research (Peterson & Margolin, 1997) that studied what kind of language teachers used when explaining their reasoning for identification. Peterson and Margolin found that assertiveness and classroom contribution were highly valued behaviors. Students that showed more of these behaviors, which according to Peterson (1999) reflected individualism and competitive achievement, tended to be nominated for gifted identification. In Peterson's initial study (1997), Latino students tended to be nominated at lower rates than would be expected in relation to the demographics of schools. Peterson and Margolin (1999) extended their previous grounded theory methodology and researched how the Hispanic community, and eventually other non-mainstream communities, viewed giftedness. Peterson and Margolin studied teachers with CLD backgrounds and examined what factors contributed to how teachers from CLD backgrounds nominated a student for gifted identification. They analyzed how different groups conceptualized giftedness. Results differed for different cultural backgrounds including the mainstream values examined in the initial study. In other words, different teachers from different backgrounds valued different behaviors and considered

demonstration of valued behaviors as indicative of giftedness. Peterson (1999) claimed that teachers with mainstream values might not accurately identify CLD students due to the cultural lens they use. Teachers may not recognize strengths that are highly valued in other cultures. For Latinos in particular, the most frequent themes regarding what characteristics were valued included artistic, talent, humility, and community service. The concept of humility contrasts with mainstream values of competitiveness. Peterson's research suggested that not only might a teacher from a dominant mainstream culture overlook gifted individuals that display behaviors valued by other cultures, but teachers with CLD backgrounds might also overlook students who display behaviors valued by the dominant culture.

Mason, Gunersel, and Ney (2014) have more recently studied this type of rater bias through a comprehensive literature review. They discovered that teacher bias is rarely discussed as a threat to validity in research. Mason et al. found a large amount of articles addressing teacher bias, but these were conceptual rather than quantitative studies. They analyzed the small amount of studies that met certain criteria including but not limited to (a) ratings of behavior were used as the dependent measure (likelihood of referral, perceptions of achievement were excluded), (b) a defensible criterion measure of behavior was used or collected in the study that allowed for comparison against teacher ratings, and (c) the source of the bias explored within the research article was cultural or ethnic. The researchers reported inconsistent findings and believed they were due to a variety of confounding variables and design limitations.

Overall, considering culture and identifying its impact on the gifted identification process is not a simple matter. First, one must consider the student's background and

compare and contrast it to the culture represented on any test. In addition to being knowledgeable about the student's culture, one must be knowledgeable about the norms the student is being compared to. An evaluator must also recognize his or her own biases and how they too can affect results. A tool has been developed to help evaluators rate giftedness while taking into consideration aspects of the Hispanic culture. However, there is currently not a strong base of evidence regarding its effectiveness for accurately identifying gifted Hispanic students.

Acculturation

Researchers have explained how culture can affect a student's chance of being identified for gifted services for two reasons: (a) lack of exposure to dominant culture could make it difficult for a student to meet cut scores on standardized tests, and (b) interaction between teacher and student culture can affect likelihood of nomination for gifted services (Ford, 2013; Gonzalez, 2006; Helms, 2003, 2006; Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996; Mason et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2005; Peterson, 1999; Peterson & Margolin, 1997; Plata & Masten, 1998; Ruiz, 2006). Incorporating culture into the assessment process, however, is complex and made even more difficult by the process of acculturation. Acculturation is when one culture comes into contact with another, and changes occur due to the dynamics between the dominant and other culture (Lopez, 2009). In this process of change, different aspects of one culture may be modified and combined with aspects of a second culture in a multitude of unique ways. Acculturation is not a simple linear path in which individuals move away from their native culture and towards a new culture (Marin & Gamba, 1996; Rhodes et al., 2005). Individuals may retain parts of their culture while they are learning about, and acculturating to, the

dominant culture (Rhodes et al., 2005). Acculturation is a rather complex process because “acculturation differences can be based on any experiential differences, not just those attributable to culture” (p. 127). Within the Hispanic community, acculturation is an important phenomenon that can have consequences on educational achievement from one generation to another generation (Marin & Gamba, 1996).

For a test to be fair, equivalent levels of acculturation need to be present in the individual and in the test being used (Rhodes et al., 2005). However, as mentioned, tests are not usually developed to match a particular level of acculturation, but rather reflect mainstream culture and values. Therefore, the test will not be measuring ability, academic achievement or even knowledge valued by the person’s own culture; rather, the test will be measuring the level of acculturation (Rhodes et al., 2005). Valdes and Figueroa (1996) and Rhodes et al. (2005) believe that in order to accurately interpret particular test scores, an evaluation of acculturation needs to occur.

In order to quantify cultural and social knowledge, researchers have developed a multitude of acculturation scales (Rhodes et al., 2005). Despite the allure of efficiency, other researchers have delineated several caveats to their use (Marin, & Gamba 1996; Rhodes et al., 2005). For example, when using these scales, care needs to be taken to ensure the scale is appropriate for the particular student, as many acculturation scales are meant to be used with very specific populations (Rhodes et al., 2005). Rhodes et al. also point out that none of these scales capture all of the different dimensions regarding acculturation. Therefore evaluators need to choose which scale measures the aspects most relevant to their type of evaluation. Furthermore, some of these scales are one-dimensional and assume that as one moves towards the new culture one moves away

from their native culture; an assumption refuted by some researchers (Marin & Gamba 1996; Rhodes et al., 2005). A final but important drawback is that not all of these rating scales are psychometrically sound (Marin & Gamba 1996; Rhodes et al., 2005).

Therefore, educators need to be familiar with the acculturation tool they are considering and ensure it is used appropriately. In an attempt to resolve some of these issues Marin and Gamba (1996) developed the Bi-dimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS).

In her discussion of acculturation scales for Hispanics, Lopez (2009) also cautioned regarding use of an acculturation scale with children. In her discussion regarding use of the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (Brief ARMSA-II; Cuellar, Harris & Jasso, 1980, 1995) she pointed out that the Brief ARMSA-II scale was normed on adolescents and adults rather than children. The problem is also true for the BAS (Marin & Gamba 1996), which was also normed on an adult population. Lopez (2009) cautioned against use of tools not normed on children and also pointed out that these measures do not take into account affective components that are important to the acculturation process. For example, for English language learners, children do not usually have the choice of whether they would or would not like to be in a bilingual classroom since these decisions are usually dictated by school policy (Lopez 2009). In other words there is a difference between measuring factors such as time spent in a culture and measuring the sense of belonging a child may experience.

To further study the issue, Lopez (2009) examined convergent validity and differential discrimination between groups using scores on the Brief ARMSA-II and a measure designed to assess a child's cultural preferences. Lopez concluded that the two

tools measured different constructs. Lopez criticized traditional proxy measures of acculturation such as parent place of birth, child place of birth, length of time in the U.S., languages spoken at home, and geographic location because they ignored the multiple factors that contribute to the acculturation experience. Lopez argued that it would be difficult to develop a tool to measure acculturation in children because of developmental considerations that play a part in interpretations.

Despite these barriers, measuring acculturation in children is important because a student's level of acculturation can impact decisions made regarding their educational opportunities. For example, in a follow up study to their research regarding how teachers rated students on the Scales for Rating Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS) and whether scores affected rates of nomination for Hispanic students, Masten et al. (1999) designed a study to determine if a student's level of acculturation was a factor affecting teacher ratings on the SRBCSS. In addition to teachers completing the SRBCSS, students were asked to complete an acculturation scale, the Children's Hispanic Background Scale (CHBS) (Martinez, Nomran & Delany, 1984). Two groups were created depending on the CHBS acculturation score. Masten et al. (1999) indicated that ethnic background and level of acculturation affected teachers' ratings. Masten et al. suggested that if rating scales such as SRBCSS are used for gifted identification, students with lower levels of acculturation are less likely to be referred. Thus, educators may be inadvertently excluding students with lower levels of acculturation from gifted services. Knowing a student is not as acculturated as peers would provide an alternative explanation to scores on the rating scale.

While appropriate questionnaires to measure acculturation in children may be lacking (Lopez, 2009), educators still need to understand the student's life experiences, the influences of people in their lives, and how these factors have shaped their identity (Hamayan et al., 2013). If these factors are not taken into account, a student's ability and potential could be underestimated and their behavior misinterpreted, thus restricting access to gifted services. Knowing level of acculturation provides a frame of reference in order to interpret performance or behavior (Rhodes et al., 2005). In addition to acculturation rating scales, Rhodes et al. suggested interviews and observations as potential methods for accomplishing this task. While Rhodes et al. believe behavioral observations are powerful, they also believe they are limited because they do not assess the more latent variables of acculturation. Rhodes et al. believe interviewing parents provides a simple and direct method for gathering a wide variety of dimensions regarding a child.

In summary, it is important to take culture into account when assessing a student. However, incorporating culture into the assessment process is not a simple manner. The process of acculturation, and the multitude of variable combinations that contribute to it, complicates the incorporation of culture into the assessment process. Tools to help evaluators assess levels of acculturation have been developed. However, when assessing children, these tools do not always account for a child's own perception regarding their cultural identity. Therefore observations and interviews are needed to fully examine dimensions of acculturation.

Language Proficiency

Within the concepts of culture and acculturation, language is an important component of the socialization process. Because the development of a second language often occurs within the context of acculturation, many parallels can be drawn between the development of language proficiency and the process of acculturation. In the same manner that researchers have explained how culture can affect a student's chance of being identified for gifted services, lack of English language proficiency can be a barrier for gifted identification. Language learning, like acculturation, is a complex process. In describing English language learners, it is not sufficient to describe a student as bilingual or even to determine their dominant language. Educators need to investigate the complexities of language proficiency within the context of second language development.

Similar to how acculturation can impact connection to the second culture and native culture, the process of acquiring a second language can impact not only the development of the second language, but also the development of the first or native language. Also, just as different aspects of first and second culture are combined during the process of acculturation; English language learners exhibit various levels of native language and English language proficiency during the process of second language acquisition. This is why describing a person as bilingual is not sufficient. The term bilingual does not indicate to what degree each language is developed, nor does it indicate in which domains proficiency is developed (Rhodes et al., 2005). Similarly, indicating language dominance merely tells which language is stronger, but again does not provide enough information regarding what levels of language proficiency are met

(Rhodes et al., 2005). These issues suggest that similar to how incorporating culture and acculturation into the assessment process is complex, so too is incorporating language proficiency.

Cummins (1981) has provided seminal research and a theoretical framework regarding second language acquisition. Cummins's research led him to develop a theory regarding a common underlying proficiency that he believes is involved in the transfer of skills from one language to another. In addition to the concept of a common underlying proficiency, Cummins delineated between two different kinds of proficiencies that he termed basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). While Cummins research was conducted in the context of Canadian immigration, Collier (1988, 1989) not only analyzed international studies, but also reviewed and synthesized research that included the Hispanic population within the U.S. culture. Her research provided further evidence to support Cummins' (1981) theories.

Many experts in second language acquisition continue to conceptualize proficiency using the descriptions by Cummins (1984) regarding basic interpersonal communications skills (BICS), which is the type of language needed for informal social interactions, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which is the type of language needed to succeed in academic tasks. If teachers are not familiar with the differences between these two kinds of proficiencies, they may misinterpret student levels of achievement. Sometimes, because a student is proficient in BICS, a teacher assumes the student's language skills are developed enough to perform at levels commensurate with monolingual students (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2002). Teachers may inaccurately

assume that because students are conversational in English, they are ready to access the academic content at a level equivalent to native language speakers (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2002). However, according to Cummins (1984) and Collier (1989), developing CALP is a much longer and more complicated process.

Various factors may affect if and how second language acquisition occurs. A student may remain monolingual in their native language, become bilingual in both native and second language, or become monolingual in the second language (Goldstein, 2005). Collier (1989) found that the age in which a student is exposed to second language instruction could affect how quickly students are able to perform at equal levels to monolingual peers. Collier found that students who arrived at the new country at ages 8-11 were fastest to achieve commensurate levels of achievement, while students who arrived at ages 12-15 were the slowest. However, Collier and Thomas (1997) also found that after coming to a new country, when immigrants were instructed completely in the second language, the quality of schooling that was delivered in their home country, in their native language, positively affected rate of second language acquisition. Those students that had 2-5 years of grade level schooling in their home country; prior to being instructed in the second language, reached equivalent academic scores with native language speakers in a shorter amount of time. In a synthesis of research regarding second language acquisition, Collier (1989) concluded that in terms of academic achievement in the second language, “constant uninterrupted cognitive academic development in all subjects throughout students schooling” (p. 527) is even more important than amount of time spent in second language instruction.

Providing opportunities for cognitive academic language development may depend in part on the type of program in which a student is enrolled. Thomas and Collier (1997) found that different kinds of programs had different effects on the trajectory of achievement in English reading. They studied three distinct types of programs. A two-way developmental program is sometimes referred to as a dual language program. In this program students in the class are both limited English speakers and native English speakers. The goal of the program is for both groups of students to become bilingual (Rhodes et al., 2005). In contrast to the goal of developing bilingualism, a transitional bilingual program uses the children's native language as a foundation to transition to all English instruction within 2-4 years (Rhodes et al., 2005). In other words, the goal is to develop English academic skills. In a third type of program, a pull out ELL program, students leave their classrooms for a period of time and to receive English language skill instruction (Rhodes et al., 2005). In a comparison of outcomes for these different methods of second language instruction, Thomas and Collier (1997) found two-way developmental bilingual programs were the most effective, with students eventually surpassing performance of monolingual students. In contrast, pull out ELL programs and transitional bilingual programs showed poorer outcomes with ELL students not reaching levels commensurate with average monolingual English speaking students by graduation. In Collier's (1989) synthesis of research regarding program effectiveness, she concluded, "when children's L1 (*native language*) development is discontinued before it is completed, they may experience negative cognitive effects in L2 (*second language*) development; conversely, children who have reached full cognitive development in two languages enjoy cognitive advantages over monolinguals" (p. 517).

This research regarding second language development has implications for how the type of educational program a student attends can affect the trajectory of native and second language development. For example, Thomas and Collier (1997) indicated that if a student is enrolled in a bilingual program, the average time needed to develop skills commensurate with native language speakers is 4-7 years. If the student had two years native instruction before moving to all instruction in the second language, the average time is 5-7 years (Collier, 1989). However, students with no schooling in their first language who are then immersed in second language instruction tend to take 7-10 years (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Within bilingual education, there are different types of bilingual programs. Typically, a transitional program does not support students in native language instruction for more than two to three years (Ovando, 2003). Since the transition to all English instruction generally occurs by the end of second grade (Ovando, 2003), students who are placed in an early exit transitional program may not develop their native language skills in academic contents. Rhodes et al. (2005) explained that this type of program is considered to be subtractive. In this situation “students are no longer receiving first language instructional support and simultaneously are exposed to more cognitively complex academic content” (p. 69). As Thomas and Collier (1997) pointed out, the student’s English language proficiency may not yet be developed to a level that is equivalent to native English speakers. The situation has implications for administration of standardized tests in English and places English language learners at a disadvantage.

Knowing background factors that support or inhibit language proficiency, such as when a student began second language learning, what kind of program the student

attended, and what kinds and what levels of proficiency have been reached, is important because it provides the context for interpreting their performance. Similar to the effects of culture and acculturation, the research points towards two important reasons why factors associated with language proficiency should be considered during gifted identification: (a) lack of English language proficiency could make it difficult for a student to meet cut scores on standardized tests, and (b) lack of proficiency can affect teacher perceptions which subsequently affects likelihood of nomination for gifted services.

One reason it is important to keep language proficiency in mind when evaluating for gifted services, is again related to how a student performs on tests that are used for identification purposes. In the same way that unfamiliarity with the dominant culture can affect a student's ability to meet standardized test cut scores for gifted identification, limited English proficiency can make it difficult for students to meet those same cut scores. Research synthesis by Collier (1987) suggests that it can take up to 10 years to score at a level commensurate with monolingual students. Yet, gifted identification tends to occur early in a student's academic career. Assessment in second language at an early age will most likely result in scores significantly discrepant from monolingual peers, due to still developing English language proficiency (Collier 1989). If the identification process relies heavily on these scores, students in the process of acquiring a second language will be at a significant disadvantage.

Knowing levels of English proficiency adds information that assists in interpreting other data (Rhodes et al., 2005), as well as in understanding what levels of performance could be expected (Rhodes et al., 2005). Language proficiency is useful for understanding whether a test is fair, and whether alternative methods of evaluation are

needed. Tests administered in English may not accurately measure the potential of a bilingual student with limited English proficiency (Rhodes et al., 2005).

A second manner in which language proficiency affects gifted identification, is related to teacher perceptions. Edl et al. (2008) utilized discriminant function analysis to determine ways in which teacher ratings for Latino students in bilingual classrooms differed from both Latino students and European American students in regular mainstream classrooms. Edl et al. studied ratings in various academic and social domains such as ethnicity, language proficiency, and classroom placement. Edl et al. found that for multiple variables, students in bilingual classrooms consistently scored lower than Latino students or European American students in regular classrooms. Edl et al. concluded that language proficiency was a more important factor in lower teacher ratings than ethnicity. They stated that “Teachers viewed students with less English proficiency as having less interpersonal competency as compared to European American students and Latino students in regular classrooms” (p. 44).

Teacher perception has implications for the gifted identification process, because monolingual English teachers may not recognize giftedness due to a student’s lower level of English language proficiency. A lower level of language proficiency may impact both the student’s classroom performance (Edl et al., 2008), and, as mentioned earlier, standardized test results (Collier, 1989). A monolingual teacher could misjudge a student’s abilities and skills, confusing BICS with CALP (Collier, 1989). Besides inaccurately judging English language proficiency, English-speaking teachers would not be able to assess a student’s comprehension or skills in the student’s native language, which would limit the scope of the teacher’s knowledge regarding the student. Yet, even

a teacher who speaks Spanish may observe that a student's native language is not as sophisticated as one would expect for a monolingual gifted student. A teacher may fail to take into account the impact of losing native language proficiency over time (Patterson et al., 2004). This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1977) and is a resulting negative effect that may occur if native language development is not properly supported (Lambert, 1984). In not recognizing its effects, the teacher may misjudge a student's performance.

Rhodes et al. (2005) identified another factor that could affect teacher perception. In addition to difficulties differentiating BIC from CALP and understanding how cognitive development is affected by language instruction, Rhodes et al. pointed out that teachers may also misjudge proficiency based on whether a student has a foreign accent. A lack of foreign accent does not indicate proficiency, just as the presence of an accent does not indicate lack of proficiency (Rhodes et al., 2005). Yet, accents may bias a teacher's perception of the student (Rhodes et al., 2005).

Language proficiency is typically measured by language tests, such as the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) (De Avila & Duncan, 1994) and the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) (Williams, Ballard, Tighe, Dalton, & Amori 1998). Macswan and Rolstad (2006) were critical of these tests because they believed these tests were not properly classifying language proficiency. They compared native language results on LAS-Oral Spanish (De Avila & Duncan, 1994) and the IPT Spanish – Oral (Williams et al., 1998) to more qualitative measures collected from natural language samples. Analysis of the coded data indicated that the proportion of students identified as fluent speakers of Spanish on the natural language measures was greater than from the LAS-O Spanish or

IPT- Spanish. The researchers found a weak relationship between morphological error rate (coded in language samples) and results of both of the other instruments. Macswan and Rolstad (2006) also found that the tests lacked concurrent validity when compared to each other.

Pray (2010) also studied language instruments, but rather than Spanish language proficiency, she studied English Oral Language Proficiency. She examined results of the Language Assessment Scales – Oral (LAS-O), the Woodcock Munoz Language (WML) Survey, and the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT). She administered these tests to native English language (Non-Hispanic) speakers, and Hispanic students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. In her frequency analysis, Pray (2010) indicated that none of the native English speakers scored in the “fluent” or “advanced fluent” range when measured by the WML. In contrast 100% of the native English speaking students scored in the “fluent English speaking range” when administered the Language Assessment Scales – Oral, and 87% of the native English students scored in the “fluent English speaking” range on the IDEA Proficiency Test. The frequency analysis showed great variation in the scores that native English speaking students obtained on these tests. T-tests found no statistical difference between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students. When examining the differences in SES, the test was just short of being statistically significant. Since the WMS is based off of Cummins theory of CALP, Pray proposed that adhering to this model on an oral language test may lead to a deficit view of non-academic language. Macswan and Rolstad (2006), as well as Pray (2010), highlight some of the complexities and limitations regarding the measurement of language proficiency.

In summary, language proficiency affects both performance on standardized tests and teacher referrals. Since students are usually nominated for gifted services either by test profile or teacher referral, it is important to draw attention to language proficiency before making inferences and subsequent placement decisions. Yet, accurately analyzing and describing language proficiency may be more complicated than appears at the surface.

In the literature, researchers present various contributing factors to underrepresentation of Hispanic ELL students in gifted programs. Scholars have described how deficit thinking, limited definitions of giftedness, faulty interpretation of standardized test scores, as well as misguided interpretations of differences in culture and language all contribute to under-identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students. Assessment of Hispanic ELL students has been complicated by all of these factors. Given the difficulties presented in traditional conceptions and methods of identifying gifted students, researchers have been exploring alternative methods of identification to ensure gifted CLD students, including Hispanic ELL students, are better identified.

Potential Solutions for Improving Identification of Gifted Hispanic Students

Due to teachers having different levels of knowledge regarding gifted behaviors and Hispanic culture, gifted identification should not rely on teacher referrals/nomination alone. With CLD students, teacher nominations can be unreliable (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, & Holloway 2005; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992). Rather, researchers suggest using procedures with multiple measures to screen student's ability (Oakland & Rossen, 2005; Worrell, 2014). Researchers have suggested several alternative practices in order to address such factors as: deficit thinking, limited conceptions of giftedness,

misinterpretation of standardized test scores, and lack of incorporation of social cultural and linguistic factors into the identification process. Because both standardized tests and alternative assessments have strengths and weaknesses, most scholars agree that a combination of measures should be used during the gifted identification process. Oakland and Rossen (2005) also suggest that in addition to screening achievement, other qualities associated with achievement such as passion for learning, persistence, dedication, and self-discipline should be screened. Therefore a combination of the following approaches may yield the best results when identifying CLD students for gifted programming. Which combination of approaches is appropriate will depend on factors such as the type of gifted program, for which the student is being assessed, and cultural language, schooling and other experiences of the students being assessed.

Multicultural Teacher Training

Teacher's perceptions regarding students may be affected by a teacher's background, including lack of multicultural experiences (Ford, Grantham, & Milner, 2004). Teacher perceptions may affect teacher referral or nomination to gifted programs (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Oakland & Rossen, 2005). Researchers have suggested multicultural education as a way to address the teacher referral component of under-identification (Ford & Harris 1999; Ford, Moore, Milner, 2005; Ford et al., 2008). Ford (2103) explained how teachers need to know about both gifted behaviors and behaviors related to specific cultures. She advocated for more substantial rather than superficial multicultural education. Multicultural education includes the examination of one's own culture and the influence it may have on teaching practices and relationships (Obi et al., 2014). Education regarding socio-linguistic factors would be particularly useful for

teachers working with Hispanic students (Esquierdo & Arreguin-Anderson, 2012). Gaining a better understanding of acculturation issues and how these manifest themselves in their students, would help teachers better interpret student behavior.

Researchers have found that educators may be receptive to multicultural education. In a case study by Harris et al. (2009), researchers interviewed teachers to analyze perceptions regarding a district's gifted identification process as it pertained to ELL students. They found that staff wanted assistance in developing alternative procedures for gifted ELL identification. Staff reported having little knowledge regarding the diverse cultures of their students and how it might impact learning and behaviors in the classrooms. ELL and gifted teachers felt that other staff did not make an effort to learn about students with different cultural backgrounds. In their study, Harris et al. showed that staff identified multicultural education as a need in their district.

Collaboration

In the same study by Harris et al. (2009), researchers mentioned poor communication between gifted specialists and teachers of other populations such as ELL as a barrier to identifying gifted ELL students. As mentioned previously, Ford (2103) explained how teachers need to know about both gifted behaviors and behaviors related to specific cultures. Harris et al. (2009) explained how limited communication interferes with a teacher's ability to know a student in multiple settings. Harris et al. found teachers were interested in finding consensus regarding what should be included in portfolios. They also reported wanting to obtain valid and reliable qualitative measures. Collaboration amongst ELL, gifted and regular education teachers may help to develop consensus regarding how to collect information from various sources to help uncover

gifts in the Hispanic ELL population. Coleman, Gallager and Job (2012) explained that collaboration between gifted educators and all aspects of an educational community are a critical component of professionalism. Not only should collaboration occur within the professional community, but also Coleman et al. suggested that collaboration should be extended to parents and the community. They explained that through collaboration “fragmented and redundant services can be replaced with integrated synergistic services” (p. 35). When educators collaborate and examine information from multiple sources and from multiple contexts, the chances of discovering gifts and talents is increased.

Use of Local Norms

One of the problems that contributes to under-identification is the difference between mean scores on standardized tests between Hispanic ELL and mainstream culture students (achievement gap). Lohman et al. (2008) and Lohman and Laken (2008) highlighted the limitations of using nationally normed tests for identification of gifted ELL Hispanic students. The researchers concluded that educators should be very skeptical of national norms and should examine distribution of scores before making any judgments for identification purposes. Lohman and Laken suggested that inferences about ability or talent are only valid when the norm sample has had similar opportunities to learn. After researching the differences between ELL and non-ELL students on nonverbal tests of intelligence, Lohman et al. (2008), stated that inferences about aptitude and talent “require the simple step of comparing children’s performance to that of other children who have had roughly similar opportunities to develop the abilities measured on the test” (p. 292). They showed how when test scores were compared to other ELL children, students normative scores were much higher. Lohman et al. suggested that

opportunity to learn should be an added component when interpreting any standardized tests. Lohman and Gambrell (2012) explained that another reason for using local norms is that the need for special gifted programming depends on the difference between the students cognitive or academic development compared to his or her classmates. Use of local subgroup norms is one approach that promotes equity in identification (Lohman, 2005). Using local subgroup norms during the interpretive process addresses the need to take into consideration social, cultural, and language experiences (which are related to opportunities to learn).

Alternative Norm Referenced Assessments

One of the ways researchers have suggested decreasing the effects of lower mean scores on standardized tests of ability and achievement is to include alternative assessments such as nonverbal assessments or behavior rating scales. The advantages of using alternative normed assessments are that CLD students tend to score closer to the mean when compared to the dominant culture.

Nonverbal tests. Some Researchers believe that the focus on fluid intelligence in nonverbal tests provides a more fair measure of ability (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). The measure is considered to be fairer, because it excludes measures of crystallized intelligence, which is affected by language, and experience (VanTassel-Baska, 2000). However in recent research by Lohman et al. (2008), the mean of ELL students continued to be lower on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). Therefore, practitioners need to be cautions about which nonverbal tests are used for which populations. Another disadvantage to nonverbal measures is that scores do not always

assess domain specific behaviors. Students identified through nonverbal tests may demonstrate limited skills in one or more academic areas.

Behavior rating scales. Researchers have also suggested behavior-rating scales as another non-traditional measure. Behavior rating scales provide another efficient and objective measure of traits that are typically associated with giftedness. Researchers such as Bracken (2008) suggested that these measures could be used to help triangulate data during identification. The disadvantages are the same as for any standardized tests. One needs to consider the unique social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of students compared to those of the norm sample. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, despite researchers' intent to develop objective measures, it is possible for teacher bias to affect ratings. In addition, Borland (2014) criticized both teacher rating forms and the less psychometric teacher checklists because he believes these tools cannot capture all that is important, as well as more qualitative narrative documentation.

Dynamic assessment. Another alternative method that focuses on fluid rather than crystallized intelligence is dynamic assessment (VanTassel-Baska, 2000). Many researchers have recommended use of dynamic assessment for gifted identification of CLD students (Baldwin, 1984; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer 1992; Passow & Frasier, 1996; Renzulli, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 2000). Dynamic assessment is based on Vygotsy's (1978) theory regarding zone of proximal development (ZPD) and approaches evaluation from a process perspective (Feng & Van Tassel-Baska, 2008). Dynamic assessment includes observations of improvements of student performance over time (Johnsen, 2008), thus attempting to assess ZPD (Borland, 2014). In her review of this type of observation, Johnsen (2008) described how scholars believe that when using

dynamic assessment “the teaching task needs to be problem based and require complex strategies so that potential may be discovered” (p. 141). Dynamic assessment evaluates a student’s performance from a test-intervention-retest perspective, allowing one to evaluate the student’s response to instruction. The evaluator actively intervenes, scaffolding to help the student understand the solution (Lidz & Macrine 2001). The evaluator then assesses how well a student profits from intervention (Lidz & Macrine 2001).

Lidz and Macrine (2001) conducted a study in a school in Pennsylvania with higher numbers of CLD students than other schools in the district, but lower numbers of identified gifted students. Student in this study were screened with a variety of measures including dynamic assessment. In addition to the GATES teacher rating scale, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Reading and Math tests, Sociometric Questionnaire completed by peers, and a parent questionnaire, researchers added a systemic dynamic assessment procedure. The dynamic testing procedures included administration of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) Mental Processing Composite (MPC) and a modified (for individual and dynamic administration) Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), which included a test, intervene, post-test format. The researchers noted that the criteria, once set, were not modified for any CLD populations. All participants were measured in the same way. Researchers identified as gifted only those students that scored above the 97th percentile on any two of the KABC, NNAT, or ITBS measures. Using this criterion, 5% of the total school population was identified. This school had previously only identified 1% of the population as gifted, while other less diverse schools in the district were identifying 5% of their population as gifted. Thus, administration of

dynamic assessment helped the school reach equivalent levels to other schools despite their higher numbers of CLD students. Logistical regression was used to analyze relative contribution to determination of gifted status. The primary source of the successful identification was the dynamic assessment modification of the NNAT. However the KABC as well the ITBS made significant contributions as well. Although the interpretation of results was limited due to heterogeneity of and limited numbers in groups, there was no evidence of differences between CLD and non-CLD students. The researchers explained that if students were to have been administered the NNAT alone, without the dynamic assessment approach, much lower identification of CLD students would have occurred. Thus, merely changing a measure would not be enough improve representation, but rather changing the manner of administration and interpretation (nature and format) of the test, impacted identification (Lidz & Macrine, 2001).

Alternative Interpretations of Norm Based Tests

In lieu of changing the type of assessment, Flanagan et al. (2013) suggest changing the manner in which results are interpreted. Rather than modifying or altering tests, Ortiz (2013) suggests that tests should be administered in a standardized manner in order to preserve validity. Flanagan et al. (2013) suggest using the established body of research regarding how CLD students perform on these tests when interpreting results. Ortiz (2013) proposes using a matrix that includes what scholars have agreed upon regarding the linguistic and cultural loading of commonly used individually administered standardized tests of cognitive ability and achievement. This matrix is used for interpreting data through a cross battery approach (Flanagan et al., 2013). Ortiz (2013) advocates use of this Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) to determine

whether a student's results follow an expected pattern of development for CLD students. The degree of difference from mainstream culture and language is considered during interpretation. By considering degree of difference from the mainstream culture, evaluators take into account background and experiences.

Currently, more is known regarding the use of C-LIM to differentiate between disabilities and cultural and linguistic differences rather than to indicate giftedness (Flanagan et al., 2007). However researchers are studying how this tool can be used to identify gifted students (Flanagan et al., 2007). Flanagan et al. (2013) suggest this tool should be used in conjunction with other types of assessments for a comprehensive evaluation. One barrier to incorporating this type of assessment into a gifted identification process is the amount of time needed to complete an individually administered battery of tests. However, this approach could be useful for individual cases in which there is no consensus through other group-administered measures.

Non-standardized Alternative Assessments

Rather than focusing on standardized tests, research has shown that CLD students tend to perform better on alternative forms of assessment that are not normed (Borland & Wright, 1984; Reid, Udall, Ronaoff, & Algozzine, 1999). These types of assessments differ from standardized tests in that they provide qualitative data rather than quantitative data (Johnsen, 2009). Non-standardized alternative assessments include more authentic assessments such as performance-based assessments, and portfolio assessments. Similar to the underlying assumption driving dynamic assessment, researchers in favor of alternative assessments assume that intelligence is malleable, and performance is dynamic and varies over time and situation (Feng & VanTassel-Baska, 2008).

Performance based assessment. Researchers describe performance-based assessments as being more authentic in nature than traditional assessments (Feng & VanTassel-Baska 2008). When performance based assessment is used, the situations in which students are evaluated are more life-like than when administered through traditional measures (Sarouphim, 2001). Performance based assessment focuses on observation of how students respond to higher-level problem solving or curricular tasks (Borland, 2014). Performance based assessment focuses on open-ended questions that require high-level thinking and problem solving. Rather than focus on whether the student can quickly answer a question, the process of how the student came to his or her conclusion is emphasized (Feng & VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Performance based assessment considers both the process and the product (Sarouphim, 2001). VanTassel-Baska (2008) described the advantages of this approach as being domain specific and providing opportunities to assess higher level thinking, problem solving, and meta-cognition skills. She described another advantage as the ability to link assessments to content and instruction, due to the diagnostic information provided. Performance based assessments are administered in a student's dominant language (Sarouphim, 2001), and considered to be more culturally bias free and fair (Maker, 1992). Finally, VanTassel-Baska (2008) stated that these types of assessments tend to be more motivating for underrepresented groups.

Maker, Nielson, and Rogers (1994) developed a program called Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities through Observation while allowing for Varied Ethnic Responses (DISCOVER). In research by Sarouphim (1999), she studied the process in which students were presented with activities that utilized manipulatives and

then assessed for spatial, logical, mathematical, and linguistic intelligences. Sarouphim described the tasks as requiring problems solving behaviors, which increased in complexity and openness as the assessment progressed. Following the assessment, observers met to discuss the student's strengths and complete a behavior checklist. Students were rated according to criteria related to problem solving behaviors and characteristics of products. Ratings of strengths included unknown, maybe, probably, and definite strengths. If a student obtained two definitely ratings, he or she was considered a superior problem solver and referred for gifted programming.

Grifith (1996) completed Tests of inter-rater reliability of DISCOVER and showed high levels of reliability between raters. Validity studies correlated performances of Mexican American students with the WISC-III (Grifiths, 1997) and performances of Navajo and Mexican American students with the Raven Progressive Matrices Sarouphim (1998). Although the sample size was small, some evidence of concurrent validity was found for both tests. Sarouphim concluded that the DISCOVER model had sound psychometric properties. However, the research studies provided limited evidence regarding effectiveness in accurately identifying students.

Sarouphim (2001) conducted a follow up study to investigate the effectiveness of DISCOVER in reducing under-representation of CLD students in gifted programs. Native American and Mexican American students were again the population studied. A similar method was implemented, with the same criteria for giftedness, which was defined as obtaining two ratings of definitely on two activities. An interesting finding regarding results was that there was no gender differences found in terms of number of boys and girls identified for gifted services. In terms of effectiveness, the researcher reported that a

“relatively high percentage of participants was identified as gifted” (Sarouphim, 2001, p. 136), although statistical evidence was not provided. The researcher acknowledged that further studies were needed to test reliability and construct validity.

Through implementation of pilot programs, VanTassel-Baska (2010) provided research that indicated performance based assessment increased identification of low SES and black students within the state of South Carolina. In researching outcomes of students identified in this manner, VanTassel-Baska continued to find statistically significant group differences in performance on a state standardized test. In other words, CLD Students identified through performance-based assessment continued to score lower than mainstream peers on state standardized tests. Van Tassel-Baska explained the results by pointing out that these students started at a lower threshold on achievement scores. The differences on the state test results paralleled the ability and achievement level obtained during identification. No specific data regarding Hispanic students was provided.

Some of the disadvantages noted regarding performance-based assessment are lack of generalizability, challenges with inter-rater reliability, and difficulty demonstrating technical adequacy (VanTassel-Baska, 2008) Performance based assessment also brings with it issues related to how a district defines giftedness. Borland (2014) cautions that the identification process must be tied to the definition of giftedness and the type of programs in the district. Therefore the types of tasks measured during performance-based assessments should match the type of instruction in the program for which the student is being identified.

Portfolio assessment. Another alternative approach to assessment involves collecting and compiling works representing a student's abilities. Similar to other alternative assessments, it is intended to integrate assessment with instruction (Coleman, 1994; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992; Johnsen, 2008; Johnsen & Ryser, 1997, Wright & Borland 1993). Several researchers (Borland & Wright, 1994; Duffy, Jones & Thomas, 1999; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992; Meyer & Schuman, 1990; Wiggins, 1989) have delineated some specific characteristics critical to portfolio assessments. Johnsen (2008) summarized the key characteristics which include: (a) the portfolio has a specific purpose, (b) it aligns with standards curriculum instruction and assessments, (c) shows growth in a variety of ways over time, (d) uses multiple sources and multiple contexts, (e) represents students performance in one or more domains, (f) actively engages the students in their own learning, evaluations and reflections, and (g) guides teaching and learning. Portfolios include the student's reflection of their products or performance collected over time (Johnsen, 2008).

In a review of research regarding portfolio assessment, Johnsen (2008) pointed out researchers such as Wright and Borland (1993) as providing evidence of the benefits of portfolio assessment. Wright and Borland studied use of portfolio assessments for identification of gifted students. At the end of the academic year, teachers completed a portfolio profile that summarized a student's development in various domains. This profile was then used to identify potential in students. Johnsen (2008) indicated that Borland and Wright (1994) reported predictive validity for future academic giftedness.

In their study regarding portfolio assessment, Shaklee and Viechnicki (1995) used teacher recorded anecdotal records, systematic teacher observations during demonstration

lessons, peer self nomination questionnaire, parent guardian home community survey, and samples of products produced by the student, as well as additional information provided by resource specialists, teachers, or parents. Once all the information was collected, teachers developed profiles that connected the student's needs with instruction. The teacher ratings and portfolios were reviewed at committee meetings where program placement was decided. These researchers found that that portfolio assessment was positively related to achievement four years later.

In an exploratory study, Harradine et al. (2014) examined the use of Teacher Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) on teacher's perceptions of strengths and potential in CLD students. This study occurred within a program evaluation for the U-STARS-Plus, a program that includes high level hands on science curriculum activities, in addition to components that address family engagement and observation. The TOPS is a profile record intended to help systematize the observation component through documentation. It was also intended to help teachers shift from an "at risk" to an "at potential" mindset (Harradine et al., 2014). It was designed to be used with children whose strengths may be overlooked through use of more traditional measures (Harradine, et al., 2014). Although U-STARS-Plus was designed for use with students of all ethnic groups, the study primarily focused on boys of color. Researchers analyzed data collected from the TOPS profile, as well as a teacher survey that explored teacher perceptions after implementation of U-STARS- Plus and TOPS. Teachers indicated that they would never have noticed the academic potential of 22% of the students, had they not used TOPS (Harradine et al., 2013). According to the teachers, 53% of African American boys would not have been identified as having potential had they not been

assessed with the TOPS (compared to 24% for White boys). More relevant to identification of Hispanic gifted students, teachers reported that they would have missed 37% of Latino boys had they not been assessed with the TOPS. Researchers reported that 48% of the students that teachers would have missed without use of TOPS were children of color.

In the survey, 20 % of the teachers reported that TOPS had revolutionized the way they looked at students, 56% reported they noticed students they might have otherwise missed, and 33.5% reported it helped them recognize and respond to the students needs. Seventy-four percent of the teachers reported that after three years of U-STARs-Plus implementation, they believed they could more readily recognized high potential students from CLD backgrounds.

Through ANOVA, researchers Harradine et al. (2014) analyzed relationships between race, and student achievement scores provided by teachers. Only science achievement was found to have a significant difference. After analyzing results, researchers pointed out that students who were identified as having strengths through TOPS, were not necessarily the students that had the highest relative achievement in class. Thus, the researchers concluded that the USTARs Plus and TOPS helps teachers re-assess their conceptualization of potential and ability.

This study also examined some of the barriers that teachers perceived as keeping them from seeing the strengths, without use of TOPS. Overall, no single barrier stood out as the primary reason. However, within the Latino subgroup, oral language skill was the most critical factor in lack of recognition of Latino boys and was also an important factor for Latino girls. The researchers suggest that the study provides more evidence similar to

earlier findings (Coleman, Shah-Coltrane, & Harrison, 2010) to show that using the TOPS helps teachers change their perceptions regarding CLD students.

Despite the promise of using portfolio assessment for identification of gifted Hispanic students, there are some disadvantages to be considered. Portfolio assessment is a complicated, and a time-consuming process. It can require a significant amount of teacher professional development (Borland, 2014). In addition it is difficult to assess technical qualities of this type of assessment.

Summary

Although alternative assessments show promise for increasing identification of CLD students including the subset of gifted ELL Hispanic, experts in the field pointed out some of the weaknesses such as lack of technical sophistication, less efficiency, and limited empirical evidence. For these reasons, Lohman and Lakin (2008) proposed combining alternative measures with more traditional approaches. Borland (2014) explained that an approach that combines both traditional and alternative assessments is based on common sense. This combined approach is based on the premise that more criteria can be used to include, rather than exclude students. Utilizing a variety of measures lends itself to a more clinical approach to evaluation (Borland, 2014). Obi et al. (2014) described how using multiple sources provides both objective and subjective information which can be useful during identification. In other words combining different measures and examining best performance or strengths lends itself to a different more clinical approach and changes the process of identification. Borland (2014) pointed out that modifying our identification process for giftedness can help improve representation of CLD students. Although research has determined the need for these

alternative assessments, McBee, Peters and Waterman (2014) caution that using a larger number of measures may not improve identification unless we examine how we use them. In other words, what is important is not just what tool is used, but how it is used during identification. More research is needed to examine the effects of different combinations of tools, as well as methods of interpretation these measures. Overall, the research has been focusing on developing tools, but is still limited regarding performance outcome data.

The proposed study will add to the body of research regarding the use of alternative assessments in the identification of Hispanic ELL students by studying the effects of adding a more qualitative measure to the identification process. The TOPS, provides a systematic process for documenting qualitative observations. Rather than explore teachers' perceptions regarding use of this tool by itself, the researcher will examine the perceptions of the committee members that analyze a combination of tools and a variety of information to determine eligibility. This researcher will explore the identification committee's perceptions regarding the utility of the TOPS. The researcher will explore if the TOPS increases committee members confidence in making decisions regarding giftedness for the Hispanic ELL population.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

In this study, TOPS was introduced as a tool with the potential to help identify the most underrepresented groups in the district's gifted programming. The tool adds a more qualitative component to the identification process. This researcher used a qualitative case study method to explore the perceptions of educators who incorporated TOPS into the identification process. This method was used to better understand the experiences of educators utilizing the tool. In the current study, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview through a focus group format. The researcher observed the process and analyzed the themes that emerged in the group's discussion. In addition, the researcher collected background information of educators who experienced any component of TOPS use. The researcher used a survey to collect and analyze this data. The goal was to determine whether participants perceived that adding a qualitative tool to the identification procedure improved the process of identifying gifted Hispanic ELL students.

Background Information

The website for the Midwestern suburban district states the goals and objectives of gifted services are to identify students who “perform, or show the potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.” The district website also states that gifted

students “can be identified in any cultural group.” However, when this researcher analyzed district data to investigate the relationship between gifted programming and the categorical variables of race, Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, limited English proficiency and income, she found that culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) students were underrepresented in the district’s gifted programming. Data indicated 13% of the third graders in the district were American Indian and 12% of the third graders in the gifted program were American Indian. Seven percent of the third graders in the district were Asian while 12% of the third graders in the gifted program were Asian. Fourteen percent of the third grade students in the district were African American and 29% of the third graders in the gifted program were African American. Forty-five percent of the third graders in the district were White, while 65% of the third graders in the gifted program were White. While 29% of the third grade students in the district were Hispanic, only 18% of the third graders in gifted programming were Hispanic. Eighteen percent of the third grade students in the district were considered LEP while only 6% of the third grade students in gifted programming were LEP. When using free and reduced lunch as the criteria, 53% of the third grade students in the district are considered low SES while 24% of the third graders in gifted programming are considered low SES. In this analysis, the researcher examined the 3rd grade cohort for that year because that cohort had been identified using the most recent district process and criteria. Percentages do not add up to 100% because the cultural background of Hispanic/Not Hispanic is a separate category from race. A student may be Hispanic and also be considered White and/or American Indian and/or Black. The researcher found that among CLD subgroups the Hispanic and LEP subgroups were the most

underrepresented. Hispanic and LEP cultural and linguistic backgrounds were more underrepresented than any particular race (see Table 1). A literature review revealed that the problem of under-representation of gifted Hispanic ELL students is not unique to the Midwestern Suburban District, but is a pervasive problem in our nation.

Table 1

Midwestern Suburban School District Percentage of Third Grade Students

Category	Entire District	Gifted Programming
American Indian	13	12
Asian	7	12
Black/African American	14	29
Pacific Islander	0	0
White	45	65
Hispanic/Latino	29	18
LEP	18	6
Low SES	53	24

Note. For 2014-2015 school year.

Description of Site

According to the 2014-15 report card for the public Midwestern Suburban District, there were 3,070 students enrolled in the district. There are seven schools in the district, which serves students in Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade. There is a 10% mobility rate. With the criteria being eligibility for free and reduced lunch, 52% of the students are categorized as low income. The total student population in the Midwestern Suburban District is comprised of 45% White students, 29% Hispanic students, 14% Black students, 13% American Indian students, and 7% Asian students. Limited English proficient (LEP) students make up 18 % of the total population. Demographics of the district were compared to demographics of the 2014-2015 third grade gifted cohort that was identified through the most recent district procedures. The researcher described these

ratios in detail in the introduction. When comparing representation in the entire district compared to representation in the third grade gifted cohort within the district, there was overrepresentation for White, Asian and Black students. In contrast, students categorized as Hispanic or LEP were less represented in third grade gifted programming.

Participants

Participants of the focus group included educators from the Midwestern suburban district. The educational background of these individuals differed and included two classroom teachers, two gifted teachers, and a curriculum specialist. Because the gifted coordinator did not participate as a member of the identification panel, she was not included in the focus group. A unifying characteristic of the participants of the gifted identification panel was their completion of a gifted education seminar.

In addition to members of one gifted panel, bilingual second grade teachers that used TOPS to assess students also participated in a demographic questionnaire regarding background and experience. One school in the district did not have a bilingual classroom and therefore did not have access to a bilingual teacher. In that particular school, the ELL teacher completed assessments with TOPS. This teacher also completed a background questionnaire. The unifying characteristic of the bilingual teachers and ELL teacher was their bilingual or ELL teacher endorsement. Therefore all panel participants had some background information regarding gifted education, and all teachers submitting TOPS profiles had some background information regarding English language learners.

Participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). Each school panel was formed with leadership from the gifted coordinator. As mentioned, members of these panels have all completed a minimal level of formal training in gifted

identification. The researcher employed purposeful sampling because it ensured educators with desired expertise in using TOPS, as well as expertise in gifted education and/or English language learners. This expertise was thought to be beneficial for analyzing data pertaining to identification of gifted Hispanic students. “The sample can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” (p. 156). As a pilot case, the researcher recruited members of the one gifted identification panel that gained experience analyzing TOPS protocols. This panel was utilized as a representative of a typical case (Creswell, 2013).

Instruments

The Midwestern Suburban District currently utilizes multiple measures for identification of students for gifted services. The following is a description of the instruments currently used.

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is a group administered standardized test that yields scores in verbal, nonverbal and quantitative domains to assess cognitive ability. This assessment battery is administered to all second graders in the district.

STAR Reading and STAR Math profiles are also examined during the identification process. The STAR tests are computer adaptive, norm-referenced academic assessments developed by Renaissance Learning. STAR Reading and Math tests measure a wide variety of literacy and mathematics skills. These assessments are used to screen all students in the district and are administered three times per year. These assessments are utilized to measure students’ academic achievement in both Reading and Math (Renaissance Learning, 2015a, 2015b).

Propensity scores are growth rates provided to the district by the consulting firm Education Consulting Research Analytics (ECRA). They are utilized to determine the expected individual growth rates of each student based on their previous achievement. Propensity scores synthesize the prior year's test data (ISAT, STAR and AIMSweb) into a single measure that reflects how a student is expected to perform on the current year's assessments. Propensity scores have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. A score of 100 would be considered average for the district, indicating a year's worth of growth in one year.

The Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) is a norm referenced rating scale used to measure observational data in five areas including general intellectual ability, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. This information is quantified and designed to assist in identifying students for gifted services. The SIGS also provides the rater an opportunity to record comments. This tool is used to measure observational data. Both parents and teachers complete the SIGS (Ryser, & McConnell, 2004).

Dynamic performance-based assessments through Kingore's Planned Experiences have also been attempted in grades K-2. Brady (2008) described these planned experiences as a way for teachers to provide enriching experiences while identifying and documenting characteristics of gifted students. This type of high-level, open-ended activity has the potential to address the issue of early and continuous access to advanced curriculum prior to the formal identification process. However, in the district in which the study will occur, these opportunities have been limited, and have not yet been systematically incorporated into the identification process.

In addition to the measures currently used in the identification of gifted students, the researcher studied the addition of TOPS to the identification process. The TOPS is a profile record intended to help systematize an observation component through documentation. Rather than being normative, the TOPS, provides a systematic process for documenting qualitative observations (Coleman et al., 2010).

The researcher utilized a focus group as a data collection method. The researcher conducted a semi-structured group interview with a focus group comprised of the district identification panel that utilized TOPS profiles. Open-ended questions were prepared prior to the semi-structured interview. During the interview the panel was allowed to “co-construct the narrative and raise and pursue issues related to the study” that were not planned ahead (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 98). The focus group discussion provided “direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences” (Morgan, 1997, p. 10). This method allowed the researcher to investigate “not only what the participants think about the issue, but also how they think about it and why they think the way they do” (p. 20). The researcher moderated the focus groups face-to-face. The group interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The interview questions addressed three research questions: (1) How did incorporating data from the TOPS protocol influence the assessment panel’s identification of Hispanic ELL students as gifted? (2) What were the gifted assessment panel’s attitudes regarding use of tops in the identification process? (3) What were the gifted panel’s views of the gifted identification process for Hispanic ELL students?

The researcher utilized two recording devices; one tape recorder and one digital recorder. Two devices were used to ensure that all participants could be heard (quality

recording) and to ensure a back up device was available should there be a malfunction. During the focus group, the researcher moderated while the gifted coordinator assisted the researcher by ensuring the recording devices were functioning properly. The semi-structured interview was first audio-recorded. The researcher then transcribed the recording for analysis.

In addition to obtaining data from the focus group, the researcher used a survey as an instrument to collect additional data. The researcher sent the demographic questionnaire to members of the focus group identification panel, as well as teachers who experienced use of the TOPS. This information provided demographic and background data including the multicultural training and linguistic experiences of adults involved in the process of identifying gifted Hispanic students.

Finally the researcher observed the identification process both before and after TOPS was incorporated into the process. The observations provided a method to collect additional contextual data that is more difficult to detect through a transcribed recording. The researcher was able to observe group dynamics, nonverbal communication, tone, and level of engagement in a topic.

Procedures

Current Procedure

Currently, the Midwestern Suburban District utilizes multiple criteria and multiple measures for identification. Although students are first screened and identified for participation in the gifted program in the spring of 2nd grade, they do not officially begin their first experiences in gifted programming until the beginning of third grade. As described in the Midwestern Suburban District gifted services program handbook, student

profiles are submitted to a panel that is typically comprised of the gifted coordinator, gifted teachers, classroom teachers who have completed gifted training (but do not necessarily teach the grades in which identification takes place), and an administrator. A psychologist is sometimes included depending on availability. The identification panel determines placement for gifted services.

As mentioned, the identification of gifted students begins during the student's 2nd grade year. All second grade students are administered the CogAT 7 assessments in the spring. Any student that scores one standard deviation above the test norms is automatically referred to the identification panel. In addition, students performing at least one standard deviation above the mean for their subgroup on growth measures provided by ECRA are also automatically referred to the identification panel. Teacher, parent, and student nominations are also accepted. For students either meeting CogAT 7 thresholds, ECRA thresholds, or referred by others, the gifted teacher completes a profile form that documents the data collected. Information regarding the SIGS is also included in this profile form. Both parents and teachers complete the SIGS.

Although there is space for observations and anecdotal information obtained during the Kingore planned experiences, as mentioned, this aspect of identification has not yet been systematically developed or incorporated. The additional data is collected for the students and sent to the identification panel. The members of the panel examine a variety of quantitative measures that are utilized during the identification process. For assessment of cognitive skills the measures include, verbal, nonverbal and quantitative subtests of the Cognitive Abilities Test 7 (CogAT 7). Computer adaptive academic assessments developed by Renaissance Learning (STAR Reading and STAR Math) and

propensity scores are utilized for assessment of academic skills. In addition, observational data is collected through the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) and Kingore's Planned Experiences.

No names appear on the form submitted to the panel. However, any subgroup the student belongs to is listed on the form. A 6-digit student identification number is used to identify the form. Members of the identification panel, analyze these forms for identification of giftedness. The panel consists of district staff members trained in gifted education. During review, the panel compares student scores to local norms for CogAT, Propensity, and Star scores. Members of the panel compare the student's scores to norms for his or her peer group (subgroup). Members of the panel look for scores that are 1.5 standard deviations above the mean for the local subgroup norms as evidence of giftedness. If a student has more than one peer group, they are compared to both groups. National norms are used with the SIGS. The members of the panel discuss information on the profile form while taking notes. Members of the panel then determine if there is a preponderance of evidence indicating a need for gifted services. On the profile form, an individual from the panel completes *Section Three: Placement* and indicates yes or no for placement in gifted services. The panel member specifically indicates English Language Arts (ELA)/Math or both. The members provide an explanation for recommendation. A different panel reviews all candidates for a second time. If there are disagreements between the first and second panel (or consensus could not be reached by either panel), the gifted coordinator reviews the student's data.

After members of the panel determine need and appropriate placement for gifted services, parents and students receive notification regarding placement and gifted

services. Parents or staff may appeal the identification panel's decision by completing the appeal form and returning it to the gifted coordinator by the date on the form. The appeal committee consists of the gifted coordinator, a district administrator, and a district parent. The appeal committee will review all pertinent information and notify parents by mail. The decision of the appeal committee is considered final.

Research Procedure

The Council for Exceptional Children describes the U Stars-Plus (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students) as being “designed to support teachers in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally/linguistically different families and in children with disabilities” ([https://www.cec.sped.org/Special - Ed-Topics/Specialty-Areas/Gifted/U-STARS-Plus](https://www.cec.sped.org/Special-Ed-Topics/Specialty-Areas/Gifted/U-STARS-Plus)). Harradine et al. (2014) described the five core elements of U-STARS-Plus, which include: (1) systematic observation of students, (2) hands on inquiry based science activities, (3) family engagement, (4) high end in class learning opportunities, and (5) capacity for building systemic change. Use of the U-STARS-Plus would help systematize early planned experiences in grades K-3 as well as the documentation of observations regarding how students actually perform in a more authentic environment. U-STARS-PLUS uses science-based projects, which are thought to be an ideal context for observing indicators of potential in children from CLD backgrounds. The developers suggest science projects are ideal because they are not overly dependent on early reading and language development and they provide a hands-on activity-oriented base (Coleman et al., 2010).

Within the U-STARS-Plus, the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) was developed as an observational component to help teachers recognize signs of potential in young children (ages 5-9 years). Developers Coleman et al. (2010) designed the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) to be used with children whose strengths are sometimes overlooked by traditional identification measures. Researchers Harradine et al. (2014) studied more than 1,100 teachers that implemented TOPS in 100 schools in four states. Harradine et al. reported that many of the schools were Title 1 schools whose racial/ ethnic groups were comparable to their states demographics. At 95% the teachers were predominantly female, with 33% being novice, 32% experienced, and 35% veteran. Teachers were predominantly White (88%) with some African American (10%) and few Latino teachers (2%). Although the USTARS PLUS was developed for all ethnic groups the study by Harradine et al. (2014) focused on "boys of color" (p. 26).

The TOPS includes systematic observation across school settings, activities, and time periods. The TOPS helps teachers focus on and recognize indicators of high potential and discover patterns of student behaviors (Coleman et al., 2010). Efron and Ravid (2013) describe several advantages of performance assessments. Performance assessments such as TOPS have several advantages over normed tests such as providing opportunities to show unique strengths, encouraging open ended thinking and creativity, and providing opportunities for demonstration and observation of complex learning tasks in authentic situations (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

The goal of this research project was to explore the perceptions of educators using the TOPS. The researcher also explored the potential impact the TOPS tool could have

for identifying second grade Hispanic LEP students for gifted programming (for both Language Arts and Math gifted services). Beyond data obtained from quantitative screening measures, nominations for gifted programs come mostly from classroom teachers. Therefore it is essential to help teachers understand what to look for in their students (McBee, 2006) and to find a systematic manner in which to document results. Because the tool delineates particular behaviors and helps teachers focus on the characteristics of gifted students, the researcher explored whether TOPS could help address an important training issue among teachers. Furthermore, the second grade teachers utilizing the tool were all bilingual English/Spanish speaking, and trained in second language acquisition. Thus, both gifted and CLD issues were addressed during implementation.

It was hoped that through the systematic observation and documentation facilitated by the TOPS, teachers would improve their ability to identify students with academic potential that may not be identified through more standardized and quantitative measures. TOPS was utilized to help teachers gather systematic, contextual observational data on students, and provide information on strengths and needs that typical curriculum-based assessments do not provide (Coleman et al., 2010). The TOPS provided a framework to observe over time, and in a variety of contexts, and in authentic settings, rather than in a single fixed time assessment (Coleman et al., 2010). The TOPS tool provided evidence of thinking process and concept development in a different way than standardized tests. Harradine et al. (2014) stated that it is “a tool to help teachers get to know their students by focusing on strengths. As such, it is not formally scored to yield a numerical value” (p. 27).

The regular district identification procedures were implemented as usual for this study. However, in addition to the quantitative measures usually analyzed, the TOPS was also implemented for second grade bilingual students in order to add a more qualitative measure to the identification process. District bilingual and gifted teachers were first oriented to the tool through professional development completed in the fall of 2015. Both groups (bilingual and gifted teachers) attended the same training. The researcher first presented rationale for use of TOPS and the gifted coordinator explained the implementation process. A time line was developed and teachers were given the manuals and tools to use at the appropriate times. Collaboration between gifted specialists and bilingual teachers was encouraged. Staff at each building was expected to complete TOPS within the agreed upon timeline.

Completing TOPS profiles. The TOPS was implemented in two phases. Developers of TOPS recommend periods of observation between 3-6 weeks. For this study, teachers were asked to observe for a period of 4 weeks. To start, the gifted coordinator asked bilingual second grade teachers in the district to observe their class during a 4-week period in February and to record information for all students on the TOPS Whole Class Observation Form. This was followed by an additional 4-week observation period in March, for specific children with the Individual Student Observation Form (Coleman et al., 2010). Bilingual teachers were asked to spend time each day (within these time frames) reflecting on and jotting down notes about the behaviors of their students. If a student was identified as having frequent and or intense strengths, the teacher was asked to observe the students using the TOPS Individual Student Observation Form. The gifted coordinator asked teachers to submit the TOPS

Individual Student Observation Forms at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. Those records were submitted to the identification panel (which does not typically include the classroom teachers who refer students) for review. Records were to become part of the students' overall profiles, and teachers were asked to submit TOPS forms along with the other data typically analyzed for identification.

Although there was the potential for six teachers or buildings to send TOPS forms to the identification panel, in actuality only one teacher submitted four individual student observation TOPS forms. According to the gifted coordinator, one teacher reported completing a classroom observation with TOPS, but did not find any gifted behaviors to stand out as frequent or intense for any particular student. Therefore, the ELL teacher did not complete any individual student observation forms. For this reason, none were sent to the identification panel from this school. It is presumed but not confirmed that this process occurred at other buildings as well. However, one gifted teacher reported to the gifted coordinator that she had communicated the process as optional to the bilingual teacher at her building. At this building, the bilingual teacher chose not to use TOPS as an assessment tool.

It is also important to note that TOPS forms did not actually reach the identification panel until after the panel had met and identified students in the traditional manner. Therefore, the gifted coordinator scheduled an additional panel meeting in which TOPS forms were analyzed. There was a two-week span between the first panel identification session and the second (which included TOPS).

Analyzing TOPS profiles. At the first panel meeting, after the initial traditional identification process had taken place, the researcher provided a brief rationale and

training for TOPS interpretation. During the second panel meeting, two weeks later, members reviewed TOPS forms along with any other data previously submitted for the second grade students with TOPS forms. The panel had previously reviewed only one of the students for which there was now a TOPS form. This student's information was reviewed and re-analyzed for a second time, with the addition of the TOPS information. The other students had not met the traditional thresholds on standardized tests and had not previously been reviewed by the panel. For these students, the panel reviewed the available normative data for the first time, in addition to the TOPS information, before making decisions regarding eligibility. It is important to note that because these students had not met the traditional normative thresholds, the classroom teachers and/or parents had not completed the SIGS. This is because meeting the normative threshold triggers the implementation of the SIGS measure. Therefore, during this identification session, the TOPS replaced the SIGS for these three bilingual students. In other words, other students that were not bilingual English/Spanish who had met the normative thresholds had some qualitative data through comments on the SIGS, but not the TOPS. In contrast, these three bilingual students had more qualitative data through the TOPS, but not the SIGS.

During the second meeting, when TOPS was added to profile analysis, the panel determined if information from TOPS changed their perception regarding the district requirement of a "preponderance of evidence" for needing gifted services. Immediately after the identification process was complete, the researcher provided the consent form for participation in a focus group. The Loyola Institutional Review Board (IRB) had previously approved this consent form. Participants and researcher signed the consent

form before the researcher conducted the focus group. The researcher then immediately moderated the focus group to gain understanding of how the TOPS data impacted the panel's view of the students, as well as their eligibility decisions.

It is important to note that because one of the panel members was late to the meeting, the identification process and the focus group started later than anticipated. Due to this change, one of the panel members had to leave the focus group before all questions were asked. A second panel member left before the last two questions were asked. This should be considered when interpreting the data.

Survey. The procedure for collecting background information included sending a survey monkey link through email. The researcher used non-probabilistic sampling to select participants (Creswell, 2012). The target population was those educators who had experienced using TOPS protocols either through actual observation and assessment or interpretation of results for decision making. The researcher first collected the email addresses of those participating in the focus group. The researcher also sent an email with a link to bilingual personnel through a district contact group. The researcher included a cover letter with information regarding recruitment that was approved by Loyola's Instructional Review Board (IRB). The researcher obtained a exemption from the IRB regarding the requirement to obtain written consent from participants. Instead, consent was described in an IRB approved consent form following the recruitment page. In the consent form, the researcher explained that continuing with the survey constituted consent from the participant. The researcher included the following statement: "Your clicking on the link, and continuing with the survey indicates that you have read the

information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.”

In the recruitment page the researcher included a statement in bold face print stating: “If you have not participated in identification of gifted Hispanic students with TOPS, please disregard this email.” Although the recruitment page stated that the survey should only be completed if the recipient had experienced using the TOPS, the researcher determined that two of the educators that completed the survey had not actually experienced use of TOPS. One respondent was an early childhood special education bilingual teacher and one was the director of English language learner services. Since information provided from the gifted coordinator confirmed that only second grade bilingual teachers and one ELL teacher had the opportunity to utilize TOPS, the preschool teacher and ELL directors’ surveys were deleted from the pool of respondents. These individuals were considered ineligible to participate due sampling requirements for the case study (Creswell, 2012). Through collaboration with the gifted coordinator, other respondents were verified as having experienced use of TOPS.

In designing this study, the researcher attempted to find a representative case within the context of the Midwestern suburban district. For this case study, the researcher employed several methods of data collection to “investigate the phenomenon within its real-life context” (Andres, 2012, p. 100). Methods of data collection will be described in the next section.

Data Collection

For this case study, the researcher used multiple sources of data collection to improve description of the phenomenon of using TOPS. The researcher utilized

observation of the process, a survey regarding background of participants and a focus group discussion for data collection. Each form of data collection will be described below.

Observation

To analyze the identification panel's decision making during the final step of the identification process, the researcher first asked the identification committee members to make decisions based on the current identification procedures. After the panel had selected the pool of students eligible for gifted services, the researcher asked the panel to return to another session to examine the TOPS protocol for any Hispanic ELL students. The researcher observed both sessions and took field notes regarding observations. The researcher used observational data to better understand the context when interpreting focus group responses.

Survey

The researcher also collected additional data by administering a structured questionnaire through Survey Monkey. The researcher asked 14 questions through the two-page survey. This survey provided background information regarding the specific training of those involved in the new process (see Appendix A for list of questions). The researcher collected this data from the gifted identification panel that participated in the focus group, as well as the second grade bilingual teachers and one ELL teacher that completed TOPS record forms. After receiving IRB approved recruitment information and consent forms through email, participants were asked to follow a Survey Monkey link. Participants then completed the survey and submitted to the cloud based survey service. Survey Monkey notified the researcher when a participant had completed the

survey. Participants completed surveys within a two-week time frame. The researcher could then view the data obtained through the surveys. Survey monkey provided the ability to review responses by individual participant or as a summary of all participants for each question.

The researcher collected eight valid surveys. These surveys were considered valid because respondents were eligible for the case study. It was known that five survey respondents were part of the identification panel. Since one bilingual teacher submitted all the TOPS forms reviewed, it can be assumed that the other two teachers that used TOPS did not find any students with characteristics that warranted completion of individual TOPS forms. This information was confirmed with the gifted coordinator. Only 50% of the bilingual teachers participated in use of TOPS. Three bilingual teachers participated in TOPS assessment while three did not. This number corresponds with the number of surveys received.

Focus Group

The researcher prepared open-ended questions prior to the semi-structured interview (see Appendix B for list of prepared questions). The researcher conducted a semi-structured group interview with the focus group comprised of the district gifted identification panel for second grade. The focus group discussion provided “direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences” (Morgan, 1997, p. 10). The researcher asked questions that investigated the panel member’s attitudes regarding the gifted identification process for bilingual Hispanic students and more specifically their attitudes regarding use of TOPS for this process. The focus group interview questions also explored how the TOPS influenced the panels’

decision making. Because the interview was semi-structured, the pre-determined questions were not followed in the exact manner prepared (see Appendix C for the actual transcript of questions asked). Some of the resulting questions elicited responses that addressed: (1) How incorporating data from the TOPS protocol changed perceptions regarding whether Hispanic students were eligible for gifted services, (2) How incorporating data from the TOPS increased confidence in identifying Hispanic students for gifted students, and (3) Whether TOPS assessment changed results to a level that warrants the amount of time and resources needed to implement it. As mentioned, the group semi structured interview was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The transcription was de-identified by using numbers rather than names. The transcription was then sent to another coder for a separate analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed data from three different sources: (a) survey information, (b) observations, and (c) a focus group discussion. The researcher analyzed survey results with the aide of Survey Monkey cloud based software. Survey Monkey aided in organizing the data for analysis. The researcher analyzed data both at the individual level as well by a summary of responses for each question. The researcher examined variables, and utilized a descriptive analysis approach. The surveys were analyzed to provide demographic information and determine if there were patterns that would enhance interpretation of focus group results. This information provided additional personal context to help the researcher interpret focus group participants' responses (Morgan, 1997).

As mentioned, the researcher observed the panel's identification process both before and after introduction of the TOPS. The researcher recorded whether any decisions made by the identification panel changed after the TOPS was included. At the point in time when panel members began reviewing TOPS, only one Hispanic ELL student had been identified as "on watch" through the regular identification process. For this student, panel members had not reached consensus as to full eligibility. The researcher gave the panel another opportunity to make decisions based on the additional data provided, observed the process, and documented the decision. This observational data was also analyzed to help the researcher understand any contextual factors that would enhance interpretation of focus group results.

Predetermined Category

In addition to observing the process of identification to determine if TOPS affected panel members' decisions, the researcher also further analyzed this question by researching the focus group transcript for evidence of TOPS impact on identification. The researcher analyzed the transcript for more subtle evidence of whether the tool increased individual panel member's level of confidence. The researcher used this portion of analysis to supplement data analyzed through observation, as well as the process of coding emergent themes.

Emergent Categories

While the researcher analyzed some background and observational data, the bulk of data analysis occurred from information gathered from the focus group discussion. In determining perceptions and opinions regarding the use of TOPS, the researcher followed a qualitative case study design. The researcher selected the only identification panel that

experienced using TOPS as a typical example and studied it in depth. The researcher conducted a focus group with the selected identification panel to serve as the case. In terms of the unit of analysis, the researcher analyzed how members experienced a change in the identification process for gifted bilingual Hispanic students. Data analysis included constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) describe the method of constant comparison analysis as allowing the researcher to build theories, analyze data systematically as well as creatively, understand the data in multiple ways, and identify and create the relationships among parts of the data. This researcher analyzed responses and experiences of the participants following the recommended three stages of constant comparison (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

The researcher created codes for each key point or new idea (i.e., open coding). First the researcher wrote notes and initial codes by hand on the margins of the transcript. Each element was bracketed, and given a concept code. The transcript was reviewed several times. In addition to hand notes, the transcript was color-coded in a word document and comments were inserted to create codes. One copy of the document was color coded by concept, and another copy was color coded by respondent. This facilitated initial visual inspection of frequency of concepts as well as the amount of comments made by each respondent. After initial review, for each relevant response, the researcher recorded the codes on an excel spreadsheet. On the spreadsheet, each category was assigned a number that corresponded to a category that was also color-coded. In this way the researcher could sort comments by category. The researcher also recorded the number assigned to the speaker. To explain, first, each new idea was recorded. Then, if

the idea was repeated, the researcher noted which speaker had also expressed the same idea. From this method the researcher was able to determine if a majority of participants had expressed the same key point or concept. The researcher coded all mentions of a topic by both category and individual, providing a nested strategy (Morgan, 1977). After the researcher coded the transcription, the transcription was sent to a second coder who repeated a second coding process.

After open coding each coder grouped codes together into categories with descriptors (i.e., axial coding). After each coder had completed this step, they compared results and found they had agreed upon five main categories that were expressed by majority of panel members. A majority, of panel members was described as three out of five panel members. After open and axial coding, the two coders compared responses and found almost identical use of terms for descriptors of categories. Coders obtained an agreement rate of 100%.

Once coders agreed upon categories, the researcher re-reviewed and further analyzed the categories for concepts and themes that could help answer research questions regarding the use of TOPS (i.e., selective coding). The researcher developed, and revised categories through a recursive constant comparison method. The researcher linked categories around a central thesis that described participants' main concern and their thoughts regarding how to resolve it.

Trustworthiness

In order to increase credibility and accuracy from the data sources, the researcher did not include a principal in the focus groups. There was no difficulty implementing this procedure since the principal of the school did not join the identification panel for the

identification procedure. The researcher intended to minimize any discomfort that could occur due to differences in authority status during the discussion (Morgan, 1997).

Excluding principals ensured that credibility of the responses was not lost due to reduced comfort in discussing personal perspectives. In addition, to protect confidentiality, members identified themselves by an assigned number while being audio taped.

To improve accuracy of researcher interpretations, the researcher utilized member checking, which entailed soliciting feedback from participants regarding the coding system and interpretations of the data (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). To complete member checking, the researcher re-stated and summarized the participants' responses during the focus group interview. Participants indicated they agreed through their verbal responses to the researcher's statements and summaries.

As mentioned, researcher analyzed multiple sources of data to better understand the context of participant responses. The researcher observed interactions and analyzed responses to a survey regarding participants' background. The researcher considered context in order to further improve accuracy of the focus group results.

To improve dependability, as previously mentioned, the researcher employed the method of reliability coding. In addition to the researcher, another individual coded the interview responses separately. This individual is a school psychologist with training in both issues related to assessment of CLD students as well as gifted education. The Midwestern suburban district has employed this psychologist for five years. She is also a doctoral candidate in the school psychology department of Loyola University Chicago.

The researcher obtained inter-coder agreement by comparing two independent lists of codes developed after reviewing the transcript during the axial coding phase. The

researcher compared codes for percentage agreement (Creswell, 2016). The researcher asked the additional coder to examine codes for frequently repeated themes. Conflicts were discussed and resolved through a consensual coding process (Creswell, 2016). The researcher and coder agreed to drop concerns over service delivery as a separate code due to only two respondents expressing this idea. Similarly another code (afraid won't catch everything) was subsumed under the time/effort difficulty category. The coders also agreed on the distinction between changed mind versus increased confidence. After discussion, there were no disagreements. Before selective coding and interpretation of results 100% inter-coder agreement was reached.

Researcher's Role and Biases

The researcher is a bilingual school psychologist at the Midwestern Suburban District. Prior to her role as a school psychologist, the researcher was a high school teacher of Spanish as a second language. Her mother is Spanish but raised in Argentina. Her father was born and raised in Chile. The researcher was born in Peru, lived in Mexico as a child (until age 9), and lived one year in Spain as a young adult. The researcher is also the mother of two children that were identified as gifted by their school district. The researcher was on a committee that helped determine the mission of the gifted program within the Midwestern Suburban District. The researcher's background is an asset in understanding some of the unique variables in assessment of bilingual students. Her experiences motivate her to continue to improve gifted programming in the district by helping the district overcome barriers that present themselves. The researcher approached the focus groups and semi-structured interviews with an open and neutral viewpoint.

Summary

According to a literature review, some of the barriers in identification of gifted Hispanic students involve teachers understanding of characteristics of giftedness as well as issues related to CLD students, including the influences of culture and language. Traditional measures used during the gifted identification process do not always address these issues. Therefore, the researcher proposed studying how the addition of a more qualitative behavioral observation instrument (TOPS) affected the identification of gifted Hispanic students. After bilingual teachers implemented and submitted results of this measure, the researcher studied the perceptions of a group of educators that made decisions regarding gifted identification (a gifted identification panel). The researcher developed a semi-structured interview to gather perceptions during a focus group format. The researcher collected additional background information to assist in interpretation through the survey administered to all adult participants of the gifted identification process for Hispanic ELL students. A qualitative case study approach was utilized in the study. In addition to the researcher triangulating data by collecting information through various sources such as a background survey, observation, and a focus group, the researcher also used member checking, and inter-rater reliability coding to improve trustworthiness. Data was analyzed through constant comparison analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Educators

Participants of the study completed a Survey that included questions regarding their background. Participants included both bilingual, general education teachers who completed TOPS forms and gifted identification panel members who interpreted TOPS forms. Eight participants completed the background questionnaire (see Table 2).

Table 2

Educational Role of Participants

Title	Role	<i>n.</i>	%
Classroom teachers	Panel Members	2	25
Bilingual teachers	Administered TOPS	2	25
ELL teachers	Administered TOPS	1	13
Gifted Teachers	Panel Members	2	25
Math Specialists	Administered TOPS	1	13

Note. *N*=8

Participants included an equal number of classroom teachers, bilingual teachers, and gifted teachers. There was also one ELL teacher and one Math specialist that participated in the study. The researcher also collected demographic information from the participants (see Table 3).

Table 3

Background of Participants

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
Under 30	2	25.0
30-39	1	12.5
40-49	2	25.0
50-59	3	37.5
60 +	0	0.0
Gender		
Female	8	100.0
Male	0	0.0
Years in Education Field		
1-2 years	0	0.0
3-4 years	2	25.0
5-10 years	1	12.5
11-15 years	1	12.5
16-20 years	4	50.0
20+ years	0	0.0
Highest Level of Schooling		
Bachelors	1	12.5
Masters	1	12.5
Masters +	6	75.0
Doctorate	0	0.0
Ethnicity		
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Black/African American	0	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	1	12.5
Native American	0	0.0
White	7	87.50
Other	0	0.0
Native Language		
English	8	100.0
Other	0	0.0
Second Language at Home		
None	3	37.5
Spanish	5	62.5
Other	0	0.0

Note. For each category $N=8$.

As shown in Table 3, the respondent's ages were distributed between under 30 to between 50 and 59 years of age. All participants were female. Seven out of the eight participants are White, while one respondent indicated being of Hispanic/Latino descent. All of the participants reported English as their native language. Five out of eight participants indicated they also spoke some Spanish in their home. Respondents reported a range of teaching experience from 3 to 20 years; therefore, no participants had less than three years or more than 20 years experience. In terms of schooling, one participant reported a bachelor's degree and one reported a Masters degree as being the highest level of education obtained. The remaining six participants reported masters plus additional graduate courses as their highest level of education. None of the respondents reported obtaining a doctorate degree.

In addition to demographic data and years of experience or education, participants were asked about their training experiences in both multicultural and linguistic issues, as well as gifted education (see Table 4).

Eighty seven and a half percent of participants received within district professional development in multicultural and linguistic issues, while only fifty percent received within district professional development in gifted education. However, seventy five percent of participants had completed the Gifted Seminar. The Gifted Seminar is a 45-hour professional development course for teachers that was developed by the Illinois State Board of Education. The goal of the seminar is to help teachers better understand the gifted population. More participants had participated in workshops regarding multiculturalism than second language development or issues surrounding giftedness. An equal number of participants reported completing an entire graduate level course in each

of the categories including multiculturalism, second language acquisition and giftedness. An equal number of participants had earned a specialist endorsement in second language acquisition as had earned a specialist endorsement in giftedness.

Table 4

Previous Training of Participants

Type of Training	<i>n</i>	%
Multiculturalism		
PD in District	7	87.5
Conferences/Workshops	5	62.5
A portion of undergraduate course	6	75.0
An entire graduate course	2	25.0
Specialist endorsement	2	25.0
Second Language Acquisition		
PD in District	7	87.5
Conferences/Workshops	3	37.5
A portion of undergraduate course	2	25.0
An entire graduate course	2	25.0
Specialist endorsement	3	37.5
Gifted Education		
PD in District	4	50.0
Conferences/Workshops	3	37.5
A portion of undergraduate course	0	0.0
An entire undergraduate course	0	0.0
Gifted Seminar	6	75.0
A portion of a graduate level course	4	50.0
An entire graduate level course	2	25.0
Specialist endorsement	3	37.5

In addition to indicating their level of training, the researcher asked participants to describe their answers. The researcher found that three respondents reported earning an ESL endorsement or bilingual certification. These were the respondents reporting a specialist endorsement in either multiculturalism or second language acquisition. In contrast, the two gifted teachers, as well as the math specialist, reported a specialist endorsement in gifted education. One of the gifted teachers described her experiences

with second language acquisition as being “a small amount of PD” (professional development). Another respondent described experiences working with second language learners in a school setting as well as living with a second language learner and helping him and his family “navigate a different culture and language.”

The researcher further analyzed the different kinds of training in relation to the participants’ educational roles. For this process the researcher assigned a number representing the highest level of training in each category. Table 5 demonstrates how the levels were assigned.

Table 5

Assigned Levels to Training Experiences

Description of Training	Level
Professional development and/or conferences and workshops	1
A portion of a course at an educational institution	2
An entire course at an educational institution and/or Gifted Seminar.	3
A specialist endorsement	4

The researcher deemed both professional development and conferences and workshops as being equal in terms of level/quality of training. Similarly, both an entire course at an educational institution and the 45 hours training through the Gifted Seminar were deemed as equal in terms of level/quality of training. The researcher used these levels to compare training in the three areas including multiculturalism, second language acquisition, and gifted education in relation to roles of the participants such as teacher, bilingual or ESL teacher and gifted specialist (see Table 6).

Table 6

Level of Training in Each Category for Each Type of Participant

Role	Multicultural Issues	Second Language Acquisition	Gifted Education
Classroom Teacher 1	2	1	3
Classroom Teacher 2	2	2	2
Bilingual Teacher 1	3	4	2
Bilingual Teacher 2	4	4	3
ELL Teacher 1	4	4	3
Gifted Specialist 1	2	1	4
Gifted Specialist 2	2	1	4
Math Specialist 1	2	1	4

The researcher found that other than with bilingual and ELL teachers, the lowest levels of training were found in the second language acquisition category. All participants had at least level 2 training in multicultural issues or gifted education. However, most educators without a specific bilingual or ELL endorsement had only level 1 training in second language acquisition. In other words, while all gifted teachers had level 4 training in gifted education, they had only level 1 training in second language acquisition. In contrast, bilingual and ELL teachers had level 2 and 3 training in gifted education. Analysis comparing level of training in different categories found that the least amount of training was completed in the area of second language acquisition.

Members of the gifted identification panel tended to be more highly trained in gifted issues. Three out of five panel members reported a group of courses culminating a specialist endorsement or certification in gifted education. One panel member described her training in gifted education as having “15+ years experience in gifted Ed and a certificate of advanced studies in gifted from Northwestern.” Four out of five panel members reported having completed the Gifted Education Seminar (GES) which entails

45 hours of training. The teacher that did not report completing the GES described her training as “a portion of a graduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education.” In the area of multiculturalism, all panel members described a portion of a course as their highest level of training in the area of multiculturalism. In the area of second language acquisition, three out of five panel members reported only receiving professional development within the school district as their highest level of training. One of these panel members described the training as being a “small amount of PD.” One panel member also reported attending a conference presentation and/or workshops. This panel member described her experiences rather than formal training. She stated:

in addition to being a Title II aid for three years where I worked exclusively with second language learners from various cultures, I live with a second language learner. I have 30+ years of experience living and working with my husband and in-laws as they navigate a different culture and language.

Only one panel member described additional training beyond district professional development or conference presentations and workshops. This panel member reported attending a portion of an undergraduate level course dedicated to second language acquisition.

Of the Bilingual and ELL teachers that completed TOPS forms two out of three had completed the 45 hour GES. One out of three had completed only a portion of a graduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education. She described her training as, “I’ve received training in gifted education through my district and masters coursework.” In contrast to the three panel members that had only received in district professional development in second language acquisition, all teachers that used TOPS

had more than in district professional development in the area of gifted education. While panel members tended to be highly trained in gifted issues, teachers that completed TOPS were highly trained in issues related to second language acquisition. All three had completed a group of courses culminating in a specialist degree. One described her training in second language issues by reporting, “I have received training in second language acquisition through my work conferences and my masters coursework. I have a masters in elementary education with ELL and Bilingual endorsements.” Another indicated Major in Spanish and “ESL/Bilingual endorsement.” The third referred to her “ESL endorsement.” These teachers also reported higher levels of training in multiculturalism than the gifted panel. While all members of the gifted identification panel reported a portion of a class dedicated to multiculturalism, teachers who administered TOPS reported at a minimum an entire course on this subject. One teacher reported, “I received training in multicultural issues through work, conferences, and also through my masters coursework. One of my courses for my ELL endorsement was entirely dedicated to multicultural awareness.” The other two teachers that administered TOPS reported either “ESL/Bilingual certification” or “ESL endorsement” as evidence of more advanced training in this area.

Students

In addition to observing the panel during identification sessions, the researcher reviewed a spreadsheet of students reviewed by identification panels, during the 2015-2016 school year. This data was analyzed to better understand the context in which panel members made their decisions. According to this spreadsheet, the gifted panel that was assigned to the 2nd grade level reviewed a total of 90 second-grade students. Table 7

shows the number of second grade students reviewed from each race and ethnicity, as well as how many were identified as gifted or placed on watch. Students could be identified in either language arts or mathematics. Students placed on watch are not officially identified as gifted but are given a provisional status. Watch students are provided with some, but not necessarily all, opportunities to participate in gifted programming. Their response is then watched for further evaluation.

Table 7

Number of Students Reviewed and Identified by Panel

Race	Total	<u>Language Arts</u>		<u>Math</u>	
		Gifted	Watch	Gifted	Watch
American Indian	3	1	0	1	0
Asian	9	5	0	4	1
Black	14	3	1	3	2
Hispanic	12	3	0	2	1
Multi-Racial	3	0	0	1	0
White	51	11	3	15	9
Totals	92	23	4	26	13

In another analysis, the total number of students identified as needing gifted programming is shown (see Table 8). Rather than show the frequency for each specific category (language arts or math), the number represents students that were identified for gifted programming in *either* language arts or math. The number does not include students that are considered on watch. The percent of students identified relates to a comparison to the total number the panel reviewed in each category. In other words % represents the percent of students identified from the pool that was sent to the panel by

either screening or nomination. The percent does not represent the ratio from the entire district.

Table 8

Number and Percent of Students Identified From Each Race

Race	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> Identified	%
American Indian	3	1	33
Asian	9	4	44
Black	14	4	29
Hispanic	12	5	42
Multi-Racial	3	1	33
White	51	17	33
Totals	92	32	

Note. *n.* = Identified in either language arts or math. Students on watch are not included.

The researcher noted that in the spreadsheet, some students were labeled as Hispanic under the column with the heading race, while other students were identified as Hispanic under the heading Hispanic. Because Hispanic students were identified in one or both of race and cultural identity categories, the number of students identified as Hispanic was analyzed both ways. Some students were identified as Hispanic and other races such as White or American Indian. The researcher also examined the number of ELL/LEP students that were reviewed and identified as gifted. Students were considered ELL/LEP even if they had exited the program or if their parents had refused ELL services. ELL/LEP students could be from a variety of race or cultural backgrounds. Therefore, students that were both Hispanic and LEP were also counted and analyzed as well. As in other categories, some students were placed on watch. These students were not included in the numbers identified. Three Hispanic ELL students were placed on

watch. Two of these three were for math services only. One other student was marked yes but with a note using the term “trial ” The researcher considered this student similar to a “watch” student (see Table 9).

Table 9

Students Reviewed and Percent Identified as Gifted

Category	n. Reviewed	n. Identified	% Identified
Hispanic	25	7	28
ELL/LEP	33	8	24
Hispanic LEP	16	1	6

Note. *n.* Identified includes either/or language arts and math. *n.* Identified does not include students on watch.

Although the researcher found that the panel reviewed 16 Hispanic LEP students, the panel reviewed only four TOPS forms. Out of these four Hispanic LEP students with TOPS forms, no students were identified for gifted programming. One of the four students was placed on watch.

Gifted Identification Panel Process

The researcher first observed the panel analyze all second grade student protocols without the use of TOPS. Then the researcher observed a second identification session where TOPS forms were used for bilingual second graders during decision-making. Out of the four protocols reviewed, the panel spent the majority of time discussing results of one particular student. Previously, this student had been categorized as “on watch” and the decision had been made to not officially include him in gifted programming, but rather to provide some services on a trial basis. The addition of the TOPS forms provided more information after this decision had been made. For this student, the teacher had written comments on the TOPS form under the following categories; Learns

Easily, Displays Curiosity & Creativity, Shows Advanced Reasoning and Problem Solving, Shows Motivation, and Shows Social Perceptiveness. This information was analyzed along with other available data. The status of this student remained “on watch.”

Panel members analyzed two other TOPS forms that were completed for a set of twins. For these students the teacher had written most comments on the TOPS form under the category of Displays Leadership. Panel members did not identify these students as gifted. The fourth TOPS form the panel analyzed had only one comment written under the category of Learns Easily. Panel members did not identify this student as gifted either. Overall, inclusion of TOPS forms did not change the status of any Hispanic ELL student.

Predetermined Theme

In addition to observing the process of identification to determine if TOPS affected panel members’ decisions, the researcher also further analyzed this question by researching the focus group transcript for evidence of TOPS impact on identification. The researcher analyzed the transcript for more subtle evidence of whether the tool increased individual panel member’s level of confidence. The researcher used this portion of analysis to supplement data analyzed through observation and the process of coding emergent themes.

Four out of five panel members indicated that their level of confidence subtly increased through use of TOPS. One panel member contributed a comment that indicated it didn’t change anything, yet also suggested it strengthened her decision. Panel members contributed these perceptions after being asked if incorporating TOPS affected their

perceptions regarding the ability of some of the ELL Hispanic students. Below are excerpts from the panel members:

Increased in Confidence After TOPS

Panel Member #1: "...I don't know that this would sway my decision. I think it might *strengthen* my decision, one way or another..."

Panel Member #2: "This data would change my opinion. I mean, I may want to push for #1 [student on watch] a little more...than we did."

Panel Member # 3: "It was only one (referring to the one student on watch) that swayed us, and maybe changed our thinking a little."

Panel Member # 4: "It just solidified what I was looking at, what I was thinking and my decision."

No Increase in Confidence after TOPS

Panel Member #1: "I don't know if I am biased by this group we saw here (referring to the forms the panel reviewed) that really didn't change anything."

The researcher explored how incorporating TOPS into the identification process influenced the panel's decision making. The researcher looked for evidence that incorporating TOPS increased the confidence level of decisions made by the panel. Few comments were made regarding this category. However the majority (four out of five) did contribute responses that fit this category. While panel member's attitudes varied regarding whether TOPS would actually change their mind about a student, the majority of panel members (four out of five) indicated that they experienced TOPS, at a minimum, improving their confidence in the decision they had made. The researcher also looked for

disconfirming evidence by looking for comments that suggested TOPS did not increase confidence. One panel member contributed a response that fit this category.

Emergent Themes

After the gifted identification panel had completed the process of making decisions for gifted programming, the researcher conducted a focus group. During the focus group, panel members were asked to share their perceptions regarding the process they had just completed. Participants expressed both positive and negative attitudes regarding use of TOPS and the process of identification for Hispanic ELL students. The researcher then analyzed a transcription of this focus group, following the recommended three stages of constant comparison (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). The following categories emerged from the data and can be used to help explain the panel members' perceptions regarding use of TOPS.

Theme 1: Time, Effort, and Difficulty of Use

One of the topics the panel discussed regarding TOPS was time, effort and difficulty of use. This category included both positive and negative comments regarding amount of time, effort, and either ease or difficulty of use. All panel members contributed responses in this category. Panel members first introduced this theme after being asked what they liked best and least about TOPS, and later when asked to weigh the advantages and disadvantages. Panel member also discussed aspects of this theme after the researcher asked follow up questions during discussions of other concepts such as training and applicability to other populations. Below are excerpts from panel members:

Panel Member #1:

Back to the Kingore, in the Kingore observation there is a very similar form that teachers are asked to mark. But nobody ever fills it out.

Panel Member #2:

(a) The other thing to think of is right now we are doing it with the bilingual teachers... a lot of them have been splits and you have at most a dozen, 15 second graders, so the ones that rise to the top out of that is only a small number. So that you might, you know, logistically be a little more possible than the regular ed. 28 kids in the classroom. (b) It's going to be impossible for them to have too many checks in every single thing in just a short period of time.

Panel Member #3:

(a) I like the verbiage on this better than the Kingore, for some reason I actually think it's easier. I actually think anybody should be able to understand what these mean if we have a teaching certificate... (b) I think the category titles are really good and that's what we did at the end we summed up which categories that we saw a frequency or intensity. (c) I am very worried about a classroom teacher being able to have the time to read every descriptor and really capture all of these... (d) I would be so worried as a classroom teacher that it's a disservice if I didn't read if I missed something...If you had lets say in a bilingual classroom five to eight kids to look at for this, ...it could be overwhelming to fill out and make sure you are doing the best job possible.

Panel Member #4:

(a) I don't believe, looking at the verbiage, looking at how this explains itself, I don't think there needs to be any training whatsoever...it would become second nature. (b) I like this being in black and white...I like being able to put down different categories. (c) Now I am being asked to do something above and beyond. And I like putting students before curriculum, and I know it is very hard to do...and I think just being able to, just yes have a checklist where I don't have to do anything else other than this is what I've seen, this is what I am asked to do...make these checklists and I know this is very time consuming, but let me put the student above the curriculum. (d) From a classroom perspective I'm not sure I would be real jazzed about filling this out on every single student. (e) I don't think it would be a hindrance for a classroom teacher to fill this out on particular students...

Panel Member #5:

...as a classroom teacher looking at this that is overwhelming, yes I could look through this and do some checks but deciding on how often do I see these things or you know, of much you know like for intensity, intensity versus frequency, that kind of adds to, I think it's a good idea to use it on a few, but like #3 said, using on a classroom, I have 24 students this year, I mean, I can't imagine doing that.

Overall, all panel members expressed their opinion regarding some aspect of time, effort and difficulty. After analyzing response regarding this theme, the researcher determined that comments pertained to both the TOPS tool itself, and the process of identification using TOPS. In reflecting on whether each comment referred to tool or

process, it became evident that these two are closely intertwined. Because the TOPS is a tool to document a process, it is often difficult to separate issues with one versus the other. Three out of five panel members commented specifically on the tool. These types of responses referred to the “verbiage” or “categories” on the TOPS or compared it to another form. Four out of five panel members referred to using the tool within the process. These comments referred to the “number” of forms that might need to be filled out, considering the “period of time.” While five total comments referred to the tool, eight referred to incorporating the tool into the process. Panel members expressed “worry” about the amount of time it would take to complete a number of TOPS forms. The concept of time was emphasized particularly when panel members perceived that the tool would need to be completed for a large number of students.

Theme 2: Need for Collaboration

Four out of five panel members contributed comments regarding the need for collaboration. The theme of collaboration was the most frequently discussed concept. Within the theme of collaboration, the need for training was considered a type of collaboration. A panel member first introduced this theme after the moderator asked about the panel member’s feelings regarding the identification process after adding the TOPS component. Once the topic of training was introduced, the moderator checked for clarification with the member by stating “So are you saying that you would like to see people who fill this out have training in giftedness?” Other panel members subsequently added perspectives regarding this theme. Panel members reintroduced this theme when the moderator later asked panel members how they would have liked to see TOPS

implemented, and what recommendations they had to improve use of the tool. Below are excerpts from panel members:

Panel Member #1:

(a) I almost would be interested to see this filled out by several different teachers coming into the classrooms... It would be interesting to see if certain kids keep popping up for different people... (b) That's why I think it would be interesting to see what other people kind of gather from it.

Panel Member #2:

(a) My one question is, how much training does the bilingual teacher have in gifted students identification? ... They may fill it out differently without going through the GES and having deeper knowledge of the advanced thinkers. (b) At least have in depth conversations [with bilingual teachers] about what it looks like to be creative thinkers. (c) I don't think it needs to be a full three hour seminar class but at least some conversations, as to this,... but at least conversations with the teacher. (d) As #1 had mentioned earlier, maybe outside observers in conjunction with the classroom teacher. I don't think it should be solely outside because as #4 has indicated it's important for the classroom teacher to have that input and their daily contact with their student is invaluable. (e) Could that possibly be their subject areas, for example the music or the PE ... (f) I think one of the important things that if we are going to use it, I like the multiple eyes, whether it's multiple eyes in the homeroom or multiple eyes meaning the specialist teachers. (g) ... I could do it on the few that I identify in my class but I let the gifted specialist know, that these are the ones I have done, maybe she

comes in and observes that, and because I found it pop, then those are the ones the specialist teacher looks at so maybe like another layer... when we pick our couple and then we send them to others if possible. (h) And that will be interesting if multiple people in multiple environments in multiple ways ...

Panel Member #4:

I think with teachers collaborating, tweaking out, this kids is always getting under my skin about something, well, Why? What is it that they're doing? Would tease out a lot of the abilities or strengths you are talking about.

Panel member #5:

I also stress the point that #1 made to talking about the difference, teachers knowing the difference between what high achievers look like and that more out of the box thinkers. I think there are many experienced teachers who still don't have that clarification.

Four out of five panel members provided comments related to a desire for more collaboration. Panel members referred to collaboration in three different ways. Two out of the five panel members referred to each of these types of collaboration. One conception of collaboration included use of multiple raters when completing TOPS forms. This topic was introduced most frequently in discussions. Panel members discussed how other non-academic subject areas teacher as well as other specialist such as gifted teachers could assist the teacher with observations that would contribute to completing TOPS forms. Another conception of collaboration included conversations between teachers and/or specialists for feedback while completing TOPS forms. Finally,

panel members introduced the idea that classroom teachers needed more training in issues related to giftedness.

Theme 3: Differentiating Between Gifted Versus Other Learners

Another theme that emerged in the dialogue between panel members was the difference between gifted students and other types of learners. Four out of five panel members contributed comments that related to this theme. Panel members mostly discussed aspects of this theme after being asked what their feelings were about adding TOPS to the identification process. Some panel members also discussed this theme when asked whether TOPS affected their perception regarding the ability of some of the students, and whether TOPS would change their mind in certain circumstances. Aspects of the theme were brought up again when some panel members responded to being asked to rate the usefulness of TOPS for Hispanic ELL students on a scale from 1-10. (Two panel members rated it an 8, and one rated it a 4). Below are excerpts from panel members:

Panel member #1:

(a) I mean a lot of teachers who haven't taken the GES (Gifted Education Seminar) you know, confuse the high achievers with the gifted. So sometimes they are immediately drawn to those kids and those are the ones that they want to write about, but you know we are looking for the kids who don't always look perfectly always in the classroom. (b) Especially if they are *not* performing. (In response to another comment regarding meeting ELL student needs in gifted programming.)

Panel Member #2:

(a) ...or at least have in depth conversations about what it looks like to be a creative thinker... Are there things on there that, engages in off task behaviors in their own type of thing, and is that quote unquote rewarded? Their negative that could be perceived as negative behaviors in a regular ed. setting but are maybe a little more indicators as you are gifted, you know in their own thing. (b) But you could tell that they were of a divergent type thinker...I think this helps to get at those different thinkers that a STAR or CogAT does not get to, and can never get to ...if the kid is tested in English. (c) You know both this discussion and the CogAT is showing me their ability to perform as opposed to just their performance. (d) This student will have different needs different from the regular ed. kids they are with in the regular ed. classroom too...as far as identification goes. (in response to meeting ELL needs in gifted.)

Panel Member #4:

(a) I think would tease out a lot of the abilities or strengths that you are talking about. You know negative versus positive. Teacher pleasing, you know. (b) I think it highlights the different things that you see about particular students...It's like they really do something unique in another area. It just highlights it, and I think you feel better putting a check there, that kid who may have a totally different way of doing things and that doesn't come out on a score. (c) It gives voice to exactly what you are talking about. Where I am unable to express what this student wants to do, but I now have a tool that I am able to use that gives voice to that.

Panel Member #5:

I also stress the point that #1 made to talking about the difference, teachers knowing the difference between what high achievers look like and that more out of the box thinkers. I think even there are many experienced teachers who still don't have that clarification.

Within the theme regarding differentiation between gifted versus other learners, four out of five panel members specifically referred to some characteristic of gifted students or compared the term gifted to other characteristics sometimes confused with giftedness. Terms panel members used to describe giftedness included "out of the box thinking," "creative thinker," "divergent thinker," and "different way of doing things." Other kinds of behaviors panel members referred to in distinguishing gifted from other types of students included "teacher pleasing" or "high achievers." One panel member also distinguished between "ability to perform" and "just their performance."

Theme 4: Fairness of Process

A majority of panel members (three out of five) also discussed issues regarding fairness. Most panel members expressed their perspective after being asked whether using TOPS changed their perception regarding the ability of some of the students. Below are excerpts from panel members:

Panel Member #1:

(a) I think we can have this conversation for every kids that we talk about. I mean this student has, but so many of the kids have, you know, have another language listed, or things that are not listed, that we could argue, they all have this baggage that given that, and they are still performing at a certain, its hard then start getting

into all these little conversations. That's why we have norms. (b) I think it gives them something that everyone else doesn't have if we have a whole set of information that we are using to identify them that we are not using to identify anyone else. So not everyone we see, we have seen some of them don't have their SIGS scores or you know, but everyone has had the same opportunity to have all those scores on there, you know whether or not they've made it there is another story.

Panel Member #2:

(a) But this student will have needs different from the regular kids they are with in the regular ed. classroom too. And again maybe the question is what is the best placement, but as far as identification. (b) I'm wondering if then it's done on everyone, does it then become something that then has to be normed by a subgroup? Because now we are looking at students that have different opportunities and different vocabulary and things like that and their ability to express their wants needs thoughts and ideas will pop more than the underrepresented group that we are looking at.

Panel Member #3:

(a) And just like a specialist, I am concerned in the sense of how would I meet that child's needs if the CogAT was administered in Spanish and they excelled on it, but everything I am going to deliver is going to be in English from here on out. So that would be a concern of mine...The cogAT score...It's already normed for that subgroup already, but then we turn around and we put them into a classroom where they are not going to receive that bilingual crutch if they need it. An IEP

student might receive an aide if that was in there, or receive a written plan, and I wonder if there's I don't know, something I'm thinking about in our district, like what do we do to support kids after? (b) I see the benefit for all kids who we are on the fence with to have this conversation with... There are so many kids that came through with strong qualitative data who got weeded out because they didn't have a STAR score, propensity score, and I feel like we could have looked just as strongly at all the qualitative data that the teachers and parents wrote, in the same manner that we've been looking at, with notations that we have been looking at the TOPS card. So I would like to give... for the integrity of the program we would have to do this for, with all students, right? If we move forward would this be something for all or only underrepresented? (c) I feel like anyone we are on the fence for I would want to do something like this and see ... (d) So you take a 3-6 week window and you have to observe your whole class, and I just think, I don't even know if that's a fair snapshot... I am very surprised there are not other names, in 6 weeks of time, have not showed up at least somewhere.

Three out of five panel members contributed responses that related to fairness.

Within the theme of fairness, panel members discussed several aspects of fairness. One panel member suggested the process for completing TOPS might not be fair. Two panel members suggested that incorporating TOPS only for Hispanic ELL students, rather than all students was not fair. Another panel member responded to these suggestions with an opposite view. Panel members not only discussed whether the process of using TOPS was fair during identification, but also whether placing ELL students into the current gifted program was fair.

Theme 5: Subjectivity of Process

Panel members introduced the theme of subjectivity in different ways. While discussing the need for teacher training, a panel member first introduced the idea that results could be dependent on the experiences and expertise of the teacher completing it. This led to other comments regarding teacher bias and effort. The researcher conceptualized this perceived lack of consistency as subjectivity. Three out of five panel members contributed comments related to this theme. Below are excerpts from panel members:

Panel Member #1:

(a) ..because I think that sometimes its subjective and maybe I don't know everyone has kind of a different view on what these things could look like, and it would be just interesting to see if certain kids keep popping up for different people. (b) I think when the classroom teacher might get to that in January or February, they've already kind of got their mind made up about kids that you know they are seeing...cuz I do think that by that time they already have this idea in their head about whose maybe on the gifted side. (c) It depends on how thoughtful the teacher is being. If they are looking at this as a job they've got those kids in mind, those kids they will fill it out for, but if they are sitting down and really reading ahead of time, then it may kind of spark some ideas for certain kids that they might not have noticed or really thought of before. (d) Trying to take some of the one person subjectivity out of it, and seeing if that's being... seen across the board.

Panel Member #2:

It depends on the expertise, the length of time, if the teachers had only one or two other classes in years past versus fifteen. It's hard to identify out of the box thinking if you've only seen a few.

Panel Member #3:

Like you said, the difference between someone who says its just my job and put a few check marks here or there, versus someone who is really looking at this carefully and being really thoughtful about a kid. I worry that I don't know what kind of data we would get. I think there would be, it would vary greatly across the district.

Three out of five panel members discussed the issue of subjectivity. Some panel members felt teachers' personal experiences including training and amount of effort or motivation could affect how they completed the TOPS forms. One panel member suggested that different people might have different interpretations of the characteristics specified in TOPS. Another panel member introduced the idea of bias when explaining how before teachers complete TOPS forms, they have already formed preconceived notions about students.

After analysis of the focus group transcript, the researcher identified five themes in which the majority of panel members contributed responses. These emerging themes shed light on what panel members felt to be important to them. The five themes that emerged were: (1) differentiating gifted learners from other learners, (2) a need for collaboration, (3) time, effort and difficulty of use, (4) fairness of process, and (5) subjectivity of process.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the varied background experiences of the adults involved in the study through results of the background survey. A relevant finding included the lower levels of training in second language acquisition in comparison to multicultural training and giftedness. The researcher also analyzed the number and types of second grade students reviewed and identified by the panel. The researcher found that only one Hispanic ELL student was identified as gifted. This student was identified without the use of TOPS. The percentage of students identified in the Hispanic ELL category was lower than for other categories including the separate categories of Hispanic or ELL. The researcher also described observations of the panel members' attempts to identify gifted Hispanic ELL students. Members of the panel did not change any decisions made prior to the use of TOPS. However further analysis of responses indicated that TOPS increased confidence in their decisions. The researcher then introduced the themes that emerged through coding of the focus group transcript. The five themes that emerged included: (1) time, effort and difficulty of implementation (2) need for collaboration, (3) ability to differentiate between gifted and other types of learners, (4) fairness of the identification process, and (5) subjectivity of the process. The researcher found that panel members expressed most concern in the process of identifying gifted Hispanic ELL students, rather than the tool itself. Next the researcher will discuss the relationship between these themes and how they relate to the research questions that guided this study. Results will be compared to existing research in the field.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore educators' perceptions regarding TOPS while answering the following questions: (1) How did incorporating the TOPS influence the gifted assessment panel's identification of Hispanic ELL students as gifted? (2) What were the gifted assessment panel's attitudes regarding use of TOPS in the identification process? (3) What were the gifted assessment panel's views of the gifted assessment process for Hispanic ELL students? In this chapter the researcher discusses the importance of the study in terms of how results contribute to the understanding of underrepresentation of Hispanic ELL students in gifted programming. The research points to perceived barriers to identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students as well as practices that are perceived to help overcome these barriers. The researcher synthesizes and interprets results from three sources. These sources include the transcript from focus group discussion, background information gathered through survey analysis, as well as observation and documentation of process. The researcher also discusses relevant literature and how it relates to interpretations of results. Finally, researcher also discusses limitations of the study and implications for future research and practice.

Importance of the Study

Findings indicate that although TOPS may have helped panel members feel more confident about their decisions, it did not increase identification of gifted Hispanic ELL

students. This may have been due to the mixed attitudes regarding the incorporation of TOPS into the process of identifying gifted Hispanic ELL students. Panel members discussed five main themes reflecting their attitudes regarding TOPS. The themes that emerged were: (1) time effort and difficulty of use, (2) need for collaboration, (3) ability to differentiate gifted from other learners, (4) fairness of process, and (5) subjectivity of process. Results point to the need for more training and collaboration for more productive use of TOPS. Research questions will be discussed below.

Question #1

How did incorporating the TOPS influence the gifted assessment panel's identification of Hispanic ELL students as gifted? This question explores what role TOPS had in the identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students. In the small sample size and under the circumstances of this study, no students that were not identified through the district's existing process were identified with TOPS. That is, there was no increase in identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students.

Through observation of the identification panel's process of making decisions, the researcher found that panel members did not change their mind about any of the students whose data included TOPS. The TOPS did not influence the identification panel's decision for any of the students that had not met other norm-based qualifications. However, this result cannot be generalized to other contexts and may have been due to conditions specific to this study. When interpreting the results to this question, background information such as limited participation by bilingual teachers and a resulting small number of TOPS forms reviewed, should be considered. As previously mentioned, only three out of six bilingual/ELL teachers actually administered TOPS. This resulted in

only four TOPS forms being submitted to the panel. Panel members reviewed only four TOPS forms.

It is possible that the perception of time, effort, and difficulty of implementing TOPS, as identified by the panel, was a barrier to teachers actually completing TOPS. In the literature, Borland (2014) described portfolio assessment as being complicated, time consuming, and requiring a significant amount of teacher professional development. It could be that initial attitudes regarding time effort and difficulty, coupled with the limited amount of training and support for bilingual teachers, and affected their level of participation. Due to these factors, teachers asked to complete TOPS may have perceived the tool to be “overwhelming” as predicted by the panel. These themes/barriers may have affected the bilingual teacher’s willingness to complete these forms.

Despite no increase in identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students, in the analysis of focus group responses, the researcher did find that a majority of panel members felt that TOPS improved their confidence in their decision. TOPS was perceived as adding some value, in that panel members felt more comfortable with their decisions. TOPS was described as helping to identify “abilities,” “strengths,” and “divergent type thinkers.” For the student placed on “watch” panel members felt more comfortable after reviewing TOPS, and continued self-questioning of their decision to give this student an opportunity to participate in aspects of gifted programming was alleviated. One panel member expressed that TOPS tipped the scale in the direction of official identification (rather than “watch”). She mentioned she might have wanted to “push a little more” for the student placed on “watch.” However other panel members did not agree with an official level of identification. Nonetheless TOPS may have prevented

other panel members from reverting to a decision where the student would be closed off to the opportunity for participation. Although the one Hispanic ELL student placed on “watch” was not officially categorized as gifted, it is possible that after participating in the gifted program on a trial basis he will be identified in the future.

To conclude, in this small sample and under the circumstances of the study, no students that were not identified through the districts existing process would have been identified with TOPS. The panel may have perceived that TOPS provided more evidence for a decision they had already made. One panel member suggested they might have wanted to push a little more for the one student to be formally identified rather than identified as on “watch.” However, for the panel studied, there was no increase in identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students. The exploration of panel members’ attitudes helps further elucidate why there was no effect on identification.

Question #2 and #3

What were the gifted assessment panel’s attitudes regarding use of TOPS in the identification process? What were the gifted assessment panel’s views of the gifted assessment process for Hispanic ELL students? This researcher found that it was difficult to separate attitudes regarding use of TOPS and attitudes regarding the gifted assessment process because they were intertwined. Therefore attitudes regarding both tool and process will be discussed together. Panel members in this study expressed a variety of attitudes regarding TOPS. In the focus group, panel members expressed attitudes through the discussion of five main topics. These topics included: (1) time effort and difficulty of use, (2) need for collaboration, (3) ability to differentiate gifted from other learners, (4) fairness of process, and (5) subjectivity of process. Figure 1

shows a conceptualization of how these themes are related and identifies some implications for future research.

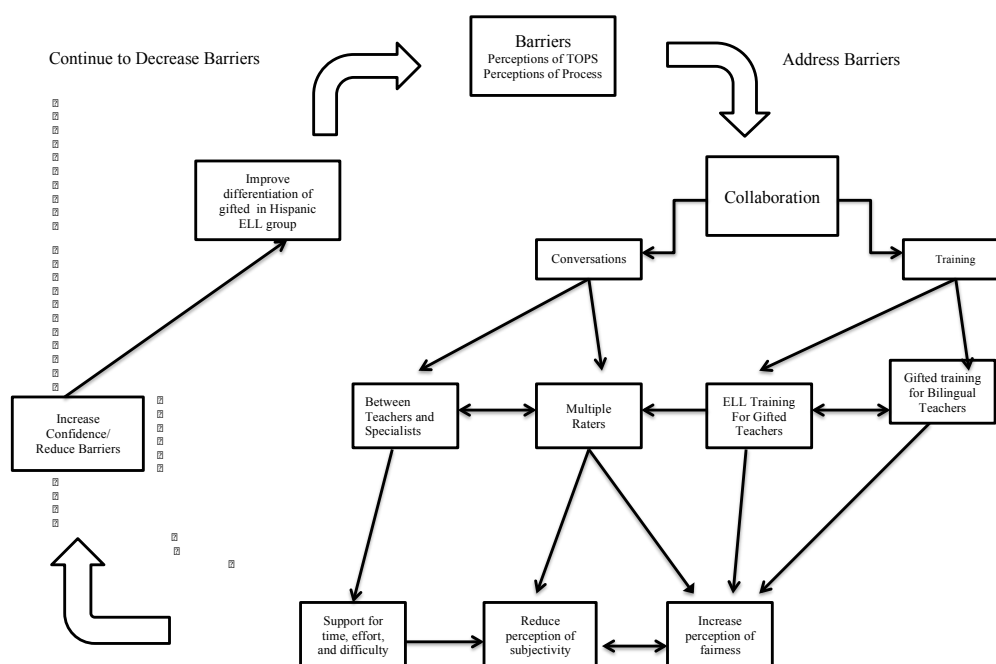


Figure 1. Relationships between themes

Note. Panel members identified barriers and ways to address these barriers. Relationships between barriers/solutions and panel members' perceptions are illustrated. The curved arrows show the recursive nature of the process.

The results of this small study were not as positive as results obtained through an exploratory study by Harradine et al. (2014). Within a program evaluation, Harradine et al. also examined teachers' perceptions regarding the use TOPS. Rather than a focus group, Harradine et al. used a survey to collect and analyze perceptions. Harradine et al. found that 20% of teachers reported TOPS having "revolutionized" the way they looked

at students, 56% reported they noticed students they might have otherwise missed, and 33.5% reported it helped them recognize and respond to students' needs. In the current study, panel members did not indicate that they noticed students they might have otherwise missed. In contrast to the study by Harradine et al. in this study, within the theme of time effort and difficulty of use, panel members expressed some negative attitudes regarding use of TOPS. Panel members perceived some of the same weaknesses of alternative assessments that Borland (2014) has noted. For example, Borland noted that alternative assessments were less efficient and less technically sophisticated. Panel members "worried" about how much time incorporation of TOPS would take. They also indicated concern regarding fairness and subjectivity. The focus group transcript contained more information regarding attitudes of TOPS and the identification process than about whether the tool increased confidence.

As mentioned, the researcher found that attitudes regarding use of TOPS were closely intertwined with attitudes regarding process of identification. Because TOPS is a tool to document a process it is often difficult to separate issues with one versus the other. Panel members held different perspectives as to whether the tool facilitated or hindered the process, Just as many panel members (four out of five) made positive comments regarding the TOPS tools as negative comments. Positive comments referred to "verbiage," "categories," and "teasing" out characteristics of giftedness. Negative comments referred more to the amount of time it would take to administer TOPS, particularly for a large number of students. Thus, the negative attitudes referred to the tool within the context of the process. Furthermore the overall total number of negative comments made regarding the process was greater than three other categories including

positive comments regarding tool, positive comments regarding process and negative comments regarding tool. More panel members made negative comments (four out of five) regarding the process of identification than positive comments (three out of five). As mentioned, panel members “worried” about the implementation of TOPS in the actual process for identification of Hispanic ELL students.

In addition to the amount of time, effort and difficulty of implementing TOPS, panel members also perceived of lack of fairness and too much subjectivity in the process as barriers. In the panel members’ perception of lack of fairness, they described use of TOPS as giving Hispanic ELL students an advantage over other non-Hispanic students (because TOPS was not used for non Hispanic ELL students). While the literature points to how assessment is not fair to CLD students including Hispanic ELL students, when using TOPS, panel members reversed the concept of fairness and perceived the assessment process as not being fair to students that were not Hispanic ELL. Figure 1 shows how perception of TOPS and perception of process are initial barriers to identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students. Panel members perceived collaboration as a strategy to overcome barriers of subjectivity and certain aspects of fairness that they perceived were embedded in the process.

To address the issues of time effort and difficulty as well as fairness and subjectivity of the process, panel members in the focus group provided the theme of collaboration. Their perception of collaboration included both more general conversations as well as training (see Figure 1). Panel members mentioned the need for collaboration between teachers and specialists and also suggested the use of multiple raters to address the barrier of subjectivity. Within the concept of training, panel

members perceived the need for classroom teachers to have more training in gifted education. The themes of training and collaboration are consistent with studies in which researchers such as Harris et al. (2009) suggested poor communication between gifted specialists and ELL teachers was a barrier to identifying gifted ELL students. Coleman et al. (2012) also stressed the importance of collaboration within the context of gifted services. One gifted teacher seemed to have an epiphany when discussing a need for collaboration. She stated “I really haven’t collaborated – that’s probably because I don’t have any ELL students right now,” realizing that lack of collaboration may be due to the fact that bilingual students have not been identified as gifted.

Within the process of gifted identification for Hispanic ELL students, panel members expressed concern over the level of training that bilingual classroom teachers had in gifted education. Panel member’s current perceptions point to the need for implementation of more gifted training for bilingual teachers. Ford (2013) agreed that teachers need to know about both gifted behaviors and behaviors related to specific cultures. Providing bilingual teachers with more training in gifted education may help increase panel’s perceptions of fairness. If panel members feel bilingual teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable about gifted characteristics, they may view TOPS results as more valid or reliable.

While panel members mentioned a need for training in the area of gifted education, no mention was made of gifted teachers needing training regarding issues related to multiculturalism or second language acquisition. These results are at variance with research by Harradine et al. (2014). Harradine et al. studied what teachers perceived to be barriers to identifying strengths for CLD students without use of TOPS, and found

that although no single barrier stood out as a primary reason, within the Latino subgroup, oral language skill was the most critical. Lack of mention regarding training in ELL related issues, may indicate a lack of awareness regarding training limitations. Data from background questionnaires confirmed that compared to the gifted identification panel, bilingual teachers may not have as extensive training in gifted issues. However, the gifted teachers and classroom teachers (who tend to make up the panels) have even less training in ELL issues than bilingual teachers had in gifted education. Literature suggests teacher's perceptions may be affected by a teacher's background including lack of multicultural experiences (Ford et al., 2004; Ford, 2013). Panel members described themselves as white, with limited training and experiences in multicultural education. None described English being their second language. It is possible that the panel member's background may have affected their perceptions. Several researchers have suggested multicultural education as a way to address under-identification (Ford & Harris 1999; Ford et al., 2004; Ford et al., 2008).

Rhodes et al. (2005) reminded us of the effects of second language acquisition on performance. Yet, panel members' comments regarding importance of norms suggest that panel members may not be aware of issues related to interpreting norms for this population. Gifted teachers expressed it was not fair to add this component for only Hispanic ELL students and not for other students. These panel members regarded Hispanic students as having an unfair advantage due to the extra information collected on them. In the literature, Obi et al. (2014) described how using multiple sources provides both objective and subjective information which can be useful in identification. Moreover, Borland (2014) suggested using a variety of measures lends itself to a more

clinical approach to evaluation. However, McBee et al. (2014) reminded practitioners that using a larger amount of measures does not necessarily improve identification, unless practitioners examine how they are used. Panel member's perceptions indicate that consideration needs to be given not just to TOPS as a tool, but also *how* it is used during identification. Panel members may need training to become more aware of how second language affects performance as well as its place in the assessment process. Esquierdo and Arreguin-Anderson (2012) noted that education regarding socio-linguistic factors would be particularly useful for teachers working with Hispanic students. Notwithstanding, a review of their backgrounds suggests that this particular group of panel members had limited education and training in the area of socio-linguistic factors. Ergo training in second language acquisition may be needed.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between aspects of collaboration that stem from conversations and training. Figure 1 also shows the relationship between aspects of collaboration and perceptions of panel members. Panel members' perceptions of fairness may change not only if panel members perceive bilingual teachers to have better training in gifted education, but also if panel members better understand issues related to second language learning as it relates to assessment. Future studies will need to be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between training in these areas and perceptions of fairness. If ELL teachers receive gifted training and gifted teachers receive training in second language acquisition, collaboration between the two areas of specialty could improve. Harris et al. (2009) identified poor communication between gifted specialists and teachers of other populations such as ELL as a barrier to identification and explained how limited communication interferes with a teacher's ability to know a student in

multiple settings. Additional training may also lead to more consistent outcomes for multiple raters. Future research could determine if the quality of collaboration improves after more in-depth training.

Figure 1 also shows how the theme of subjectivity was related to the issue fairness. Panel members perceived a need to use multiple raters in order to reduce subjectivity. As mentioned, it is possible that panel members would consider the tool fairer, if the amount of perceived subjectivity could be reduced through collaboration, particularly through use of multiple raters. However other aspects of fairness that panel members discussed suggest that some issues related to ELL learners may not be well understood. As mentioned, these aspects could be addressed through training (see Figure 1).

Another manner in which teachers can use collaboration to address barriers is by providing support through collaboration to those teachers who perceive the tool to be time consuming and difficult to implement. Support from other teachers and specialists provided through collaboration may change the negative perception. As mentioned, Borland (2014) suggested this type of assessment could be complicated and time consuming and require a significant amount of teacher professional development. Other relevant literature (Harris et al., 2009) suggests teachers are interested in finding consensus in their practice through collaboration. Future research is needed to determine if increased levels of collaboration change perceptions regarding time, effort and difficulty.

It is possible that by implementing more collaboration through conversations and specific training, the Midwestern Suburban District can address barriers of time effort

and difficulty as well as perceived unfairness and subjectivity. If barriers are reduced and confidence in differentiation of gifted learners through TOPS is increased, panel members may feel better about the process of identification for gifted Hispanic ELL students. Reduction of these barriers could improve TOPS ability to differentiate gifted students from other learners within the Hispanic ELL subgroup. As shown in Figure 1, the process is recursive and would require ongoing efforts and evaluation. Future research is needed to study the results of these efforts.

Also within the context of fairness, panel members presented another unexpected issue. Gifted teachers expressed concern that the ELL students might not be best served by placement in gifted programming. They expressed apprehension that gifted teachers might not be able to meet these student's needs in the program, as it currently exists. This hesitancy is consistent with literature from several researchers who suggested the need for more supports for CLD students for both access of curriculum and retention in gifted programming (Briggs et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2008; Tomlinson et al. 2004; Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2014). Borland (2014) also cautioned that the identification process must be tied to the definition of giftedness and the types of programs in the district. Regarding this issue, panel members did not generate any potential solutions to this barrier. Gifted teachers perceptions suggest that the Midwestern Suburban School District may want to evaluate the type of instruction and supports in the program for which Hispanic ELL students are being identified.

Finally, it is possible that some level of deficit thinking affected panel members' perceptions. Valencia (2010) warned that educators might not recognize the presence of deficit thinking. Panel members referring to cultural differences as "baggage" is an

example of labeling differences as deficits and suggests that some level of deficit thinking may exist. Valencia also stated that educators need to be aware of how policies related to methods of measurement and segregation affect how CLD groups are viewed. Ovando (2013) pointed out how immigration and bilingual education can also affect how educators view and/or accept students. Results suggest that gifted teachers seem hesitant to place Hispanic ELL students that are currently in bilingual programs in gifted programming. A panel member expressed concern they would not have a “bilingual crutch” in gifted programming. It’s possible that lower expectations are at work. Researchers have noted how these lower expectations can result in self-fulfilling prophecies (Guyll et al., 2010). For English language learners, research has shown how different types of bilingual programs affect the trajectory of their language learning (Collier, 1989). Given the research regarding various types of programming, it would be interesting to know how gifted programming affects this trajectory. Future research is needed to determine how this trajectory compares to others. Panel member’s reservations regarding placing students that demonstrate ability, yet through standardized tests are not currently “performing,” places students with high potential to learn in less challenging instruction and environments. Results of this study suggest that more training and collaboration are needed to mitigate these tendencies.

Returning to the study by Coleman et al. (2014), it should be noted that teachers reported that with TOPS, they could more readily recognize high potential students from CLD backgrounds. However, this perception occurred after three years of implementation. Because this is only the first year of implementation in the Midwestern Suburban District, it is possible that after addressing the barriers discussed, better

identification will occur over time. More research is needed regarding how perceptions, as well as the number of identified students, changes over time, once perceived barriers are addressed.

To summarize, panel members generated several themes that have also been noted by other researchers as related to the under-identification of gifted Hispanic ELL students. Panel members' perceptions of TOPS and the identification process may currently serve as a barrier to identification of this population. Comments suggest some deficit thinking and lack of awareness regarding limitations of training specific to ELL issues may contribute to these negative perceptions. Similar to other researchers, panel members recognized collaboration as a tool to improve fairness and reduce subjectivity. Additional collaboration and training may also improve perceptions regarding time effort and difficulty of TOPS implementation in the process. Implementing and evaluating effects of collaboration is a recursive process that works to improve identification.

Limitations of the Study

There were certain limitations to this study including the small sample size, and limited participation of bilingual teachers. Because the Midwestern Suburban School District is small, information regarding use of TOPS could only be collected from one identification panel. As previously mentioned, although the panel consisted of five members, two members left before all questions had been asked, further decreasing participation level.

Furthermore, there may be limitations due to the focus group's composition. Although some bilingual teachers completed TOPS forms, no bilingual teachers were part of the identification panel. Therefore a sample of perspectives from bilingual teachers

regarding use of the TOPS was not included in the focus group discussion. This particular subgroup could have provided additional insight into use of TOPS.

In terms of completing the TOPS for the panel, the lack of participation of half of the second grade bilingual teachers in the district also impacted results. This study did not investigate the perceptions of teachers that actually completed TOPS, but limited its scope to educators interpreting TOPS. As mentioned, omitting perceptions from this subgroup limits the results of the study.

Finally, as with other qualitative studies, results are limited in scope to the district that was studied. The researcher did not intend to generalize results to other school districts or settings. Rather, the results of this case study are intended to determine needs of the district studied and provide information useful for improving methods of gifted identification for the specific subpopulation of Hispanic ELL students.

Implications for Future Study

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of educators interpreting TOPS during a gifted identification process. The researcher identified several other questions that could be addressed in the future. First, there is the recursive nature of programmatic evaluation. Researchers could study different aspects of collaboration and training and determine whether implementation has an effect on perceptions and/or actual identification results. Secondly, perceptions of the teachers utilizing TOPS could be studied. Panel members speculated regarding what it would be like for a teacher to use TOPS for assessment, without actually having experience administering it. It would be interesting to conduct a focus group with the teachers that actually did administer the TOPS, as opposed to just the panel members that used it for the final decision-making.

This might provide more information regarding ease or difficulty of using the tool. It may also provide information regarding more specific needs for training.

In the focus group, panel members expressed the need for bilingual teachers to have training in gifted education. Future research could determine whether bilingual teachers' perception of training needs was similar or different to the panel's perceptions. For example, would bilingual teachers perceive the need for panel members to obtain more training regarding English language learners? Future research could also determine how to raise awareness of ELL issues that impact identification. Research could also focus on whether panel members' perceptions regarding use of tools and use of norms changes after further training in ELL issues

As previously noted, several buildings did not implement TOPS during the identification process. This situation suggests a need to further explore the barriers that prevented implementation from occurring. Specific aspects of these barriers could be studied more in depth. If the teachers perceive TOPS difficult to implement, then specific strategies to overcome these barriers can be further explored. For example, were there difficulties with the timing of implementation, length of time of observations, procedures for obtaining tools, etc.? More information in this area would help determine what specific type of training is needed in regards to *how* to implement in order to overcome these barriers. In other words in addition to training regarding giftedness, or second language learning, more information is needed regarding what kind of training would improve tool use and incorporation into process.

Conclusions

This study examined perceptions of panel members who used TOPS during the identification process. The findings of this case study support the current research regarding collaboration, and underscore the importance of training within this process. Results suggest that while the Midwestern Suburban District utilizes many of the recommended practices for identification of gifted Hispanic students including use of local norms, nonverbal tests, behavior rating scales, and an attempt at using more dynamic assessments, the interpretation of non-standardized assessments may be hampered by lack of training and collaboration. Perceptions regarding subjectivity and fairness may be affected by lack of training and collaboration as well as remnants of deficit thinking. The research indicates that in the Midwestern Suburban School district, in order for TOPS to improve identification for this population, more training and collaboration needs to take place. This study also provides avenues for future study including how specific types of training and collaboration affect perceptions over time.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions by marking the appropriate boxes.

1. What is your age?

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or over

2. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

3. Please specify your ethnicity.

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American
- White
- Other

4. What is your native language?

- English
- Spanish
- Other

5. Do you speak any languages other than native language spoken in your home?

- No
- Yes

Please specify language.

6. How many years have you been teaching or the education field?

- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

7. What is the highest degree or level of schooling you have completed?

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Masters plus additional graduate courses
- Doctorate degree

8. What kind of training have you received in terms of multicultural issues?

Mark all that apply.

- Professional development provided by the school district
- Attendance at conference presentations/workshops
- A portion of an undergraduate level course dedicated to multiculturalism.
- An entire graduate level course dedicated to multiculturalism
- I have completed a group of courses culminating in a specialist endorsement/certification/minor/ etc.

9. Please describe your answers to the previous question regarding multicultural training.

10. What kind of training have you received regarding second language acquisition?

Mark all that apply.

- Professional development provided by the school district
- Attendance at conference presentations/workshops
- A portion of an undergraduate level course dedicated to second language acquisition
- An entire graduate level course dedicated to second language acquisition.
- I have completed a group of courses culminating in a specialist endorsement/certification/minor/ etc.

11. Please describe your answer to the previous question regarding second language acquisition.

12. What kinds of training have you received regarding gifted education?

Mark all that apply.

- Professional development provided by the school district
- Attendance at conference presentations/workshops
- Gifted Seminar
- A portion of an undergraduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education
- An entire Undergraduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education
- A portion of a graduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education
- An entire graduate level course dedicated to issues related to gifted education
- I have completed a group of courses culminating in a specialist endorsement/certification/minor/etc.

13. Please describe your answers to the previous question regarding gifted education training.

14. What is your title?

APPENDIX B
PREPARED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Focus Group Interview

- Introduction
- Welcome to the session
- Thank you for taking the time to provide perspectives on TOPS
- Review and explanation of process (including tape-recording)
- Explanation of confidentiality
- Assigning a number to each participant

Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

1. How did you feel about adding the TOPS for identification of gifted Hispanic students?

How did you feel about the identification process before TOPS was added?

How have your feelings about gifted identification for Hispanic students changed, if at all?

2. What did you like best about using TOPS during the gifted identification process?

3. What did you like least about using TOPS during the gifted identification process?

Do you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages why or why not?

4. How did incorporating TOPS into the identification process affect your perception regarding the ability of the students for which that data was provided?

For any particular student, were you surprised by any of the data presented through TOPS?

5. How did the TOPS affect your level of confidence when making decisions regarding eligibility for gifted services?

What particular aspects resulted in an increase or decrease in confidence level?

6. Did adding TOPS to the data you analyzed for identification change your mind about any student's eligibility for gifted services?

How so?

For how many students?

APPENDIX C
ACTUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you feel about the identification process, adding this component [TOPS]?
2. How does that compare to feelings without using this [TOPS]?
3. So are you saying that you would like to see that people who fill this out have training in giftedness? (The researcher was member checking.)
4. So do you think this tool helps get to some of that, what you are talking about?
(Members were discussing ability to differentiate between gifted learners and other learners.)
5. So you think by the time they get to this, they have already formed a bias?
(Researcher was member checking after panel member described this idea.)
6. So what did you like best about it [TOPS] and what did you like least about it [TOPS]?
7. What do the rest of you think?
8. Do you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
9. Is there a consensus that the disadvantages are too hard to overcome or is it worth it?
10. Does anyone else want to weigh in on that?
11. Does incorporating TOPS affect your perception regarding the ability of some of these [Hispanic bilingual ELL] students?
12. Do you think TOPS might change your mind in certain circumstances?
13. For these particular students, [reviewed by this panel] was there any surprises in terms of the data presented through TOPS?
14. Did it change your thoughts at all?
15. How would you have liked to see this implemented?

16. What recommendations would you have for improving the use of this tool?
17. Anything else?
18. How do the rest of you feel about that? Why or why wouldn't you?
19. What would be the pros and cons of that? (These two questions were asked after panel members introduced the idea of using TOPS for all students, not just Hispanic ELL students).
20. Anybody else on that point?
21. So what do you think the value of TOPS is compared to some of the other tools that are already in place? (After panel member compared TOPS to other tool used during identification).
22. Any other thoughts on that?
23. From a scale of 1-10 with 10 being extremely useful, how useful do you find the TOPS to be – I want to stick with Hispanic ELL students – I know we have talked about using it for other populations but just for Hispanic ELL students how useful would you rate it from a scale of 1-10?
24. Of all the things that we discussed what do you feel is the most important?
25. It sounds like more collaboration between people, is that what you mean by that? (Member checking).
26. Is there anything we missed? Any points someone would want to bring up that we haven't really discussed yet?
27. Did I miss anything in the summary? (after member checking)

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VITA

Barb Martin was born in Peru and lived in Mexico as a child. Her mother's roots were in Spain where she continues to have extended family. Barb completed her bachelor of arts in the Teaching of Spanish from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She began her career teaching in the Chicago Public School system, first as a bilingual teacher and then as a high school Spanish teacher. While teaching high school, she pursued her Masters of Education and specialist degree in school psychology through Loyola University Chicago. She completed her internship at Morton East High School under the guidance of Dr. Rosario Pesce. After completing her school psychology degree, she began working as a bilingual school psychologist for Woodridge District 68. During the years when Barb's children were young, she worked as a contractual bilingual psychologist, providing services to a variety of districts in the Chicago metropolitan area. She also worked part time for the coop LADSE in their Early Childhood department. Later, she returned full time to Woodridge District 68. Currently, Barb is a certified bilingual school psychologist in Woodridge Illinois. Barb returned to Loyola University Chicago to complete her Doctor of Education degree in School Psychology.

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