PARENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH GIFTED IDENTIFICATION AND

PROGRAMMING

by

CASSIE NG

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this investigation was parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming obtained through individual interviews with three mothers (Peggy, Carrie and Sharon) of gifted children. The results of the study encompassed parent experiences regarding identification, programming, and perceptions of what it means to be gifted. Regarding the identification process itself, all the parents wanted a more transparent process, as all two were not told of what was happening during testing and had to rely on their children's memories of what had happened.

The research revealed two results regarding gifted programming. In Peggy's case, the gifted program seemed disorganized and unstructured for her son, Darren. However, both Carrie and Sharon found the gifted program beneficial for their daughters, with Jenn (Carrie's daughter) newly entering the program and Rachel (Sharon's daughter) having experienced the gifted program (Enhanced Learning Class) for two years. Sharon also noticed differences between the two classes regarding increased communication with Rachel's teacher in the gifted program. In previous years, Sharon remembered only being able to speak to teachers during rushed and generally uninformative parent-teacher interview nights.

Both Sharon and Carrie saw more positives than negatives in the gifted program and believed that the program had benefitted their daughters. In contrast, Peggy chose not to enter her son into the gifted program and still stands by her decision. She believed not being in the program had helped mold her son into the man he was today.

I was afforded the chance to listen to parents share with me their hopes, fears, and worries about their children. The research granted me a glimpse into the world of adolescents through their parents' perspectives. Ultimately, this study reminded me that it is vital that we listen to parents and try to see things from their point of view. Listening to these parents' stories has allowed me to see their views more clearly and has reinforced the need to ensure that we never underestimate the value of listening to people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a student, I was tested as possibly being gifted in Grade 3. I remember thinking that I didn't want to be gifted as it meant I would be separated from my best friends. The four of us did everything together so the thought of being separated from the others was the greatest fear in my young life. I recall my teacher taking six students from my class to the staff room where we were interviewed by a lady who asked us questions about school. I answered the questions to the best of my ability and then was ushered into the office the next day. Here I talked to another lady who asked me to do some math problems, read a book passage, and answer questions based on the text. The school sent a letter to my parents a week later informing them that I was not gifted.

As a teacher, I had a chance to teach both gifted and regular students in drama. The major difference between the classes was the depth of material covered. The materials for the gifted students were generally much more challenging in comparison to that for the regular students. However, as a teacher who was committed to meeting the needs of every child, my frustration escalated as I often observed gifted students in my class who had high potential not demonstrating their capability in their daily work. The majority of the students who were identified as gifted rushed through their work with minimal effort. With good intentions, I spent hours each week developing extension activities in drama, but the gifted students were still more motivated to race through the assignments than to demonstrate creativity or innovative thinking in their answers. I struggled with meeting their needs with so many other demands on teacher time.

Although this experience proved challenging, I still reflect on it as a fond experience that helped me develop greater flexibility and adaptability to addressing students' needs.

As a master's student, I worked hard to find a topic on which to focus on for my project and remembered my time teaching gifted students fondly. I also thought of my many close friends who were either in a gifted program or chose not to enter such a program. I therefore decided to examine gifted identification and programming. I wanted to understand why some parents chose to enter their children into these programs while others declined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to understand the process of gifted identification and how different gifted program options operate from the perspectives of three parents with gifted children. To address this purpose, I posed the following research questions: How are students identified as gifted? How do gifted programs work as perceived by parents? The main purpose of my study was to understand the experiences of parents of gifted students on gifted identification and programming because, when researching the topic, I found little research regarding their perspectives.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of its emphasis on gifted identification, gifted programming, and parental perspectives. Identification is often problematic as educators struggle in identifying all gifted students. This struggle is compounded by the fact that there are various criteria when addressing gifted learners. In Ontario, identification is

commonly done by using standardized tests like the prominent identification tests such as the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Fourth Edition (WISC-IV), or Stanford–Binet (Fifth Edition) to identify giftedness in students (Association of Bright Children [ABC], 2011). These tests are usually undertaken after teacher recommendations or parent requests that the student be tested. Proper identification is vital to ensure that all students receive appropriate academic challenges to succeed.

Gifted learners need appropriate program options to provide for the different ways that gifted learners learn (consistent challenge, daily talent development, independent work, depth and complexity, limited drill and review; Rogers, 2007). Students are more likely to experience passion in environments where they feel supported by peers who are of similar ability and motivation levels, where teachers model enthusiasm and press for understanding, where there is adequate challenge, and where there are opportunities to work on varied, meaningful, and cognitively complex tasks (Fredricks, Alfred, & Eccles, 2010).

This study attempted to fill in research gaps that currently exist related to parent experiences with gifted identification and the use of gifted programs in schools. This study sought to understand gifted education and identification through parents' perspectives and would thus help to add to the limited existing literature on the matter. Although this study utilizes a small sample, it is hoped that its data will be helpful for school districts to consider when designing, budgeting for, and implementing programs that would broaden advanced opportunities for gifted students. Moreover, the results of

the study could have important implications for educators desiring parent input when designing gifted identification and gifted programs.

Overview of the Project

Following the introduction found in chapter 1 of the project, chapter 2 contains the literature review on gifted identification and programming. Included in this discussion are relevant definitions as well as a review of gifted education among underrepresented students. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology that was used in this qualitative study through descriptions of how I collected and analyzed the data. Chapter 4 summarizes and analyzes the results from the interviews with the three mothers. Finally, interpretations of the findings are included in Chapter 5 of the project through reflections on the results and the process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Identification of gifted students is often one of the most difficult elements of implementing a gifted program. Contributing to the problem are varying definitions of giftedness and commitments to publicly funded programs (Gallagher, 2009; Makel, 2010; Pierce et al., 2007; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). In addition, the nature of the topic itself leads to divergences in literature in that the topic can refer to giftedness as well as the notion of gifted and talented. A synthesis of the research on gifted programs has also shown variance. Rogers (2007) demonstrated that, ahead of all other forms of instructional delivery, when compared to regular learners, gifted learners are significantly more likely to prefer independent study, independent projects, and self-instructional materials. However, when there is no option for a separate, purely gifted setting, a classroom teacher must address the needs of gifted students within a general education setting. In such a setting, there are three widely used educational modifications for gifted children: acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation. A frequent issue concerning gifted education is that there is no progress or priorities or funding given to these programs (Clark, 1997; Ginsberg, 2005; Gould, 2000; Kondor, 2007; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Murray et al., 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2006; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2002). According to Gibson and Mitchell (2005), gifted programs are "constantly at the mercy of shifting public perceptions of worth and the vagaries of state and local budget processes" (p. 169).

The play between political rhetoric and practical concerns shows the fragility of gifted programs and demonstrates how they are not appropriately funded or a cost-effective way to help support all learners. In addition, some research suggests that

placement of some students in gifted programs may result in them experiencing an

increased level of psychological distress (Rogers, 2007). For example, while some

students may benefit from being separated from their "average-ability" peers, others may

experience social isolation and frustration. This isolation is of particular concern when

placing minority students in gifted programs because the curricula in many of these

programs do not include an emphasis on multiculturalism and, therefore, may not be

relevant to their experiences and contribute to their learning (Ford & Harris, 1999).

Gifted learners need appropriate program options to provide for the different ways that

gifted learners learn, including consistent challenge, daily talent development,

independent work, depth and complexity, limited drill and review (Rogers, 2007).

Students are more likely to experience passion in environments where they feel supported

by peers who are of similar ability and motivation levels, where teachers model

enthusiasm and press for understanding, where there is adequate challenge, and where

there are opportunities to work on varied, meaningful, and cognitively complex tasks

(Fredricks, Alfred, & Eccles, 2010).

Defining Giftedness

Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of giftedness or gifted and

talented, gifted education is generally used as a term for specific practices and services in

the education of students who have been identified as gifted based on capability and/or

talent (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). Some of the characteristics that gifted learners possess

include good problem solving/reasoning abilities, rapid learning ability, extensive

vocabulary, excellent memory, long attention span, perfectionism, intensity, keen powers

of observation, vivid imagination, and a high degree of creativity (The Association for Bright Children [ABC], 2011). With these exceptional learning traits, it would be fair to suggest that all gifted students should succeed academically and, furthermore, that the gifted program would provide an effective motivational learning frame, guiding them to academic success. However, the identification of gifted students is often one of the most difficult elements of implementing a gifted program. In the US, contributing to the problem are various definitions of giftedness and various commitments to publicly funded programs across the different states (Pierce et al., 2010). In Canada, these variations may also differ from province to province.

Gifted Identification

Schools in the United States use various identification processes to identify children as gifted. On one extreme, there are those researchers and practitioners who maintain that intelligence is measurable by IQ tests, which they claim are extremely reliable and valid, and that different types of intelligence tests all measure the same general intelligence (as discussed in Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Those who favour IQ tests believe that a population's IQ range can be represented in a normal curve, with most people clustering around 100 and with only 3% having scores above 130 and thus qualifying as gifted (Schroth & Helfer, 2008). This benchmark would determine whether or not the children would get special educational services under the gifted and talented category. In Ontario, the prominent identification tests used are the CCAT, WISC-IV, or Stanford–Binet (Fifth Edition) to identify giftedness in students (ABC, 2011). Furthermore, proponents of standard measuring for IQ believe that such tests are not

biased against Blacks, other ethnic minority groups who are English speaking, or other native-born people in the United States, predicting equally well for all subgroups (Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Conversely, many other researchers believe children of colour, English-language learners, and low-SES students are discriminated against by standardized tests because such tests are biased against diverse students and support an identification process that is supposed to be free from bias (Borland, 1986; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Richert, 1991). These researchers contend that giftedness is context-dependent and multifaceted and is much more than simple tests, tests that can be racially and culturally biased (Callahan, 2005; Ford & Harmon, 2001; Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002; Naglieri & Ford, 2003; Richert, 1991; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). While many school districts now use multiple criteria for identification, Schroth and Helfer (2008) noted that 90% of school districts rely at least partially on standardized achievement or aptitude tests for identification. Sole use of these instruments leads to underrepresentation of diverse students and students from lower socioeconomic status for inclusion into gifted and talented programs (Cornell, Delcourt, Goldberg, & Bland, 1995; Ford & Harmon, 2001; Make1, 2009; Pierce et al., 2010; Schroth & Helfer, 2008).

The identification system of gifted students is thus a problematic area that should be reviewed carefully for unfair practices (Baldwin, 2005; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Wellisch & Brown, 2011). Gifted identification procedures gather criteria on students assuming that they come to school with similar experiences and opportunities, and are therefore being treated equally; however, they are not being treated equitably (Slocumb & Payne, 2000).

Researchers have proposed new models of identification that have been used to identify gifted children in ways that go beyond conventional IQ. Sternberg's (2010) efforts have been addressed toward developing new kinds of tests to assess intelligence in broader ways than has been possible in the past. The framework Sternberg (2010) used is one called the augmented theory of successful intelligence (Sternberg, 1985, 2007, 2010), or WICS (which stands for Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesized). His theory proposes that people in almost any walk of life need: (a) creativity to generate new and exciting ideas; (b) analytical intelligence to evaluate whether theirs and others' ideas are good ideas; (c) practical intelligence to execute their ideas and to persuade others of their value; and (d) wisdom to ensure that their abilities are being used for some kind of common good that balances their own interests with other people's and institutional interests over the short and long terms (Sternberg, 2010). According to the theory, these abilities are modifiable, in some degree, rather than fixed (Sternberg, 2007).

Theories of Intelligence

Research by Sternberg (1985) revealed that giftedness should be examined in a broader way incorporating several parts of intelligence. His gifted theory, known as the Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, suggested that three intellectual abilities are vital to academic and social accomplishments, opening the door for more ways to identify intelligence. Sternberg proposed that intelligence discloses itself in at least three ways: (a) componentially, (b) experientially, and (c) contextually. In addition, Sternberg (2007) urged educators to place culture at the center of thinking and decisions when making identification and placement decisions for gifted. His ideas are particularly helpful in developing talent in high ability students from diverse backgrounds. Sternberg's (1985)

research showed that, when students are measured on a broader analysis of giftedness, a more diverse populace is eligible for gifted services. He suggested that gifts and talents manifest themselves differently across cultures, and educators must be culturally sensitive when nurturing and developing the talents of students who are under-represented.

While most researchers examine identification, Makel (2009) proposed that there are four distinct and relevant events related to the gifted identification process that could cause significant changes in attitudes toward giftedness. These four events are nomination, testing, labeling, and participation (Makel, 2009). One student could burst with pride upon being nominated for a gifted program, whereas another could feel immense pressure. Similarly, a student being tested for giftedness could leave the testing situation confident or unsure. The event that most explicitly divides students is that of labeling; some are told they are gifted, whereas others are told they are not. Finally, as eligible students begin participating in gifted programming, some may respond positively, while others may struggle (Makel, 2009).

Under-representation in Gifted Education

Educators have proposed several explanations for the under-representation of different groups within the gifted population, most notably the over-reliance on standardized tests, inequity in educational experiences, and cultural perceptions of, and attitudes toward, giftedness. Neumeister et al. (2007) noted that 90% of school districts rely on standardized achievement or aptitude tests for identification. The exclusive use of these instruments often leads to under-representation of minority children and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds for selection into gifted programs (Neumeister et

al., 2007). In addition, many educators have noted the inequity in educational experiences as a contributing factor to under-representation of different students in gifted programs (Ford, 1998; Neumeister et al., 2007). Ford (1998) contended that school districts with large minority populations often experience teacher shortages, and the schools are less likely to offer academically rigorous curricula. Ford (1998) found that poor educational experiences and underachievement negatively affect students' opportunities to participate in gifted programs because they may prevent students from developing quality products and work samples often used in the screening and identification process. However, Baldwin (2005) found that often culturally diverse students' sets of experiences create differential mental processing abilities in the testing situation. She stressed that to combat under-representation, knowledge about giftedness must be gained and attitudes toward these students must be adjusted.

Often the use of culturally inappropriate assessment instruments places students at a disadvantage. Researchers including Castellano and Diaz (2002) have demonstrated the weakness of gifted identification procedures and contend that most of the identification procedures used, such as standardized tests, teacher recommendations, and grades, are really a measure of conformity to middle class academic values and achievement. The more measures that are used and combined inappropriately, the more likely it is that disadvantaged students (poor, minority, creative, and others that tend to be underachievers at school) will be excluded. Therefore, the use of multiple measures, which may create the appearance of inclusiveness, can actually promote elitism in the identification process. A new identification paradigm would recognize the variety of ways in which students display giftedness and would offer a varied and authentic

assessment approach. There may be a need to use non-verbal assessment tools specifically designed to overcome the cultural bias of verbal tests (Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Naglieri & Ford, 2003). Several promising instruments for doing just that include the Matrix Analysis Test, Ravens Matrices, and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test. There is still controversy about the value of tests in general, but culture-fair tests (intelligence tests in which performance is not based on experience with or knowledge of a specific culture) are considered to be a more accurate measure of a student's potential than traditional verbal tests because they do not confound the test by influence of language, vocabulary, or academic exposure (Ford et al., 2008).

Educators have begun to respond to these issues contributing to under-representation by advocating for a more comprehensive identification/selection procedure that may better identify all gifted students (Bernal, 2002; Ford, 1998; Kitano et al., 2007; Neumeister et al., 2007; Pierce et al., 2010). They have called for a change in attitudes about giftedness, recognizing that giftedness is developmental, and that no single test can measure giftedness (Pierce et al., 2010). Other educators advocate for using alternative methods of identification, such as the use of nonverbal tests, authentic assessments, and multiple criteria, including parent and teacher nominations for identification. Researchers advocate the use of a non-traditional instrument to lessen cultural and social bias often found in standardized measures, to provide measures for all students, and to allow students to show evidence of potential in various ways (Naglieri & Ford, 2003; Pierce et al., 2010; Van Tassel-Baska, Feng, Swanson, Quek, & Chandler, 2009).

One measurement of student ability holding promise for gifted identification is the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). The general purpose of the test is to

measure ability without the requirement of reading, writing, or speaking. The test focuses on problem-solving skills and reasoning skills regardless of linguistic, educational, or cultural background. It is used with young elementary school children as it is considered hands-on and age-appropriate. Naglieri and Ford (2003) claimed that more gifted students were likely to earn high scores on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test and thus the test could better identify a greater number of students. The test could predict achievement as well as measures of ability that contain both verbal and nonverbal content (Naglieri & Ford, 2003).

Still administrators, gifted education specialists, and classroom teachers hold divergent views regarding the identification of gifted children (Pfeiffer & Jarosewich, 2007; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Schroth and Helfer (2008) found three conflicting perspectives. First, classroom teachers' views regarding their preferred methods of identification are through teacher nominations; however, teachers do not highly regard observations and test data, the basis of teacher nominations. Second, the preference by administrators, gifted education specialists, and regular classroom teachers for particular methods of identification indicates possible confusion between the relative importance of general or specific aptitudes and good effort and study habits. These conflicting views are problematic because student manifestations of teacher-pleasing behaviours would seem to trump academic talent in some educators' minds as the determining factor relating to the receipt of gifted education services. Third, the variability of preferred choices between groups of educators indicates that, regardless of method, the traits that characterize a gifted child and the most appropriate means of identifying and assessing

these traits are not uniformly clear to those working in the schools (Schroth & Helfer, 2008).

Those seeking alternative standardized tests should be cautious, however; Lohman (2005) advised that there are no culture-free measures and that culture fairness is very difficult to assert about any known aptitude test. He referred to nonverbal versions of such tests as a helpful adjunct, but as a measure of last resort, and suggested that a more productive direction might be to employ traditional tests only to compare students with similar backgrounds and experiences as a means to identify the students with the most aptitude. A sensible plan to increase participation in gifted programs may rely less on alternative assessments and rest instead with a well-crafted learning environment. Lohman (2005) proposed that measures of academic accomplishment (which include, but are not limited to, norm-referenced achievement tests) should be the primary criteria for defining academic giftedness. Such assessments not only measure knowledge and skills that are important aptitudes for academic learning, but they also help define the type of expertise schools aim to develop.

Yet many educators attribute the poor participation of diverse students in gifted programs to the ineffectiveness of standardized tests in capturing the ability of these students. Many researchers sought to examine more authentic measures in identification (Callahan, 2005; Ford & Harmon, 2001; Naglieri & Ford, 2003; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Alternative assessments, also referred to as authentic or performance-based assessments, typically simulate real-life situations and emphasize problem solving over knowledge-based problems. Pierce et al. (2010) have found that many students perform better on these alternative forms of assessment compared to traditional forms. To combat under-

representation of minority students, for example, Bernal (2002) proposed that school districts must change in the following three ways: 1) have minority teachers represented in their GT (gifted and talented) teachers (not just for the minority GT students, but for all the children in the GT program); 2) have multiculturally-trained GT teachers working a clearly differentiated multicultural curriculum, preferably one that capitalizes on ethnic/linguistic diversity; and 3) conduct evaluation data to support the work of these dedicated professionals. In addition, school districts should help disseminate successful practices to schools that are still in a state of denial. Bernal feels that hiring minority teachers for GT programs and evaluating the efforts to identify and make all GT students successful, indicate a creative, and much needed, innovation on the part of GT programs.

Other researchers think that that parents, teachers, and school counsellors are often the first sources of identification and should be better prepared to identify children (Baldwin, 2005; Schroth & Helfer, 2008; Van Tassel-Baska et al., 2009). These perspectives are shared among many teachers, parents, and the students themselves, suggesting the beneficial nature of gifted identification and programming for these students' self-confidence and self-esteem. Many common, yet diverse characteristics, were attributed to these students, ranging from being strong learners in several ways to being limited in motivation, organization, and the ability to work with peers (Van Tassel-Baska et al., 2009).

There is still much room for study and experimentation to determine a variety of methods that will work to include more qualified students into the gifted ranks (Callahan, 2005). Districts continue to struggle to include students from diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds. New decision-making demands action and must play an

active role in policy directions addressing the identification issue. Unfortunately, some school districts ignore existing data in favour of operating within the status quo. Movement in the direction of equity requires a commitment of resources and is not always well received. Continued attention to data and creative evidence-based interventions, such as a talent development program for those who are left out of the gifted process, should be considered (Callahan, 2005). These changes suggest that expanding the traditional methods used to study the effects of giftedness could yield valuable information about gifted identification. Thus a commitment to identifying talent from all walks of life is a viable option that should be pursued and encouraged to help ensure that all students have a fair chance to succeed.

There is research that offers support for expanding philosophies, definitions, and theories of giftedness that accommodate greater diversity (Barlow & Dunbar, 2010; Makel, 2009). When focusing on the large population of students, the definition of giftedness must be nontraditional, flexible, and diverse. If a greater number of students are to be identified for gifted services, we must retreat from narrow definitions of giftedness, which have often neglected and ignored a student's cultural and environmental backgrounds (Ford & Harmon, 2001). Talent development in the area of underrepresented populations is a critical issue that could play an important role in closing the gap currently exposed in gifted education. As Borland (1986) states, "catching up" is not the goal; it is the development of potential that is too often frustrated by inequities in our society and our schools.

Unfortunately, there is a strong acceptance in the educator population of a narrow conception of intelligence and giftedness (Callahan, 2005). These attitudes that define

giftedness must be addressed if gifted education is to be inclusive of all cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Adjustments in thinking that offer a broader view of what it means to be intelligent in the form of multiple intelligences should be embraced by teachers and administrators. These educators can then be the policymakers who develop criteria and procedures for gifted education, which can strive to be more inclusive in nature. Based on research by Schroth and Helfer (2008), this attitude adjustment should include involving parents and mentors. It must encompass creating curriculum and programs that are flexible and highlight the many ways intelligence can be fostered for all students.

The cost for under-identification is high. Gifted students need to work at higher instructional levels and at a faster pace than non-gifted students (Sousa, 2003). When this acceleration does not happen, they work at the same pace as their non-gifted peers, and their achievement levels often drop. In time, under-identification leads many gifted and talented students to experience boredom, dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem. These students can become underachievers and discipline problems as well (Winebrenner, 1992). Kulik's (1992) research revealed that gifted students benefited least from doing reasonably typical studies in a mixed-level class, and benefited most from learning with other similarly advanced students in accelerated or enriched classes. To engage gifted students, the base curriculum must be differentiated to challenge and motivate gifted learners. Such differentiation is not just good for gifted learners, but offers excellent instructional practices for all students (Smutny, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999).

In addition, students from poverty and other at-risk communities deserve master teachers who provide enriched educational opportunities to help level the playing field.

Many schools positioned in challenging neighborhoods are working diligently to help

students to "catch-up" with peers. These educators are providing additional support for

students' lack of experiences due to environmental influences; they can now become the

advocates who discover and unleash masked potential (Strip, 2000). Educators can play a

key role in helping underrepresented gifted students acquire the skills, beliefs, and

attitudes necessary to capitalize on their talents. There are specific instructional issues

students from poverty face daily and the answer for success lies within a rigorous

curriculum and early intervention programs that target talent potential (Callahan, 2005;

Tomlinson et al., 2000).

Gifted Program Development/Learning Environment

Gifted children benefit from specifically designed educational programming

(Conklin & Frei, 2007; Reis et al., 1998; Rimm, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). To

combat underachievement, gifted students need to have a differentiated curriculum if they

are to learn in school. Reis et al. (1998) found that most gifted elementary school students

already know about half of what they are scheduled to learn before they enter school for

the year. Repetitive material intended for students who need review can only fit into the

category of "boring" for many of these students (Rimm, 2008). Conklin and Frei (2007)

also claimed instruction in elementary mainstream classrooms often lacks challenge for

gifted students since it covers a relatively narrow range of topics, with minimal

exploration of concepts, recurring drill and practice, and repetition of concepts. Because

of these characteristics of their program, gifted students benefit from being placed

together in a gifted setting. However, this strategy is not always feasible as the cost of

these programs presents a financial burden. In fact, segregated gifted programs are at a standstill and virtually no progress, priorities, or funding is given to such programs (Clark, 1997; Ginsberg, 2005; Gould, 2000; Kondor, 2007; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Murray et al., 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2006). According to Gibson and Mitchell (2005), gifted programs are "constantly at the mercy of shifting public perceptions of worth and the vagaries of state and local budget processes" (p. 169). These perceptions show the fragility of the gifted program.

When there is no option for a separate, purely gifted class, teachers must address the needs of gifted students within a general education setting. Within this general education setting, there are three widely used educational modifications for gifted children: acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation. Acceleration can be broadly defined as any educational strategy that determines a learner's zone of proximal development is above grade level in one or more areas, and then responds by providing appropriate modifications to curriculum and instructional practice for a particular unit or subject, and /or by adjusting placement part-time or full-time, to ensure the student is challenged, engaged, and actively learning on a continual basis. Recognition of the many modes of acceleration is not widespread in Ontario where the term has most often been associated only with 'grade skipping'. Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross (2004) identify and address 18 educational strategies under the acceleration umbrella. These strategies depend on the age of admission for the students (entering Kindergarten a year earlier than usual, entering first grade a year earlier than usual, or skipping a grade; early entrance to middle school, high school, or college), modes of instruction (continuous progress, self-paced instruction, subject-matter or partial acceleration, combined classes), modifications

to curriculum (compacting; reduced amount of introduction, drill and practice; telescoping curriculum; student completes 3 years of schooling in 2 years or masters the requirements of a full year of schooling in one term); mentoring (a mentor or expert tutor provides advanced or more rapid instruction), or concurrent/dual enrolment (where student receives a high school credit while enrolled in elementary school or a postsecondary credit while enrolled in high school; in some cases completing a single advanced level course earns both a secondary and post-secondary credit including Advanced Placement); and modes of delivery (extracurricular programs, correspondence courses).

Rather than accelerating or compacting curriculum, Tomlinson et al. (2003) encourage teachers to create challenging problem situations that provide numerous opportunities for students to construct knowledge through inquiry, discussion, and argument. The researchers stress interpretive listening as a key role in monitoring students' thinking, which leads to dialogue or questioning in which information facilitates student learning (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Moreover, Gallagher (2009) argues that, although acceleration is an accepted form of differentiation, it is not to be recommended as a steady diet of didactic instruction for gifted students. Overemphasis on the acceleration program creates and sends a troubling message to students: that the goal of education is a tangible reward instead of experience, exploration, awareness, discovery, or creativity.

An ABC (2011) report, *Gifted information resource guide***:** *A concise overview of gifted education programming in Ontario school boards,* surveyed parents, educators, and students over the past 2-3 years. Additional information was obtained through

conversations with key stakeholders. The report was unable to identify any particular school boards that have model acceleration practices that are well understood and widespread currently in place specifically to address needs of gifted learners. Where formal, deliberate acceleration does occur, it usually happens either at the request of parents or the suggestion of a teacher or principal. Typically, either the educators or parents (or both) have had prior positive experiences with acceleration and/or familiarity with the positive research-based outcomes for the practice as outlined in publications such as *A Nation Deceived* (www.nationdeceived.org).

ABC found that the widely variable availability of research-recommended educational practices in Ontario, such as acceleration, often contributes to discord between parents and educators because it creates a gap between what parents know is working in other schools and communities and what their local educators may be willing to do for children with similarly demonstrated and documented needs. ABC stresses the necessity for clear communication between parents and the Ministry of Education. Moreover, these researchers contend that delineating the full flexibility that educators have to deliver truly modified programming above, as well as below, grade level will improve learning opportunities for all Ontario students. ABC think that, by sharing examples of innovative, effective, and practical solutions currently practiced in Ontario schools, the Ministry will further promote research-proven practices such as acceleration (ABC, 2011).

Clustering or congregating gifted learners both facilitates delivery of accelerated programming and places a threshold of demand on the teacher to accelerate instruction, in one or more ways, to keep the gifted cluster engaged and actively learning. Gifted

learners who are clustered together are the most likely to receive intensive, ongoing, differentiated, and modified instruction, including various modes of acceleration (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004).

Congregation and acceleration are sometimes viewed as "either-or" options, and there may be some cases where a particular learner's needs are met, at least for a time, by one or the other. However oftentimes, gifted learners require both strategies working in tandem to fully meet all of their academic and social-emotional needs; for example, many gifted learners in Ontario report very positive experiences from receiving simultaneously, or over time, some combination of compacting, grade-skipping, and/or subject acceleration in conjunction with congregated placement (ABC, 2011).

Enrichment involves introducing new subjects to the curriculum, adding new topics in existing subject areas, or exploring topics currently in the curriculum in greater depth. Expanding the curriculum by adding additional work in thinking skills or research skills is another form of enrichment (Conklin & Frei, 2007). This modification is beneficial to gifted learners; however, it is left to individual teachers to make the modifications necessary for each gifted child. However, these modifications may not be addressing the individual learning needs required for each student. The IB or International Baccalaureate program is an internationally recognized educational program, similar to the Advanced Placement [AP] program, that allows students to get a heightened education. Upon completion of the program, the student receives a diploma; the program can potentially have more prestige than the AP program because the IB program is recognized around the world. The program consists of eight subject groups integrated through five areas of interaction that provide a framework for learning within

and across the subjects. Students are required to study their mother tongue, a second language, humanities, sciences, mathematics, arts, physical education, and technology. In the final year of the program, students engage in a personal project, which allows them to demonstrate the understandings and skills they have developed throughout the program (IB Middle Years Programme; http://www.ibo.org/myp/).

Differentiation is similar to enrichment but is the process of using a variety of approaches to modify content, process, and product to meet students' diverse needs, interests, and learning profiles (Gould, 2002). By differentiating the curriculum, multiple standards can be met while providing appropriate challenges for all students. Similarly, Stein and Poole (2007) describe a strategy for teaching and learning based on an equal partnership for students and teachers that, they believe, should be adopted by all schools. This strategy should include:

- giving all children, including the gifted child, the opportunity to learn via a wide range of open-ended learner-sensitive activities;
- encouraging the children and their teachers to plan for individual interests and learning needs;
- allowing the children to take ownership of the real-life contexts initiated by the teacher or other children;
- reflecting realistic learning outcomes, determined by children in negotiation with the teacher and other learners. (Stein & Poole, 1997, pp. 14-15)

This type of curriculum strategy is "learner-focused, not teacher-directed." It can help control classroom management as it gives students the time and freedom to develop their own preferred learning (Gould, 2002; Stein & Poole, 1997).

Differentiated instruction is helpful to any teacher and critical for teachers in inclusive classrooms. Unlike mainstreaming, inclusive education does not separate students with disabilities who are unable to "keep up" without significant support. Differentiated instructional strategies are thus critical, especially given the simultaneous

push for all students to achieve high standards. If gifted students are to reach higher general curriculum standards, they need to learn in classrooms where they can both access the general curriculum and reap the benefits of high expectations (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Good (2006) identifies a common misconception that educating gifted and talented students in the general education setting through differentiation is a largely unmanageable theory of individualized instruction. Teachers become overwhelmed and, in turn, create extra activities for students who are already familiar with the core curricular concepts. Tomlinson (2008) proposes a more constructive view of differentiation that focuses on meaningful learning or practical ideas for all students. Teachers should plan to address learners' different needs, rather than planning one lesson for everyone and adjusting it when it does not work for some students (Murray, Shea, & Shea, 2004). Good (2006) suggests planning several activity options for class work rather than alternate assignments for each student. The teacher may then work with the entire class, small groups, individual students, or a combination of the three. However, Reis et al. (1998) suggest a goal for teachers to provide gifted students with fewer and more complex tasks over a long period of time rather than several alternate assignments.

Many school boards provide students identified as gifted with in-class enrichment or differentiated instruction throughout all grade levels. The majority of school boards in Ontario begin this process in Grade 4 or 5 (ABC, 2011). Thus the majority of school boards in Ontario begin their gifted programming, both part-time and full-time, in these grades. The number of elementary schools offering part-time withdrawal programming varies among school boards. These numbers reflect the level of student participation in each program.

One such program can be found in Peel Region. The gifted program offers two "tracks" for elementary gifted programming. Track 1 refers to services designed for students identified as Exceptional Intellectual – Gifted. Track 2 refers to a service for potentially gifted children. Moreover, these gifted programs for junior and intermediate level elementary students offer three "levels of service"; Mode I: service for academically superior students, which provides a clustering of these students with their intellectual peers in the regular classroom. Mode II: a service designed for students identified as mildly or moderately gifted, which combines the clustering of Mode I, together with part-time withdrawal or integrated enhancement experiences. Finally, Mode III provides a service that accommodates students identified as moderately to profoundly gifted through full-time enhanced classes.

One type of full-time enhanced class is the Enhanced Learning Class (ELC), designed for students identified as Exceptional Intellectual- Gifted, who require extensive and continuing modification of the regular classroom. The legislated maximum class size is 25 students for ELCs. These classes offer enhanced experiences in all of the major academic fields with care taken to ensure the academic, social-emotional, and internal/motivating components of the students' program. The foci of ELCs may include:

- Acquisition and extension of information processing skills
- Analysis of broad-based questions, problems, and themes
- Development of a sense of the "connectedness" of all knowledge
- Instruction and practice of various styles of thinking (critical, creative, productive, divergent)
- Emphasis on a repertoire of problem solving skills
- Development of independent (interdependent) and cooperative learning skills
- Growth in self-awareness, attitudes, and communications skills
- Access to curriculum expectations before students' chronological grade as appropriate. (Gifted Education Program Review, 2009)

The reviewed literature found similar approaches to working with gifted children because many gifted students achieve intellectual developmental milestones at an above average pace. These children tend to have an extended range of interests already, and they use a wide variety of sources to build up their diversified knowledge. They also have investigative minds and are persistent in finishing tasks. Therefore, it is necessary to design a curriculum to reflect their specific interests as well as their learning needs (Conklin & Frei, 2007; Stein & Poole, 1997).

Gifted education requires the appropriate management, organization, and delivery of a learner-sensitive interest and needs curriculum that can actively encourage the intellectual characteristics of gifted students. Differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment are three ways to meet these standards while maintaining enough challenge for gifted learners. These approaches may have positive effects for all learners. Providing students with choices and meaningful, authentic opportunities for them to construct knowledge will not only meet their learning needs, but will motivate them to achieve excellence (Kondor, 2007). This strategy can be applicable to other students as well, therefore making the teaching and learning strategy beneficial for the needs of all children. Advocating for this type of teaching for all children includes helping gifted children to reach their full potential, as it provides situations that are designed to extend their thinking skills and, by extension, make them better students (Gould, 2002; Stein & Poole, 1997).

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

To better understand parents' experiences with gifted identification and programming, it is vital to examine the environment in which the programs are designed and implemented, as well as the individuals responsible for the program and the participants. Thus a qualitative case study design was employed in the evaluation of parents' experiences with gifted programming and identification. This design provided a framework for phenomenological research, the goal of which is to understand phenomena in a context-specific setting (Patton, 2002).

The current study is a phenomenological study, in that it "focus[ed] on [how] human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). This objective was realized through three semi-structured interviews with parents of gifted children. I used an interview guide approach in combination with a conversational strategy. A conversational strategy (Patton, 2002) allowed me to be able to be flexible in probing and in determining when it was appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or to pose questions about new areas of inquiry not originally anticipated during the interview instrument development.

Participants

Recruitment

Enlisting the help of friends to secure names, participants were recruited by email and by newsletter to prospective parents (see Appendix A). Parents with children in

Grades 4-9 were selected on a first come basis. As there were insufficient participants

meeting this criterion, parents of older children were then selected on a first come basis.

Participants

A total of three parents of gifted students were interviewed: Peggy, Carrie, and

Sharon. Peggy is Darren's mother; they both live in Toronto. Darren is 26 years old and

currently owns a private tutoring company. He was identified in Grade 3 as gifted but

was not put in a gifted program. Carrie is mother to 10-year-old Jenn; they live in

Whitby. For most of Jenn's life, she has been in a public school system. However, she

has just recently been identified as gifted and has been enrolled in a gifted program for

next year. Finally, Sharon is mother to 10–year-old Rachel, who is in Grade 5 and

enrolled in a gifted program at a Mississauga school. The three subjects were selected

because they represented three different situations and thus would provide a range of

gifted experiences.

Setting

This study took place in Toronto and Whitby, Ontario. Whitby is located

in Southern Ontario east of Toronto on the north shore of Lake Ontario. While the

southern portion of Whitby is predominantly urban and an economic hub, the northern

part of the municipality is more rural ("Whitby, Ontario - Detailed City Profile."

Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Public education in Whitby is provided via the Durham

District School Board, which has its headquarters in Whitby. As of late 2010, there were

24 elementary schools and four secondary schools (Durham District School Board,

https://ddsb.durham.edu.on.ca). The Durham Catholic District School Board oversees

public Catholic education in Durham Region. There are eight Catholic elementary

schools and two secondary schools (Durham Catholic District School Board,www.dcdsb.ca/).

Toronto is the provincial capital of Ontario and the largest city in Canada. It is located in southern Ontario on the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario. With over 2.5 million residents, it is the fifth most populous city in North America. Its metropolitan area with over 5 million residents is the seventh largest urban region in North America. Toronto is at the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and is part of a densely populated region in Southern Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe, which is home to over 8.1 million residents—approximately 25% of Canada's population ("Population and dwelling counts, for urban areas, 2006 and 2001 censuses - 100% data." *Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population*). The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) operates 558 public schools. Of these, 451 are elementary and 102 are secondary (high) schools, making the TDSB the largest school board in Canada (*TDSB Fact Sheet*, http://www.tdsb.on.ca/pageid=4131). Additionally, the Toronto Catholic District School Board manages the city's publicly funded Roman Catholic schools, while the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest and the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud manage public and Roman Catholic French-language schools, respectively.

Ethics

There were minimal risks in this study. This study did not involve any questions about sensitive or personal issues; psychological or emotional risk; physical, economic, or social risk. There were no risks to participants due to power imbalance or language and

cultural sensitivities. Informed consent was obtained. All participants knew they could withdraw from the interview at any time, without pressure or consequence of any kind, and they might request that all or part of their data be removed and destroyed. This study was granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen's policies.

Data Collection

Using the steps developed by Patton (2002), this study began with a focus for the inquiry, and determination of where and from whom data would be collected. The analysis of previous research studies provided me with the conceptual scaffolding needed to design the questions used in the data collection process. To collect data, three one-on-one interviews were conducted.

Interviews

Interviews were purposefully conducted to capture the rich perspectives of parents with gifted children. The method included ethnographic interviews employing an approach of open-ended questions that allowed for individual variations, and included a guide to pace the interviewing and to permit a more systematic and comprehensive data collection (Patton, 2002). The in-depth, one-on-one interviewing, based on a pre-created interview guide, was similar to a guided conversation. I made sure to remain attentive during the interview to shape the process into a comfortable form of social conversation so as to obtain high quality information (Patton, 2002). I worked to be sensitive to the participants and tried my best to establish a non-threatening environment to make them feel comfortable. This approach was undertaken to help facilitate trust and develop a

good rapport with each participant. A letter (Appendix B) was sent to each participant explaining the study and requesting consent for participation (Appendix C).

The semi-structured interviews began with warm-up questions to help participants feel at ease. A statement of the researcher's purpose and focus was made at the outset where I described what I was looking for. Interview probes were used throughout the interview to "elicit elaboration of detail, further explanations and clarification of response" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 358). The order of questioning was purposefully varied to obtain adequate data from each question asked. Generally, the questions were grouped by topic to assist in coding but sometimes the script deviated from the guide to probe for more elaborated responses or clarifications. During the interview, it was important to monitor how each participant was reacting to the questions as well as providing helpful feedback to facilitate a good flow of communication (Patton, 2002).

The questions ranged from descriptive to behavioural questions. I tried to incorporate opinion and value questions (Patton, 2002) to gather the participants' goals, intentions, and expectations. To start, I solicited background or general information about their gifted children, in addition to information regarding their child's educational backgrounds as well as probing for personal anecdotes about when they were identified. Finally, the conversation was guided in a way to address issues regarding gifted programming.

These in-depth interviews permitted face-to-face contact with the respondents allowing for rich data, details, and new insights into the research. The flexibility of the interview allowed me to clarify questions and responses to maintain consistency across

interviews. The interviews lasted about an hour each; the setting for each interview was a location that made the interviewee feel comfortable, and which offered privacy and limited disruptions. The specific interview guide for the participants can be found in Appendix D.

Once participants gave consent to the recording and were assured confidentiality, the interview guide was used to record the participants' responses. During the interviews, I tried to be as neutral as possible during the study while remaining hyperaware of the power that a researcher can have in an interviewing dynamic. This also involved allowing the participants to share their stories without requiring an approval or affirmation from me as the researcher. In addition, I felt it was critical that I not influence or steer the participants in any way, which might have signaled or endorsed a certain response.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with each interview being recorded on tape with the permission of the participants and summarized in notes via a field journal. By taping the interviews, I could remain attentive to body language, while making eye contact with the participant, as well as paying attention to the overall mood during the interview.

When the interview was complete, I listened to the tape and wrote a verbatim account of everything recorded. This transcription of the raw data included word-for-word participants' responses and was reviewed by the participants for accuracy. It is important that the original research participants consider reports to be accurate and confidential (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All contact information for participants was stored separately from the interview data; pseudonyms were used for participant names.

All hard copies of consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet. In addition, all computer data files associated with the study were stored using password protected files.

Data analysis began with a content analysis whereby I identified core consistencies and meanings present (Patton, 2002). Data analysis also included systematically coding and categorizing the interview transcripts to clarify what was recorded and perceived in the different interviews. This process of inductive analysis is where categories, themes, and patterns emerged from the data. A constant-comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1999) was used in developing the topics and categories.

Each interview was coded twice. I first made a content analysis that involved identifying, coding, categorizing, and labeling the primary data patterns (Patton, 2002). I searched for similarities, differences, and consistencies by comparing and contrasting across the data. The categories were then explored for internal convergence and external divergence to guarantee consistency and distinction from one another (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Member Checking

Once the data were collected, I reported preliminary findings to the participants and asked for commentary on the accuracy of the results. I then addressed the issue of assurances of congruence and trustworthiness between participants' views and the reconstruction and representation of their views and experiences during the study by incorporating these critiques into the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Constructivist methodology suggests component checks to account for the rigorous nature of the inquiry. The components of trustworthiness include credibility as relating to internal validity (accuracy of results and interpretations); confirmability

relating to objectivity (ability to connect results and data); dependability relating to reliability (all procedures were constructivist); and transferability relating to external validity (information gained in one area can have meaning and usefulness in other contexts; Patton, 2002). "Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 48). Threats to reliability were controlled through the researcher role, participant selection, and data collection and data analysis strategies.

For this study, the researcher was the instrument that was used to collect data by interviewing in the research setting. The credibility of a qualitative research study depends heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Patton, 2002). I became immersed in the data and assumed an interactive role in which I recorded data and interacted with participants across the study setting.

Researcher bias entered into the picture, although I tried my best to avoid it. This attempt to reduce bias involved being as neutral as possible during the study and being mindful of the power that the researcher can often have in an interview dynamic. To further prevent bias, I made sure to record field notes as well as use an interview guide as ways to deal with any subjectivity in the research design. To enhance reflexivity, I recorded any dilemmas, decisions, and actions in a field journal throughout the study.

Sampling biases occur when the researcher consciously or unconsciously selects subjects whose selection may result in an inaccurate finding; or including subjects who help realize the researchers' desired points of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This possibility was controlled by selecting participants on a first come basis.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The focus of this investigation was to explore parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming. This focus required me to examine and analyze the interviews of parents of gifted children. While each source was initially studied individually, I looked collectively at all data when analyzing. I read and reread through each interview transcription, made notes, and formed initial codes based on emerging themes. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed and grouped into meaningful themes that evolved from the participants' open reflections. Informed choices were subsequently made about the inclusion of representative quotes from the data. Finally, I made decisions about the meaning of the data by establishing degrees of related responses that produced patterns and a "logical chain of evidence" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 260).

By using an inductive analytical approach to data analysis, I interpreted the interview data and a unique, organizational framework developed. The major themes of this study were related to identification procedures, academic rigour, and parents' perceptions of gifted education. The pattern codes capture the different connections in the data and offer a thorough explanation about the phenomenon found within each theme. An examination of these themes revealed through the data help to explain the different experiences faced by the three students.

Peggy and Darren

Background

Darren is 26 years old. He lives with his mother and father in a three-story home in a large metropolitan city in Ontario. Darren was born in Hong Kong and moved to Canada when he was 5 years old. Peggy is a retired teacher who now spends most of her day taking care of nieces and nephews. She used to teach Grade 7 and 8 in the public school system and later in an alternative school. Darren's father, Frank, is a retired computer engineer.

Identification

Darren's giftedness was noted during his preschool years. His mother explains that he was actually extremely bright in terms of childhood development. "He was already playing on the computer by age 2 and was already spelling words, and I also noticed he just devours books." His mother describes him as having a photographic memory that "just kind of absorbed everything and anything." She feels that his memory allowed Darren to fuel his desire to learn through reading books and browsing the Internet. This ability was further evident as he matured. At that time, Peggy and Frank noticed that "his capacity to understand the big picture for anything seems to come to him very easily."

Like many young boys, Darren enjoyed watching cartoons and was in awe of Superman, his early childhood hero. Because Darren was an active youngster, his mother enrolled him in many extracurricular activities. She explains, "I had him learn Chinese Kung-fu to let his energy find some way out." Darren also learned to play piano and cello.

During identification, Peggy remembers that Darren's whole class was tested for intelligence testing. She recalls the parents being kept in the dark and were only informed of testing through letters from school. "(It) said that these kids would be given a test and they just spent a day in the classroom and they did that, they evaluated and assessed and that was it." Peggy recalls, "It was a long day, and after they picked out a few kids to do extra testing on." Peggy remembers they pulled Darren out of class to do this extra testing, but admitted that the details were not clear: "It's very vague for me right now; it was such a long time ago."

When asked about her perceptions on the identification process, Peggy cautions, "I think the process is good if you know how to use the information but if you don't know how to use the information it may not necessarily be that great." Still the identification of gifted students is often one of the most difficult elements of implementing a gifted program. Adding to this problem is that there is no universally agreed upon definition of giftedness; gifted education is generally used as a term for specific practices and services in the education of students who have been identified as gifted based on capability and/or talent (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). However, Peggy believes that to be gifted means to approach a problem from different perspectives or "think outside of the box in order to solve something in a different way." She stresses that it is important for gifted learners to understand why they are gifted lest they "feel like they are not accepted by society and feel like they're out of it."

Academic Rigour

Darren's academic performance remained outstanding through Grade 3. He was identified as gifted at that time, scoring in the 99th percentile in language and math and

science. However, Peggy often expressed concern for Darren's achievement orientation in school and frequently felt that Darren didn't apply himself when it came down to completing work on time. She thought that he did not always work as hard as he could, and she insisted that he should study more. Peggy explains, "He often didn't study the night before a test;" and, "if it's daily homework, I'll put in less than an hour." Peggy often had to remind Darren he was good at everything if he really put forth effort, noting "you have talents, if you don't use them, it is a waste."

Peggy is a retired teacher who spent many years teaching in both the gifted and regular streams. Her perceptions on gifted students are helpful because she can provide personal accounts regarding the many students she has taught. She feels that "if you truly have a gifted student, they actually think out of the box and may not necessarily follow your normal patterns of a high achiever." Moreover, she believes that "sometimes the giftedness is a, sort of like a challenge for them to fit into a world that is expecting children with high average(s) to behave in a certain way." However, Peggy often found the opposite to be true. She taught many students who did not fit that particular mode; this fact surprised everybody as people tend to assume that gifted learners have high intellectual abilities and are therefore excellent students. In Peggy's experiences, she found that high achievers naturally tended to have good work habits and were thus placed into gifted programs. She stresses that these high achievers "may not have been truly gifted … whereas the truly gifted ones (might) be at the bottom of the class but are so way off-line in the way they're thinking that people … consider them as not achieving." This mindset could prove problematic as it could lead to the underrepresentation of gifted students.

Being a teacher of the gifted, Peggy noticed that all the gifted programs involved projects and figured it would not be a good fit for Darren and his skill set. These programs worried her "because I know my son doesn't have such a good reputation in terms of (his) study skills and work skills, work ethic, because he was so fast in learning things that he would prefer to read rather than to hand in the homework or hand in the projects." Peggy remembers that "not all programs are regulated in the way that you may know." For example, she recalls inconsistencies evident in teaching gifted students and says, "You can have one class who are doing tremendously well stimulating them and challenging them. Then there are the classes that really treat giftedness as if the students can teach themselves, so they give them projects to do. "

Peggy recalls positive aspects in the program as well. "The positive aspect is it's a community. When you get a group of high achievers together, they brainstorm ideas and they sort of get all excited about doing projects." Gifted programs have the potential to help students excel: "It is marvelous to watch them achieve in ways that are beyond the regular grade, so definitely there is an advantage of putting them all into the gifted program."

However, although Darren was identified as gifted, he was not placed in the gifted program. Peggy worried that Darren would not be a good fit with the program. She cites his experiences in the regular classroom to support her reasoning. "He was doing China; so for two weeks he did nothing but read about China; so he learned so much about China, but he didn't express it in terms of pen to paper. … So of course he failed." As a result of such experiences, Peggy "figured that if he was going to go into that gifted program, or the particular gifted program that is project oriented," it was not going to be a

good match to Darren's capabilities in that " he would not meet up with success or rather he would labelled as 'lazy.'"

Perceptions of Gifted Education

For several years, Darren was ranked first in his class. Along with strong academic skills, his talents included effective interpersonal skills, leadership, and musical ability. The rest of elementary school played out regularly, and it was not until Grade 8, when he started to exhibit some gifted traits, that teachers started sending him to math contests and debate sessions. According to Peggy, he was elected as the valedictorian because "his writing skill was so much better than the rest of them." Looking back, I ask Peggy if she feels that Darren had missed out, by not entering the gifted program. She replies that "he is always realizing the fact that he will not fit into anybody's mold." This realization has helped Darren in that, as he grows older, he has developed learning skills to help him adapt. Peggy feels that, given his own educational experiences, "he might be able to identify with students who are say gifted and not fitting in." Darren has recently started his own tutoring business and the last child he tutored was a learning disabled (LD) gifted student. Peggy explains, "they got along so well because they totally understood each other."

However, treating gifted students as a singular group can be problematic because it is important to recognize the differences each student brings to the table. In view of differentiation, it is imperative that teachers focus on meaningful learning that encompasses all students. Thus teachers should plan to address and adjust to various learners' different needs. Peggy stresses that "all students should be treated individually because you might have LD gifted, the behavioural gifted, and you have the ones that are

against authority, so how do you deal with that?" Peggy feels the best way is to have a teacher who is confident in him/herself. For her, it is "important to tell the kids I'm learning just as much as you are and that maybe I can point you guys in the direction that you wanted to learn and get more information that way."

Carrie and Jenn

Background

Jenn is 10 years old and going into Grade 5. She lives with her parents, Carrie and Mike, as well as her older sister, Maggie. Jenn's family moved from Nova Scotia 6 years ago, and they now reside in a large three-story home in a bedroom community of a small suburb in Ontario. According to Jenn's mother, her teachers describe Jenn as "a really sociable girl but she's also very tenacious." Her parents feel that Jenn "is easily motivated when it comes to things she's excited about or passionate about and excels in all things having to do with language."

Identification

Jenn's grandmother was the one who first noticed her giftedness during Jenn's preschool years; "how quick she was, her sense of humour, how she just caught on to things so quickly, and she always said to me [Carrie] she's very bright." Her giftedness was further evident in Senior Kindergarten when her teachers would say her level of understanding and sense of humour were advanced, and she understood "adult jokes." Carrie says that teachers would frequently comment on Jenn's understanding of difficult subject matters. "She has a level of understanding that is different … they started doing Shakespeare in class and [the teacher] said Jenn understood everything at a different level." Carrie also remembers she thought Jenn was different in understanding her own

humour, "I would say stuff and she would be laughing. I just didn't think she would understand and she did!"

After a few teachers' recommendations, Jenn was tested at the end of Grade 3. During the testing, Carrie wished she could have been present. "I almost wish I was there, I only learned about things [from Jenn] there was only what I was told from her and then she told me it was very organized, very thorough." She recalls clearly "the days that the testing would be done, how it would be done, she'd go into a room separately and I was able to tell her that so she wouldn't be afraid." Carrie was only worried about the possibility of Jenn being pulled out of class or standing out.

After an initial round of group testing, Jenn was interviewed one-on-one. Carrie remembers that Jenn was feeling very apprehensive: "She was really nervous [during the testing] because she didn't know this woman, but I knew it would be the best for her because she'd be able to talk and that's her thing, to be able to express herself." Jenn was identified as gifted through scoring at the 98th percentile in language.

The parents were kept in the dark and were informed of testing results through letters from school. "I had no idea until that paper came back if they were going to say yes she is or not she's not … I accepted whatever and I also had no idea. I was totally in the dark." Carrie was also accepting of whatever result came from the testing: "If she wasn't, fine we'd move on. And if she was, ok what do we do next?"

Academic Rigour

For most of Jenn's life, she has been in a public school system. Carrie explains that "they have always placed an importance on extracurricular activities and always make sure to enroll the kids in extracurricular activities like sports and art." Jenn has

weekly lessons in softball, jazz, and piano: "She's even starting to play the drums, she begged us hard for that one." Both Mike and Carrie have adopted a laissez-faire policy toward Jenn's and Maggie's education and support them by saying, "I don't care about marks at all. I don't know if I'm a strange mother, I just care that they're happy because that's half the battle of going to school and they both love going to school." Although Jenn excels in language skills, she struggles with many other subjects such as math. When Carrie learned of Jenn's results after gifted testing, she was shocked to find that she was lower in every other subject. "You just always expect that because she's so good in languages, she'd be good in everything else too!"

Carrie says that Jenn is easily motivated "when it comes to things she's excited about or passionate about." Carrie credits Jenn's teachers in "igniting some kind of thing within her, and I don't know… but when you see a kid get that excited with a teacher, it's amazing." However, Carrie is beginning to worry as both her daughters are getting older. "I'm seeing that they're changing … their friends are becoming everything." Still she is uncertain as to what the future will hold: "We'll see what happens … I do have this thought in my head, that if she doesn't make it, it would almost be like quitting." Although Carrie and Mike have a laissez-faire policy regarding marks and achievements, they wholeheartedly believe in determination "because Mike's a marathon runner and we both do stuff; we stick to it and I hope Jenn does too." Thus Carrie really would like to see Jenn succeed in the gifted program "because it'll feel like quitting if she doesn't, I would never tell her that but I just, if she can make it I'll be so proud because it's probably the hardest thing she's ever done."

Perceptions of Gifted Education

Many parents ask Carrie how Jenn got into the gifted program. "[The parents will say things] like they think that their kid is really smart and is probably really smart." Carrie has a ready answer for these parents. "I said it's not really about being smart … it's hard to explain it's like she's very bright but there's something else going on." Carrie often struggles with describing the gifted program because she feels she is not sure what being gifted means for Jenn.

For Grade 5, Jenn has had an IEP where modifications were made to help challenge her. She is much happier now because she has more challenges. "She's even said she doesn't have to wait while the other kids catch on. And I've never heard that. One day she just said, "Oh I always have to wait. I was like what?" Previously, before the IEP, Jenn became bored as the teacher would "explain something and she gets it right away but then she has to do it again so everyone else will get it. It's the teaching that is repetitive." Carrie sees this repetition as a problem not just for Jenn but for other students. "So these kids get it the first time; so to hear it over and over again, it becomes boring and redundant and that's when their head starts going somewhere else."

Jenn's academic performance has remained outstanding through this grade. Jenn has recently been enrolled in a gifted program for the coming year; her parents are hoping that it will challenge her. While Jenn is very sociable and makes many friends, she is apprehensive about switching to a new school. Still Carrie worries about the future and sees potential aspects in the program that worry her as well. "I think for the kids, maybe, there's more bright minds in one class and they might not like that." She is also concerned about the possible increased stress. "Or maybe it's the pressure? Will these kids feel that they will be smart enough? Will they be as smart as the other kids?" Jenn is

also anxious about entering the gifted program. "She wanted to be the fish in the pond that was big so she knew what we meant, and understood and didn't want to be the little one." Despite her own misgivings, Carrie tries to convince Jenn otherwise. "I said like the little fish in the ocean and she said no, I don't want to be that. So she understands that she's special, kind of, but there's definitely that anxiety there."

Although Jenn has not entered into the gifted program, she and her parents recently attended an orientation session at her prospective school. Carrie reflects on this session positively.

> It was amazing and informative. They had this motto, it was why not? Like if the kid says let's do this, why not? So I think they're sort of, which I am a big believer in bringing creativity back to learning … which is so important which I don't think they have time for. It's like this program is like a private school in a public school system, and when do you get that opportunity? You don't. And when does a teacher have time to say why not, when they have so many different students to have to think about.

At the orientation, all the teachers came out. Carrie explains that the teachers' presence was a very good sign, "they're all young and hip looking … she was so happy, just that little thing made her so happy. So these teachers being hip looking is half the battle. I'm excited to see where next year takes us!"

Sharon and Rachel

Background

Rachel is 10 years old and has just finished Grade 4. She was born in Israel and moved to Canada at the age of 6. She attended daycare to Senior Kindergarten in Israel (ages 1.5-6) and started Grade 1 in Canada. Rachel's family lives in a two-story home in a community within a large metropolitan city in Ontario. Rachel has an older sister named

Jessica. The two girls live with their parents and their uncle. Rachel attends a school in the city that has a gifted program where it allows her to go in-depth in many areas. Rachel excels in school and "doesn't seem to try very hard to maintain the marks she used to have at her previous school." However, she is learning to accept that "she is no longer an A+ student like she was before, but she feel she learns much more now."

Identification

Rachel's giftedness was noted during her preschool years. Her mother explains, "She could memorize things pretty well. She learned faster than other kids." Rachel developed verbally at a very young age; "she communicated way above her age at the age of 2 and could converse with adults and older children with ease." She acquired her second language (English) at an amazing speed and was always curious and asked interesting, in-depth questions about things that interested her: "This one time she had this huge obsession with butterflies."

Sharon recalls that the "school had a standard test … and then later [Rachel] had an individual interview." She remembers being kept in the dark about the whole process but received a paper from the school informing her that Rachel was gifted. "I had no idea, as we only got the final outcome." Sharon wishes she had had the opportunity to learn more about the identification process. "I never saw the tests or talked to the person who assessed her, I would have liked to know what was going on." According to her mother, the school said Rachel excels in both language and math.

Academic Rigour

Sharon describes Rachel as "a very smart and curious kid, who loves to read … she'll read about anything!" She is also very inquisitive and asks many questions. Because Rachel is an active youngster, her mother enrolled her in many extracurricular activities. She explains, "She goes to gymnastics and soccer once a week. It's great for her and it's great for me too, she gets to expend some of that energy." Rachel is also learning to play the piano and guitar. Although she enjoys her other extracurricular activities, Rachel's passion is dance, and she is "an extremely talented dancer who competes at dance competitions around the country." She also loves music and "devotes countless hours listening to songs in her room." Sharon is "happy [Rachel] does so many other things. I think it's important for her to be well-rounded."

Although she feels that her daughter is smart, Sharon often worries that Rachel does not put in enough time in her studies to fully realize her potential. "I always have to remind her to do her homework … I don't think she spends nearly enough time on it, I mean she only spends 15 minutes on it sometimes!" She also worries "that her daughter thinks she is smart and does not need to put in much effort to do well … I think this is a horrible belief she's had since she was young." She remembers that Rachel often boasted to other kids that "she never had to do homework and still did well on tests without studying." Sharon finds that she has to remind Rachel to be more humble, as she feels this belief "can inflate [Rachel's] sense of importance."

Perceptions of Gifted Education

Rachel chose to go into the gifted program herself. Even against her mother's wishes, she insisted on entering an "Enhanced Learning Class (ELC)" and had to change

schools. Sharon wanted Rachel to stay at her old school and tried to convince her to stay at her school with an IEP, as well as extracurricular enrichment. A number of other family members, including her sister, attended the old school, and Sharon worried that Rachel would be considered an outcast, or someone who was different from everyone else, at the new school. "I just didn't want her to feel excluded, you know." Later on, Sharon found out the underlying motive for Rachel to change schools. "She said at her old school the kids made fun of her … she told me she felt like other people judged her for being smart … the kids were just mean and were always calling [her] a nerd." Looking back, Sharon feels that "the idea of changing schools was a very wise decision as she is now challenged in school … she's much happier now and feels more comfortable in class and is able to socialize with kids who share similar interests."

Sharon reports that Rachel generally "really enjoys school … except for homework." Rachel feels that homework "is awful not because it's hard but it's really boring most of the time." When comparing her time in her old class, Rachel much prefers the ELC as it is "typically less boring for her." Rachel values "the hands-on tasks, plays, games, debates, field trips" that are frequent components in class and help contribute to her engagement in class.

Sharon also notices differences between the two classes regarding communication with Rachel's teachers. "I feel like [Rachel's new teacher] is more accessible and we're able to communicate much more throughout the school year." In previous years, Sharon remembers only being able to speak to teachers during parent-teacher interview nights, which she feels "were often always so rushed and not very informative."

Sharon sees more positives in the gifted program and believes that the program has benefitted Rachel "not just because she can make friends" but because she is able to be challenged by her peers. Sharon believes it is a good thing to group students by ability; "I think they are regularly humbled by their peers, since no one student is the best in everything. I think all children, regardless of ability, should experience such competition and be challenged."

CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS

The focus of this investigation was the exploration of parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming. This focus required me to analyze the interviews of parents of gifted children. Certain key words and/or phrases were representative of the data: gifted identification, gifted programming, and expectations/perceptions. These words and/or phrases formed the basis for my descriptions of the findings in the previous chapter and reflections on the results in the current chapter.

Reflections on Gifted Identification

The findings of this study support qualitative findings in the literature suggesting that changes in educational interventions in the form of gifted development program be effective in increasing gifted identification (Barlow & Dunbar, 2010; Callahan, 2005; Makel, 2009). With that stated, the underrepresentation of diverse groups in gifted programs is complex and is not readily resolved with just one intervention approach or strategy. To address the issue, a multistep approach is recommended including flexible identification procedures, teacher training, and authentic assessments. With intentional regard for understanding the idea of the gifted experience, this study sought to understand parents' experiences with gifted identification and programming.

In addition to being identified as gifted, Darren, Jenn, and Rachel displayed a multitude of talents. For instance, Darren's mother explains that he was extremely bright in terms of childhood development. She notes that Darren was "playing on the computer by age 2 and was already able to spell words." His mother describes him as having a

photographic memory that "just kind of absorbed everything and anything." She feels that his memory allowed Darren to fuel his desire to learn through reading books and browsing the Internet. This ability was further evident as he matured; Peggy and Frank (Darren's father) noticed that "his [Darren's] capacity to understand the big picture for anything seems to come to him very easily."

All three of the children's giftedness was noted during their preschool years with all three parents indicating that they or family members observed how advanced their children's humour, questions, or understanding was. In all three cases, the mothers of the participants took a strong interest in exposing their children to different extracurricular lesson in early childhood. All parents provided the children with extracurricular lessons after school or on weekends. Rachel dances and frequently competes in dance competitions around the country. In addition to dance, she goes to gymnastics and soccer once a week and is learning to play the piano and guitar.

Regarding the identification process itself, the parents wanted a more transparent process. Carrie and Sharon believe they were kept in the dark about what was happening during testing and had to rely on their children's memories of what happened. Although Peggy knew how Darren was tested, she no longer can recall the details as the testing took place a long time ago. During the gifted testing, Carrie wished she could have been present. However, her daughter Jenn said the testing "was very organized, very thorough." She recalls clearly "the days that the testing would be done, how it would be done, she'd go into a room separately, and I was able to tell her that so she wouldn't be afraid." Carrie was only worried about the possibility of Jenn being pulled out of class or standing out.

All the parents were only informed of testing results through letters from school. Carrie recalls that she "had no idea until that paper came back if they were going to say "yes, she is" or "no, she's not" … I accepted whatever and I also had no idea. I was totally in the dark." Both Sharon and Carrie were accepting of whatever result came from the testing with Carrie noting, "If she wasn't, fine; we'd move on. And if she was, ok, what do we do next?"

Reflections on Gifted Programming

The research found two results regarding gifted programming. In Peggy's case, the gifted program seemed disorganized and unstructured for her son, Darren. She did not think the program would be the right fit for Darren and chose not to enroll him in the program, even though he was ranked first in his class. Along with strong academic skills, his Darren had effective interpersonal skills, leadership, and musical ability. The rest of elementary school played out regularly, and it was not until Grade 8, when he started to exhibit some gifted traits, that teachers started sending Darren to math contests and debate sessions. According to Peggy, he was elected as the valedictorian because of his superior writing skills. Looking back, I ask Peggy if she feels that Darren had missed out, by not entering the gifted program. She hesitates to answer at first but has come to the realization that Darren is "is realizing the fact that he will not fit in to anybody's mold." This realization has helped Darren in that, as he grows older, he has developed learning skills to help him adapt. Peggy feels that, given his own educational experiences, "he might be able to identify with students who are gifted and not fitting in."

Both Carrie and Sharon found the gifted program beneficial for their daughters, with Jenn (Carrie's daughter) newly entering the program and Rachel (Sharon's daughter) having experienced the gifted program (Enhanced Learning Class) for two years. On changing classes, Rachel is much happier and feels more comfortable as she is able to socialize with children who share similar interests. Sharon also reports that Rachel generally "really enjoys school … except for homework." Rachel feels that homework "is awful not because it's hard but it's really boring most of the time." When comparing her time in her old class, Rachel much prefers the ELC as it is "typically less boring for her." Rachel values "the hands-on tasks, plays, games, debates, field trips" that are frequent components in class and help contribute to her engagement in class.

Reflections on Expectations/Perceptions

Of all the parents, Carrie is the most hesitant regarding gifted programming: Carrie explains that many parents ask Carrie how Jenn got into the gifted program. "[The parents will say things] like they think that their kid is really smart and is probably really smart." Carrie has a ready answer for these parents. "I said it's not really about being smart … it's hard to explain. It's like she's very bright but there's something else going on." Carrie often struggles with describing the gifted program because she feels she is not sure what being gifted means for Jenn.

Peggy (Darren's mom) offers an interesting perspective as a former teacher of the gifted, and cautions that treating gifted students as a homogeneous group can be problematic because it is important to recognize the differences each student brings to the table. In view of differentiation, it is imperative that teachers focus on meaningful

learning that encompasses all students. Thus teachers should plan to address and adjust to various learners' different needs. Peggy stresses that, "all students should be treated individually." Peggy believes the best way to accomplish this task is to have a teacher who is confident in him/herself. For her, it is "important to tell the kids I'm learning just as much as you are and that maybe I can point you guys in the direction that you wanted to learn and get more information that way."

Rachel chose to go into the gifted program herself. Even against her mother's wishes, she insisted on entering an "Enhanced Learning Class (ELC)" and had to change schools. Looking back, Sharon agrees with her daughter and feels that the idea of changing schools was a very wise decision on Rachel's part as she now faces appropriate challenges in school. Sharon is happy to report that Rachel is much happier now as she is able to socialize with students who share similar interests and is able to feel more comfortable in class. Sharon notices differences between the two classes regarding communication with Rachel's teachers. She sees Rachel's teachers as more accessible and remarks how easy it is to communicate with the teachers throughout the school year. In previous years, Sharon remembers only being able to speak to teachers during parent-teacher interview nights, which she feels "were often always so rushed and not very informative."

Sharon sees more positives in the gifted program and believes that the program has benefitted Rachel "not just because she can make friends" but because she is able to be challenged by her peers. Sharon believes it is a good thing to group students by ability: "I think they are regularly humbled by their peers, since no one student is the best in

everything. I think all children, regardless of ability, should experience such competition and be challenged."

Reflections as a Researcher/Future Teacher

Upon identification of the adult participants, an introductory letter was sent to each participant that served to identify the researcher, explain the purpose of the study, and request participation. Prior to the confirmation of an interview, informed consent was obtained. The interview was scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participant. Questions were asked from an interview guide that focused on the topic of study. Once participants gave consent to the recording and were assured of confidentiality, the interview guide was used to record the participants' responses. This description of the research makes it appear like a straight-forward process. However, I had some challenges along the way. My initial plan was to work with ABC Ontario, which I was assured would help me find interview candidates. A significant delay occurred and, after multiple attempts at contacting the organization, I knew that recruitment through the organization would not work. After realizing that I was not able to pursue my original recruitment plan, I asked friends and other colleagues for referrals. Fortunately, my friends responded, and I was able to secure the names of potential participants who were then recruited by e-mail.

During the interviews, I tried to be as neutral as possible while being aware of the power that a researcher can have in an interviewing dynamic. Maintaining neutrality involved allowing the participants to share their stories without requiring an approval or affirmation from me as the researcher. In addition, I felt it was critical that I not influence

or steer the participants in any way, which might have signaled or endorsed a certain response. I transcribed the interview audio-recordings and then submitted the transcripts via e-mail to the participants for review, clarification, and editing. The reviewed transcripts were used for the final data analysis. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the process.

Preparing for the interview triggered a particularly poignant reflection for me where I discovered the difference between my perspective about the impact of the questions and those of the participants. It was interesting to listen to parents share with me their hopes, fears, and worries about their children. This process reminded me that it is vital that we listen to parents and try to see things from their point of view. Listening to these parents' stories has allowed me to see their views more clearly and has reinforced the need to ensure that we never underestimate the value of listening to people.

The research granted me a glimpse into the world of adolescents through their parents' perspectives. This view has been both inspirational and something to cherish as I was able to learn about the different experiences for each family regarding the gifted process. There is also something incredibly exciting about seeing the idea develop into a research project. I have further developed my skills and knowledge, and these are relevant and directly transferable to my teaching practice. By being allowed to undertake all parts of the research process, I have gained experience that I could not have gained from books alone. Even though I was tempted to quit my master's project more than once, I am happy that I had the experience and persevered.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming

Hello Parents,

My name is Cassie Ng from Queen's University. Has your child been identified as gifted? I am conducting a Master's of Education study on parents' perspectives on gifted identification and gifted programs. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. If you are interested in hearing more about the study, please contact me.

I can be reached at 8cn6@queensu.ca or 416-992-2733. If you wish to speak to someone from the research ethics office you may contact the chair at Chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION

October 21, 2010

Dear Parents,

My name is Cassie Ng. I am asking you to participate in an interview that I am undertaking for my Master of Education project at Queen's University entitled *Parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming*. The purpose of my project is to understand gifted identification and programming through parents' perspectives. This study was granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board for compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, and Queen's policies.

The interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length and will be audio-recorded. It will take place at the offices of ABC Ontario. I will prepare a verbatim transcription of the interview, which you will have an opportunity to review, concealing your identity and the identity of people that you might mention through the course of the interview by using fictitious names. Only my supervisor, Dr. John Freeman, and I will have access to the data. In accordance with Queen's policy, data will be retained for five years in a secure location with specific instructions.

In asking you to participate in this exercise, I am assuring you that you may choose not to answer any question that you find objectionable or that makes you uncomfortable in any way. There are no foreseeable risks, and your participation is entirely voluntary. Also, you may withdraw from the interview at any time, without pressure or consequence of any kind, and you may request that all or part of your data be removed and destroyed. Results from this study will be published in my master's project and may be at a conference and/or in an open access publication relevant to the digital library community. If the data is used for secondary analysis it will contain no identifying information.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Cassie Ng at 8cn6@queensu.ca or my supervisor, John Freeman at 613-533-6000 ext. 77298 or freemanj@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca. If you agree to participate in this research, please sign the consent form, returning one copy to me and retaining the second copy for your records.

Sincerely,
Cassie Ng

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent:

If you are willing to participate in the research exercise *Parents' experiences with gifted identification and gifted programming* please fill out the following.

*****

I have read the description of the research exercise as contained on the Letter of Information, and I understand that the purpose of the study is to assist in the project entitled *Parents' experiences with gifted identification and programming*. My questions have been answered, and I understand that my participation in the research interview is voluntary, that I may withdraw at any time, that the information I provide will be treated as confidential, and that my identity will be protected to the extent possible. I also understand that the 60-minute interview will be audio-recorded so that a transcription can be prepared. The audio-recording will be erased, notes will be shredded, and computer files will be deleted in 5 years. I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of a fictitious name, and all identifying features (e.g., child's school name) will be removed. I also understand that a copy of my transcript will be provided for me to check for accuracy.

I understand that I will not be expected to answer any questions that might make me feel uncomfortable or that I find objectionable. I understand that I may withdraw from the interview at any time, without pressure or consequence of any kind, and that I may request that all or part of my data be removed and destroyed.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Cassie Ng at 8cn6@queensu.ca or my supervisor, John Freeman at 613-533-6000 ext. 77298 or freemanj@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Please provide an e-mail address for you to review the transcription and the

interpretation:

_____

Date _____

Please sign one copy of this Consent Form and return to Cassie Ng before the

interview. Retain the second copy for your records.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Could you tell me a bit about your child?

2. Describe your child's educational background.

3. When you think of giftedness, what do you visualize?

4. What first alerted you to the possibility that your child was gifted?

5. Describe the gifted identification process.

6. How accurate was the process?

7. What has your child's involvement in special gifted or enrichment programs in school been like?

8. What program/modifications are made for your child?

9. What are the positive aspects of the program?

10. What, if any, are the negative aspects of the program?

11. How do you feel the program contributes to motivation?

12. Do you have advice for other parents of gifted children?

13. Is there anything we may have missed in this interview that you would like to expand on?