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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Opening the Gates of a GATE Program:
A Mixed Methods Study of Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices
in One Multicultural Middle School

by

Marie Lynette Aldapa

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

In partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2016

Opening the Gates of a GATE Program:
A Mixed Methods Study of Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices
in One Multicultural Middle School

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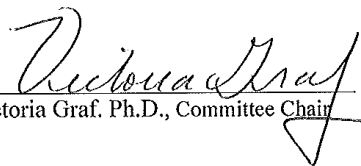
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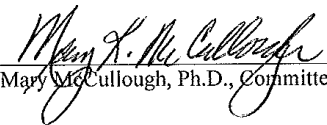
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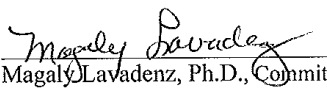
This dissertation written by Marie Lynette Aldapa, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

3-30-2016
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My Dissertation Committee – for guiding me and sharing your wisdom.

My LMU Cohort 5 Colleagues – LMU past professor and liturgical music composer, Bob Hurd (1984) described our work the best in his refrain to “Who Shall Climb the Mountain of God?”– this was our call to come together, this is our call to go out into the world:

They who do justice will live in the presence of God...

They shall be called the sons and daughters of God...

For if you hear the cry of the poor...

If you feed the hungry...

If you loosen the bonds of oppression...

Then your light will break forth like the dawn...

And your wounds be healed...

And the God of all will be your God...

Special thank you – To my students: representatives of the whole world in one classroom... who, as classmates and friends, may take their rightful places at the table of excellence to add their voices, perspectives, and multiple intelligences to the conversations regarding: the answers, the cures, the inventions, the technologies, the peaceful diplomacy, and endless possibilities that will make our world a better place. As Langston Hughes (1902–1967) describes, they too are beautiful and they too are America.

I, Too – by Langston Hughes (1994)

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

“Eat in the kitchen,”

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

DEDICATION

My Grandmothers: Opal Rosecrans and Frances Aldapa

My Parents: Carolyn and Robert Aldapa

My LMU Parents: Sr. Peg Dolan, RSHM and Fernando Moreno

My sister in academia: Chrystal Anne Maggiore

My Godchildren: Celeste Jaylynn Lesure and Jose Pulido Martinez

My Mama Kitty

They have all been by my side physically and spiritually through this entire journey.

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Opening the Gates of a GATE Program:
A Mixed Method Study of Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices
In One Multicultural Middle School

by

Marie Lynette Aldapa

The under-representation of racial minority students in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs has been an issue with little to no resolution (Ford, 2002). These under-represented racial minority groups are experiencing the obstacles of discrimination. Ogbu's (1987) observation offers a framework distinguishing minorities: voluntary and involuntary. Researchers report on the under-representation of "involuntary" minority groups (McBee, 2006).

Researchers have offered keys to opening the gates of GATE programs to bring about racial equity. Recruitment processes: alternative assessments and teacher referrals are available to identify minority GATE students (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, & Holloway, 2005). Retention practices: racial diversity of gate teachers, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of caring are available to support racial minority gate students once in the program (Delpit, 2006).

This mixed-methods study is of one school's GATE program, Multicultural Middle School (MMS). The study used descriptive statistics to analyze percentages of racial representation of MMS's GATE students and GATE teachers. The study also used questionnaires, observations, and interviews to analyze MMS's GATE teachers' knowledge and practices in regards to the research-based recruitment processes and retention practices of under-represented racial minorities.

This study found that the *voluntary racial minority group* was over-represented and one of four *involuntary racial groups* was under-represented. This study also found that MMS's GATE program had achieved racial equity in three of the four involuntary racial minority groups. At the time of this study, MMS's GATE program was trending toward equity.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Numerous demographic groups have been under-represented in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs in the United States (Freeman, 2004; Matthews & Matthews, 2004; Reis & Diaz 1999; Sarouphim, 2004). In an effort to address this inequality, researchers have found explanations for the under-representation of this student population, and have offered solutions to bring about equity. Freeman (2004) noted the under-representation of gifted students who were female, and were especially absent in mathematics and science. Reis and Diaz researched the under-representation of students from low socioeconomic status in urban GATE programs. Matthews and Matthews noted an under-representation of students who were bilingual in GATE programs because these students often remained unidentified by teachers for referral.

The problem is the under-representation of these demographic groups in GATE programs yet there are solutions that can bring about equity. Freeman (2004) suggested that alternative assessments such as academic portfolios and having more teachers, especially in math and science, who are also female would help the gifted students who are female achieve. Reis and Diaz (1999) studied how high school students who were gifted excelled despite their urban, low socioeconomic status school. Despite the poverty, Reis and Diaz noted that personal resilience, parental support, and teacher mentoring were all part of the students' success. Reagan and Osborn (2002) posed a solution of culturally responsive classes that are structured for native Spanish speakers and promote the identification of, and success for, gifted students who are bilingual.

Along with the under-representation of gifted students who are female are gifted students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, and gifted students who are bilingual; numerous researchers have also studied the under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002; Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002; Sarouphim, 2004). Researchers have offered suggestions for achieving racial equity in GATE programs, however no one, to date, has put the research-suggested strategies into practice as a systematic program. Therefore, this study identifies what I believe to be the most prominent of these research solutions in order to obtain equity for one of these under-represented demographic groups—racial minorities—and offers six strategies that may open the gates of GATE programs to these gifted students.

The under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs has been an issue for many years but has achieved little-to-no resolution. These students are still experiencing the obstacles of prejudice, bias, and discrimination (Ford & Grantham 2003, citing Gould 1981, 1995; Menchaca, 1997). Such under-representation has shut these students out of GATE programs. There also appears to be a distinction within racial minority populations that affects their success in society, in general, and in school, specifically.

Ogbu (1974, 1987) offered terms and a framework in which to distinguish different types of racial minorities. The more successful minorities, the “voluntary minorities,” are those racial minorities who immigrated more-or-less voluntarily to the United States. The less successful minorities, the “involuntary minorities,” are those racial minorities who were originally brought into the United States involuntarily through various means including: slavery, conquest, and/or colonization. For the purpose of this study, the students from involuntary racial minority groups

will include—Native Americans, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos—in GATE programs are the focus of this mixed-methods study. All of these racial minority groups are considered involuntary minorities by Ogbu’s definition (1974, 1987, 2003). These racial minority groups each has a unique relationships to the United States—an oppression of a historical, political, sociological, and/or economical nature. Various Europeans conquered the Native Americans; the African Americans were enslaved by various Europeans and brought to the Americas; and the Pacific Islanders and Latinos were both conquered and colonized by the dominant European Racial Majority.

Numerous researchers have reported statistics that focus on students from involuntary minority groups and their under-representation in GATE programs (Ford, 1996, 1998, 2002; Kornhaber, 1999; McBee, 2006; Sarouphim, 2004). These students are under-represented in GATE programs by as much as 30–70% relative to their percentage in the population (Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002).

The extant research has pointed to two prominent reasons for this statistical under-representation: recruitment processes and retention practices. Recruitment processes into GATE programs block students from involuntary minority groups from entering GATE programs. One recruitment process leading to under-representation is that current assessments offer a narrow definition of giftedness that favors students from the dominant European American culture (Ford, 1996, 1998, 2002; Kornhaber, 1999; McBee, 2006; Sarouphim, 2004). Gould (1995) asserted that standardized tests traditionally measure familiarity with European American culture and therefore leads to low test scores for involuntary minority groups who are unfamiliar with the dominant culture’s customs, traditions, values, norms, and language. There are also

disagreements over what scores on standardized tests, IQ tests, and percentiles constitute “giftedness” (Ford, 1996, 1998, 2002; Kornhaber, 1999; McBee, 2006; Sarouphim, 2004). So, there is no standard cut-off score. Yet, whatever the illusive line of demarcation is, according to Ford and Grantham (2003), the fact is that more than 90% of school districts use standardized test scores as their primary identifier for the placement of students in GATE programs.

Another recruitment process that leads to the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups is that the abilities of these students are often overlooked and unrecognized by teachers who must nominate students for GATE programs (Bernal, 1994). McBee (2006) found that teacher referrals for students for gifted programs are unreliable and unfair to students from involuntary racial minority groups. Elhoweris et al. (2005) conducted an experiment regarding the reliability of teachers’ referrals of students to GATE programs. The study found that teachers referred to the GATE program what the experiment identified as “European American students” more frequently than what the experiment identified as “African American students” when given the very same vignettes of “potential” GATE students. This experiment pointed to the lack of reliability of initial and frontline Teacher Referrals when *race* is taken into consideration.

The lack of retention practices in GATE programs pushes students from involuntary minority groups out of the GATE program (Ford, Baytops, & Harmon 1997; Ford & Grantham, 2003). These under-represented students in GATE programs have also been identified as under-achieving students. They are at risk for either being dropped by GATE programs or by voluntarily dropping out of GATE programs. The research regarding under-achieving under-represented students from involuntary minority groups in GATE programs reports that these

students had less than positive “teacher-student” relationships (Delpit, 2006; Ford et al., 1997). The GATE teachers also have lowered expectations for students from involuntary minority groups, and some of these students have in turn internalized these deficit-thinking patterns and thus frequently drop out of the GATE program (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Ford et al., 1997). The absence of a culturally responsive and diversity welcoming environment leads to the lack of retention of many students from involuntary minority groups in GATE programs (Delpit, 2006; Ford et al., 1997).

While the research offers reasons for the under-representation of students from involuntary minority groups in GATE programs—their lack of recruitment and their lack of retention—it also offers strategies to achieve racial equity for these overlooked students. I have identified six strategies that are prominent in the literature on GATE programs. These are found within the prominent recruitment processes and retention practices. The two recruitment processes I have identified include: (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Sarouphim, 2004). The four retention practices I identified include: (a) teacher diversity, (b) culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive curriculum, and (d) creating a classroom culture of caring (Delpit, 2006; Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 1996; Grantham & Ford, 2003; Lin, 2001; Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005; Perez, 2000). According to the research, these two areas of recruitment processes and retention practices can open the gates of GATE programs for students from involuntary minority groups to obtain equitable racial access and representation.

Statement of the Problem

The under-representation of students from involuntary minority groups in GATE programs is a persistent problem. Yet, there are solutions offered in the literature on how to achieve racial equity—recruitment processes and retention practices. To date, there are no such studies reporting the implementation of these solutions in a systematic manner—either singularly or collectively—in a school’s GATE program. A mixed-methods study of a school that has implemented these solutions—either singularly or collectively—would demonstrate how these solutions work, or are ineffectual, in a real world setting (Creswell, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how one urban middle school, Multicultural Middle School (MMS), implemented the prominent research-identified strategies of recruitment processes and retention practices, as a means of achieving racial equity in its GATE program. This school has approached racial equity in the representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in its GATE program, as evidenced through MMS's school demographic reports made available to its GATE teachers.

This study examined the ways in which the teachers of MMS’s GATE program implemented the two recruitment processes of: (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals. This study also examined the ways in which these teachers implemented the four retention practices of: (a) teacher diversity, (b) culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive curriculum, and (d) a classroom culture of caring. These six strategies are considered through an examination of the teachers’ prior knowledge, core beliefs, and daily classroom practices regarding GATE programs in general and MMS’s GATE program in particular.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can offer teachers and school districts strategies by which to bring about racial equity in their own GATE programs and open the gates of their GATE programs to previously under-served and under-represented students from involuntary minority groups. This study investigated the six strategies to unlocking the problem of under-representation of these racial minority students and focused on the implementation of the prominently identified solutions in the literature of recruitment processes and the retention practices in the real world setting of MMS's GATE program. The findings of this study can provide ways of opening the gates of GATE programs to students of involuntary racial minority groups and thus approach racial equity for these students.

As a member of MMS's faculty, I first shared my findings with the faculty of MMS. The findings were also shared with MMS's district offices, which are most concerned with this topic: the Office of Gifted/Talented Programs and the Office of Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity. I also explored other avenues in which to share these findings in various conferences, educational settings, and educational publications.

This research is significant beyond GATE programs. As stated earlier, there is an under-representation of students from many demographic groups in GATE programs: students who are female, students of low socioeconomic status, students who are bilingual, and students from minority racial groups. While there is an under-representation of these demographic groups, there is an over-representation of students who are male, of middle to upper socioeconomic status, monolingual in American English, and of the Dominant European Racial Group. One dominant perspective, one dominant point of view, one dominant way of being does not provide

adequate space for diversity, creativity, and synergy. A diverse group of gifted students in a culturally responsive and caring educational environment in which synergistic interactions can take place has the potential to elicit the answers, the cures, the inventions, the technologies, the peaceful diplomacies, and endless possibilities that can—and will—make this world a better place.

Framework

Ogbu's (1987) terms distinguishing students from racial minority groups as either voluntary or involuntary will be used to frame and categorize students from racial minority groups in this study. The "voluntary minority" is a racial minority whose ancestors, or who themselves, voluntarily immigrated to the United States in order to escape negative living situations and/or to seek out a more positive living situations. Students from the voluntary minority groups that are part of MMS's GATE program are predominantly Asian.

The "involuntary minority" is a racial minority whose ancestors were originally brought into the United States involuntarily through slavery, conquest, and/or colonization. These racial minority groups each has unique relationships to the United States—oppression of an historical, political, sociological, and/or economic nature. Various Europeans conquered the Native Americans, enslaved the African Americans then transmitting them to the Americas, and conquered both Pacific Islanders and Latinos by colonization, thus setting themselves up to be the Dominant European Racial Majority. The students from the involuntary minority groups that are part of MMS's GATE program are the focus of this study: Native Americans, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos.

The two prominent themes from the reviewed literature—recruitment processes and retention practices—are the parameters used to frame the lens of this study. This study examined the extent to which recruitment processes and retention practices were implemented in MMS’s GATE program in order to obtain racial equity. The two prominent recruitment processes I identified include: (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals. The four prominent retention practices I identified include: (a) teacher diversity, (b) culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive curriculum, and (d) a classroom culture of caring.

There are two prominent recruitment processes. The first recruitment process, alternative assessments, is a means of measuring giftedness beyond mathematics and language arts. These assessments measure multiple intelligences that are prerequisites in a gifted and talented program (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Gardner’s (1983) *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* is at the core of many formal and informal alternative assessments.

The second recruitment process, teacher referrals, is the starting point for most students who enter the GATE program. It is a classroom teacher, with assessment scores in mind, who usually makes the first observation as to whether a student possesses gifted qualities (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Ford & Grantham, 2003). Insuring that this process is equitable is crucial to entering the GATE program.

There are four prominent retention practices. The first retention practice, teacher diversity, is the hiring of teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds and those who are culturally sensitive to their students from involuntary minority groups. The research highlighted teachers who are ethnically diverse, understanding of cultural diversity, appreciative of cultural

differences, eliminate deficit thinking patterns, raise expectations for diverse students, and so forth (Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 1996; Milner, 2003; Moore et al., 2005).

The second retention practice, culturally responsive pedagogy, is a way of connecting with multicultural students in ways that are familiar. It is a technique that bridges the known home culture to the unknown school culture (Delpit, 2006). It is a successfully proven practice that enables students from involuntary minority groups to remain in GATE programs.

The third retention practice, culturally responsive curriculum, recognizes the background of knowledge of students from involuntary minority groups. There are models designed to enhance the curriculum by connecting the lived experiences and cultural knowledge of students to school experiences and knowledge (Delpit, 2006; Ford & Harris, 1997). It is a practice that also allows the students from involuntary minority groups to remain in GATE programs.

Finally, the fourth retention practice, a classroom culture of caring, is a way to promote positive teacher-student relationships that is supportive. It is also a way to establish positive classroom environments (Delpit, 2006; Lin, 2001; Perez, 2000). All of these processes and practices are research-identified keys to opening the gates of GATE programs to students from previously under-served and under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Research Questions

My research questions concerned racial equity in Multicultural Middle School's (MMS) GATE program. The questions were as follows:

1. To what extent does MMS's GATE program implement the research-identified Recruitment Processes that are designed to include students from Involuntary Minority Groups?

2. To what extent do the teachers in MMS's GATE program implement the research-identified Retention Practices that are designed to retain students from Involuntary Minority Groups?

The initial premise of this study assumed that the implementation of the prominent recruitment processes and retention practices identified in the current research contributed to equitable representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in MMS's GATE program.

Research Design and Methods

Quantitative Tools

In order to answer these research questions, I chose to conduct a mixed-methods study (Creswell, 2007) of MMS's GATE program. The quantitative tools employed were questionnaires and descriptive statistics. I used a questionnaire designed to gather information on the teachers of MMS's GATE program, such as racial identity, educational background, and teaching experience. The descriptive statistics calculated from the racial identity information demonstrated the extent to which there was use of the retention practice of teacher diversity. The teachers' educational background and teaching experience were also represented in descriptive statistics.

I also used a questionnaire (Phuntsog, 2001) designed to gauge the beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program regarding the retention practices of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive curriculum. This questionnaire has a 4-point Likert-type scale of: *Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree*. The teachers' responses were converted into percentages and frequencies using descriptive statistics.

I used descriptive statistics to analyze racial representation. I compared MMS's school-wide racial demographic percentages to MMS's GATE program student racial demographic percentages. These descriptive statistics enabled me to report the under- and over- representation of students from the dominant racial majority, voluntary racial minority, and involuntary racial minority groups in MMS's GATE program. I also compared the racial demographic percentages of the teachers of MMS's GATE program to MMS's GATE program student racial demographic percentages. These descriptive statistics enabled me to discuss one of the strategies—teacher diversity—and report racial diversity, or lack of diversity, among the teachers of MMS's GATE program. I also used descriptive statistics to analyze percentages of racial representation of those students who were recently referred for possible gifted identification and those students recently identified as gifted in order to quantify recruitment processes. Descriptive statistics were also used to analyze percentages of those students who were recently dropped from MMS's GATE program in order to quantify retention practices.

Qualitative Tools

The qualitative tools I used were observations and interviews. I conducted classroom observations by using the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies—OPAL (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010). The OPAL is a research-based classroom observation instrument. This protocol was used to look for evidence of the retention practices of culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of caring. By conducting these observations, I documented the daily classroom practices and core beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program in terms of retention practices.

I followed up the classroom observations with one-on-one interviews with the coordinators of MMS's GATE program. I asked the coordinators about the two recruitment processes of (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals. The triangulation of questionnaires, classroom observations, and one-on-one interviews coupled with the descriptive statistics of racial representation yielded an in-depth view of the teachers' use of the recruitment practices and retention processes in MMS's GATE program.

Limitations

The limitation of this study concerned the unknown number of teachers of GATE students who would participate. It was unknown how many of MMS's GATE teachers, past and present, would agree to be any part of this study. There was also an unknown number of teachers, past and present, who would agree to fill out the questionnaire. There was, again, an unknown number of teachers, past and present, who would agree to classroom observations. Finally, there was an unknown number of GATE coordinators, past and present, who would agree to one-on-one interviews.

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study was its scope. This is a study of only one GATE program. This is a study at only the middle school level. This study took place in only one school semester—Spring 2012.

All of the teachers in MMS's GATE program were asked to participate in this study. There were approximately 20 teachers who taught the core academic subjects to the sixth through eighth grade students in MMS's GATE program. I also invited all of the teachers who were part of MMS's GATE program in the previous two years to participate. Some of these

teachers were still part of MMS's GATE program and some had transferred to other schools. All of these teachers had been a part of the decisions made concerning MMS's GATE program that had impacted the current MMS GATE program and the racial demographics of the current sixth-through eighth-grade GATE students.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the teachers of MMS's GATE program, who participated, past and present, participated fully in this study and with full candor.

Definition of Terms

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program: The purpose of this program is to implement a coordinated effort to enhance the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the special education needs of gifted and talented students (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Involuntary Minority: A minority group, according to John Ogbu (1974, 1987, 2003), that involuntarily became part of the United States through slavery, colonization, and/or conquest. For the purposes of this study that category included Native Americans, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos.

Large Metropolitan Urban School District (LMUSD) racial terms: Pseudonym for the school district of study. The racial terms used: White, Black, American Indian, and Hispanic will be changed to: European American, African American, Native American and Latino for the text of this study. Pacific Islander and Asian will remain the same. The racial terms: White, Asian, Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander, and American Indian will be used in the racial demographic charts.

Latinos: Both Latinos and Latinas are those students who themselves or their ancestors are from Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

Multicultural Middle School (MMS): An abbreviated pseudonym for the middle school used often in this study.

The Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies (OPAL): An observation protocol created by Magaly Lavadenz and Elvira Armas (2010) to measure quantitative and qualitative data.

Under-Representation: The lack of equitable participation of racial groups in gifted programs. According to LMUSD, equity is achieved within 10% over or under in representation.

Voluntary Minority: A minority group, according to John Ogbu (1974, 1987, 2003), that voluntarily chose to become part of the United States through immigration.

Organization of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how one middle school, Multicultural Middle School, implemented the research-identified strategies of recruitment processes and retention practices to achieve racial equity for students from involuntary minority groups in their GATE program. Chapter 1 of this study briefly discusses the background, problem, purpose, and significance of this study. Chapter 2 provides an analysis and synthesis of the reviewed literature regarding the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs. Chapter 2 also identifies six prominent strategies that are used in the recruitment and retention of these students into GATE programs. Chapter 3 describes the mixed-methods design used in this study: questionnaires, observations, interviews, and descriptive statistics. The daily classroom practices and core beliefs of the teachers were also examined in order to describe

MMS's GATE program. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the major findings through a questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and descriptive statistics regarding the implementation of the six strategies used in the recruitment processes and retention practices of students from involuntary racial minority groups. Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the major findings in the study and a discussion of future implications for equity for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Numerous demographic groups have been under-represented in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs in the United States (Freeman, 2004; Matthews & Matthews, 2004; Reis & Diaz 1999; Sarouphim, 2004). In an effort to address this inequality, researchers have found explanations for the under-representation and have offered solutions to bring about equity. Freeman (2004) noted the under-representation of gifted students who were females especially in science and mathematics. Reis and Diaz (1999) researched the under-representation of students from low socioeconomic status in urban GATE programs. Matthews and Matthews (2004) noted an under-representation of students who were bilingual in GATE programs because these students often remained unidentified by teachers for referral.

These demographic groups had a problem with under-representation in GATE programs yet there seemed to be no solutions to bring about equity. Freeman (2004) suggested that alternative assessments, such as portfolios, and having more teachers who are female, would help the gifted students who were female achieve. Reis and Diaz (1999) studied how high school students who were gifted excelled in their urban, low socioeconomic status school due to personal resilience, parental support, and teacher mentoring that were all part of their success pattern. Reagan and Osborn (2002) posed a solution of culturally responsive classes that are structured for native Spanish speakers and that promote the identification of, and success for, gifted students who are bilingual.

Along with the under-representation of gifted students who are female gifted students from low socioeconomic status and gifted students who are bilingual, numerous researchers have

studied the under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs (Ford, et al., 2002; Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002; Sarouphim, 2004). Researchers have offered suggestions for achieving racial equity in GATE programs, however no one—to date—has put the research-suggested strategies into a systematic program. The focus of this literature review is two-fold: (a) to identify the factors that create an under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs, and (b) to identify effective strategies to opening the gate of GATE programs to these under-represented gifted students.

Background

The explanations for low school achievement and even failure among racial minority students are many and varied. Erickson (1987) cited that one early explanation of racial minority failure was that these students had a “genetic deficit.” Racial minority students have been looked upon as inherently inferior intellectually. Ogbu (1987) cited another early explanation that emerged in the 1960s that proposed racial minority students had “cultural deficits.” Racial minority students were seen as culturally deprived and socially disadvantaged because they came from nonstimulating learning environments. These early prejudicial explanations incriminate the students themselves for such deficits.

The above explanations and incriminations have been long held and are difficult to eradicate. These residual beliefs and persistent attitudes regarding deficits are steeped in the traditional educational practices of the United States that promote inequity and ethnocentrism (Darder, 2011). This literature review examines the traditional educational practices that promote racial inequality in GATE programs and proposes the creation of a new system that will open the gates of the GATE program to under-represented and under-served racial minorities.

Theoretical Framework

Ogbu (1987) discussed the various factors effecting school achievement in his research regarding academic performance of students from racial minority groups. Ogbu's work refutes the old notions of genetic and cultural deficits and offers another explanation. Ogbu provides a framework that distinguishes students from different racial minority groups and offers a new explanation for school failure among different minorities' children. In Ogbu's "Emerging Explanation" (1987), he pointed out:

By comparing different minorities it appears that the primary problem, in the academic performance of minority children, does not lie in the mere fact that children possess a different language, dialect, or communication style; it is not that they possess a different cognitive style or a different style of interaction. (p. 314)

Ogbu contended that the primary problem—the main factor differentiating the more successful racial minorities from the less successful racial minorities “appears to be the nature of the history, subordination, and exploitation of the minorities” (p. 315).

The more successful minorities are the “voluntary” minorities. They have immigrated more or less voluntarily to the United States because they believed that they would have a better life through greater economic well-being, better overall opportunities, and/or greater political freedom. While they may often experience difficulties with language and cultural differences, they do not experience continual disproportionate academic failure (Ogbu, 1974).

The less successful minorities are the “involuntary” minorities. They were originally brought into the United States involuntarily through slavery, conquest, and/or colonization. Ogbu (1987) contended that they experience difficulties by being denied true assimilation into

mainstream society and experience continual disproportionate school failure. While the voluntary minority groups eventually moves up the socioeconomic ladder, the involuntary minority groups meet constant obstacles in their attempts toward upward mobility. The voluntary minority groups seems to be eventually welcomed into society, at some point, while the involuntary minority groups seems to be perpetually unwelcomed.

Overall, Ogbu's (1987) explanation for low school achievement, and even failure among students from racial minority groups, has given educators a new way of looking at these students. The voluntary racial minority groups might see its experiences as temporary setbacks, while they learn English, and believe that they will eventually succeed in the United States. Yet, the involuntary racial minority groups might see their experience as long lasting because their nonstandard English was born out of an oppressed history with the United States, and they are still thwarted in their attempts at success. This explanation is not only seen, in general, throughout society in the United States, but also, in particular, throughout the GATE programs in schools. There is an over-representation of students from the Majority Racial Group and students from Voluntary Racial Minority Groups in GATE programs (Bernal, 2002). Conversely, there is an under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs (Ford et al., 2002; Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002; Sarouphim, 2004).

Under-Representation of Involuntary Minority Groups

There is an under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs. The literature shows how the under-represented groups still experience obstacles and challenges of racial prejudice, bias, and discrimination (Ford et al., 2002; Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002; Sarouphim, 2004). The under-represented students from racial minority groups in GATE

programs mentioned in the literature include Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans. All of these racial minority groups are considered and labeled involuntary minorities by Ogbu (1974, 1987, 2003). These three groups each has a unique relationships to the United States—an oppression of a historical, political, sociological, and/or economical nature. Various Europeans conquered the Native Americans, the African Americans were enslaved by various Europeans and brought to the Americas, and a variety of Latino Americans were both conquered and colonized by the dominant European Racial Majority.

Ford (2003) offered these statistics: the school-age population of the United States is made up of Native Americans 1%, African Americans 16%, and Latino Americans 11%. If there were racial equity in GATE programs, the percentages would be the same or at least similar, yet they are not. The three involuntary racial minority groups listed above are under-represented in GATE programs by at least half - .3%, - 8%, and - 4.7%, respectively. In contrast, Bernal (2002) pointed out that there was an over-representation of students from the dominant European racial majority in GATE programs, especially in Texas. Students from the dominant European racial majority made up 45% of the school population, yet 61.88% of these students were in the GATE program. As one study indicated, overall, the students from involuntary racial minority groups were under-represented in GATE programs by as much as 30–70%, relative to their percentages in the general U.S. population (Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002).

Themes in Literature Regarding Under-Representation

The Role of Assessment

The reasons for under-representation of involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs are many. One reason for the under-representation is that some educators still have a

traditional and narrow belief in intelligence and giftedness. These same educators also believed that students from racial minority backgrounds were cognitively inferior (Ford et al., 2002). Gould (1995) has asserted that standardized tests measure familiarity with European American culture and therefore lead to low test scores for involuntary minority groups. Scoring low on such tests perpetuate the already erroneous belief in the cognitive inferiority of racial minority groups.

Intelligence Quotients tests (I.Q. tests) are used as one type of measurement. Ford (1998) and Kornhaber (1999) reported that some GATE programs use an I.Q. of 130 or above to designate what is considered gifted. McBee (2006) reported that other GATE programs use an I.Q. of 136 or above on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test.

Percentiles are a whole other measurement used to define giftedness. Ford (1998) reported that some GATE programs use the benchmarks of the 95th–98th percentile to be considered gifted, while Sarouphim (2004) later reported that some GATE programs consider giftedness at-and-above the 97th percentile. Ford (1998) reported another look at giftedness, to be the highest 3–5% of the population, is considered gifted by some GATE programs. The cut-off scores are not standard nor are the tools for measurement. Yet, whatever the arbitrary line of demarcation is, according to Ford and Grantham (2003), more than 90% of school districts use test scores as their primary or sole identifier for students to be placed in GATE programs.

Students from involuntary racial minority groups have failed to be referred by a classroom teacher as gifted because they lack a few points on the IQ or achievement tests (Bernal, 1994) with nothing else taken into consideration. These standardized tests measure familiarity with European American culture and American English proficiency, not basic human

intelligence. This European advantage is in favor of the students from the dominant racial majority and almost guarantees low-test scores within involuntary racial minority groups who are unfamiliar with the customs, traditions, values, norms, and language of the European American middle-class of the United States (Gould, 1995). If this traditional recruitment process of placement into GATE programs continues as is, it will insure that the status quo remains as the entrenched present-day demographics of GATE programs: male, European, middle class, and monolingual in American English.

Traditional assessment plays a role in the under representation of specific groups of students from involuntary minority groups. Students from Native American backgrounds are 1% of the school population in the United States, and yet they are only .3% of the GATE population (Ford, 2003). Ford (1996) contended that these students fail to exhibit successful standardized assessment test-taking behaviors. Many Native American tribal cultures and beliefs do not value competitive behaviors in academic settings, and thus will not score well on traditional assessments. Kornhaber (1999) stated that Native Americans value group identity and that they tend to avoid high grades for fear they may be isolated from their peers. Even though Native Americans do not score well on these assessments does not mean that there is a lack of giftedness amid the Native American communities.

Another specific demographic group of students for whom traditional assessment plays a role in their under-representation in GATE programs are African Americans. They are 16% of the school-age population in the United States yet they are only 8% of the GATE population (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Ford (1996) asserted that African American students' learning styles are different from European students' learning styles. African American students are inclined to

be relational, social, holistic, and global learners who approach situations intuitively. Kornhaber (1999) attributed similar characteristics to African Americans as to Native Americans; that they value group identity, and avoid high grades, for fear this may isolate them from their peers. Even though African American do not score well on these assessments does not mean that there is a lack of giftedness in African American communities.

African Americans are an under-represented racial minority group that also has had to contend with other obstacles. Ford and Grantham (2003) citing Gould (1981, 1995) and Menchaca (1997) reported something sinister and disturbing regarding the assessment of African Americans. Traditional fears, discriminatory practices, and prejudice against African Americans have led to conscious fraud in the assessment of African Americans. There were reports of dishonest and prejudiced research methods, deliberate miscalculations, data misinterpretations, and convenient omissions among scientists studying the intelligence among African Americans. These injustices have also contributed to low standardized test scores among African Americans.

Students from Latino backgrounds are another demographic group for whom traditional assessments play a role in their under-representation in GATE programs. According to Ford (2003), Latinos are 11% of the school age population of the United States, yet only 4.7% of the GATE population. Students from Latino backgrounds are less than half as likely, as students from European backgrounds, to be placed in GATE programs (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Latinos are an under-represented racial minority group that also contains many students who are bilingual. Ford (1996) pointed out that many Latinos come from countries where students were seldom assessed individually. The Latinos, like the Native Americans and African Americans, value group identity. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of traditional individualized assessment

can cause anxiety and interfere with abilities to demonstrate achievement and potential. Though Latinos do not score well on these assessments, such scores do not mean that there is a lack of giftedness in the Latino communities. Overall, students from each minority racial group: Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos have some similar and some specific obstacles that lock them out of GATE programs.

The Role of Teacher Referral

The role of teacher referrals is another reason for the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs. This area of under-representation has to do with teachers who hold the deficit thinking perspective. Deficit thinking exists when teachers hold negative, stereotypic, and counter-productive views about culturally diverse students and then lower their professional expectations of those students (Ford & Grantham, 2003). The teachers who hold the deficit thinking perspective assume that students from diverse populations are cognitively inferior because many fail to meet the traditional and narrow criteria for placement in GATE programs (Ford et al., 2002).

Often students from involuntary racial minority groups have had their abilities overlooked and unrecognized by teachers who must nominate students for the GATE program (Bernal, 1994). McBee (2006) found that teacher referrals, of students for gifted programs, are unreliable and unfair to students from involuntary racial minority groups, specifically, African American students. He discovered that teachers were more likely to nominate students from the dominant racial majority group who were also from middle-class backgrounds. Teachers frequently emphasized ordinary behaviors such as cooperation, answering correctly, punctuality, and neatness when identifying students for gifted services (Ford, 1995). Therefore, regular

classroom teachers may not be reliable sources for identifying gifted learners who are from culturally or ethnically diverse groups.

Elhoweris et al. (2005) conducted an experiment regarding the reliability of teachers' referral and recommendation decisions in light of a student's ethnicity. The participants in this experiment were predominantly female, European American, middle-class, middle-aged, bachelor-degreed, and they were experienced as general education teachers—not as gifted education teachers. The participants were given the same vignettes of “potential” gifted students. There were three treatments to the vignettes. One third of the vignettes stated that the potentially gifted student was African American; another third stated that the potentially gifted student was European American, and the last third did not state the potentially gifted student's ethnicity. The participants were asked to respond to two questions:

1. Should the student be referred for evaluation in a gifted program?
2. Should the student be placed directly in a gifted program?

The teachers' responses showed a distinct pattern. The European American students were referred by the participants at a higher rate than the African American students for both questions. Again, the regular classroom teachers may not be a reliable source for identifying gifted learners from culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse groups.

The Role of Retention

There are other factors that create the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs. There is a lack of retention of these gifted students, and there are numerous reasons that contribute to this lack of retention. Ford and Harris (1997) pointed out that gifted students from African American backgrounds deliberately underachieve

and that they choose not to participate in gifted programs in order to avoid peer pressure and accusations that they are “acting White.” These identified gifted African American students camouflage their abilities to be socially accepted by their primary social group and to share in the disenfranchisement of the group’s common identity. The gifted students, who are African American, win academically by being accepted into GATE programs but they lose socially by being rejected by their peers who are not identified as gifted.

Ford and Grantham (2003) further pointed out that the gifted African American students’ social, emotional, and psychological development internalizes deficit-thinking patterns regarding themselves as reflected by their classroom teachers. Questioning their own abilities, and feeling that they don’t fit with the other students in the program, many of these identified gifted students sabotage their own achievement and do not continue in GATE programs

Ford, Baytops, and Harmon (1997) reported that the under-represented gifted students, from involuntary racial minority groups, in GATE programs, are under-achieving due to classroom culture factors. These gifted students have had less-than-positive relationships with their teachers. Delpit (2006) reminded educators that students from African American backgrounds are aware of their relationships with their teachers. If they have positive relationships, they not only learn from a teacher but also for a teacher. If they do not have a positive relationship with their teacher, then they may neither learn from, nor make an effort to learn from, their teacher.

Ford, Baytops, and Harmon (1997) also reported that teachers tend to have lower expectations for gifted students from involuntary racial minority groups than they do for students from voluntary racial minority groups or from the majority racial group. The gifted students

from involuntary racial minority groups also feel they have a less than supportive classroom climate. These students lack support from teachers in their classroom, and the lack of attention to multicultural education in their classes, lead gifted students from involuntary racial minority groups to a lack interest in belonging to GATE programs.

There are specific factors, with regards for concern, as to the lack of retention of gifted students who are bilingual. When gifted students of Latino backgrounds are placed in traditional Spanish classes they do not do well, and are even marginalized, because of their primary language background (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). Gifted students who are bilingual become bored with the primary pronunciation work, beginning dialogues, repetition drills, and so forth (Lee & Van Patten, 1995). This boredom, according to Ford and Harmon (2001), has led to under-achievement because of the lack of opportunity to learn beyond remedial skills and to progress toward more challenging academic assignments. The lack of opportunity and teacher support, along with peer pressure and being marginalized, can lead involuntary racial minority groups to a lack of interest in belonging to GATE programs.

Conclusions Regarding Under-Representation

There are many obstacles to achieving equity for involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs. Ogbu (1987) offered a framework distinguishing between racial minorities, by explaining the historical burdens that create obstacles for today's involuntary racial minority today.

Traditional assessments create obstacles for involuntary racial minorities because these assessments do not take into account multiple intelligences (Sarouphim, 2002, 2004) or communal ways of performing tasks (Ford, 2003). Deficit-thinking teachers create obstacles

because they fail to notice, or fail to give value to, students from involuntary racial minority groups (Elhoweris et al., 2005).

Finally, the factors contributing to underachievement (Ford & Grantham, 2003) also create obstacles because of the inability to retain students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs. All of these obstacles lead to under-representation of these students and can lock them out of GATE programs.

Themes in Literature Regarding Equity

Recruitment Process (1) —Alternative Assessments

The first recruitment process strategy that contributes to racial equity in GATE programs is to use general alternative assessments and selection systems. One form of assessment is based on Sternberg's (1985) *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence*. Intelligence is revealed in three ways according to Sternberg. The first way intelligence is revealed is “componentially,” componential thinkers do well on standardized tests. The second way intelligence is revealed is “experientially,” experiential learners value creativity and enjoy novelty. The third way intelligence is revealed is “contextually,” contextual learners readily adapt to their environments, they are socially competent and practical. Considering all three categories, only the componential thinker does well on standardized tests. This leaves the other two intelligence types to be overlooked because (a) they are not readily validated on traditional assessments or (b) seen as areas of giftedness in GATE programs. The category where intelligence is validated contextually is where involuntary racial minority groups excel. These contextual learners are, as stated above, socially competent and practical. As cited earlier (Ford, 1996; Kornhaber, 1999)

Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos all value group identity and test better in group settings.

Another form of assessment is based on Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. The multiple areas are quite comprehensive—linguistics, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinesthetic, spatial, musical, and added naturalist, spiritual, and existential (Gardner, 1999). Like Sternberg's componential thinkers, who do well on tests, Gardner's linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences do well on standardized tests because that component is what is tested and given most weight in determining giftedness. The other eight of Gardner's intelligences are not validated on traditional tests and are not acknowledged as areas of giftedness in GATE programs. These theories, Sternberg's (1985) and Gardner's (1983), contend that intelligence is a social construct that manifests itself in many ways. The complex nature of intelligence cannot be measured in such a simplistic manner and still be considered a just and equitable evaluation (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Alternative assessments are necessary for all students, especially students from involuntary racial minority groups, so that intelligence and giftedness can be recognized in all its manifestations.

There is evidence that students from involuntary minority racial groups do well on alternative assessments. Sarouphim (2002, 2004) studied the performance-based assessment *Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities Through Observations while allowing for Varied Ethnic Responses (DISCOVER)* and found that racial minorities scored well on this type of alternative assessment. This performance assessment is based on Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences theory. Sarouphim (2002) demonstrated that students from Native American backgrounds scored higher than students from European backgrounds on one of DISCOVER's

components, the “drawing and construction” task. Kornhaber (1999) reported that, prior to the DISCOVER assessment in Arizona, there were 0% identified gifted students of Navajo background but, after using the DISCOVER assessment, there was a newly identified group of 10-30% gifted students.

Sarouphim (2004) demonstrated that students from African American background were also identified for giftedness at a higher rate by using the DISCOVER-performance based assessment. Kornhaber (1999) used another alternative assessment, the Problem Solving Assessment (PSA) for identifying giftedness in students of African American background. Kornhaber (1999) found that prior to the PSA, 8–12% students of African American background were identified gifted and after the PSA, 18% of the same students were duly identified as gifted.

Sarouphim (2002, 2004) also demonstrated that students from Latino backgrounds were also identified for giftedness at a higher rate by using the DISCOVER performance-based assessment. After using this alternative assessment, more students from Latino backgrounds were identified as gifted (by 30%) than had been previously identified as gifted. All of these students, from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups chosen for these studies, performed significantly higher on the Alternative Assessments than on traditional assessments. All three involuntary racial minority groups: Native American, African American, and Latinos, performed significantly better once they were given tests that validate their learning styles and recognizes their intelligences (Ford, 1996; Kornhaber, 1999; Sarouphim, 2002, 2004).

There are many alternative assessments that are available to measure intelligence in students and contribute to identifying giftedness. Numerous alternative assessments are listed here to demonstrate that there are many alternatives from which to choose: Multiple Intelligence

Assessment Technique, Project Spectrum, Matrix Analogies Test, Problem Solving Assessment, and DISCOVER's five subtests of: Pablo, Tangrams, Storytelling, Story Writing, and Math (Sarouphim, 2004). All of these assessments have been successfully administered to students from involuntary racial minority groups (Sarouphim, 2004). A paradigm shift in alternative assessment processes can contribute to equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Recruitment Process (2) —Teacher Referral

The second recruitment process strategy that contributes to racial equity is teacher referral. Elhoweris et al. (2005), as mentioned earlier, conducted an experiment regarding the reliability of teachers' referral and recommendation decisions in light of a student's racial background. The participants were given the same vignettes of "potential" gifted students. One-third of the vignettes stated that the potentially gifted student was African American; one-third stated that the potentially gifted student was European American, and the final third of the vignettes did not mention the racial background of the potentially gifted student. The participants were asked to respond to two questions. Question One: "Should the student be referred for evaluation for placement in a gifted program?" Question Two: "Should the student be placed directly in a gifted program?" The students of European American background were recommended by the teachers at a higher rate for evaluation for placement into the gifted program than were the students of African American background. The students of European American background were also recommended by the teachers at a higher rate for being placed directly into the gifted program than were the students of African American background.

At first glance, the experiment by Elhoweris et al. (2005) looked as if it proved only one thing: that teacher referrals to GATE programs are unfair to students from an African American background. However, the experiment shed light on another finding: The control group that did not state the ethnicity of the potentially gifted minority student were recommended by the teachers at a higher rate for evaluation for placement into the gifted program than were the students of European American background. The control group that did not state the ethnicity of the potentially gifted student was also recommended by the teachers at a higher rate for being placed directly into the gifted program than were the students of European American background. It seems that if the factor of race is taken out of the equation, a more accurate assessment regarding giftedness is obtained. An accurate teacher referral is a recruitment processes that can contribute to racial equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Retention Practice (1) – Teacher Diversity

The first retention practice strategy that contributes to racial equity is teacher diversity. Another way of seeking equity for students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs is through the hiring of culturally sensitive and/or culturally diverse teachers. Milner and colleagues (2003) suggested that teacher education programs provide opportunities to translate cultural pedagogical principles into practice. The principles of understanding cultural diversity, appreciating cultural differences, eliminating deficit thinking, raising expectations for diverse students, and so forth, all signal a paradigm shift in GATE programs. Moore et al. (2005) also warned teachers to be aware of, and sensitive to, under-represented racial minorities' identity issues. They suggested that teachers take into account that U.S. society continues to

practice racism, prejudice, and discrimination and such practices can negatively affect how students of racial minority backgrounds identify with their racial heritage and their racial identity. As with self-concept and self-esteem, racial identity influences students' motivation, persistence, and achievement (Ford, 1996; Grantham & Ford, 2003).

As for hiring culturally diverse teachers, Ford, Grantham, and Harris (1996) pointed out how teachers from racial minority groups not only model professional behaviors to students from racial minority groups in GATE programs but are also ones to expose students from European backgrounds to the different perspectives that these teachers bring to a classroom. Hiring culturally sensitive and diverse teachers is a retention practice that can contribute to racial equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Retention Practice (2) — Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The second retention practice strategy that contributes to racial equity is the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. Loyola Marymount University's School of Education's Conceptual Framework (2009) informs educators that, in order to deliver culturally responsive pedagogy, educators must understand and come to terms with their own values, assumptions, and socialization experiences that validate or devalue the funds of knowledge of their learners. Ford and Trotman (2001) pointed out that that culturally responsive pedagogy helps students from involuntary racial minority groups to develop a cultural identity that empowers them to strive for academic excellence. Effective culturally responsive pedagogy enables these students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers who can make evaluations and who will more ably develop solutions to social problems (Ford & Trotman, 2001).

Such culturally responsive practices are offered by Delpit (2006) with examples of connecting experiences from the students' world to newly discovered school knowledge. Delpit listed numerous ways educators can connect with their students. One example uses the African American church structure as an analogy to the governmental structures of the United States. Another example uses the rhyme and rhythm rules of rap songs as a way to explain the meters and verses of Shakespeare. Yet another practice uses the creation of a quilted blanket to explain the theorems of geometry. Delpit (2006) reminded educators that they are ones who have the opportunity to connect the familiar home world to the unknowns of the academic world.

Culturally responsive pedagogy practices centers on the idea that educators create learning environments in which: “(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and experience cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 160). The implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy is a retention practice that can contribute to racial equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Retention Practice (3) – Culturally Responsive Curriculum

The third retention practice strategy that contributes to racial equity is the use of a culturally responsive curriculum. Bernal (1998c, p. 5) stated that to establish a foundation for ethnic diversity in the GATE program, the GATE curriculum must become multicultural, else the program may unwittingly become an instrument of acculturation for the children of non-dominant ethnic groups, placing these children at risk of both damaged mental health and damaged ties to their families.

Ford and Grantham (2003) called for effective affective programs and activities to help cope with the internalized pressures and the external peer pressures experienced by students from involuntary racial minority groups.

Ford et al. (2002) described Banks and Banks's (1995) Four Approaches to Integrating Multicultural Content into the Curriculum as a way to infuse GATE programs with a culturally responsive curriculum. The lowest level is the contributions approach that "provides a quick and easy way to put ethnic content into the curriculum" (p. 129). This entails the "holiday approach" that only mentions cultural components during special occasions and annual celebrations. The next level is the Additive Approach, which "makes it possible to add ethnic content into the curriculum without changing its structure" (p. 129). This entails adding concepts and perspectives without changing the structure of the curriculum. The two lowest levels mentioned above are the least critical, the least challenging, and the least culturally responsive for the teachers and the students to experience.

The third level is the Transformation Approach, which "enables students to understand the complex ways in which diverse racial groups participated in the formation of the United States society and culture" (p. 130). This entails changing the structure and nature of the curriculum to enable students to view issues from the perspective of diverse groups. The fourth and highest level is the Social Action approach that "presents students with important social problems and issues . . . and [to] take reflective actions to help resolve the issues or problems" (p. 130). This entails having students improve their cognitive thinking, decision-making skills, and social-action skills. The third and fourth levels are the most critical, the most challenging, and the most culturally responsive for students and teachers to experience.

One culturally responsive education model that echoes Banks and Banks's (1995) call for "critical consciousness" is a framework by Ford and Harris (1997). This framework is based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1985) and assists educators in developing learning experiences that are multicultural and challenging. One learning experience on the analysis level of Bloom is the "Analysis-Social Action" project, which has students analyzing socially unjust historical and modern situations from different perspectives, which then lead to the class's discussion of socially responsible solutions to the problems posed. One such activity asks students to compare and contrast United States's slavery with South Africa's apartheid. Students are then asked to develop a plan for decreasing discrimination in modern settings (Ford & Harris, 1997).

The more students from involuntary racial minority groups that are represented in the curricula, the more likely they are to successfully engage in the academic coursework (Ford et al., 2002). As one student stated, "I feel like being in the class more when I learn about . . . my heritage. It gives me encouragement . . . It helps to improve my grades" (Ford, 1999, p. 12). The implementation of culturally responsive curriculum is also a retention practice that can contribute to racial equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups.

Retention Practice (4) — Classroom Culture of Caring

The fourth retention practice strategy is the use of an environment referred to as a classroom culture of caring. Perez (2000) revealed that students from culturally diverse backgrounds flourish in classrooms where they are cared for as persons and as learners by their teachers. I believe that of all the retention practices that I have identified in the research, the classroom culture of caring is above all the most contributing factor to the retention of students

not only from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs in particular, but for all students. There are a number of definitions regarding a culture of caring and how it is manifested in schools and classrooms. Lin (2001) described caring as “more fundamental than justice, fairness, and equity. When people sincerely care about others, they find ways to treat [others] justly, fairly, and equitably” (p. 110). Perez (2000) pointed out that caring means that “the other person matters and the other person makes a difference” (p. 102). Lin (2001) and Stronge (2007) both agreed that caring has to do with wanting the best for each other and bringing out the best in students through affirmations and encouragement. Lin (2001) continued with stating that trusting relationships are the basis for an effectual academic and social climate in classrooms.

In a classroom culture of caring, teachers are often able to articulate and are daily in touch with core belief systems that led them to becoming teachers in the first place. Noddings (2006) reminded teachers that most of them entered teaching because they wanted to make a difference in the lives of students. Teachers who are caring want to help all students to become healthy, competent, and moral people (Strahan & Layell, 2006). Swick (1999) quoted an experienced teacher who explained, “I am seeing my role as a teacher in a much larger sense – that of guiding and nurturing young people [in my classroom]” (p. 30).

In a classroom culture of caring, the teachers who are caring are also adept at keeping a healthy balance of caring and academics. Effective teachers balance their affective characteristics, social and emotional behaviors, with their pedagogical practices (Stronge, 2007). Strahan and Layell (2006) pointed out how successful teachers “Connect caring-and-action by responding to the [psycho-social] developmental needs of their students and the nature of their

subject matter” (p. 148). Olson and Wyett (2000) suggested that teachers be chosen not only for their knowledge and competence of a subject matter, but also for their positive personality and character. They go on to admit that the emphasis on what is sought by effectual teachers swings between the cognitive and affective domains. They concluded that research demonstrates how the affective competencies of teachers “directly impact” student learning. Olson and Wyett (2000) echoed Strahan and Layell’s (2006) findings reaffirming that respectful, caring relationships (between teachers and students) are important for the students’ overall success.

A classroom culture of caring refers to a list of caring characteristics and indentifying benchmarks that effective teachers can aspire to, revise, and articulate. “Respect is an essential aspect of an ethic of care, respect is an undergirding prerequisite for effective teaching . . . respect is powerful” (Rice, 2001, p.105). In the opinion of students, “being respectful and equitable” are the most important characteristics of a teacher who is caring. Students value teachers who avoid favoritism and demonstrate fairness in regards to race, cultural background, and gender (Stronge, 2007). Other characteristics of teachers who are caring include being gentle, kind, accepting, encouraging, understanding, responsive, and supportive (Noddings, 2006; Rice, 2001; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Stronge, 2007). Caring behaviors include listening to students, answering students’ questions, creating an environment where students feel safe, calling students by name, greeting students when they enter the classroom, encouraging students to do their best, affirming student efforts and talents, showing students unconditional positive regard, providing students with a safety net, being open and honest with students, and setting aside personal problems to put their students’ needs first (Lumpkin, 2007; Olson & Wyett, 2000; Rice, 2001; Stronge, 2007).

In a classroom culture of caring, teachers deal with discipline in ways that students notice and perceive as positive. Students described what teachers who are caring do, and do not do, to discipline students. Teachers who are caring avoid using ridicule and do not allow students to lose respect in front of their peers. These teachers know and understand the facts before deciding on disciplinary actions, and then tell their students specifically where they went wrong. Teachers who are caring punish individuals for doing wrong not the whole group (Stronge, 2007). These teachers are strict while nice and respectful. Teachers who are caring do not act like they “think the worst” of their students. And finally, no matter what, these teachers communicate, at all times, the message that they care about their students (Perez, 2000; Strahan & Layell, 2006).

Teachers who are caring are primarily concerned with becoming the best teacher possible in order to sustain an optimal learning environment for students. With this goal in mind, they continually reflect on and refine their instructional approaches in order to meet the needs of their students (Lumpkin, 2007). Teachers who are caring affirm the primary cultural capital and primary languages of their students while they teach standards based knowledge. In doing so, this dual approach of pedagogy and curriculum supports students in developing a healthy cultural identity and high academic self-concept (Lin, 2001). Teachers who are caring also use multiple instructional strategies in order to offer diverse learning experiences and establish clear expectations for all types of assignments: warm-up exercises, class participation, homework, individual and group projects, problem-solving exercises, discussions, and exams (Lumpkin, 2007).

There are academic benefits for students from involuntary racial minority groups in a classroom culture of caring. Rice (2001) pointed out that it is important that these recommended students perceive their teachers as caring. If students from involuntary racial minority groups perceive that their teacher cares about them, then they are motivated to put forth more effort in their academic subjects. Delpit (2006) found this to be true in the African American community. She found that students who were African American were sensitive to their relationships among themselves and their teachers. She stated that these students needed to feel connected to their teacher on an emotional level. She found that if students who were African American did not feel connected, then they would not learn and they would not put forth the effort. “I have concluded that it appears that they not only learn from a teacher, but also learn for a teacher” (Delpit, 2006, p. 227). Perez (2000) added that it is not only students from African American backgrounds who need this “mutually caring and respectful” relationship with their teachers, but that all culturally diverse students, or students from involuntary racial minority groups, need this type of relationship with their teachers. “They not only need to like their teachers, but they also must sense that their teacher cares for them as well” (Perez, 2000, p. 103).

There are more academic benefits within a classroom culture of caring. Perez (2000) continued by stating that students who learn in a caring atmosphere are engaged in learning and are motivated to learn. The teachers who are caring believe that, by “creating a warm, personal learning environment in which students were well-known and accepted by teachers” (Perez, 2000, p. 105), they could make a difference, especially in the academic achievement for at-risk students. Lumpkin (2007) also found that when teachers care, students know it and respond by “optimizing their commitment” to learning. Students also put forth “greater effort to reach their

potential.” Rice (2001) pointed out that the teachers who care conduct engaging activities that showcase academic behavior by promoting student interactions, encouraging student collaboration, and valuing active participation. Over all, as student perceptions of caring from their teacher increase, students’ academic effort also increases (Rice, 2001).

Lin (2001) stated that caring, community, and culture in multicultural classrooms produce higher levels of achievement. Olson and Wyett (2000) conducted research that demonstrated that affective competencies in teachers have a direct effect on student learning and achievement. Rice (2001) reported that students who perceived their teachers to be caring also believed that they had learned more in the class. Perez (2000) declared that the care that teachers show toward students might be the most important influence on student academic performance. Olson and Wyett (2000) reported that students “score higher on measures of self-concept, have increased scores on intelligence measures, and exhibit higher levels of thinking” (p. 742). Strahan and Layell (2006) concluded that schools with the highest levels of the classroom culture of caring exhibited by teachers who insisted on and demonstrated the benchmarks of caring characteristics had the highest levels of academic achievement. Over all, I believe that the contributions from the retention practice of a classroom culture of caring may be the most effective retention practice to achieve racial equity in GATE programs for students from under-represented Involuntary racial minority groups.

Conclusion

The review of literature regarding the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs described the causes for this under-representation and the contributing strategies to racial equity. I have identified six strategies that effectively open

the gates of the GATE program through recruitment processes and retention practices. There are two recruitment processes: alternative assessments and teacher referrals. There are four retention practices: teacher diversity, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of caring. All six strategies contribute to opening the gates of GATE programs to under-represented involuntary racial minority groups and contribute to racial equity within GATE programs.

As stated earlier, there is an under-representation of many demographic groups in GATE programs. These include students who are female, students of low socioeconomic status, students who are bilingual, and students from racial minority groups. While there is an under-representation of these demographic groups, there is an over-representation of: students who are male, students of middle-to-upper-class status, students who are monolingual in English, and students from the Dominant European Racial Group. One dominant perspective, one dominant point of view, one dominant way of being does not provide a space adequate for diversity, creativity, and synergy. A diverse group of gifted students, who are learning and working together in a culturally responsive and caring educational environment, can have meaningful and productive, life-changing synergistic interactions. The outcomes of these interactions have the potential to elicit the answers, the cures, the inventions, the technologies, and the peaceful diplomacy that can—and will—make this world a better place.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This review of literature offers reasons for the under-representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in GATE programs—the lack of recruitment and the lack of retention. The literature also offered strategies as how to achieve racial equity for these students. I have identified six prominent strategies within recruitment processes and retention practices. The two recruitment processes I have identified include (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Sarouphim, 2004). The four other retention practices I identified include (a) teacher diversity, (b) culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive curriculum, and (d) creating a classroom culture of caring (Delpit, 2006; Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 1996; Grantham & Ford, 2003; Moore et al., 2005; Lin, 2001; Perez, 2000). According to the research, these strategies of recruitment processes and retention practices can contribute to opening the gates of GATE programs for students from involuntary racial minority groups in order to obtain equitable racial representation. These six strategies are the basis for this study and research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions are designed to investigate obtaining racial equity for students from under-represented involuntary racial minority groups in Multicultural Middle School's (MMS) GATE program. The questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does MMS's GATE program implement research identified Recruitment Processes that are designed to include students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?

2. To what extent do the teachers of MMS's GATE program implement research identified Retention Practices that are designed to retain students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?

This study investigated the implementation of the prominent recruitment processes and the retention practices that I have identified in the current research in an attempt to understand the equitable and inequitable representation of students from involuntary racial minority groups in MMS's GATE program.

Methodology

In order to answer these research questions, I chose to do a mixed-method study (Creswell, 2007) of MMS's GATE program. The chart below shows how the data gathered regarding recruitment processes and retention practices has been categorized and organized:

Table 3.1

Data Gathering

		Instruments		
		Questionnaires Demographics <i>Past and Present Teachers</i>	Classroom Observations <i>Present Teachers</i>	Interviews <i>Past and Present GATE Program Coordinators</i>
Recruitment Processes	Teacher Referrals	Qualitative		
	Alternative Assessments	Qualitative		
Retention Practices	Teacher Diversity	Quantitative		
	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Quantitative	Quantitative Qualitative	
	Culturally Responsive Curriculum	Quantitative	Quantitative Qualitative	
	Classroom Culture of Caring	Quantitative	Quantitative Qualitative	

Recruitment Processes Instrumentation

In order to answer the first research question regarding the extent to which MMS’s GATE program implemented research-identified recruitment processes designed to include students from involuntary racial minority groups, interviews were conducted. I conducted one-

on-one interviews (Appendix D) with the coordinators of MMS's GATE program. I asked both the coordinators, past and present, about the two recruitment processes of alternative assessments and teacher referrals.

In addition to these two topics of discussion, the present GATE coordinator also provided a list of potential GATE students. I used descriptive statistics to analyze percentages of racial representation of students of MMS who had recently been referred for possible gifted identification. The descriptive statistics of racial representation of students recently identified to join MMS's GATE program shed light on the effectiveness of MMS's GATE program recruitment processes. The descriptive statistics of racial representation of students who had recently dropped out of MMS's GATE program also shed light on the effectiveness of MMS's GATE program retention practices.

Retention Practices Instrumentation

In order to answer the second research question regarding the extent MMS's GATE program implemented research-identified retention practices designed to retain students from involuntary racial minority groups, three data gathering tools were used: descriptive statistics, a questionnaire, and classroom observations. I used a questionnaire designed to gather data on the teachers of MMS's GATE program such as racial identity, educational background, and teaching experience (Appendix A). The descriptive statistics calculated from the racial identity information demonstrated the extent of the use of the retention practice of teacher diversity. The teachers' educational background and teaching experience are also represented in descriptive statistics in order to compare their backgrounds to the backgrounds of the teachers in the

experiment conducted by Elhoweris et al. (2005) regarding teachers' referral of potentially gifted students.

I also used a questionnaire by Phuntsog (2001) designed to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices. Phuntsog created the questionnaire by reviewing literature pertaining to culturally responsive teaching. The review led to the identification of critical issues and characteristics of culturally responsive teaching that shaped the items for the questionnaire (Phuntsog, 2001). Phuntsog's questionnaire was used to gauge the beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program toward characteristics of culturally responsive teaching regarding the retention practices of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive curriculum. The questionnaire contained items that also dealt with the affective domain of teaching; thus the questionnaire also gauged the beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program regarding the retention practice of a classroom culture of caring. This questionnaire (Appendix B) uses a 4-point Likert-type scale of: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. The teachers' responses were converted into percentages and frequencies as descriptive statistics.

I also used the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies—OPAL (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010) as a classroom observation tool. I was trained to use the OPAL (by the creators of the OPAL, Dr. Lavadenz and Dr. Armas) in a three-day professional development sessions during January and February of 2012. I was trained on how to recognize, rate, and note teacher practices of: (a) rigorous and relevant curriculum, (b) connections, (c) comprehensibility, and (d) interactions.

The OPAL is an observation protocol that has both quantitative and qualitative components. It is a research-based classroom observation instrument (Appendix C) that was published in 2010 (Lavadenz & Armas) as a reliable and valid classroom observation measure. The quantitative component rates the classroom practices starting at *low* (1–2), to *medium* (3–4), to *high* (5–6). This protocol was used in this study to look for evidence of the prominent retention practices of: culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of caring.

I also documented and rated the daily classroom protocols, and core beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program, in terms of retention practices by using the OPAL. I observed eight teachers in their classrooms and used the rating scale mention above. The teachers taught the various core courses of: English, mathematics, science, and social studies. They taught sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classes. The sixth-grade teachers taught two courses each: (a) English and social studies or (b) mathematics and science. In all, I observed: eighth-grade algebra and United States History; seventh- grade algebra, English, and science; and sixth-grade English/Social studies, mathematics/science, and pre-algebra/science. I was able to spend a full class period with each teacher throughout February 2012.

Calculating Equity

I used descriptive statistics to determine if MMS's GATE program had obtained racial equity. I compared MMS's school-wide racial demographic percentages to MMS's GATE program student racial demographic percentages. These descriptive statistics demonstrated if there was any over-representation, under-representation, or equity regarding the students within the dominant racial group, voluntary racial minority group, or involuntary racial minority group

in MMS's GATE program. If the racial demographic percentages of MMS's GATE student population matched within 10% of under-representation or over-representation in comparison to the demographic percentages of MMS's school-wide student population, equity had been achieved according to Large Metropolitan Urban School District's (LMUSD) standards (BUL – 269.7, 2010). If racial demographic percentages among the student population in MMS's GATE program did not match within 10% of under-representation or over-representation in comparison to the demographic percentages of MMS's school-wide student population, then equity had not been achieved. Overall, these calculations were used to demonstrate the under-representation, over-representation, or equitable representation of the students from involuntary racial minority groups in MMS's GATE program.

I also compared the racial demographic percentages of the teachers of MMS's GATE program to MMS's GATE program student racial demographic percentages. These descriptive statistics allowed me to quantify one of the retention strategies—teacher diversity—and report racial diversity, or lack of diversity, among the teachers of MMS's GATE program.

Classroom observations were conducted by using the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies – OPAL (Lavandez & Armas, 2010). OPAL is a research-based classroom observation instrument (Appendix C) that was published in 2010 as a reliable and valid classroom observation measure. This observation protocol has a quantitative component, as described above, and a qualitative component. The qualitative component comprises notes on classroom practice under the topics of: rigorous and relevant curriculum, connections, comprehensibility, and interactions. This protocol was used to look for evidence of the prominent retention practices of: culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of

caring. By conducting observations, I was able to document the daily classroom practices and core beliefs of the teachers of MMS's GATE program in terms of retention practices.

Ethical Concerns

In order to maintain ethical standards I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Loyola Marymount University. I obtained informed consent forms from each GATE teacher. The consent forms were explained to the participants by me, the researcher; filled out by, signed by, and returned by the teachers to me, the researcher. All of these teachers were informed that participation was voluntary. The teachers could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The teachers were informed that all participation in the study was for research purposes and not for evaluation purposes. These teachers were given pseudonyms when referred to in the study in order to maintain anonymity. As a matter of transparency and disclosure, it should be noted that I am a teacher in MMS's GATE program. My input in this study as one of these teachers was limited only to the descriptive statistics regarding the racial demographics of MMS's GATE teachers. The interviews and classroom observations were kept confidential.

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study was its scope. This was a study of only one GATE program. This was a study of only the middle school level. This study took place in only one school semester—Spring 2012.

All of the MMS's GATE program teachers were asked to participate in this study. There were 12 teachers who taught the sixth- through eighth-grade students in MMS's GATE program.

These same teachers taught the core academic courses of math, English, science, social studies, and an enrichment program, in lieu of the school-wide academic intervention program. I also invited all of the teachers who were part of MMS's GATE program in the past two years, to participate. Some of these teachers were still on MMS's campus, some had moved on to other schools, and some were no longer part of LMUSD. All of these teachers had been a part of the decisions made concerning MMS's GATE program that impacted the current MMS GATE program and the racial demographics of the current sixth- through eighth-grade GATE students.

Limitations

The limitation of this study concerned all of the unknowns. It was unknown how many of MMS's GATE teachers, past and present, would agree to participate in this study. There was also an unknown number of teachers, past and present, who might agree to fill out the questionnaire. There was also an unknown number of teachers, past and present, who might give permission to do classroom observations. There was an unknown number of times I might be allowed access to the classrooms. And, there was an unknown number of GATE coordinators, past and present, who might agree to the one-on-one interviews.

Site Selection

Multicultural Middle School (MMS) was selected for this study primarily because its school population was racially diverse. MMS was part of a Large Metropolitan Urban School District (LMUSD). It was located in a working class community. It was a Title I school, which means that the majority of the students qualified for the Federally Funded School Lunch Program. The school's racial demographics reflected the diverse population of this community: White, Asian, Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander, and Native American—LMUSD

terms used to identify racial demographics. This site was selected because of its voluntary and involuntary racial minority populations (Ogbu, 2003). MMS had a student population of 982. It was also chosen for its convenience because, as stated above, I am currently a teacher in MMS's GATE program.

Table 3.2

MMS School-Wide Racial Demographics – Total Population: 982

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Racial Group White	3	8	8	19	2
Voluntary Racial Minority Group-Asian	47	63	70	180	18
Involuntary Racial Minority Groups-Hispanic	129	174	174	477	48.5
African American	49	83	80	212	22
Pacific Islander	23	28	38	89	9
American Indian	0	3	2	5	.5

Participant Selections

The participants of this study were MMS's 12 GATE teachers. Also, as stated above, I invited all the teachers to participate who were part of MMS's GATE program within the past two years. These former GATE teachers had had an impact on MMS's current GATE program.

The teachers of MMS’s GATE program, past and present, had taught, or currently teach, the sixth- through eighth-grade core academic subjects of English, social studies, mathematics, and science. The teachers varied in their years of experience in teaching their academic subjects, grade levels, and in teaching students identified as Gifted.

Table 3.3

MMS Teachers: Teaching Experience

	Mean	Median	Mode	Range
Ages	30’s	40’s	9 in each 30s and 40s	20s – 50s = 30
Total years teaching	13	11	3 in each: 7, 8, and 11	29.5 – 7 = 22.5
Number of years teaching at MMS	9	8	5 at 7	15 – 4 = 11
Total years teaching GATE students	6	4	3 at 4	26 – 1 = 25
Number of years teaching GATE students at MMS	4.5	4	4 at 4	12 – 1 = 11

The GATE teachers’ racial demographics also varied: White, Asian, Hispanic, and African American. This was a convenience sampling for me, because, as stated above, I am a teacher in MMS’s GATE program. As a teacher in MMS’s GATE program, I participated only in the teacher demographics section.

Table 3.4

MMS - GATE Teacher Racial Demographics Total Population (past 3 years) – 23

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Racial Group White	1	1	4	6	26
Voluntary Racial Group – Asian	6	3	1	10	43.5
Involuntary Racial Groups Hispanic	0	1	1	2	8.5
African American	3	1	1	5	22

Table 3.5

MMS GATE Teachers’ Racial Demographics: Current Teacher Total – 12

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Racial Group White	0	0	2	2	16.7
Voluntary Racial Minority Group Asian	1	3	0	4	33.3
Involuntary Racial Minority Groups					

Hispanic	0	0	1	1	4.5
African American	3	1	1	5	41.5

Data Collection and Procedures

First, I gained access to the teachers of GATE students through a MMS GATE program meeting to explain the scope and sequence of the research. A separate after-school meeting for the former MMS GATE teachers was set up to explain the scope and sequence of the research. It was explained to both groups that the questionnaire, the classroom observation tool, and the interview questions were chosen based upon the literature review and protocols learned through studies at Loyola Marymount University. It was further explained that there would be comparisons of the racial demographics of MMS’s school-wide student population to the racial demographics of the students in the GATE program using descriptive statistics. The teachers were informed that comparisons would be made between the racial demographics of teachers and students of MMS’s GATE program by using descriptive statistics. All racial demographic information regarding the students was provided by MMS’s counseling office in a comprehensive and concise report.

Second, during the same meetings of current and former teachers, the consent forms were distributed and their use was explained to the teachers of GATE students. They filled out, signed, and returned the informed consent forms in a timely manner either in person or in my school mailbox. It was explained that all participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time during the study. It was also explained that the study was for research purposes only and not for evaluative purposes.

Third, during the same meetings, the questionnaires were distributed to the current and former GATE teachers. It was explained that the questionnaire information was confidential. No teachers' names were asked for or used. The questionnaires would be returned to me, the researcher, through school mail.

Fourth, during the same meetings, I asked those teachers who would like to be part of the classroom observations to let me know through school mail or school email. Those GATE teachers who allowed me to conduct classroom observations signed up on a calendar of available dates. The classroom observations were conducted according to the sign up calendar. Eight of the 12 MMS teachers signed up for classroom observations.

And finally, the one-on-one interviews with two of the past and present GATE coordinators were scheduled. Both of the coordinators consented to interviews. The interviews with the coordinators were conducted over the telephone. I used five basic questions and took notes on our conversations (Appendix F).

Once the information was distributed to MMS's GATE teachers and coordinators, past and present, the interview and classroom observation calendar of availability was filled in by those involved. The questionnaires were passed out at the same time. The calendar was completed with the interviews and observations intertwined in availability. Those teachers who chose to fill out the questionnaire turned in the data sheets by the due date. The data collection of interviews, observations, and questionnaires was not conducted in a linear fashion, but simultaneously gathered until all the data was collected.

The use of questionnaires, classroom observations, and one-on-one interviews created a triangulation of data that was coupled with the descriptive statistics of racial representation

thereby yielding an in-depth view of the teachers' use of the recruitment practices and retention processes in MMS's GATE program.

Conclusion

While there is an under-representation of students from racial minority groups in GATE programs throughout the United States, this study focused on racial equity for involuntary minority students in particular. In this study, I looked at what I have identified in the research as the prominent strategies of recruitment processes and retention practices that open the gates of the GATE program to under-represented involuntary racial minority groups. The two prominent recruitment processes included: (a) alternative assessments and (b) teacher referrals. The four prominent retention practices included: (a) teacher diversity, (b) culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive curriculum, and (d) a classroom culture of caring. All six strategies contribute to racial equity in GATE programs.

In this study, I investigated the extent to which teachers of MMS's GATE program implemented research-identified recruitment processes designed to attract and include students from involuntary minority groups. I also investigated the extent to which the teachers of MMS's GATE program implemented research-identified retention practices designed to retain students from involuntary minority groups.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study. These findings will demonstrate how the teachers of MMS's GATE program utilized the research-based recruitment processes and retention practices that can bring about equity for racial minority students in GATE programs. The data were collected to answer the research questions that were designed to investigate equity for the involuntary racial minority groups of Multicultural Middle School's (MMS) GATE program. The questions were as follows:

1. To what extent does MMS's GATE program implement research identified Recruitment Processes that are designed to include students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?
2. To what extent do the teachers of MMS's GATE program implement research identified Retention Practices that are designed to retain students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?

The data were gathered through qualitative and quantitative instruments, and will be presented in this chapter by method of data collection. As indicated in Chapter 3, I engaged in five separate methods of data collection.

1. Demographic Questionnaire: I administered a questionnaire for the MMS GATE program teachers in order to gather their demographic data (Appendix A). (23 participants)
Answers both questions #1 recruitment and #2 retention research questions.

2. Perception Questionnaire: I administered a questionnaire, by Phuntsog (2001), designed to ascertain teacher perceptions (Appendix B). (23 participants) Answers question #2 retention research question.
3. Interview: I interviewed (Appendix F) the past and present MMS GATE program coordinators. (2 participants) Answers both questions #1 recruitment and #2 retention research questions.
4. Observation Protocol: I implemented the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies – OPAL (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010) as a classroom observation tool (Appendix D). (8 participants) Answers #2 retention research question.
5. Descriptive Statistics: I collected descriptive statistics regarding demographics and the under-representation, over- representation, or equity of Involuntary Racial Minority students in MMS’s GATE program. Answers both questions #1 recruitment and #2 retention, plus demonstrates either equity or inequity.

Data Collection Method #1: Demographic Questionnaire

I created a questionnaire to ascertain the MMS GATE teacher demographics regarding race, age, teaching experience, and education. This questionnaire answers both questions #1 recruitment and #2 retention. This enabled me to gauge teacher racial diversity in order to compare their racial demographics with students’ racial demographics. The demographic information of age, teaching experience, and education is necessary to compare to other studies of teachers who were asked to identify Involuntary Racial Minorities to the GATE program.

Table 4.1

MMS GATE Teachers Demographics

Group	MMS GATE Teachers Past 3 Years	MMS GATE Teachers 2012	Change + -
Dominant Racial Group: White	26%	16.5%	- 9.5%
Voluntary Racial Minority Group: Asian	43.5%	33.5%	-10%
Involuntary Racial Minority Groups: Hispanic African American	8.5%	4.5%	- 4%
	22%	41.5%	+19.5%

This racial demographic chart indicates that the categories of dominant and involuntary Asian racial minority both decreased from 2009 to 2012 among the MMS GATE teachers. In the same time period, the category of involuntary Hispanic racial minorities also decreased. Yet, the involuntary African American racial minorities increased during this time period among the MMS GATE teachers at the same rate as all other combined categories decreased.

Table 4.2

MMS Teachers (23): Age and Teaching Experience

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Range
Ages	30's	40's	9 in each 30's and 40's	20's – 50's = 30
Total years teaching	13	11	3 in each: 7, 8, and 11	29.5 – 7 = 22.5
Number of years teaching at MMS	9	8	5 at 7	15 – 4 = 11
Total years teaching GATE students	6	4	3 at 4	26 – 1 = 25
Number of years teaching GATE students at MMS	4.5	4	4 at 4	12 – 1 = 11

This age and teaching experience demographic chart indicates that the majority of MMS's GATE teachers were in the 30s and 40s age bracket. They had taught for over 10 years and about half of that time was spent teaching GATE students.

Table 4.3

MMS Teachers (23): Educational Backgrounds

Variable	Other	Required	Above	And Beyond
Degrees	AA – 1	BS/BA - 24	MA – 8	Doctorate - 2
Certifications	Misc - 2	CLAD - 23	National Board – 3	Gifted – 4
Credentials		Clear Multiple Subject/ Single Subject – 23	Authorizations to teach outside of primary Credential - 2	
GATE Training	Professional Development – 6	Seminars – 12 Gifted Conferences – 23	University Course Credit – 4	Gifted Certificate - 4

This educational background demographic chart indicates that MMS’s GATE teachers go above and beyond required educational backgrounds of average teachers. All of these teachers have gone through basic GATE training and about a third have gone above and beyond in their GATE training.

Data Collection Method 2: Teacher Perception Questionnaire

The questionnaire, developed by Phuntsog (2001), was designed to ascertain teachers’ perceptions of the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices. This questionnaire was used to answer question #2 retention. Phuntsog’s (2001) questionnaire was used to gauge the beliefs of the teachers of MMS’s GATE program. This questionnaire (Appendix B) uses a 4-point Likert-type scale of *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The teachers’ responses were converted into percentages and frequencies as descriptive statistics.

Table 4.4

Phuntsog's (2001) Questionnaire Results

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Culturally responsive teaching contributes to the enhancement of self-esteem of all culturally diverse students.	81.25%	12.5%	0%	6.25%
2. Culturally responsive practice undermines the national unity by emphasizing cultural differences.	12.5%	12.5%	43.75%	31.25%
3. Regardless of cultural differences, all children learn from the same teaching method.	81.25%	12.5%	0%	6.25%
4. Culturally responsive practice is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.	43.75%	50%	0%	6.25%

5. Regardless of cultural differences using the same reading material is an effective way to ensure equal access for all children in the classroom.	0%	31.25%	56.25%	12.5%
6. Changing classroom management is a part of culturally responsive teaching to respond to cultural backgrounds of children.	43.75%	43.75%	12.5%	0%
7. Encouraging respect for cultural diversity is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.	75%	25%	0%	0%
8. Children with limited English proficiency should be encouraged to use only English in the classroom.	18.75%	37.5%	37.5%	6.25%

9. I believe that culture has a strong impact on children's school success.	43.75%	56.25%	0%	0%
10. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops divisiveness among children.	18.75%	6.25%	31.25%	43.75%
11. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops tolerance among children.	43.75%	56.25%	0%	0%
12. A color-blind approach to teaching is effective for ensuring respect for all culturally diverse students.	6.25%	18.75%	56.25%	18.75%
13. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups reduces prejudice against those groups.	25%	62.5%	18.75%	0%

14. Inclusion of reading materials from different cultural groups reduces academic learning time.	0%	0%	50%	50%
15. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups promotes stereotypes of those groups.	0%	0%	62.5%	37.5%
16. Children learn better when teachers are sensitive to home and school cultural differences.	37.5%	50%	0%	12.5%
17. Questioning one's beliefs about teaching and learning is a critical part of culturally responsive teaching.	37.5%	56.25%	6.25%	0%
18. All children must learn that we all belong to some ethnic groups and that all groups are just different but not inferior or superior than others.	50%	31.25%	6.25%	12.5%

19. All children must learn that the US is made up of many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and that each must be recognized in classrooms to enrich all our schooling experiences.	43.75%	37.5%	12.5%	6.25%
20. All children must learn we have a responsibility to change discrimination and prejudice in our society against different group.	68.75%	31.25%	0%	0%

The MMS GATE teachers answered (87.5% to 100%) either strongly agree or agree regarding the promotion of culturally responsive teaching and the promotion of equality (#1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 17, 20). Yet, one question (#3) was not answered in the promotion of cultural differences. A majority of participants (93.75%) either strongly agree or agree that regardless of cultural differences, all children learn from the same teaching method.

The MMS GATE teachers have also answered either strongly agree or agree regarding inclusion of literature from different cultures (#11 and #13). The teachers also strongly disagree or disagree that literature from different cultures promotes stereotypes and reduces academic learning time (#14 and 15). And a majority of participants (75%) either disagree or disagree

strongly that the inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops divisiveness among children. However, a significant number of participants (25%) believe that inclusion of literature from different cultural groups does develop divisiveness among children. And a majority of participants (68.75%) either disagree or disagree strongly that regardless of cultural differences using the same material is an effective way to ensure equal access for all children in the classroom; yet, a significant number of participants (31.25%) agree.

Further, the MMS GATE teachers have answered (81.25%) either strongly agree or agree regarding a positive view of diverse ethnic groups (#18 and #19). In addition, they have also answered (75%) either strongly disagree or disagree that a color-blind approach to teaching is beneficial (#2 and #12). The one question that the MMS GATE teachers have answered without a significant majority of agreement is in regard to encouraging children with limited English proficiency to use English only in the classroom. A majority of participants (56.25%) either strongly agree or agree while the other participants (43.75%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that children with limited English proficiency should use English only in the classroom.

Data Collection Method 3: Interviews of Past and Present GATE Coordinators

I conducted one-on-one interviews (Appendix D) with both coordinators, one past and one present, of MMS's GATE program. These questions were designed to answer question #1 recruitment, but I found some answers to question #2 retention. Interview questions with responses follow.

Question (1) Describe the role of assessment in the recruitment of GATE students at MMS?

I asked the two coordinators of MMS's GATE program to describe the role of assessment in the recruitment of GATE students (Appendix F). The coordinators both described the use of standardized test scores. Coordinator A stated, "Our hands are tied by the policies set forth by the district," as the coordinator identified the standardized test scores as the "primary tool used to identify potentially gifted students." The student must have above average test scores in English language arts and mathematics for three consecutive years. Coordinator B stated "with the advent of the district's MYDATA computer program, it has become increasingly easier to identify students who are potentially gifted" [because of their test scores]. Coordinator B went on to state, "I run a CC17 report from the counseling office that pulls out students with English Language Arts scores of 450 or more and/or Math scores of 450 or more." It is with this report Coordinator B provided for me the racial demographics of the potential GATE students.

The coordinators both mentioned that IQ scores, ascertained by school psychologists, were also used to identify GATE students. Coordinator A stated, "The result of the IQ test will classify the child in one of two categories - as Highly Gifted or Intellectual. A psychologist, who has the required training does this type of assessment." The district policy was that this type of IQ testing could be done only once during a student's academic career. The district and parent's consent forms were required to do such testing. Coordinator A went on to tell me that this-one-time-only testing was not always the policy. Coordinator A recalled a time early in their career where some students were tested more than once.

Question (2) What do you know about traditional, alternative, and informal assessments in regards to GATE students at MMS?

When asked about assessments Coordinator B answered, “Unfortunately there are no alternative assessments used for indentifying students in LMUSD as gifted.” The coordinators both said that there are alternative assessments, such as portfolios and auditions, but only for the talented identification. The coordinators both went on to say that this identification is rare at MMS. Yet, another way to identify students as gifted is to use core curriculum grades. Coordinator A pointed out, “The student can be referred to the program under Specific Academic Ability, this happens if they have three years of advanced achievement in either English Language Arts or Math.” Also, Coordinator A said that if the student is “social/economically disadvantaged, they can be recruited even if one of the subjects, in one of the years falls short.” They are recruited but not necessarily identified gifted immediately as their next response describes.

Coordinator B described a process used in MMS’s GATE program that allowed high achievers to still participate in the program:

If a student has the grades, but not the test scores, they cannot be identified GATE. Yet the student is placed in our Honors classes along with students who are gifted so that they may continue to be challenged until their scores improve and are identified [as gifted] later.

This MMS GATE program recruitment process of placing high achieving students in honors courses in hopes that their test scores improve and are later identified gifted had not been

tracked. The coordinators both confirmed that at least one student who was placed in MMS's Honors classes, was later identified gifted in high school.

Question (3) How does a teacher at your school refer a student to the GATE program?

I asked both the GATE coordinators about the role of teacher referrals to the GATE program (Appendix F). Coordinator B described a process that is followed when a teacher believes that a student is gifted: "Teachers are encouraged to monitor and observe the students in their classes for a list of characteristics of giftedness: a well-developed vocabulary, reading skill above grade level, ability to grasp a new concept quickly, and strong problem solving ability". Coordinator B also stated that, "If a teacher feels [that] a student demonstrates some of these traits, I give the teacher a survey to complete asking him/her to rank the child's demonstration of these traits. It is a scale of 1 (being not observed) to 5 (frequently observed)." If the student demonstrates gifted traits, "I review the test data, contacts the parent/guardian for permission to have the candidate tested for the program, and develop a case study to refer the student to a psychologist for IQ testing".

Question (4) How else are students referred to the GATE program?

Coordinator A said that the majority of the referrals do not even come from teachers, "The referral usually comes from the computer database containing the standardized test scores. That database is where I got that list of potential gifted students that I gave you." The following is the data base which the GATE coordinator shared with me.

Table 4.5

MMS Potential GATE Student Racial Demographics: Total Population – 28

Group	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Majority Group: White	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Minority Group: Asian	1	5	0	6	21
Involuntary Minority Racial Groups: Hispanic	7	4	3	14	50
African American	4	1	1	6	21
Pacific Islander	2	0	0	2	8
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0

MMS potential GATE student racial demographics will be used with additional information regarding racial equity in MMS’s GATE program.

Data Collection Method 4: OPAL Classroom Observations

I observed eight teachers in their classrooms and used the OPAL rating scale. This observation tool answers question #2 retention. The scale used includes numeric ratings of 1–2 for low ratings, 3–4 for medium ratings, and 5–6 for high ratings. Observers were also required to indicate an “n” if the teacher practice is not observable. Teacher practices and rates of: (a) rigorous and relevant curriculum, (b) connections, (c) comprehensibility, and (d) interactions were observed using the OPAL scale.

The teachers taught the various core courses of: English, mathematics, science, and social studies. They taught sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classes. The sixth-grade teachers taught two courses each: (a) English and social studies – or (b) mathematics and science. In all, I observed: eighth-grade algebra and United States History; seventh-grade algebra, English, and science; and sixth-grade English/social studies, mathematics/science, and pre-algebra/science. I spent one full class period with each teacher throughout February 2012.

The OPAL ratings for my classroom observations follow. Within each of the OPAL categories mentioned above: (1) rigorous and relevant curriculum, 2) connections, 3) comprehensibility, and 4) interactions; there are a range of indicators which the observer must rate. Each segment of these indicator subsets is defined prior to the ratings data.

OPAL Category #1: Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

Rating indicators are defined as:

- 1.1 – Engages students in problem solving, critical thinking and other activities that make subject matter meaningful.
- 1.2 – Facilitates student and teacher access to materials, technology, and resources to promote learning.
- 1.3 – Organizes curriculum and teaching to support students’ understanding of instructional themes or topics.
- 1.4 – Establishes high expectations for learning that build on students’ linguistic and academic strengths and needs.
- 1.5 – Provides access to content and materials in students’ primary language.
- 1.6 Provides opportunities for students to transfer skills between their primary language and target language.

Table 4.6

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum Classroom Averages

OPAL Classroom		
Observations for Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum	N	M
1.1	8	4.50
1.2	8	5.13
1.3	8	5.00
1.4	8	5.00
1.5	8	1.25
1.6	8	1.00

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.1: Engages students in problem solving, critical thinking and other activities that make subject matter meaningful. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The teachers engaged students in problem solving and critical thinking to make subject matter meaningful and this was evident by either the choice of topics or the act of turning the lesson into a game. The English and history teachers made the subject matter meaningful by asking the students what they would do as participants in the situations presented in the stories or news articles. The math teachers made the subject matter meaningful and engaging by creating a game out of the math problems.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.50, medium-high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.2: Facilitates student and teacher access to materials, technology, and resources to promote learning. This indicator was observed in all of the eight classrooms. The facilitation of access to materials, technology, and resources to promote learning was evident by the many resources available. All of the classrooms had smart boards, projectors, televisions, DVD players, white boards, textbooks, and

library books. Some of the classrooms had tabletop computers, laptop carts filled with of computers, individual white boards, and manipulatives.

These classroom observations averaged a 5.13, high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.3: Organizes curriculum and teaching to support students' understanding of instructional themes or topics. This indicator was observed in all of the eight classrooms. The teachers' organization of curriculum, to support students' understanding of instructional themes and topics, was evident by routines and building on prior knowledge. The math and science teachers had similar routines: warm-up activity, or a quiz, that reviewed the previous days' lesson; correcting homework on the board; new lesson including academic vocabulary; guided practice with clarifying questions, independent practice with discussion and clarifying questions; and finally assignment of homework.

One math and science teacher coupled concepts from both subjects in her projects such as: windmills, kites, towers, bridges, mousetrap cars, and the SCAMP project mentioned earlier in detail. The English and history teachers also followed a routine and built on prior knowledge. Some of their routines included: historical event of the day, directed lessons including academic vocabulary, reading of a narrative story or a non-fiction article, creating graphic organizers with prior information, discussions, and reporting out answers to comprehension questions.

These classroom observations averaged a 5.0, high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.4: Establishes high expectations for learning that build on students' linguistic and academic strengths and needs. This indicator was observed in all of the eight classrooms. The teachers established high expectations for learning that built on students' linguistic and academic strengths and was made evident by the

requirement of the use of full sentences and academic language. Every teacher, in every subject, insisted that all questions and answers be in full sentences. Academic language was not only used in lessons and discussions, but vocabulary words were found in the classroom environment. The classrooms were filled with word walls, vocabulary charts, and exit slips by students describing in full sentences what they had learned in the daily lesson.

These classroom observations averaged a 5.0, high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.5: Provides access to content and materials in students' primary language. This indicator was observed in only one of the classrooms. There was little evidence that the teachers provide access to content in their students' primary language. The only example of the use of the primary language of Spanish was in Ms. Bonny's English class. She was explaining the term "context clue." She asked the Spanish speakers what Spanish word "con" means in English. They responded "with." She explained that a context clue was actually getting a clue about an unknown word "with" the surrounding text.

These classroom observations averaged 1.25, low on the implementation scale.

Indicator Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum 1.6: Provides opportunities for students to transfer skills between their primary language and target language. This indicator was not observed in any of the classrooms. There was no evidence that an opportunity for students to transfer skill between their primary language and target language was provided except in the same scenario mentioned above in Ms. Bonny's classroom regarding context clues.

These classroom observations averaged 1.0, low on the implementation scale.

OPAL Category #2: Connections

Rating indicators are defined as:

- 2.1 – Relates instructional concepts to social conditions in the students’ community.
- 2.2– Helps students make connections between subject matter concepts and previous learning.
- 2.3– Builds on students’ life experiences and interests to make the content relevant and meaningful to them.

Table 4.7

<i>Connections Classroom Averages</i>		
OPAL Classroom Observations for Connections	N	M
2.1	8	2.25
2.2	8	4.63
2.3	8	3.25

Indicator Connections 2.1: Relates instructional concepts to social conditions in student community. This indicator was observed in only three of the eight classrooms. In classrooms where it was observed, there were few indicators of relating instructional concepts to the students’ community. Ms. Bonny related conflicts in a story to the conflicts on television shows and, by using the students’ vernacular of “drama” during lunchtime. Mr. Well related the U.S. Constitution’s Fourth Amendment to GPS tracking and police presence in the local neighborhood. Ms. Gram introduced the GATE depth- and-complexity thinking skills by relating them to her students’ culture in an “all about me” graphic organizer.

These classroom observations averaged a 2.25, low on the implementation scale.

Indicator Connections 2.2: Helps students make connections between subject matter concepts and previous learning. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. In those classrooms there were many indicators of making connections between subject matter concepts and previous learning. In every classroom the previous learning was in regards to the previous lessons of either the day before or of another pertinent previous lesson. This practice occurred in each subject and in each grade level. There was always a warm up activity or reminders of what the class had experienced before and how it related to the lesson of the day.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.63, medium - high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Connections 2.3: Builds on student's life experiences and interests to make the content relevant and meaningful to them. This indicator was observed in five of the eight classrooms. In those classrooms it was observed, how there were significant indicators, of building on students' life experiences and interests, to make the content relevant and meaningful to them. Ms. Bonny not only connected the students' life experiences, as stated earlier, story conflicts to television and to lunchtime conflicts, but also to food. One particular story took place in the U.S. South and there was a character from New York who did not appreciate Southern cooking. This opened up an animated conversation regarding the love of Southern cooking among the students and Ms. Bonny, for whom this is their cultural food and for others who were appreciative of this type of cultural food.

Ms. Gram connected the students' life experiences to their backgrounds with games that used dice and spinners to relate the concept of probability. This opened up another animated

conversation regarding board games such as Monopoly, The Game of Life, and Twister. Other examples of probability had to do with weather predictions and the accuracy of the probability of rain.

Mr. Well connected to the Bill of Rights with the Miranda Rights as recited on television police shows. This opened up an animated recital of, “You have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law...” by a few of the students.

Ms. Noe connected the students’ life experiences to mathematical concepts in a class project, SCAMP – Story about a Cultural Artifact from a Mathematical Perspective. SCAMP requires the students to choose an item that has cultural significance to them and then explain the mathematical concepts behind the artifact. The students chose Native American dream catchers, the Mexican Aztec calendar, the Mexican Mayan pyramid, an African game named Mancala, the Hawaiian ukelele, and many recipes for favorite cultural foods. The mathematical concepts used were geometric shapes, probability, and measurements.

These classroom observations averaged a 3.25, medium on the implementation scale.

OPAL Category #3: Comprehensibility

Rating indicators are defined as:

- 3.1 – Uses scaffolding strategies and devices (i.e. outlines, webs, semantic maps, compare/contrast charts, KWL) to make subject matter understandable.
- 3.2 – Amplifies student input by: questioning / restating / rephrasing / expanding / contextualizing.
- 3.3 – Explains key terms, clarifies idiomatic expressions, uses gestures and/or visuals to illustrate concepts.

Table 4.8

<i>Comprehensibility Classroom Averages</i>		
OPAL Classroom Observations for Comprehensibility	N	M
3.1	8	4.75
3.2	8	4.25
3.3	8	5.00
3.4	8	4.13
3.5	8	4.38

Indicator Comprehensibility 3.1: Uses scaffolding strategies and devices (i.e. outlines, webs, semantic maps, compare/contrast charts, KWL) to make subject matter understandable. This indicator was observable in all of the classrooms. The use of scaffolding strategies and devices, to make subject matter more understandable, was evident in thinking maps, charts, manipulatives, and diagrams. These devices were used with mathematical equations, story conflicts, and DNA structures. These devices were seen in the lesson of the day, part of the classroom environment, and used in each student’s notebook.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.75, a medium - high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Comprehensibility 3.2: Amplifies student input by questioning/restating/rephrasing/expanding/contextualizing. This indicator was observable in seven of the eight classrooms. The amplification of student input, by questioning and expanding, was evident by the clarifying questions and statements made by the teacher and the students. The teachers were asking students to repeat the instructions in the students’ own words, and then teachers entertained any remaining clarifying questions from the students. During lessons the teachers would ask students open-ended questions such as, “What would you do in that situation? What

do you think may happen next? What do you think about what happened?” On the bulletin boards there was student work that restated and rephrased concepts, such as mathematical formulas, and the events leading to the U.S. Revolutionary War.

These classroom observations averaged 4.25, medium on the implementations scale.

Indicator Comprehensibility 3.3: Explains key themes, clarifies idiomatic expressions, uses gestures, and/or visuals to illustrate concepts. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The explanation of key terms was evident in each class through a series of steps. The definitions of terms, in each subject matter, started with definitions and then moved on to other steps such as using context clues, illustrations, and thinking maps. There were word walls and vocabulary charts in most of the classrooms. The teachers used academic vocabulary in the lessons and the students used the suggested academic vocabulary in their responses.

All eight classrooms averaged a 5.0, high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Comprehensibility 3.4: Provides frequent feedback and checks for comprehension. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The teachers’ efforts providing frequent feedback to students and checking for their comprehension of the material was evident as the teachers walked around the classroom interacting with their students. Not only did the teachers give instructions to the whole class, they also checked on the small cooperative-learning groups, the pairs working together, and offered one-on-one help to individual students. The teachers would also stop the class to clarify the questions asked by the groups or individuals making sure the whole class understood.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.13, medium - high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Comprehensibility 3.5: Uses informal assessments of student learning to adjust instruction while teaching. This indicator was observed in seven of the eight classrooms. The teachers used informal “assessments of student learning” to adjust instructions while teaching. This on-the-spot readjustment was made evident by the questions the teachers who asked for feedback and who then gave and responses to students’ inquiries. The teachers would walk around the room while asking and answering their students’ clarifying questions. When needed, the teacher would do a “mini-lesson” on a concept. As required, teachers would also instruct students to skip some of the math problems because the students had mastered a particular concept. Each teacher had the practice of asking students if they needed any help and/or if they needed more time to complete a task.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.38, medium on the implementation scale.

OPAL Category #4: Interactions

Rating indicators are defined as:

- 4.1– Facilitates student autonomy and choice by promoting active listening, questioning, and/or advocating.
- 4.2 – Makes decisions about modifying procedures and rules to support student learning.
- 4.3 – Effectively communicates subject matter knowledge in the target language.
- 4.4 – Uses flexible groupings to promote positive interactions and accommodations for individual and group learning needs.

Table 4.9

<i>Interactions Classroom Averages</i>		
OPAL Classroom Observations for Interactions	N	M
4.1	8	4.63
4.2	8	4.63
4.3	8	4.25
4.4	8	4.88

Indicator Interactions 4.1: Facilitates student autonomy and choice by promoting active listening, questioning, and/or advocating. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The facilitation of student autonomy and choice was evident by the students advocating for themselves. The students made decisions and choices in small matters such as: which math problems to do on the board, which classroom jobs they would do, which strategy to use while computing a math problem, and/or whether or not to read aloud in front of the class or from their seat. The students also made decisions and choices in larger matters such as which artifact to use in the SCAMP project.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.63, medium - high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Interactions 4.2: Makes decisions about modifying procedures and rules to support student learning. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The decisions about modifying procedures and rules to support student learning was evident by the questions the teachers asked and the student responses. The math teachers would modify which problems to do-or-not-do depending on the mastery of the concepts. One math teacher had to modify the lesson by incorporating the use of hands-on manipulatives. The science teachers modified the lessons because of time constraints with other activities such as the mobile sea

vehicle display that visited the on campus for a limited time. The teachers would also modify regarding time if the students needed more time to finish and if students needed further instruction, teachers would continue the next day.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.63, medium - high on the implementation scale.

Indicator Interactions 4.3: Effectively communicates subject matter knowledge in the target language. This indicator was observed in seven of the eight classrooms. The effective communication of subject matter knowledge, in the target language, was evident by the use of academic language and terminology. The classrooms were filled with word walls and vocabulary lists. The teachers used academic language in their lessons, directions, worksheets, and discussions. The students were encouraged to use the same academic language in their questions and discussions. The students were also encouraged to use complete sentences when contributing in class. Some of the collegiate terms used in class were: characterization, internal and external conflicts, nuclei, chromosomes, amendments, polynomials, equations, and probability.

These classroom observations averaged 4.25, medium on the implementation scale.

Indicator Interactions 4.4: Uses flexible groupings to promote positive interactions and accommodations for individual and group learning needs. This indicator was observed in all eight of the classrooms. The teacher's use of flexible groupings, to promote positive interactions and to accommodate for individual and group learning needs, was evident by the variety of groups used in each classroom throughout the class period. The teachers followed a pattern of instructing the whole class and then breaking the whole class into smaller groups. The smaller groups varied according to the task at hand. Some of the groups were table discussion

groups of four students. Some of the groups were partners for proofreading and for correcting math problems. Some of the groups were determined by who easily understood which concepts and could readily move on while others needed a review lesson.

These classroom observations averaged a 4.88, medium - high on the implementation scale.

Classroom Culture of Caring

Data related to Indicator Interactions 4.4 began to emerge. I observed incidents of affirmations and encouragement on behalf of the GATE teachers that are indicators of a Classroom Culture of Caring (Stronge, 2007).

(1) Ms. Bonny's English class was filled with: compliments, "thank you," "please," terms of endearment, and colorful stamps in notebooks on work done well.

(2) Ms. Mayor's algebra class was filled with: "good job," "thank you for being honest," and "Wow you are the first to see that."

(3) Ms. Gram's math class was filled with: "good," "good job," giving high fives, and "thank you."

(4) Ms. Castle's algebra class was filled with: "Thank you ladies for helping me" and "Thank you everyone for being patient as I look for the right materials for us.."

(5) Mr. Road's English class was filled with: compliments on a writing assignment, "thank you," "that's great," applause, "excellent story tellers," "take pride in your work," and "good."

Data Collection Method 5: Descriptive Statistics of MMS GATE Program

I used descriptive statistics to determine if MMS’s GATE program has obtained racial equity. These statistics answer both #1 recruitment and #2 retention. I compared MMS’s school-wide racial demographic percentages to MMS’s GATE program student racial demographic percentages. These descriptive statistics demonstrated if there was over-representation, under-representation, or equity regarding the students within the dominant racial group, voluntary racial minority group, and involuntary racial minority group in MMS’s GATE program.

Table 4.10

MMS School-Wide Racial Demographics – Total Population: 982

Demographic	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Racial Group: White	3	8	8	19	2
Voluntary Racial Minority Group: Asian	47	63	70	180	18
Involuntary Racial Minority Groups:					
Hispanic	129	174	174	477	48.5
African American	49	83	80	212	22
Pacific Islander	23	28	38	89	9
American Indian	0	3	2	5	.5

School-wide student racial demographics will be used to compare with MMS’s GATE program’s student racial demographics in order to see if they align within ten percent of MMS’s school-wide student racial demographics.

Table 4.11

MMS GATE Student Racial Demographics: Total Population - 104

Demographic	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total	Percentage
Dominant Group: White	0	4	3	7	7
Voluntary Minority Group: Asian	10	12	17	39	38
Involuntary Minority Groups: Hispanic	5	21	24	50	48
African American	0	1	2	3	3
Pacific Islander	1	3	1	5	4
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0

MMS’s GATE program’s student racial demographics will be used to compare with MMS’s school-wide student racial demographics in order to see if they align within ten percent of each other.

Table 4.12

MMS School-Wide Racial Demographic Compared to MMS GATE Program Racial Demographics

Demographic	MMS School-Wide	MMS GATE Program	+ over - under = equity (within 10%)
Dominant Group: White	2%	7%	+ 5% (=)
Voluntary Minority Group: Asian	18%	38%	+ 20 %
Involuntary Minority Groups: Hispanic	48.5%	48%	= equity
African American	22%	3%	- 19%
Pacific Islander	9%	4%	- 5% (=)
American Indian	0.5%	0%	-0.5% (=)

This chart compares MMS’s school-wide student racial demographics with MMS’s GATE program student racial demographics. The dominant, White group is within 10% of over or under-representation so it is considered equitable.

The voluntary minority group, Asian, is over-represented and is not considered equitable. The Involuntary minority groups: Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and American Indian are considered equitable. The involuntary minority group, African American is under-represented and is not considered equitable.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study. These findings demonstrated how the teachers of MMS's GATE program have utilized the research based recruitment processes and retention practices that can bring about equity for racial minority students in GATE programs. The findings are reported in alignment with the type of instruments I used in gathering data. There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the data about both recruitment and retention of involuntary racial minorities.

Recruitment Processes were seen prominently through the teacher demographics, and coordinator interviews. There are two major conclusions that can be reached.

1. The teacher racial demographics show that there are more racial minority teachers in MMS's Gate Program compared to previous years at MMS. Thus, students can have the advantage of seeing themselves in the academic world, and seeing themselves as leaders in the classroom
2. The interviews with the GATE coordinators revealed an on-site process that allows students who are not identified gifted by a close margin to take the Honors/Gifted courses in preparation for future identification. Thus, this policy allows students who narrowly miss the cut for identification to remain academically challenged in hope to be identified later.

Retention practices were seen prominently through the perceptions questionnaire, the OPAL (2010) observations, and the culture of caring. There are two major conclusions that can be reached.

1. The Phutsong (2001) questionnaire indicated that the MMS GATE teachers scored 85%–100% either strongly agree or agree in the importance of culturally responsive teaching.
2. The teachers scored medium to high on the Interactions section of the OPAL (2010) observation tool where they were observed fostering positive interactions between students. Therefore, it is clear that teachers at MMS, for the most part, are responsive to the needs of involuntary racial minorities and have created and sustained a culture of caring in their classrooms.

The use of both recruitment processes and the retention practices were seen in the descriptive statistics. The statistics regarding racial equity demonstrated that most of the involuntary racial minority groups had achieved equity. Thus, the overall demographics of MMS's school-wide match the demographics of MMS's GATE Program, indicating that equity has been achieved in most groups.

Conclusions and analysis of the data presented in this chapter will appear in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the findings of this study regarding the under- representation of Involuntary Racial Minority students in GATE programs. There are solutions offered in the research literature on how to achieve racial equity in recruitment processes and retention practices. To date, however, there are no such studies reporting on the identification and implementation in a systematic manner for these solutions. The findings of this study highlight the successful identification and implementation recruitment processes and retention practices that have been effective in the real world setting of MMS's GATE program. These effective processes and practices might serve to create a comprehensive system that may be utilized by other schools' GATE programs in order to bring about equity for under-represented involuntary racial minority students.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to investigate the racial equity for students from under-represented involuntary minority racial groups in Multicultural Middle School's (MMS) GATE program.

1. To what extent does MMS's GATE program implement research identified Recruitment Processes that are designed to include students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?

2. To what extent do the teachers of MMS's GATE program implement research identified Retention Practices that are designed to retain students from Involuntary Racial Minority Groups?

Research Question 1 Findings

Recruitment of MMS involuntary minority students to the GATE

program:Recruitment process (1) – alternative assessments. The use of traditional standardized tests (Sarouphim, 2002, 2004) is still MMS's primary identifier for students who are gifted. It is the easiest route to identifying students. All students must take annual standardized tests, and the test scores are readily available. Alternative Assessments can cost a district with limited resources and personnel, so these assessments are not implemented. The district's policy on IQ testing (Ford, 1998; Kornhaber, 1999; McBee, 2006) currently is that students who are tested, are tested only once in the students' experience with the district. The new policy of only testing *once* while part of LMUSD points again to the era of budget cuts.

However, MMS's GATE program goes beyond the literature by implementing a widespread practice of placing students with acceptable test scores and grades into the Honors/Gifted courses *in the belief* that said students will score within the gifted range in the future. There is no tracking system for this practice, yet the GATE coordinators did confirm that at least one of MMS's former students, placed in the Honors/Gifted courses, was later identified as Gifted while in high school.

This in-house policy, implemented by the GATE coordinator and counselors, is not a written or institutionally sanctioned process. Instead, it is born from culture of caring that wants to see Involuntary Racial Minorities be challenged and be successful. This is both a benefit and a

disadvantage. It benefits the students, and implements a practice that benefits the students. However, the disadvantage is that this “in-house” policy is not written into the operations of the school or the GATE program. Thus, if the current personnel changes school sites, the next leader may or may not choose to follow this procedure. This puts students at risk.

Recruitment process (2) - teacher referral. MMS’s GATE teachers are different from the teachers described in the literature. Elhoweris et al. (2005) described the teachers in their study as predominantly middle-aged and quite experienced teachers. MMS’s GATE teachers fully matched this description in several areas; they were middle aged—median age in the 40s, and experienced teachers—and had an average of 13 years of teaching. However, the MMS’s GATE teachers did not match the study’s description of predominantly: Bachelor degreed, general education credentialed, and from European racial background (Elhoweris et al., 2005). The MMS GATE teachers surpassed the Bachelor-degreed teachers in the study in education—eight with Masters degrees and two with Doctoral degrees, three have National Board Certification and four have Gifted Education Certification. The teachers noted in previous research were general education teachers whereas the MMS GATE teachers have averaged six years teaching GATE students. Further, the teachers of MMS’s GATE program are superior at referring students for the GATE program because of their own education, certifications, and experience.

GATE Teachers at MMS can see giftedness in those that would otherwise be overlooked because of their long experience teaching gifted students, and because of the knowledge base gained through their academic pursuits. These teachers chose to seek out Gifted certifications,

and to stay in the Gifted teaching field and thus are more qualified to make these critical referral decisions that impact students lives.

Research Question 2 Findings

Retention of MMS GATE involuntary racial minority students: Retention practice

(1) - diversity of teachers

Ford, Grantham, and Harris (1996) pointed out how, teachers from racial minority groups model professional behaviors to students from racial minority groups in GATE programs and bring different perspectives to the classroom. The MMS GATE teachers are also more racially diverse than the literature suggests (Elhoweris et al., 2005). The MMS GATE teachers, over the last three years, were 26% European American; and the 2012 MMS GATE teachers are 16.7% European American. In 2012 MMS GATE teachers were 46% involuntary racial minorities.

This diversity of GATE teachers is important for students because students are able to see themselves in their teachers, they have role models that they can authentically relate to, and whose life experience may be similar to their own. This relationship between student and teacher fosters a positive learning environment in which can positively affect retention of Involuntary Racial Minorities.

Retention practice (2) - culturally responsive pedagogy. Ford and Trotman (2001) pointed out that that culturally responsive pedagogy helps students from involuntary racial minority groups to develop a cultural identity that empowers them to strive for academic excellence. The OPAL (2010) items that pertain to the MMS's GATE teachers' practices of culturally responsive pedagogy are connections, comprehensibility, and interactions. This finding was evident because the majority of the items scored 4.5 to 5, (*high-medium* scores and *high*

scores), as being evident in their classrooms. The Phuntsog (2001) questionnaire given to MMS GATE teachers shows that the teachers scored 87.5 to 100 strongly agree and agree with Culturally Responsive Teaching questions. This mirrors the finding above that GATE teachers who are racial minorities have an effective and successful relationship with involuntary racial minorities in their classrooms.

Yet the MMS GATE teachers were equal in their agreement and disagreement over the question of “English Only” in the classroom. The GATE student racial groups that normally would have a challenge with English would be the voluntary Asians, involuntary Hispanics, and the involuntary Pacific Islanders. The split in GATE teacher agreement and disagreement over the use of “English Only” in the classroom has not had an adverse affect on these racial minority groups. These racial minorities have not been affected in the racial representation because the Asians are over represented and the Hispanics and Pacific Islanders are equitably representation in the GATE program.

Retention practice (3) - culturally responsive curriculum. the more students from involuntary racial minority groups that were represented in the curricula, the more likely they are to successfully engage in the academic coursework (Ford et al., 2002). MMS’s GATE teachers’ perspectives on culturally responsive curriculum were in agreement with such a curriculum. All of the items on the Phuntsog (2001) questionnaire were in alignment with this curriculum. The teacher responses were 68.75% to 100% in agreement with the use and importance of culturally responsive curriculum. The OPAL (2010) items that pertain to the MMS’s GATE teachers’ use of culturally responsive curriculum is the category of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The majority of the items scored high 4.5 to 5.125, (*high-medium* scores to *high* scores).

However, the connection to the students' primary language, addressed in the OPAL, was observed briefly in only one classroom. Again, this lack of connecting to a students' primary language, with an "English Only" attitude has not had an adverse effect of their representation in the GATE program.

Retention practice (4) - classroom culture of caring. There are academic benefits for students from involuntary racial minority groups in a classroom culture of caring. Rice (2001) pointed out that it is important that these recommended students perceive their teachers as *caring*. If students from involuntary racial minority groups perceive that their teacher cares about them, then they are motivated to put forth more effort in their academic subjects. Perez (2000) added, "mutually caring and respectful" relationship with their teachers, are needed in *all culturally diverse students*, or students from involuntary racial minority groups, are in need of this type of relationship with their teachers.

Strahan and Layell (2006) concluded that schools with the highest levels of the classroom culture of caring exhibited by teachers who insisted on and demonstrated the benchmarks of caring characteristic had the highest levels of academic achievement.

Characteristics of teachers who are caring include being gentle, kind, accepting, encouraging, understanding, responsive, and supportive (Noddings, 2006; Rice, 2001; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Stronge, 2007).

The MMS GATE teacher responses to the Phuntsog (2001) questionnaire that were in alignment with a classroom culture of caring were 68.75% to 100% in agreement with the use and importance. The qualitative component of the OPAL (2010) allowed for observing the affirmations and encouragement that Stronge (2007) described as part of a Classroom Culture of

Caring. There were examples of this throughout my research: bulletin boards filled with exemplary student work, the teachers saying “Good job,” “Wow, you are the first to notice that,” “High five! - You are right,” “Great job,” applause from peers, and the rubber stamp rewards placed on work well done. These vibrant classrooms were spaces filled with affirmations and encouragement.

I believe that the classroom culture of caring has the largest impact on retention, not only in the GATE program, but also in the overall school population. Delpit (2006) pointed out that students who are connected to their classroom teachers will “not only learn from a teacher, but also learn for a teacher” (p. 227). The MMS GATE teachers have shown that they create a safe and supportive space for their students to feel comfortable in which to learn and succeed.

Retention overall – drop out rates. I asked the Head Counselor of MMS for some descriptive statistics regarding the retention of MMS GATE students, in other words, had anyone dropped out of the MMS GATE Program? He answered by saying that there was no need for such statistics because no such students had dropped out of MMS’s GATE program. This is the ultimate confirmation that the diverse teachers, the culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum, and the culture of caring combine to make students want to stay in the MMS GATE program and be successful. I believe that this non-drop out rate can be contributed to the GATE teachers adhering to all of the Retention Practices in their classrooms.

Racial Equity

Findings Regarding Descriptive Statistics

Ogbu (1997) observed that the dominant White group and voluntary racial minorities are given a higher position in society as whole. Conversely, involuntary racial minorities are underrepresented in status oriented or highly prized positions in society. However, MMS's GATE program does not completely adhere to Ogbu's observations. MMS's GATE program does not have an over-representation of the dominant White group, in fact the percentage is considered equitable. Also, MMS's GATE program does not have an under-representation of Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, or American Indians. They too are also considered equitable. MMS's GATE program is trending toward complete equity.

This trend toward equity is a tribute to MMS's GATE teachers, and their unwitting use of all six key recruitment and retention tools noted in the literature review. This success is to be lauded. However, the fact that the use of these techniques is "unwitting" is problematic. Unless and until these processes and practices can be formalized and used systemically, recruitment and retention of involuntary racial minorities cannot be guaranteed.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant because they can offer teachers and school districts the strategies in which to bring about racial equity in their own GATE programs to previously underserved and under-represented students from involuntary racial minority groups. This study investigated six strategies to unlocking the problem of under-representation of these students and focused on the implementation of the prominently identified solutions in the literature of recruitment processes and retention practices in the real world setting of MMS's

GATE program. These recruitment processes and retention practices, used in an individual or systematic manner, could prove to be keys to effectively opening the gates of GATE programs. This study can be used to create a *process of investigating* if a school has racial equity in its GATE program. If there is not equity, an investigation (of the use of the recruitment processes and retention practices) can gauge where the school can begin its conversation regarding professional development, and new practices, in order to bring about racial equity.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study imply that GATE programs can achieve equity among involuntary racial minority students. The several recruitment processes and retention practices that I identified in the research can support a singular GATE program or a district-wide GATE program in its quest for racial equity. I believe that each school district should be actively inquiring of each school site if their GATE programs are equitable in regards to their racial demographics. If not, these processes and practices can be used in combination or singularly, according to the needs of the school site.

If the school's GATE program is having difficulty in recruiting underrepresented racial minority students, then the processes of alternative assessments and/or professional development around teacher referrals can provide support. If the school's GATE program is having difficulty retaining underrepresented racial minority students, then the practices of teacher diversity, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and/or a classroom culture of caring can provide support. This study demonstrated how each of these processes and practices manifested in the real world setting of MMS's GATE program. Other school settings can look at

how these processes and practices manifest in their own schools as a starting point. Then they can tailor their professional development around the processes and practices to their own needs.

As a member of MMS's faculty, I will share my findings with the faculty of MMS. I found that MMS is approaching equity in all demographic categories. The findings showed that the GATE White, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Native American student demographics were all equitable in comparison to the same student demographic groups school-wide. The GATE Asian students were overrepresented in comparison to the same student demographic school-wide, while the GATE African American students were underrepresented in comparison to the same student demographic school-wide. Yet, when looking at the demographics of the students who had been referred recently to MMS's GATE program, the numbers showed equity. MMS's GATE program is trending toward equity in all student racial demographics. My recommendation to MMS is to use more of the retention practices for their GATE African American students.

As a member of MMS's faculty, I will also share with my colleagues the one retention practice that I believe to be most effective: the classroom culture of caring. The GATE teachers proved in the questionnaire and the classroom observations that a classroom culture of caring is occurring. I would like to emphasize that this practice can work in all classrooms, not just GATE classes.

I will also share my findings with MMS's district offices that are most concerned with this topic: The Office of Gifted/Talented Programs and The Office of Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity. My hope is to demonstrate that this study provides a systematic approach to reaching and supporting racial demographic equity in all of LMUSD's school sites.

I also hope to share my findings in appropriate educational avenues. I would like to submit my findings in educational periodicals and journals. I would like to share my findings at GATE conferences. I would like to write a handbook on how-to create equity for our underrepresented racial minority GATE students.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are many related areas connected to this topic that need further research. To expand this study I would like to look further into MMS's recruitment processes.

- Construct a system of tracking those high achieving students in the Honors courses to see when, and if, they were later identified gifted.
- Create a Professional Development Class developed by the GATE teachers to educate the general education teachers on how to identify giftedness in their students.
- Interview the teachers and the students regarding MMS's retention practices. I am especially curious about the retention practice of teacher diversity. I wonder what the students think about their teachers in terms of the teachers' racial background. What do the students, who do have teachers from their racial background, have to say about seeing someone of their own racial group in the role of leader? What do the students say about having teachers who do not share the students' racial backgrounds? To what degree does it matter to the students that their teachers share any racial background similarities or none at all?
- Apply these tools to gender, language, and class equity. Each of these areas can use the same categories of recruitments processes of alternative assessments and

teacher referrals. Each of these areas can also use the same retention processes of teacher diversity, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive curriculum, and a classroom culture of caring.

- Create a comprehensive system of using these keys of recruitment and retention to opening the gates of the GATE program to the under-represented and the underserved involuntary racial minorities in order to bring about equity. These keys can be applied to MMS's Gifted program in order to complete its trending toward equity process. The keys can also be applied throughout LMUSD and beyond.

Conclusion

There is an under-representation of many demographic groups in GATE programs: females, low SES, bilingual, and minority racial groups. While there is an under-representation of these demographic groups, there is an over-representation of males, middle-to-upper class status, monolingual, and the dominant White racial group. One dominant perspective, one dominant point of view, one dominant way of being, does not provide an adequate enough space for diversity, creativity, and synergy. A diverse group of gifted students, who is learning and working together in a culturally responsive and caring educational environment, can have synergistic interactions. The outcomes of these quality interactions have the potential to elicit the answers, the cures, the inventions, the new technologies, and the peaceful diplomacy that can and will make this world a better place.

Then senator, and now president, Barack Obama, said on the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 2008, "Dr. King once said that, 'The arc of

the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.’ It bends because each of us, in our own ways, put[s] our hand on that arc and we bend it in the direction of justice” (Obama, 2008). I believe that President Obama’s words could be applied to *all GATE teachers* who, in their own ways, put their hands, on that arc and bend it toward justice by teaching, caring, encouraging, recruiting, and retaining students from under-represented and underserved racial minority groups. May we, as educators, bend that arc toward “liberty and justice for ALL.”

Appendix A

Teacher Questionnaire

Race/Races, Ethnicity/Ethnicities, Culture/Cultures:

Age range: 20s _____ 30s _____ 40s _____ 50s _____ 60s _____

Total number of years teaching:

Number of years teaching at MMS:

Total number of years teaching GATE students:

Number of years teaching GATE students at MMS:

Educational background (degrees, credentials, certifications, etc.):

Types of training for teaching GATE students:

Appendix B

Questionnaire (Phuntsog, 2001)

(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Disagree (4) Strongly Disagree

1. Culturally responsive teaching contributes to the enhancement of self-esteem of all culturally diverse students.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

2. Culturally responsive practice undermines the national unity by emphasizing cultural differences.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

3. Regardless of cultural differences, all children learn from the same teaching method.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

4. Culturally responsive practice is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

5. Regardless of cultural differences using the same reading material is an effective way to ensure equal access for all children in the classroom.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

6. Changing classroom management is a part of culturally responsive teaching to respond to cultural backgrounds of children.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

7. Encouraging respect for cultural diversity is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

8. Children with limited English proficiency should be encouraged to use only English in the classroom.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

9. I believe that culture has a strong impact on children's school success.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

10. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops divisiveness among children.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

11. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops tolerance among children.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

12. A color-blind approach to teaching is effective for ensuring respect for all culturally diverse students.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

13. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups reduces prejudice against those groups.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

14. Inclusion of reading materials from different cultural groups reduces academic learning time.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

15. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups promotes stereotypes of those groups.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

16. Children learn better when teachers are sensitive to home and school cultural differences.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

17. Questioning one's beliefs about teaching and learning is a critical part of culturally responsive teaching.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

18. All children must learn that we all belong to some ethnic groups and that all groups are just different but not inferior or superior than others.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

19. All children must learn that the US is made up of many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and that each must be recognized in classrooms to enrich all our schooling experiences.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

20. All children must learn we have a responsibility to change discrimination and prejudice in our society against different group.

(1) SA (2) A (3) D (4) SD

Appendix C

Retention Practices Questionnaire

The following questionnaire (Phuntsog, 2001) was used to ascertain MMS's GATE teachers' perspectives on the Retention Practices of: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Curriculum, and a Classroom Culture of Caring. The following are the teachers' responses in percentages.

(1) Strongly Agree % (2) Agree % (3) Disagree % (4) Strongly Disagree %

1. Culturally responsive teaching contributes to the enhancement of self-esteem of all culturally diverse students.

(1) SA – 81.25 (2) A – 12.5 (3) D - 0 (4) SD – 6.25

2. Culturally responsive practice undermines the national unity by emphasizing cultural differences.

(1) SA – 12.5 (2) A – 12.5 (3) D – 43.75 (4) SD – 31.25

3. Regardless of cultural differences, all children learn from the same teaching method.

(1) SA - 0 (2) A – 12.5 (3) D – 62.5 (4) SD - 25

4. Culturally responsive practice is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.

(1) SA – 43.75 (2) A - 50 (3) D - 0 (4) SD – 6.25

5. Regardless of cultural differences using the same reading material is an effective way to ensure equal access for all children in the classroom.

(1) SA - 0 (2) A – 31.25 (3) D – 56.25 (4) SD – 12.5

6. Changing classroom management is a part of culturally responsive teaching to respond to cultural backgrounds of children.

(1) SA – 43.75 (2) A – 43.75 (3) D – 12.5 (4) SD - 0

7. Encouraging respect for cultural diversity is essential for creating an inclusive classroom environment.

(1) SA – 75 (2) A – 25 (3) D – 0 (4) SD – 0

8. Children with limited English proficiency should be encouraged to use only English in the classroom.

(1) SA – 18.75 (2) A – 37.5 (3) D – 37.5 (4) SD – 6.25

9. I believe that culture has a strong impact on children's school success.

(1) SA – 43.75 (2) A – 56.25 (3) D – 0 (4) SD – 0

10. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops divisiveness among children.

(1) SA – 18.75 (2) A – 6.25 (3) D – 31.25 (4) SD – 43.75

11. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups develops tolerance among children.

(1) SA – 43.75 (2) A – 56.25 (3) D – 0 (4) SD – 0

12. A color-blind approach to teaching is effective for ensuring respect for all culturally diverse students.

(1) SA – 6.25 (2) A – 18.75 (3) D – 56.25 (4) SD – 18.75

13. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups reduces prejudice against those groups.

(1) SA – 25 (2) A – 62.5 (3) D – 18.75 (4) SD – 0

14. Inclusion of reading materials from different cultural groups reduces academic learning time.

(1) SA – 0 (2) A – 0 (3) D – 50 (4) SD – 50

15. Inclusion of literature from different cultural groups promotes stereotypes of those groups.

(1) SA - 0 (2) A – 0 (3) D – 62.5 (4) SD – 37.5

16. Children learn better when teachers are sensitive to home and school cultural differences.

(1) SA – 37.5 (2) A – 50 (3) D – 0 (4) SD – 12.5

17. Questioning one's beliefs about teaching and learning is a critical part of culturally responsive teaching.

(1) SA – 37.5 (2) A – 56.25 (3) D – 6.25 (4) SD – 0

18. All children must learn that we all belong to some ethnic groups and that all groups are just different but not inferior or superior than others.

(1) SA – 50 (2) A – 31.25 (3) D – 6.25 (4) SD – 12.5

19. All children must learn that the US is made up of many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and that each must be recognized in classrooms to enrich all our schooling experiences.

(1) SA – 43.75 (2) A – 37.5 (3) D – 12.5 (4) SD – 6.25

20. All children must learn we have a responsibility to change discrimination and prejudice in our society against different group.

(1) SA – 68.75 (2) A – 31.25 (3) D – 0 (4) SD – 0

Appendix D

Classroom Observation

OPAL – Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies: A Tool for Guiding Reflective Teaching Practice for English Language Learners (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010)

Components of Empowering Pedagogy:

- Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum
- Connections
- Comprehensibility
- Interactions

Implementation Scale:

- Low 1 - 2
- Medium 3 - 4
- High 5 - 6
- Not Observable n/o

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR ACADEMIC LITERACIES | OPAL[®]

Teacher Name: _____ Grade: _____ Subject/Lesson Focus: _____ ELD Level(s): _____

The OPAL is a research-based tool for observing teacher practices and classroom interactions from sociocultural and language acquisition perspectives. Academic literacies are defined as a set of 21st century skills, abilities, and dispositions developed through the affirmation of and in response to students' identities, experiences and backgrounds.

Components of Empowering Pedagogy	Implementation Scale	Evidence and Next Steps				
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Low 1-2</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Med 3-4</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">High 5-6</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Not Observable n/o</td> </tr> </table>	Low 1-2	Med 3-4	High 5-6	Not Observable n/o	
Low 1-2	Med 3-4	High 5-6	Not Observable n/o			
RIGOROUS & RELEVANT CURRICULUM	The curriculum is cognitively complex, relevant, challenging and appropriate for linguistically diverse populations.					

- 1.1 Engages students in problem solving, critical thinking and other activities that make subject matter meaningful.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 1.2 Facilitates student and teacher access to materials, technology, and resources to promote learning.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 1.3 Organizes curriculum and teaching to support students' understanding of instructional themes or topics.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 1.4 Establishes high expectations for learning that build on students' linguistic and academic strengths and needs.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 1.5 Provides access to content and materials in students' primary language.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 1.6 Provides opportunities for students to transfer skills between their primary language and target language.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o

Evidence	Next Steps

CONNECTIONS	Teachers are mindful about providing opportunities for students to link content to their lives, histories, and realities to create change.	
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- 2.1 Relates instructional concepts to social conditions in the students' community.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 2.2 Helps students make connections between subject matter concepts and previous learning.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o
- 2.3 Builds on students' life experiences and interests to make the content relevant and meaningful to them.
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | n/o

Evidence	Next Steps

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Teacher Name _____ Grade _____ Subject _____ ELD Level(s) _____ Lesson Focus _____ Date _____

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR ACADEMIC LITERACIES | OPAL[®]

Teacher Name: _____ Grade: _____ Subject/Lesson Focus: _____ ELD Level(s): _____

Components of Empowering Pedagogy	Implementation Scale	Evidence and Next Steps
	Low 1-2	Med 3-4
	High 5-6	Not Observable n/o
COMPREHENSIBILITY		
Instruction allows for maximum student understanding and teachers utilize effective strategies to help students access content.		
<p>3.1 Uses scaffolding strategies and devices (i.e. outlines, webs, semantic maps, compare/contrast charts, KWL) to make subject matter understandable.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>3.2 Amplifies student input by: questioning / restating / rephrasing / expanding / contextualizing.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>3.3 Explains key terms, clarifies idiomatic expressions, uses gestures and/or visuals to illustrate concepts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>3.4 Provides frequent feedback and checks for comprehension.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>3.5 Uses informal assessments of student learning to adjust instruction while teaching.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p>	Evidence	Next Steps
INTERACTIONS		
Varied participation structures allow for interactions that maximize engagement, leadership opportunities, and access to the curriculum.		
<p>4.1 Facilitates student autonomy and choice by promoting active listening, questioning, and/or advocating.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>4.2 Makes decisions about modifying procedures and rules to support student learning.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>4.3 Effectively communicates subject matter knowledge in the target language.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p> <p>4.4 Uses flexible groupings to promote positive interactions and accommodations for individual and group learning needs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 6 n/o</p>	Evidence	Next Steps

Teacher Name

Grade

Subject

ELD Level(s)

Lesson Focus

Date

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Appendix E

Retention Practices Observations Protocol

The Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies – OPAL (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010) is the tool that I used in MMS’s GATE teachers’ classrooms. It is a tool that has both a quantitative and qualitative components. The following is the quantitative component of the OPAL with the implementation scale averaged scores.

IMPLEMENTATION SCALE:

LOW 1-2 / MEDIUM 3-4 / HIGH 5-6 / NOT OBSERVABLE n/o

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

- 1.1** Engages students in problem solving, critical thinking and other activities that make subject matter meaningful.... 4.5
- 1.2** Facilitates student and teacher access to materials, technology, and resources to promote learning... 5.125
- 1.3** Organizes curriculum and teaching to support students’ understanding of instructional themes or topics... 5
- 1.4** Establishes high expectations for learning that build on students’ linguistic and academic strengths and needs... 5
- 1.5** Provides access to content and materials in students’ primary language... (3) 7 – n/o
- 1.6** Provides opportunities for students to transfer skills between their primary language and target language... 8 – n/o

Connections

- 2.1** Relates instructional concepts to social conditions in the students’ community... (4.3) 5 – n/o
- 2.2** Helps students make connections between subject matter concepts and previous learning... 4.625
- 2.3** Builds on students’ life experiences and interests to make the content relevant and meaningful to them... all over 3,4,5,5,6= 4.6 , 3 n/o

Comprehensibility

- 3.1** Uses scaffolding strategies and devices (i.e. outlines, webs, semantic maps, compare/contrast charts, KWL) to make subject matter understandable... 4.75
- 3.2** Amplifies student input by: questioning / restating / rephrasing / expanding / contextualizing... 4.71
- 3.3** Explains key terms, clarifies idiomatic expressions, uses gestures and / or visuals to illustrate concepts... 5
- 3.4** Provides frequent feedback and checks for comprehension... 4.57
- 3.5** Uses informal assessments of student learning to adjust instruction while teaching... 4.85

Interactions

- 4.1** Facilitates student autonomy and choice by promoting active listening, questioning, and / or advocating... 4.625
- 4.2** Makes decisions about modifying procedures and rules to support student learning... 4.625
- 4.3** Effectively communicates subject matter knowledge in the target language... 4.71
- 4.4** Uses flexible groupings to promote positive interactions and accommodations for individual and group learning needs... 4.875

Appendix F

Interview Questions for Gate Coordinators

Recruitment

- 1) Describe the role of assessment in the recruitment of GATE students at MMS.
- 2) What do you know about traditional, alternative, and informal assessments in regards to GATE students at MMS?
- 3) How does a teacher at your school refer a student to the GATE program?
- 4) How else are students referred to the GATE program?
- 5) Is there anything else you would like to share about the recruitment process of MMS's GATE program?

Appendix G

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §24172, I understand that I have the following rights as a participant in a research study:

1. I will be informed of the nature and purpose of the experiment.
2. I will be given an explanation of the procedures to be followed in the medical experiment, and any drug or device to be utilized.
3. I will be given a description of any attendant discomforts and risks to be reasonably expected from the study.
4. I will be given an explanation of any benefits to be expected from the study, if applicable.
5. I will be given a disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures, drugs or devices that might be advantageous and their relative risks and benefits.
6. I will be informed of the avenues of medical treatment, if any, available after the study is completed if complications should arise.
7. I will be given an opportunity to ask any questions concerning the study or the procedures involved.
8. I will be instructed that consent to participate in the research study may be withdrawn at any time and that I may discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.
9. I will be given a copy of the signed and dated written consent form.
10. I will be given the opportunity to decide to consent or not to consent to the study without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence on my decision.

Appendix H

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: December 30, 2011

Loyola Marymount University

Opening the Gates of a GATE Program: A Mixed Methods Study of Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices in One Multicultural Middle School

- 1) I hereby authorize Marie Lynette Aldapa, EdD Candidate to include me in the following research study: Opening the Gates of a GATE Program: A Mixed Method Study of Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices In One Multicultural Middle School.
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to look at Carnegie Middle School's (aka-Multicultural Middle School in the study) Gifted and Talented Education Program regarding our Recruitment Processes and Retention Practices of our students from racial minority backgrounds and which will last for approximately two months starting the spring semester 2012.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a teacher and/or coordinator in Carnegie Middle School's GATE program.
- 4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will be asked to fill out a confidential questionnaire, allow Marie Lynette Aldapa to observe my classroom, and if I am a coordinator of the GATE program, to participate in a one-on-one interview. All of these activities are voluntary. I may participate in only the activities I choose to participate in. None of the activities are evaluative. I may drop out of the study at any time.

The investigator will provide a confidential questionnaire, conduct classroom observations, and conduct one-on-one interviews.

These procedures have been explained to me by: Marie Lynette Aldapa.

- 5) I understand that I will NOT be videotaped, audiotaped and/or photographed in the process of these research procedures.
- 6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: sharing candidly about my beliefs as a GATE teacher and opening my classroom to an observation.
- 7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are: being validated for my efforts as a GATE teacher and being part of a study that may bring about racial equity to GATE programs.

- 8) I understand that the following alternative procedures are available: audio/visual taping of the interviews and questionnaires completed on-line. The reason these are not being used is: there will only be one or two interviews and Marie Lynette Aldapa will be handwriting the responses, and there will only be up to thirty questionnaires and Marie Lynette Aldapa will be collecting the questionnaires and calculating the information on her own.
- 9) I understand that Marie Lynette Aldapa who can be reached at: 310.293.8461(cell), X223 (classroom phone), Room 23 (on campus), school mailbox (Main Office on campus), or mla3821@lausd.net, will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 10) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 11) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to my position as a GATE teacher.
- 12) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 13) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 14) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

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