



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

MORGRIDGE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Gifted Education

Exploring the Phenomena of Gifted Graduate Students Studying Gifted Education

Joi Lin, M.S. | January 31, 2019

10th Anniversary Gifted Education Conference

Celebrating Gifted Education: Reflecting on Our Past – Impacting Our Future
Denver, Colorado, USA

Background of the study



- 2nd year Education Doctorate Student studying C&I - Gifted Education Leadership
- Teacher and gifted adult
- Passion for career development of gifted and talented students and adults
- Desire to support the development of educators for gifted students
- Curiosity about shared experiences and career development paths of classmates who are also gifted graduate students studying gifted education

Statement of Problem



Research exists on the characteristics of effective or beloved teachers of gifted students (Bishop, 1968; Howard, 2015; Ramsey, 1990; Rosemarin, 2014; Skipper, 1970; Vialle & Quigley, 2002), but little is known about the shared experiences of gifted graduate students who have chosen to study gifted education.

Purpose of the Study



The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomena of gifted graduate students who choose to study gifted education by seeking commonalities and variance among their educational and career development experiences.

Research Design



Faculty Advisors
Dr. Norma Hafenstein & Dr. Brette Garner
University of Denver

Research Questions



What shared themes exist...

- 1) in the past **educational experiences** of gifted graduate students?
- 2) in the **career development paths** of gifted students who are studying gifted education?
- 3) of hope for **future impact** on behalf of gifted students, gifted education, and research?



Gifted students appreciate highly-qualified teachers who have:

- effective teaching practices (Howard, 2015),
- care about gifted students (Ramsey, 1990; Rosemarin, 2014),
- understand giftedness (Vialle & Quigley, 2002),
- know their content area (Vialle & Quigley, 2002), have
- emotional intelligence (Rosemarin, 2014), and
- as some researchers recommend, are intellectually gifted themselves (Bishop, 1968; Rosemarin, 2014; Skipper, 1970).

Giftedness persists throughout the lifespan (Fiedler, 2012).



Phenomenological Research Design

A qualitative research design structured to elicit textural richness of experiences of a population that shares a certain phenomena with a goal of describing a horizon of experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994)

Setting and Population



Setting is a private, western, University's College of Education.

Population consists of graduate students who have taken at least one graduate course in Gifted Education at the institution who also self-identify/have been identified as gifted.

Sample of Participants



A convenience sample (Gliner et al., 2017) of **8 Graduate Students** personally known by the researcher to have taken Gifted Education coursework, who all completed the recruitment survey, consent form, and **self-identified/were formally identified as gifted**. All sample participants are pursuing an **Education Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction**, and 7 are specializing in Gifted Education. All sample participants have prior or current **teaching experience**.



IRB Approval

Two Semi-Structured Interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994)

Coding to construct a **horizon of experiences**(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994)

Member-Checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018)
Reporting

Interview Design



Two, 45-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom

First interview focused on experience as a gifted student

Second interview focused on experience as an educator of the gifted



Interviews were transcribed using Zoom. Began with coding seeking “**individual experiences and the context of those experiences**” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 353) related to research questions using NVivo. Created themes to encompass **horizontalization** of experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Themes were **member-checked** (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to strengthen credibility of findings.

Timeline



July 2019

- Obtained IRB approval

September 2019

- Invited convenience sample to participate
- Recruitment Survey

October/November 2019

- Conducted Interviews, 8 participants completed consent form and both interviews

November 2019

- Analyzed and coded data

December 2019

- Last Date to Request Removal of Data

January 2020

- Member-checking and peer review of themes
- Presentation of Results

Findings



Findings: Past Educational Experiences



“My gifted program really was one of the happiest memories that I had of elementary years. The teachers that I had **nurturing creativity and growth and curiosity** made such a huge impact”

“I always read really high...but when you're a kid, you can't verbalize how you're doing math. And so people just thought I was really slow to the point where they talked about **holding me back** in first grade. And my **mom was like, no, my daughter can read and she can do math...**”

“Some of my friends were in AP English, and I remember them walking around with the *Fountainhead* and it's like a brick. **I felt excluded, and I wondered how did they get into that class**”

“I thought college was a joke like way easier than high school ...and almost like frustrating...I switched colleges a lot...I feel like I'm at college, **I need to be more challenged**”

Findings: Career Development Paths



"...I was very intensely focused on dance. I am a **career changer**. I worked in commercial real estate for a decade. [When] I was a yoga instructor...a client said to me like you realize you're basically a special ed yoga teacher right --you should teach Special Ed and I was like, oh."

"I majored in elementary education with a minor in humanities...I loved teaching. My mom said **I would play school all the time, even though I didn't like school**"

"My district gave a little stipend for the gifted teachers...so it really fell into my hands because **no one else wanted to do it.**"

"I got out of my master's degree program and I was like, oh, liberal arts degree. What do you do? And I started substituting...and after about half a year of substituting. I was like, **I want to do more.**"

Findings: Future Impact & Goals



“I only have so much time left on this earth...where can I have the most impact...I'd love to **speak internationally** as my next goal...I really want to **work on my developmental theory**”

“**Work with faculty** in a way that invites creativity and Just different ways of thinking about how to teach”

“**Teaching collegiate...teacher prep classes** about gifted[ness]”

“Do I need to switch to a PhD [to do **more research**]?”

“**Develop curriculum** with my students and share it with teachers”

“Collaborate with gifted teachers to create or **move policy**”

“Bring more **awareness to classroom teachers** about what giftedness looks like and how we can meet the needs of our gifted students, even if they aren't formally identified”



Small exploratory sample does not provide generalizable results

Did not invite entire population to participate

Only one researcher coded data

I attempted to epoche, or **bracket personal biases away** (Moustakas, 1994), while reviewing and analyzing data: difficult because so many aspects of my own personal experience mirror that of participants; easy because I wanted to learn the variance in the unique, cumulative experiences of participants.

Future Research Questions



What are shared characteristics of people who **become and excel as teachers** of gifted students?

What are shared characteristics of people who **become and excel as researchers** of gifted education?

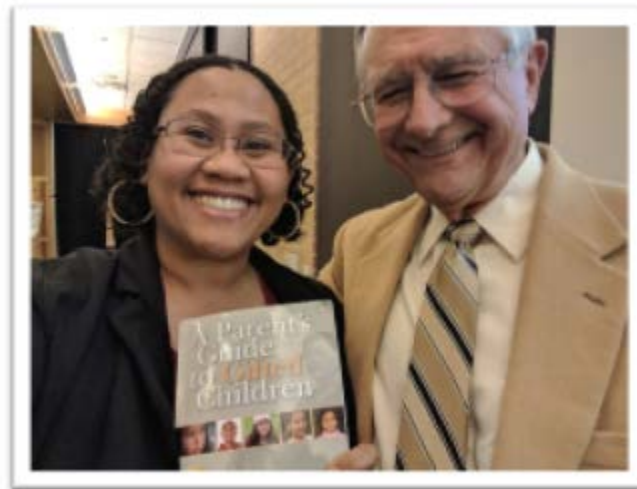
How can we identify and support **career development of students with potential** to excel as gifted education teachers or researchers?

Sponsored Research Project



James T. Webb Influence Scholar Program

Sincere appreciation to the Office of the Daniel L. Ritchie Endowed Chair of Gifted Education for sponsoring and funding this research project.
We miss you, Jim!



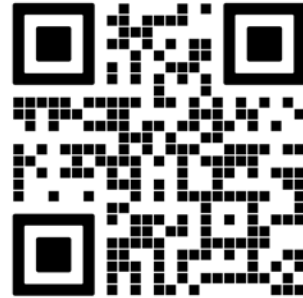
Joi Lin & Jim Webb at the 2017 8th Annual Gifted Education Conference, Denver, Colorado.

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To read more quotes of participants, please peruse my poster, **“Educational Experiences of Gifted Graduate Students Studying Gifted Education”** in the Onyx room or scan the QR code of the poster.



Thank You!



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