

Access and Equity Denied: Key Theories for School Psychologists to Consider When Assessing Black and Hispanic Students for Gifted Education

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ABSTRACT: Black and Hispanic students are consistently underrepresented in gifted education. Several factors contribute to their low identification and lack of access to such programs and services. While teacher underreferral is a significant contributing factor, problematic also is testing and assessment, which is often administered by school psychologists. In this article, we touch on testing issues but devote more attention to key theories for school psychologists to consider when assessing, evaluating, collaborating, and making recommendations regarding Black and Hispanic students for gifted education.

The role of school psychologists in special education has been addressed extensively. Walcott, Charvat, McNamara, and Hyson (2016) reported that conducting individual student evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services is the professional practice school psychologists are engaged in to the greatest degree. While the role of school psychologists is expanding, seldom does this include a focus on gifted education, which is overlooked in training (Robinson, 2002). Robinson (2002) noted that from 1998 to 2002, no article in *School Psychology Review* focused on gifted issues. Robertson, Pfeiffer, and Taylor (2011) confirmed that there is a lack of research that examines how well school psychologists are prepared to provide services to students who are gifted. School psychologists, however, have expressed interest in gifted education training and a desire to be effective with associated interventions (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). This is imperative because school psychologists are often responsible for testing and making recommendations for gifted education intervention. One example is Florida, where students who have been identified as gifted via Plan A must be tested by a school psychologist, with a single IQ score of 130 determining access to gifted education (for more information see <http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/region/S10010>). This impactful role and responsibility cannot be discounted as it pertains to the underidentification of Black and Hispanic students as gifted and the overidentification of Asian and White students. Like teachers, school psychologists can be and have been gatekeepers when high-stakes testing is involved.

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In light of the scant attention given to gifted education in school psychology research and training (Ford, 2014b), this article begins with an overview of gifted education definitions and theories and presents data on the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students in gifted education. Next, the implications of these data on the gifted education pipeline in terms of who is not in gifted education and the contributing barriers are discussed. Then, several theories for school psychologists to consider in their equitable assessment and evaluation of students of color who are underrepresented in gifted education are reviewed. The article concludes with recommendations and resources germane to equitable and socially just gifted assessment, evaluation, and work related to this process.

FEDERAL DEFINITIONS OF GIFTED

Gifted education is not federally mandated, yet the U.S. Department of Education has issued several definitions, beginning in 1970. The most frequently used is the 1972 Marland definition, followed by the 1993 definition, which is the most culturally responsive (see Figure 1). The 1993 definition focuses on (a) talent, which can be developed; (b) potential, which addresses opportunity gaps between students; and (c) environment and experience, which also addresses opportunity gaps by race and income. The 1993 definition should be considered when interpreting test scores, especially the mean scores for Black and Hispanic students, which are often lower than those of White students (e.g., Kaufman, 2009; Kaufman, Raiford, & Coalson, 2016). Different experiences and the quality of those experiences affect the manifestation of gifted characteristics and behaviors, as well as test performance. For example, children who have access to high-quality preschool programs that are focused on academics and grounded in a developmentally appropriate practice framework will likely outperform those who experience early education programs without an academic focus and developmentally appropriate practice framework, thereby lacking rigor that is responsive to the social-emotional, psychological, and academic needs of racially and culturally different learners (Barbarin et al., 2006; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Lee & Burkam, 2002). Further, children reared in high-income families and communities tend to have exposure to more extensive vocabularies than those living in poverty (Hart & Risley, 1999, 2003). When the realities of limited access to and opportunities for more challenging discourse are ignored and/or disregarded, false positives may result for students who are more economically and educationally advantaged and false negatives for students from underserved and underrepresented populations.

Figure 1. Two Federal Definitions of Gifted (1972 and 1993)

1972	1993
<p>Student who gives evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who needs services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.</p>	<p>Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.</p>

Note. Ford (2013); U.S. Department of Education (1993).

DATA ON GIFTED EDUCATION UNDERREPRESENTATION FOR BLACK AND HISPANIC STUDENTS

Educators and families have been concerned about the underrepresentation of students from racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds in gifted education. Evidence of this underrepresentation is well documented by the Office for Civil Rights. Since 2002, the Office for Civil Rights has collected data on most and more recently all school districts as documented in its Civil Rights Data Collection (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

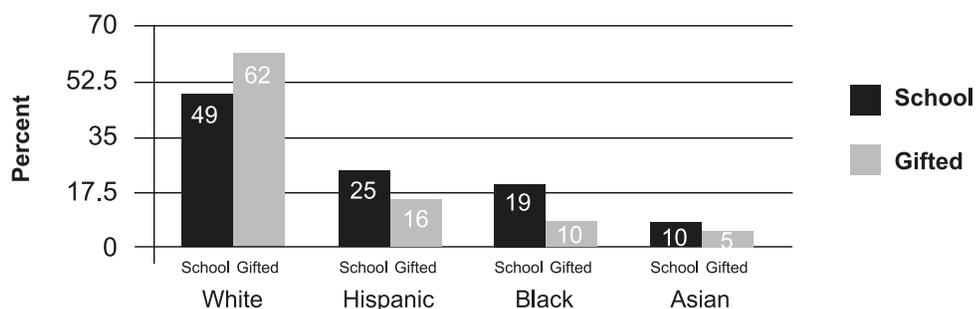
Annually, Black and Hispanic students are underrepresented in gifted education and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The most recent findings are for the 2011–2012 school year, in which Black students comprised 19% of students in U.S. schools but only 10% of gifted students. One formula for calculating underrepresentation is the Racial Composition Difference Index (RCDI; see Ford, 2013). The RCDI compares a group's presentation in the school population versus the group's representation in a program, such as gifted and AP. Applying the RCDI, there is a 48% discrepancy between representation in schools and representation in gifted education for Black students. Hispanic students are also underrepresented in gifted classes, but not AP. Explanations for this nuance could not be found. Hispanics comprised 25% of the student population, but only 16% of gifted education, resulting in a 36% discrepancy (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Figure 2 presents the demographics of school enrollment in general education and gifted education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Therefore, the national landscape of gifted education, a critical opportunity and important pipeline to later AP courses, remains largely White and Asian. The underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students in gifted education nationally is a long-standing trend that begins in early childhood where the practice of ability grouping, primarily in reading, tends to set in motion academic tracking (Oakes, 2005). Such practices in the early grades raise fundamental questions about biased and unfair tests and other instruments used as measures of early cognitive ability and language performance. This raises two critical questions:

- How do race and culture have a direct impact on students' access to learning opportunities in a racially stratified society?
- What are the various ways in which school psychologists limit these racially and culturally different students' access to gifted education and other opportunities and exposure to advanced curricular materials (e.g., honors, AP, and International Baccalaureate classes)?

These questions are important for school psychologists to contemplate to ensure equitable gifted education assessments and evaluations, especially given the impact of culturally unresponsive and/or assaultive learning environments that include, but are not limited to, inadequate instructional materials, poor quality early childhood experiences and programs, poor quality teachers placed in urban schools,

Figure 2. Demographics of Schools Versus Gifted Programs 2011–2012



and culturally incompetent educators who have lowered expectations for such students. These barriers cannot be discounted or trivialized in assessments, evaluations, interpretations, and eventual recommendations (Barton & Coley, 2009; Ford, 2013; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Wright, Ford, & Waters, in press). These barriers that contribute to the failure to equitably educate Black and Hispanic students are exacerbated by the critical need to prime the gifted education pipeline to ensure that no potential is wasted.

GIFTED EDUCATION: A PREDICTABLE LEAKY PIPELINE

We contend that participation in gifted education results in an increased probability that students will participate in AP classes and attend elite colleges and universities. Given the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education, it is no surprise that they are poorly represented in AP, representing only 9% of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Lack of access to gifted education contributes to the achievement gap, opportunity gap, underachievement, and dropout rates (see Ford, 2010, 2013, for a more detailed analysis).

Explaining who is not in the gifted education pipeline must include a critical and culturally grounded understanding that the earliest studies, definitions, and theories of gifted education were steeped in deficit thinking and colorblindness, and the repercussions reverberate to this date. Examples often cited include such works by Terman (1925) and his gifted “termites,” which defined then and now what it means to be gifted relative to IQ along with associated characteristics. Only three students of color were in this study of 1000 gifted students. Thus, we believe, that the generalizability of this colorblind body of work is severely compromised. Relative to deficit thinking, Jensen (1969) went so far as to contend that Blacks were intellectually inferior to Whites, a mindset that some scholars vehemently contest. Ford (2010, 2013) has kvetched against notions of intellectual and cultural inferiority in gifted education, which assumes that students bring a White and middle class standard set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the testing experience. Such an Anglo-normative assumption decontextualizes the realities of unequal childhoods along the lines of race, class, and family life (e.g., Barbarin et al., 2006; Clark, 1983; Hart & Risley, 1999, 2003; Lareau, 2011). The following theories and conceptual models can help school psychologists in repairing the pipeline and in their social justice work.

Theoretical and Conceptual Consideration: Knowledge Is Power

To increase their understanding of underrepresentation, as well as skills for being culturally responsive in assessing gifted Black and Hispanic students, knowledge of a few theories and conceptual frameworks is essential in the highly impactful role of school psychologists. These theories and conceptual frameworks include Allport’s theory of prejudice, microaggressions, Merton’s typology of prejudice, implicit bias, and disparate impact. Below, a brief review of these theories and frameworks is provided.

Allport’s (1954) seminal theory of prejudice was advanced the same year as *Brown v. Board of Education*. Allport delineated five degrees of prejudice: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. The first three, which are described next, can inform the work of school psychologists as they consider their roles and responsibilities in gifted education regarding equitable access.

- *Antilocution*. Antilocution refers to verbal and nonverbal messages said to or about others, including name calling, racial and ethnic jokes and slurs, and certain nonverbal messages (e.g., symbols, signs). Hate speech is the epitome of such verbiage. In gifted education, antilocution is evident in such statements as “Black and Hispanic students are not as smart as other students.” “Until Hispanic students speak English well, they don’t deserve or need to be in gifted classes.” “Gifted programs are being watered down with those minority kids being admitted.”
- *Avoidance*. Avoidance, often associated with White flight, exists when an individual or group seeks to decrease or eliminate interactions with others. Educationally, avoidance exists when gifted education is

designed for the purpose of separating White students from non-White students. When educators acquiesce to the status quo, underrepresentation for Black and Hispanic students is highly probable.

- *Discrimination.* Discrimination occurs when the rights of an individual or group are denied. Gifted underrepresentation is a direct and indirect product of avoidance and discrimination. The underrepresentation of Hispanic and Black students *exceeds* statistical chance nationally. Discrimination can exist when school psychologists make the decision not to use tests and instruments in the students' native language and/or do not have translators for non-English speaking and bilingual students. Other policies, procedures, and practices can be discriminatory (e.g., lack of district and building norms, weighted matrices with IQ given most points, time of year and grade level(s) for when students are tested, lack of ongoing assessment, lack of universal screening).

Racial Microaggressions

Sue (2010) developed a detailed model of nine racial microaggressions (environmental microaggressions, ascription of intelligence, assumption of criminal status, second class citizen, pathologizing cultural values and communication styles, alien in one's own land, color blindness, denial of individual racism, and myth of meritocracy) that is applicable to school psychologists in gifted education. Below, the nine microaggressions are described in the context of three broader categories of racial microaggressions (i.e., microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations) for school psychologists to strongly take into account when working with underrepresented groups, in particular Black and Hispanic students.

Microassaults. Microassaults are explicit and conscious verbal or nonverbal racial attacks against a culturally different individual and/or group.

- Environmental microaggressions: Testing materials lack or have little diversity, item(s) focuses on Whites and thus neglecting students of color, items position Blacks and Hispanics in stereotypical roles, and items negate the experiences and vocabulary of these groups.

Microinsults. Microinsults are subtle communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean an individual's or group's racial heritage, culture, or identity.

- Ascription of intelligence: "I was not expecting Hispanic students in that building to score so high on the IQ test."
- Assumption of criminal status: "Those Black students are too disruptive to be in our gifted class. They need to be evaluated for behavioral disorders not gifted education."
- Second class citizen: "His father is a Hispanic and probably never heard of AP classes, which helps to explain why his son is not doing well."
- Pathologizing cultural values and communication styles: "If Blacks were less social and more independent, they would focus more on school and therefore do better on tests."

Microinvalidations. Microinvalidations are communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a culturally different individual and/or group.

- Alien in one's own land: "You are so articulate. How long have you been in the United States?"
- Colorblindness: "I don't see color, and neither do tests. Therefore, the test we select does not matter and won't affect test performance and gifted education enrollment."
- Denial of individual racism: "I am not a racist. I have referred a few Black students for gifted screening."
- Myth of meritocracy: "Prejudice does not exist. Hispanic and Black students need to work harder if they want to be identified as gifted." "The most qualified students should be in gifted programs."

Merton's (1949) Typology of Prejudice complements microaggressions, offering promise for helping school psychologists to understand and address how their thoughts and actions contribute to underrepresentation. The model focuses on whether an individual is prejudiced or not *and* whether the person discriminates or not. The result is four types of prejudice:

- All-weather liberal: The individual is not prejudiced and does not discriminate.
- Reluctant liberal: The individual is not prejudiced but discriminates.
- Timid bigot: The individual is prejudiced but does not discriminate.
- All-weather bigot: The individual is prejudiced and discriminates.

To decrease social inequality and elitism in gifted education, the ideal and need is to have education professionals who are not prejudiced and do not discriminate (all-weather liberal). When school psychologists adopt tests and instruments that Black and Hispanic students do not score well on, even if they believe such students are capable, prejudice is evident (reluctant liberal). Another example would be following traditional policies and procedures and, thus, disregarding local and building norms in screening and labeling.

Also apparent is that when he or she is prejudiced, a school psychologist may not discriminate (timid bigot). Perhaps a more accurate way to state this is that, when accountability exists, a school psychologist will not be “allowed” to act on his or her prejudiced beliefs. Supervisors and civil rights policies (e.g., Civil Rights Act of 1964) and organizations monitor and prohibit discrimination in schools. Thus, school psychologists will be required to choose culturally fair tests and instruments and develop and adhere to equitable policies and procedures. The reality is that prejudice does exist in schools, and such beliefs have been acted on (all-weather bigot). This is demonstrated in studies on the persistently low referrals of Black and Hispanics to gifted education and AP classes (see Ford et al., 2008; Grissom & Redding, 2016). School psychologists who are prejudiced and act on their beliefs run the risk of districts facing civil rights violations, which often begins with investigations from the Office for Civil Rights or the U.S. Department of Justice (see Ford 2014a).

When an individual is prejudiced but does not discriminate (timid bigot), he or she is likely to be aware of the legal ramifications of doing so. Thus, the individual will take the steps necessary to not have discriminatory instruments, policies, and procedures that contribute to underrepresentation. Discrimination can occur by someone who is not prejudiced. In this case, discrimination can be intentional or unintentional, but is often the result of conforming to social pressures. To repeat, a school psychologist may believe that Black and Hispanic students are being discriminated against, but fail to challenge the system, status quo, and colleagues for fear of retribution (e.g., social isolation, threats, job loss, demotion).

Implicit Bias

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness (Kirwin Institute, 2015). Noteworthy is that implicit biases may not align with declared beliefs, nor do they necessarily reflect stances that one explicitly endorses. Individuals frequently hold biases that favor their “in-group” and are against “out-groups,” which helps explain why White educators overrefer White students for gifted education and underrefer Black and Hispanic students. Grissom and Redding (2016) found that even when Black students have the same test scores and grades as White students, teachers underestimate and are suspicious of them, resulting in underreferrals for gifted education screening.

On a positive note, implicit biases are malleable; that is, they can be gradually unlearned through a variety of de-biasing techniques. Hence, school psychologists must be self-reflective and consult and

collaborate with other educators. It is especially critical to collaborate with educators of color when making gifted education assessments and decisions to decrease cultural misunderstanding in all aspects and phases of assessment and decision making.

It behooves education professionals to know that even unintentional discrimination can be illegal, according to disparate impact theory. In a recent gifted education court case, the district (U-46 in Elgin, IL) was found guilty of intentional and unintentional discrimination in denying access for Hispanic students (see Ford, 2014a). School psychologists must decrease and eliminate both intentional and unintentional barriers contributing to gifted education and AP underrepresentation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

Differential expectations and access cannot be ignored, given the preponderance of evidence that Black and Hispanic students contend with the lowest expectations from teachers and other school personnel (e.g., school psychologists and counselors), even when they have the same profiles and performance as White students who are perceived as gifted (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Grissom and Redding (2016) found that even *after* controlling (e.g., matching) for test scores and other factors, Black students were referred to gifted programs at significantly lower rates when taught by White teachers.

The crucial need for greater diversity among education professionals includes school psychologists. Historically, practitioners from culturally different backgrounds, especially racial and linguistic nondominant groups, have been significantly underrepresented in the field of school psychology (Proctor, Simpson, Levin, & Hackimer, 2014; Walcott et al., 2016), which accordingly calls for culturally responsive training among all educators. Additionally, school psychologists must attend to existing inherent biases in measures and assessments of intelligence. The exploration of these solutions is continued below.

Limiting Biased Intelligence Tests

Standardized intelligence testing has been considered one of psychology's greatest successes. Intelligence tests are undeniably one of the field's most persistent and widely used tools to design interventions (Benson, 2003; Kaufman, 2009), but tests are riddled with challenges and critiques. Intelligence testing has been accused of: (a) unfairly stratifying examinees by race, culture, language, gender, income, and educational level; (b) minimizing the importance of creativity and tacit or practical knowledge; and (c) propagating the idea that people are born with an unchangeable endowment of intellectual potential that can be reified and that determines and predicts their success in school, work, and life. Kaufman (2009) cautioned that "IQ tests predict pretty well, but not with pinpoint accuracy, not in isolation, and not 10 years down the road" (p. 7).

For several decades, intelligence researchers have been trying to preserve the usefulness and utility of intelligence tests, while addressing concerns and limitations, which increase more with an increasingly diverse school population. There remains a major disconnect between the definitions, theories, and tests developed in the 1970s and the way intelligence tests are actually used. Narrowing that gap and disconnect remains a major challenge for school psychologists (Benson, 2003).

As Sattler (1992) noted:

...probably no test can be created that will entirely eliminate the influence of learning and cultural experiences. The test content and materials, the language in which the questions are phrased, the test directions, the categories for classifying the responses, the scoring criteria, and the validity criteria are all culture bound. (p. 8)

Likewise, Kaufman (2009) asserted, “I can’t try to package the IQ as a magical elixir and disguise it as an unblemished tool used by pure scientists in a sterile laboratory” (p. 8).

Controversy notwithstanding, intelligence tests, when used responsibly, help school psychologists to develop recommendations about the most beneficial and responsive services to students who are gifted. This consists of assessing patterns of performance on intelligence tests and obtaining clinical observations of students during and after the testing session. Per Kaufman (2009): “IQs or even scores on separate ability scales in isolation are sterile” (p. 158). “IQs are not about numbers, they are about people” (p. 156). This means removing the focus from a single IQ score and thus assessing the child as a whole, which can then be used to develop individualized teaching strategies and related interventions (Benson, 2003; Flanagan & Ortiz, 2007; Kaufman et al., 2016; Sattler, 2008). Along these lines, Sattler (2008) discussed at length the racial differences in White, Black, and Hispanic populations and their mean differences on the WISC-V Full Scale IQ, General Ability Index, composite scores, and the various subscales. Black and Hispanic students scored about 10–12 points lower than White students on IQ tests. Interestingly, Sattler (2008) also noted that Black students often scored lower than Whites on measures of crystallized ability and acquired knowledge, which has been reported by Flanagan and Ortiz (2007) and discussed by Kaufman (2009). To wit:

When we test students using a standardized device and compare them to a set of norms to gain an index of their relative standing, we assume that the students we test are similar to those on whom the test was standardized; that is, we assume their acculturation [and linguistic history] is comparable, but not necessarily identical, to that of the students who made up the normative sample for the test. (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1991, p. 7)

Testing issues with students of color has a contentious history (Gould, 1996) that includes centuries of false research and interpretations, mostly with Blacks. The debates continue in the 21st century with diatribes regarding test bias and fairness along racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic lines. In contrast to this contentious history of testing, we now discuss ways to avoid culturally irrelevant evaluation procedures.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group. We consider stereotype threat to be a race-based form of test anxiety. Steele and Aronson (1995) reported in several experiments that Black college freshmen and sophomores performed more poorly on standardized tests than White students when their race was emphasized. When race was not emphasized, however, Black students performed better and equivalently with White students. The results showed that performance in academic contexts can be harmed by the awareness that one’s behavior might be viewed through the lens of racial stereotypes (see Steele & Aronson, 1995). Their study prompted a renewed and ongoing exploration of the causes and consequences of stereotype threat (including more than 300 publications). In education, it can lead students to choose not to pursue a particular domain of study.

School psychologists must understand that stereotype threat can and does harm the testing performance of any individual for whom the situation invokes a stereotype-based expectation of poor performance. School psychologists must examine the situations most likely to lead to stereotype threat in underrepresented gifted students and decrease their impact. The conditions are often those in which a highlighted stereotype implicates students through association with a relevant social category. For example, when students view themselves in terms of a salient group membership (e.g., “I am Black and Blacks are not good test takers.”), performance can be undermined because of concerns about possibly confirming negative stereotypes about their group.

Given that stereotype threat is a pernicious factor affecting stereotyped or marginalized individuals' achievement and identities, school psychologists must understand methods of reducing its negative effects. Methods range from in-depth interventions to teaching affected students about the malleable nature of intelligence to simple changes in classroom and testing practices that can be easily implemented by the instructor, such as ensuring culture fair testing, teaching test-taking skills, and discussing test-wiseness skills.

Avoiding Culturally Irrelevant Evaluation Procedures

In addition to awareness of the impact of stereotype threat, cultural knowledge must be addressed in cognitive evaluation and assessment because it forms the necessary context for understanding performance and advocating for students. With respect to standardized testing, it is essential to: (a) evaluate cultural and linguistic differences (i.e., large differences will result in more adverse effects on performance); (b) evaluate inhibiting factors (inhibiting factors will result in negative effects on performance); (c) evaluate nondiscriminatory data (i.e., is the child capable of learning typically if given the chance or under different conditions and with a different measure); (d) evaluate opportunity for learning (less opportunity to learn lowers probability of being identified as gifted and high potential); (e) search for data and multiple indicators that converge to provide solid evidence for conclusions/interpretations or inferences drawn from the assessment; and (f) stay with the null hypothesis that functioning is typical until and unless the data clearly demonstrate otherwise and base decisions on the preponderance of the available data (Ortiz, 2012).

The above suggestions underscore that effective social justice-minded and culturally responsive school psychologists and decision makers focus on *assessment* rather than just testing, which is often viewed as an end in itself. Using a medical analogy, assessment consists of being comprehensive at gathering enough data to diagnose issues and needs, and to prescribe individual interventions, including the need for gifted education services. A significant part of the assessment process includes reviewing risk and protective factors. Ignoring, disregarding, and trivializing such factors is counterproductive to authentic assessments and valid evaluations that do not simply rank and sort, but instead can contribute to the understanding of cultural difference versus deficit misinterpretations that result in underreferrals and the underidentification of Black and Hispanic students as gifted and in need of such services.

Also debated is the efficacy of traditional intelligence tests compared to nontraditional tests (i.e., nonverbal measures). Regardless of their shortcomings, both types of tests, when used with other data, are informative. Pitting them against each other is counterproductive; that is, it is not a matter of *either/or* but *both/and*. Ortiz (2012) tendered the following considerations regarding nonverbal measures, also referred to as language-reduced tests:

- It is impossible to administer a test without some type of communication occurring between examinee and examiner. This is the purpose of gestures/pantomime.
- Some tests remain very culturally embedded; that is, they do not become culturally fair simply because language is not required for responding.
- Construct underrepresentation is common, especially on tests that measure fluid reasoning, and when viewed within the context of Cattell-Horn-Carroll theory, some batteries measure a narrower range of broad cognitive abilities/processes, particularly those related to verbal academic skills (e.g., reading and writing).
- All nonverbal tests are subject to the same problems with norms and cultural content as verbal tests; that is, they do not control for differences in acculturation and language proficiency which may still affect performance, albeit less than with verbal tests.
- Language-reduced tests are helpful in evaluation of culturally different individuals and may provide better estimates of true functioning in certain areas, but they are not a panacea or completely

satisfactory solution with respect to fairness and provide no information about dysfunction in the most common areas of referral (i.e., reading, writing, math).

Attitudes and beliefs about giftedness cannot be ruled out as denying access to gifted services. Prejudice, bias, discrimination (Allport, 1954), deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010), and microaggressions (Sue, 2010) exist among gifted education teachers (Grissom & Redding, 2016), school counselors (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015), and school psychologists (Proctor et al., 2014). As a result, the practice of ranking and sorting in gifted education both primes and limits the pipeline.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS: PRIMING AND REPAIRING THE CORRODED PIPELINE

“The importance of a person’s profile is axiomatic to clinicians who routinely assess children and adults referred for clinical assessment” (Kaufman, 2009, p. 164). For school psychologists to make equitable decisions about tests, specifically their validity and reliability for underrepresented groups, they must first be cognizant of the federal definitions and theories of gifted education and their implications. School psychologists should work directly with school counselors, gifted education staff, and research staff to study the most equitable local and building norms and criteria for Black and Hispanic students. Annual data should be collected to monitor norms and criteria in order to ensure the efficacy of such policies and procedures, along with needed changes.

School psychologists should also collaborate with families and educators to create talent development and enrichment opportunities that help cultivate potential in order to bring these talents to fruition. Reading programs are essential, along with helping families access resources in their community and schools. There is little evidence that school psychologists are serving in such roles. On the contrary, along with other professionals, school psychologists contribute to gifted education underrepresentation. This raises the question of their formal training to assess gifted students in general and underrepresented gifted students in particular. To reiterate, examining the role of school psychologists in gifted education is not new (e.g., Ericson, 2002; Ford, 2014b; Gross & Sabatino, 1965; Tisdall & Birch, 1965). The need is dire, particularly given the increasing number of students who are culturally different and current demographic shifts where non-White students are the majority nationally and in many school districts (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

To increase the number of Black and Hispanic students in gifted education, attention must be given to the pipeline beginning in early childhood as a logical and viable pathway to gifted education. In addition, it is essential that school psychologists utilize a range of repertoire of measures—including nonverbal tests and nonverbal subscales from traditional tests (Kaufman, 2009; Kaufman et al., 2016; Sattler, 2008)—which necessitates knowing students simultaneously as individuals and as cultural beings. Effective testing principles (American Psychological Association, 2010) recognize how culture affects test performance, as summarized by Ford and Whiting (2006) and Ortiz (2012). These practices will help with identifying more Black and Hispanic students as gifted:

- Assess for the purpose of intervention (e.g., need for gifted education services)
- Assess initially with authentic and alternative procedures (e.g., use a repertoire of tools with individual students and cultural factors in mind)
- Assess and evaluate the learning ecology (e.g., curricular rigor, quality of preschool and formal schooling, teacher quality, teacher experience)
- Assess and evaluate opportunity for learning (e.g., educational experiences at home and school)
- Assess and evaluate language proficiency (i.e., adopt instruments as well as practices, policies, and procedures that do not penalize students who are linguistically diverse and not English proficient)
- Assess and evaluate relevant cultural and linguistic factors (e.g., views about intelligence)
- Evaluate, revise, and retest hypotheses (e.g., with ongoing considerations to culture)

- Reduce bias in traditional assessment practices (e.g., include nonverbal measures and evaluate nonverbal subscales)
- Support conclusions through data convergence and multiple indicators using a cultural lens

CONCLUSION

Performance on any given test is based upon the degree to which an individual possesses age-appropriate levels of language development and acculturation (Ortiz, 2012). School psychologists must consider the most salient and relevant factors that will help create a defensible position and equitable recommendations regarding whether documentation and data are culturally responsive, fair, and valid. At minimum, to make such decisions, school psychologists, school counselors, and others administering and interpreting data must (a) not underestimate the impact of even small amounts of cultural or linguistic differences and exposure, (b) develop an expectation about the degree of impact the cultural and linguistic factors should have on test performance and compare available results accordingly, and (c) look for patterns in the data that show consistency (e.g., lower scores on tests that require more language [verbal measures] and higher scores on tests that require less language [nonverbal measures], as well as performance on crystallized versus fluid ability measures). Final interpretations and decisions must be based on the preponderance of the data, convergence of indicators, and the principle of do no harm; that is, school psychologists must protect the rights and welfare of students while promoting improvement in the quality of their lives (Flanagan & Ortiz, 2007; Ford & Whiting, 2006; Ortiz, 2012). When social justice and antideficit philosophies are adopted, when culturally responsive training is partaken, and when training is received in gifted education, equitable changes will provide greater access and opportunity to the leaky pipeline to gifted education for Black and Hispanic students.

RESOURCES

Project Implicit: Implicit association tests: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Attention to implicit biases or associations has increased in recent years, shedding additional information on prejudice and discrimination. School psychologists can take various implicit association tests. The results can be useful as school psychologists interpret the test scores of Black and Hispanic students for gifted education services.

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613–629. Retrieved from <http://www.brynmawr.edu/diversitycouncil/documents/SteeleATITA.pdf>

Stereotype threat helps explain, in part, the depressed test scores of Black students. Suggestions for addressing stereotype threat are provided, which should be useful for school psychologists in their gifted education assessments and evaluations.

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Describes various manifestations of microaggressions and presents extensive research about the categories. School psychologists may not be aware of how they interpret intelligence across the racial groups in gifted education assessments and evaluations. This book provides numerous details and examples of the various microaggressions.

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