Chapter 6

Underrepresentation of Black Children in Gifted Education Programs: Examining Ethnocentric Monoculturalism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss ethnocentric monoculturalism and how it contributes to the underrepresentation of Black children in gifted education programs. Ethnocentric monocultural bias is pervasive in all systems. Because it is so pervasive, it often operates outside of our conscious awareness. The authors specifically address it in the gifted education arena. They also offer recommendations for teachers and school counselors seeking to change the narrative about Black children in gifted education programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, Worrell, and Grantham (2012) challenge the need for a model that takes into account the ever-changing demographic of the public school system and the “browning” of the United States population. They present statistics suggesting that most public schools will have a majority of children of color by 2020 with people of color out numbering whites by 2050. They argue that gifted program’s enrollment represent students from White and middle-class backgrounds thus not accounting for the needs of gifted students of color. Grantham (2012) further transcends the work of Dr. Mary M. Fraiser (1979) by encouraging the inclusion of not only excellence (eminence) and high standards but also equity (class issues) as the public school sector will grow to include more low-income, primarily Black and Hispanics students. Black students are significantly underrepresented in gifted education (Ford, 2013; Ford & King, 2014). Data based upon the 2011-2012 school year indicates that Black students represent 15.9% of the total public school population in the United States and 8.8% of children in gifted and talented programs (United States Department of Education, 2012). This chapter seeks to address the issue of underrepresentation of minorities in gifted and talented education programs through the rejection of ethnocentrism and the implementation of more multicultural perspectives in gifted identification processes.

BACKGROUND

For decades, scholars have examined the use of standardized tests in connection with Black children. William (1972) wrote that test bias and standardized testing have adverse effects on the self-esteem of Black children. There have also been concerns raised about the fairness of the entire standardized testing process. More specifically, Ford & Grantham 2003; Kauffmann, 1994 have stated that attention must be paid to the inherent bias used in the development of testing instruments. Many testing instruments were developed and normed on the White middle class. Thus, it is inequitable to assume a universal reality when administering these instruments to children of color.
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