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## GIFTEDNESS AND TALENT

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## GIFTEDNESS AND TALENT: THE TRIPLE INVISIBILITY OF GIFTED BLACK WOMEN STUDENTS

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### Abstract

Affirmative policies arise from the need to favor some sectors of society that have suffered or continue to suffer from the effects of discrimination, injustice, racism, or exclusion; among these, in Special Education, students with gifted characteristics have become invisible to teachers, guardians, and society in general. However, the trinomial gifted-black-female presents threefold invisibility in our world. This study analyzes the factors that trigger the invisibility of gifted black women in Brazilian schools. We use descriptive statistics to analyze the microdata collected by surveys, evaluations, and exams carried out by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research.

**Key-words:** Giftedness. Talent. Invisibility. Black women.

### Introduction

The historical and contemporary processes of discrimination, inequality, stigmatization, injustice, social exclusion, racism, and violence have affected different sectors of the Brazilian population (e.g., women, blacks, indigenous people, immigrants, the homeless, elderly, and special education students). The colonial history of American countries reached thousands of human beings in a state of oppression.

In this context, the National Policy for Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEE-EI/08) aims to improve the learning of special education students in Brazil (disabilities, developmental disorders, and giftedness) and to encourage their participation and access to regular schools by promoting responses to their educational needs (Brasil, 2008). With this in mind, implemented the Specialized Educational Service Classrooms (AEE), the Special and Inclusive Education Centers (NUEEI), and Giftedness Service Centers (NAAHS).

However, there is still much to be done regarding the educational needs of students with Giftedness and Talent (D&T). With this in mind, this article aims to analyze the factors that trigger the invisibility of the trinomial black women with giftedness in Brazilian schools, which is an obstacle to their timely indication, identification, and care in the AEE classrooms for the development of their

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potential.

The text begins with the characteristics of students with D&T in Brazilian schools and their poor indication and identification in Brazil (first invisibility), which influences managers, classmates, parents, guardians, and teachers' perception. Next, we will comment on the characteristics of female education in the colonial era. A series of historical and contemporary inequality processes, stigmatization, injustice, social exclusion, racism, and violence. Factors affecting this Brazilian population (second invisibility). Finally, based on the Social Domain-Theory (TDS), the third invisibility factor will be addressed: the education of black women.

### **Methodology**

To offer a theoretical study on the gifted black women triple invisibility, we propose a descriptive methodology. It is bibliographical research, which included books and journals that address current studies on D&T and TDS. We read and analyzed the original publications on these topics. To access these texts, we carried out electronic searches in databases information sources for the areas of Education and Psychology, such as PsycINFO, Fundación Dialnet, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC, Institute of Education Sciences), and Google Scholar.

Additionally, we used descriptive statistics to analyze the microdata collected by surveys, evaluations, and examinations from the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP).

### **Results and discussion**

This section will be divided into three to observe each of the factors that trigger the invisibility of the black women trinomial: first, the general invisibility of D&T students; second, the invisibility of women with D&T characteristics; and third, the invisibility of gifted black women.

#### **First invisibility: gifted and talented students**

In this text, the terms giftedness and talent (D&T) will be considered equivalent to what the National Council of Education of Brazil (Resolução, 2001) calls high abilities/giftedness (AH/SD). Abandoning the official nomenclature was, on the one hand, due to the inaccurate terminology translation and the need to consider the talent development process. At first, it thinks of giftedness as the possession and use of outstanding natural capabilities anchored biologically and informally developed (Gagné, 2018), placing the person among the top 10% of their peers. And, in a second moment, talent, considered as the mastery of these skills from a systematic development - or competencies - that manifest themselves in at least one field of human activity that allocates the person among the 10% most outstanding in their specialty (Gagné, 2013a).

In addition to the trio of giftedness, talent, and Development Process, the Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), has as its constructs two additional elements called intrapersonal and environmental catalysts that play the role of facilitators in the process (Gagné, 2013a). Even though they are theoretically separated, they are related and interdependent constructs since they are part of a process that corresponds to the progressive development of the endowment of talents (GAGNÉ, 2013b). As Gagné (2013a) comments, there are no pure differentiation measures of both moments as they are part of a continuum of a broader dynamic process. However, giftedness is a *sine qua non* condition of talent. Therefore, the timely indication, identification, and assistance of these D&T people in the AEE rooms are vital for their talent development.

However, many of these D&T students suffer from their invisibility in Brazilian society. And particularly in the educational sector before their teachers, educational technicians, educational managers, and even their relatives and guardians. Data at the national level confirm this invisibility throughout the Brazilian territory. The Brazilian Association for the Gifted of Rio Grande do Sul (ABSD-RS) estimates an index of 7.78% of D&T students in Brazil (Negrini, 2008). The School Census of Basic Education reports the existence of 48,133 of these D&T students in regular classes (Figure 1) out of a total of 47.8 million registered enrollments (INEP, 2019). Therefore, we infer that there are more than two million D&T students to be identified in Brazil. They suffer from invisibility and, therefore, are not considered for the AEE of schools.

**Figure 1: Giftedness and talent: geographic distribution in Brazil 2019**



Source: INEP. Basic Statistical Synopsis 2019

Freitas and Perez (2016) call camouflaging factors the characteristics of “invisibility” or “non-existence” of these students, which can affect their indication, identification, and attendance in the AEE classrooms. The authors consider three factors: individual (e.g., low self-esteem, depression, perfectionism), familial (e.g., low parental expectations, excessive pressure for academic performance, family conflicts), and environmental (e.g., low teacher expectations, labels pejorative label such as nerd). They influence the under-representation and under-performance of these D&T students. Factors that hinder the manifestation of D&T, which generate low self-confidence, make these students invisible and, consequently, hide their D&T indicators before teachers (Freitas & Perez, 2016). The invisibility of these D&T students is notorious when women (second invisibility) and black (third invisibility).

### **Second invisibility: female students**

Over the years, D&T education has been disproportionately provided to white students compared to black students (Acosta, 2019) and given to men compared to women. Prejudice, discrimination, and institutional emphasis on deficits in special education are probably some of the causes of this inequality. It affects underrepresented talented students' educational experiences (Wright, Ford & Young, 2017) and legitimizing myths.

It is necessary to review historically female education to understand the legitimizing myths influencing D&T invisibility. It was characterized by the supremacy of men over women as the patriarchal family, especially during the colonial stage. Ribeiro (1987) points out that at that time, the formal education of women was considered a social heresy both in Portugal and in Brazil. The woman was kept in seclusion and considered an inferior being with the sole function of being the generator of the men who preserved male hegemony. It led to an immense mass of illiterate women in the colony. Thus, it is not surprising that nowadays, among students with D&T indicators, the invisibility of women is even more evident. The consequences of inequity and injustice, based on these legitimizing myths, impact the perception of teachers, students, and guardians of the characteristics of these students. This historically differentiated education and the lack of successful female role models have negatively influenced women's self-esteem in the case of the "imposter syndrome" when they attribute their success to everyone or everything but themselves (Freitas & Perez, 2016).

The authors of this article evidenced an example of the above during the aster's project interviews. It aimed to indicate D&T students in a State School on the French-Brazilian border. Thus, interviews were carried out with teachers, parents, and students. In an interview with the mother of two students (a girl and a boy), the researchers noticed a mother's preference for the son. The mother described her son's abilities, intelligence, and talents in great detail but referring to her daughter - thrifty in words - as obstinate but not intelligent. However, after the analysis of the interviews, only the student had D&T characteristics. From the researchers' perspective, this result points to a legitimizing myth to the social construction of gender difference (Abad, 2018; Abad et al., 2020).

Gender is a social construction that influences the world's perception (Abad et al., 2020). Social practices and relationships build the identity of men and women. They are products of power relations that consider the female identity fragile, insecure, emotional, selfless. Gender stereotypes create barriers to the growth of female social figures, thus, creating legitimizing myths. Such as the constant recognition of the gifted male figure to the detriment of the female figure. It is notorious in the cultures of American countries.

Family experiences reinforce these legitimizing myths in the early stages of the child's development. It shapes how the individual relates in his adulthood to other people - the individual's images of people and events are represented by objects in the unconscious. In this sense, these legitimizing myths create barriers to the development of female social figures, creating myths and perceptions – such as the example mentioned earlier in the interview: the constant recognition of the gifted male figure to the detriment of the female figure as shown in Table 01.

Table 01: Students with Giftedness and Talent by Region and Gender

Region	Men	Women	Total
North	1574 (61.2%)	999 (38,8%)	2573
North-East	3066 (66.9%)	1518 (33.1%)	4584
South-East	28647 (77.1%)	8520 (22.9%)	37167
South	4223 (63.8%)	2391 (36.2%)	6614
Mid-West	2099 (65.3%)	1117 (34.7%)	3216
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39609 (73.1%)</b>	<b>14545 (26.9%)</b>	<b>54154</b>

Source: INEP. Basic Education Statistical Microdata Synopsis. Brasilia: 2019.

In table 01, we can observe the proportional disparity of students with giftedness and talent identified in Brazil. With 73.1% men and 26.9% women, that is, we have only 14,545 female students out of a universe of 47.8 million registered enrollments in Brazil (INEP, 2019).

### **Third invisibility: gifted black woman**

Throughout history, stereotypes (e g., gender, social or financial status, race, religion, economic situation) and prejudice influence how society is stratified and how oppressed groups are formed and defined. In this sense, the Social Domain-Theory (SDT) (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), used in this study, aims to combine the social psychological theories of intergroup relations and the ideologies and processes of legitimizing social inequalities (Islam, 2014).

TDS explains the subconscious need to defend social hierarchies based on a series of ideals and belief systems. When a hegemonic, or oppressor group holds a disproportionate amount of benefits (e.g., social status, power, money, highly esteemed roles), a subordinate - or oppressed group - is in a disproportionate situation (Acosta 2019). Therefore, the theory focuses on the social-psychological processes by which ideological structures are internalized in individual attitudes and beliefs (Islam, 2014). In contemporary society, white people have privileges (e.g., job opportunities, better food and health, longer life) and facilities to transmit things that make life easier for their children (e.g., wealth, education, social connections). In the current context, black people and other minorities are four times more likely to die from Covid-19 (Dyer, 2020). However, the image of minorities and oppressed people in this society contrasts sharply with the “cultural virtues” and the representation of the former group (the latter seen as uncontrolled, dangerous, lazy, and dishonest) (Pratto et al., 2000).

According to TDS, legitimating myths (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) are a combination of prejudice, assumptions of the inferiority of marginalized groups, and political conservatism. It leads to the formation of persistent ideological myths, which are institutionalized and used to legitimize existing structures of inequality as fair and desirable (Islam, 2014). TDS, in this sense, explains how common factors such as cultural ideologies, discriminatory behaviors, social roles, and psychological propensities for group prejudice combine to maintain social group hierarchy (Pratto et al., 2000). Thus, providing a clearer understanding of why groups become oppressed and how they remain oppressed: The continuation of the status quo of this inequality is not individual, but systemic (Acosta, 2019).

Pratto (1994) considers the psychological aspect of TDS by postulating that an individual variable called Social Domain Orientation (SDO) represents the extent to which a person wants a group to dominate and be superior to other groups. SDO is an attitudinal orientation towards intergroup relationships, reflecting an individual preference for hierarchical relationships ordered along a superior-inferior dimension (Pratto et al., 1994). Although these beliefs benefit some group members, their internalization by oppressed groups also prevents them from engaging in social actions against inequalities and prejudices (Islam, 2014).

Therefore, the legitimizing myths and society's latent and subconscious need to maintain stratified social hierarchies can influence the appointment and identification of black D&T students in Brazil. In this sense, educators should be aware of the possible subconscious preference for hierarchical social structures in the process of identifying underrepresented students (Acosta 2019).

From one perspective, inequalities between blacks and whites are directly related to colonial education. On the one hand, the white color remained one of the discriminatory elements when it was considered the color of the ruling class, and a policy of valuing white women was created, which caused difficulties for black women (Ribeiro, 1987). On the other hand, the lack of schools and teachers and the almost absolute lack of interest in black education in the colonial period and the Empire meant that

black women had more limited educational opportunities (Gonçalves, 2000). Currently, these discriminatory practices against them are translated into unequal education, lower than average wages in the country, and a higher rate of unemployment among black women. Given this, black women's educational achievements are translated into proportionately lower occupational and income gains (Hasenbalg, 2005).

The legitimizing myths of racist ideologies are explicit -or covertly - inculcated in people and institutions. They lead to reproduction throughout the individual life cycle and in the succession of generations, to the confinement of black people in general, and black women in particular, to the lower levels of the social structure (Osorio, 2004). It means that black Brazilian women are in a cumulative disadvantages cycle (Hasenbalg, 2005) throughout the phases of their life. Thus, influencing their psychosocial development and, therefore, behavior and perceptions. We can observe those cumulative disadvantages in Table 02.

**Table 01: Gifted Black Women Students by Region**

Region	Not Declared	White	Black	Brown	Yellow	Indigenous	TOTAL
North	275 (27.5%)	176 (17.6%)	21 (2.1%)	520 (52.1%)	4 (0.4%)	3 (0.3%)	999
North-East	340 (22.4%)	225 (14.8%)	53 (3.5%)	894 (58.9%)	4 (0.3%)	2 (0.1%)	1518
South-East	1608 (18.9%)	4850 (56.9%)	227 (2.7%)	1783 (20.9%)	41 (0.5%)	11 (0.1%)	8520
South	331 (13.9%)	1750 (73.2%)	44 (1.8%)	247 (10.3%)	17 (0.7%)	2 (0.1%)	2391
Mid-West	329 (29.4%)	401 (35.9%)	32 (2.9%)	348 (31.2%)	3 (0.3%)	4 (0.3%)	1117
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2883 (19.8%)</b>	<b>7402 (50.9%)</b>	<b>377 (2.6%)</b>	<b>3792 (26.0%)</b>	<b>69 (0.5%)</b>	<b>22 (0.2%)</b>	<b>14,545</b>

Source: INEP. Basic Education Statistical Microdata Synopsis. Brasilia: 2019.

In the table, we can see gifted black female students identified in Brazil (INEP, 2019). They comprise only 377 female students nationwide. That is, they are only 2.6% of the total number of Brazilian female students. If we consider the number of enrollments of D&T students across the country (47.8 million), these students represent an average of 0.00078870292% of the total number of D&T students in Brazil.

Based on the Integrative Talent Development Model (Gagné, 2018) it is not surprising that the invisibility of gifted black women is even more evident in the intellectual, creative, social, and perceptual domains. A difference from the muscular and motor control domains where black women traditionally stand out for their natural abilities.



## Final Considerations

The legitimizing myths of stratified social hierarchies have power in people's subconscious because they are shared collectively among group members and society as a whole (Moscovici, 1984). In the school context, education is grounded in a stratified social structure in which, despite imminent failure, practices that do not work continue to be implemented by teachers and carried out by students (Acosta, 2019). Therefore, in this context, teachers might not be aware of the role these myths play in perpetuating the status quo (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

That said, considering the exposure of black Brazilian women to a cycle of cumulative disadvantages pointed out by Hasenbalg (2005) and Erikson's development stages, influence the trust, autonomy, initiative, constructiveness, identity, intimacy, productivity, and integrity of these black women. However, one of the most harmful consequences of the above is the impact on their self-esteem (self-knowledge, self-concept, and self-assessment, to self-acceptance). It represents a synthesis of the previous steps where the person creates his scale of values and develops his abilities (Rodríguez Estrada, Pellicer de Flores & Domínguez, 1988).

To paraphrase Rodríguez (1988): the worst disgrace that can happen to a woman is to think evil of herself. Consequently, the history of oppressed black women has created one of the most disastrous aspects of this process: making them invisible by nullifying their culture, history, references, talents, abilities, capacities, and virtues; to the annihilation of any reference that could make us proud, stimulate or provide the possibility of acceptance of being different and having their individuality.

The situation is even more complicated for these students, knowing that many private and public schools have not implemented the AEE Rooms. We observed it in the field research (Abad, 2018) despite public policies that oblige to assist D&T students. And, therefore, they do not comply with Resolution CNE/CEB n° 4/2009 of the National Council of Education, which obliges, in its Article 5, the implementation of the AEE, primarily, in the resource rooms the school's own multifunctional in the inverse shift of schooling.

Finally, considering that teachers are the professionals who theoretically know and therefore be in the best conditions to observe and refer black D&T students to the school's AEE (both their family members and friends generally do not have this knowledge). That means the possibility that these students never develop their natural abilities and update their talents, and therefore remain immersed in the invisibility that represents a series of cumulative disadvantages for them. The research is in progress. However, preliminary results point to a fourth invisibility in Brazil: that of gifted black women from the northern region of the country.

**Authors' contribution:**

Alberto Abad, elaborated, analyzed, and wrote the manuscript;

Thaís Marques Abad elaborated, analyzed, wrote and revised the manuscript.

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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