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Disadvantaged Gifted Students: Latinos

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Abstract

This Literature Review examines the underrepresentation of gifted minority students identified in the United States, particularly Latinos. Giftedness and Talent Programs have historically been predominantly white with a diminished minority representation in the case of Latino, Black, and American Indigenous peoples. Although it has been argued in the past, nature vs nurture is not representative of the literature today. The literature shows that underrepresentation is caused by non-inclusive testing and identification bias by teachers. This kind of teacher bias may be caused by overt or implicit prejudice and may affect student interactions and mental health even outside of the gifted space. Microaggressions have a role in these moments with gifted teachers. In particular, Latino students may be affected in unique circumstances when compared to their unidentified peers as they may experience a language barrier or experience fears concerning undocumented status.

Introduction

- The underrepresentation of people of color has been highly discussed in the United States since a long before the civil rights movement. Latino, Black and Indigenous populations in particular have been highly discussed in the literature as experiencing the effects of this lack of representation. The lack of inclusion is seen in all facets of American life and culture and may be most negatively impactful on younger gifted students. Who are currently experiencing their effects. The article *The Underrepresentation of minority students in gifted Education: Problems and Promises in Recruitment and Retention* was released in 1998. It argued that not only was Gifted representation in minority populations disproportionate and has been this way for several decades (Ford, 1998).
 - Minority students, with the exception of Asian Americans, were underrepresented in programs. At the time, 49 states tested for intellectual giftedness but as more categories of giftedness were identified, fewer states tested students for these other types of giftedness. This included Creative (41 states), Artistic (35 states), Leadership (30 states), Critical thinking (15 states), Psychomotorically (11 states), Psychosocially (9 states), and Understanding of One's Cultural Heritage (5 states). Almost 2 and a half decades later, the literature has grown concerning the identification of disadvantaged gifted students.
 - Students identified with giftedness are individuals of K - 12 age who have been tested for having a higher level of ability or recognized potential than their peers of the same age and have passed gifted testing. The purpose of this essay is to investigate whether or not there is a major disparity between the representation of diverse minority populations, particularly Latinos or Hispanic students. A specific concern is the examination and comparison of how students are identified, who is identified, who does the identifying, what are the outcomes, and what are the experiences of Latino students.

The Numbers

- In 2015, only 538, 529 out of more than 3 million gifted students were Latino. For context, 1,939,266 were white, which made up over 60% total gifted/talent program students (Snyder et al., 2016).
- Black and Hispanic males were the least represented people in these programs in 2012 (Ford et al., 2013).
- Hispanic students made up 25% of total student population but only 16% were represented in Gifted and Talented programs. Additionally, Black students made up 19% of the total students enrolled but only 10% of gifted students.
- In the United States, 1.6 million children are undocumented. Latinos make up 58% of the overall immigrant children and represent more than 75% of the students in English Language Learner programs (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007).
 - Hispanic students are less likely to graduate and more likely to drop out than their non-Hispanic peers. Only 31.1% of Hispanic students were found to be enrolled in advanced mathematics and science classes compared to 47.4% of White students. In terms of gifted programs, 3% of Hispanic and 3.5% of Black students were identified for gifted program placement compared to 10 % of their White counterparts and 7.5% of their Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts.

Underrepresentation Causes

- Anti-Blackness, Xenophobia, and English language exclusivity may all be argued as components of the foundational issues with disparity of minority gifted student identification (Cross, 2017).
- The lack of representation may be caused by certain assessment's not evaluating multiple displays of giftedness in students (Tafolla, 2018).
 - Giftedness has many different assessments that could be used to examine a diverse pool of students, tests that have been used in the identification of these underrepresented students included the the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test (Wayne, 2009).
- Researchers argue that it is discrimination by educators as the cause of minority gifted student underrepresentation with more literature examining this concern. In a court case from 2014 (McFadden v. Board of Education for Illinois School District U-46), an Illinois school district was found guilty of discrimination against Black and Hispanic students when the district created separate gifted programs for White and Hispanic students. The court ruled program segregation deprived students of these programs based on ethnicity, and highlighted issues with the school's screening, identification, and policies (Ford, 2014). The ruling raises the questions concerning teachers' explicit racism or prejudice, implicit biases, or both towards minority populations. Microaggressions concerning people of minority race are at play and influence teacher perceptions and therefore their referrals.

Underrepresentation causes

- Specifically, teachers can affect the underrepresentation as teachers often refer potentially gifted students for testing, making teachers the "gatekeepers" of sorts. Gatekeeping is found in individuals of any group who believe they determine who can be denied entrance into that same group. During the 1980s, the advocacy for Hispanic students was lacking. Modern research examines the teachers as the source of potential bias and prejudice, implying that if both student and teacher have different identities, presumably cultural, then the bias can have negative effects (Courville & DeRouen, 2009).
- The perceptions of teachers, their own identity, and their biases have been investigated in the literature showing that economically and racially disadvantaged students are more at risk for being overlooked for gifted identification than their White counterparts. As recently as 2007 teachers were in general less likely to refer Latino and African American students by nearly one standard deviation (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Teachers have a "deficit-oriented framework" where students with apparent learning hurdles were deemed not qualifiable for gifted programs, as if these traits were mutually exclusive. Teachers seemed to maintain the traditional views of giftedness and students who deviated from those traditional norms tended to not be referred for testing. This deficit framework implies that students must first overcome the hurdles before being considered for referral. Discrimination and true implicit bias needs to be remedied for the students outside the norm, racially diverse, and underrepresented are as likely to be referred for testing.

Looking Forward

To address the issues presented in the literature,

- improvement and use of gifted and talented identification tests that are deemed inclusive by research.
 - New tests for diverse populations need to be created. Expanding upon the types of giftedness that is tested is a key component for combating underrepresentation of minority students.
- Next, it is important to recognize and diminish the biases held by teachers and gifted proctors, as well as to include more teachers who represent the wide variety of racially diverse students.
- Finally, for Latino and Hispanic people it is important for organizations, schools, and districts to support programs not specifically tailored to English speaking students to improve the representation of bilingual programs and bilingual faculty.
 - Speaking Spanish is not a disadvantage or a sign of mental deficiency but is an asset. Providing the foundational support programs, gifted programs, and the improvement of educational experiences would make it possible for more people of color to achieve success in the United States after formative education.

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