

SCHOOL COUNSELOR ADVOCACY: IDENTIFICATION AND RETENTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GIFTED STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article explores the reasons traditionally underserved African-American students are not readily being identified, recruited, and selected for gifted education programs when they demonstrate gifted characteristics. Suggestions are given to redress the lack of training professional school counselors receive in handling the gifted education and the referral process, as well as the “deficit orientation” educators may hold regarding racially and culturally diverse students. Implications for future research are discussed.

The role of the professional school counselor in increasing the presence of African-American students in gifted education is crucial, yet appears undervalued. Professional school counselors are stakeholders in education, yet there is a paucity of scholarship that addresses the importance of the professional school counselor in identifying gifted and talented students. Several authors (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Bryan, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Lee, 2005) have contributed to the current research examining the professional school counselor’s role of advocate, champion of social justice, social change agent, and urban school counselor, in order to empower marginalized students to increase in achievement and to be successful (Mitcham-Smith & Bryant, 2006).

The lack of professional school counselors’ input in the

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referral process becomes more apparent when considering the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted programs. In a study of the top 100 largest school districts in the United States, it was found that over 51% of the population under the age of 18 are from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000), yet culturally diverse students are underrepresented in gifted education programs by as much as 70% (Gabelko & Sosniak, 2002). The controversial issue of low numbers of these diverse groups in gifted education persisted (Baldwin, 2001; Bernal, 2002; Brown, 1997; Evans, 1996; Feldhusen, 1998; Ford, 1998; Harris & Ford, 1999; Howells, 1998; Kornhaber, 1999; Rhodes, 1992; Worrell, Szarko, & Gabelko, 2001).

This article explores reasons traditionally underserved African-American students are not readily identified and recruited for gifted education programs. First, suggestions are given on how to combat the lack of training professional school counselors receive in handling gifted education and the referral process (Mitcham-Smith & Bryant, 2006), as well as the “deficit orientation” (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002) educators may hold regarding racially and culturally diverse students. Second, a description of the referral process for gifted students and the myriad definitions of giftedness are presented. Finally, implications for teachers, school counselors and counselor educators are offered.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERREPRESENTATION

What is the reason for the lack of culturally diverse students in gifted education? Although they possess gifted characteristics, African-American students are not readily identified and recruited for gifted education programs. Extant literature suggests there is a “deficit under-representation orientation” held by educators that prevents them from recognizing gifted characteristics in African-American students (Ford et al., 2002). A review of the literature on underrepresentation in gifted education indicates that there are several factors that contribute to racially and culturally diverse representation, including the definitions of gifted, referral process, how giftedness is determined, and issues concerning retention (Ford & Grantham, 2003).

LACK OF CONSISTENT DEFINITIONS

Students with exceptional abilities are often labeled "gifted." But what is "gifted"? Webster's II Dictionary (2005) defines the term as "endowed with a special aptitude or ability" (p. 303). However, the definition fails to inform the reader of what qualifies as a "special aptitude or ability". Many scholars (e.g., Anguiano, 2003; Clark, 2002; Ford, 1998, 2003; Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman 2002; Manning, 2006; Renzulli, 1986, 2003) have maintained that there is a lack of consistency in the definition of "gifted".

Many definitions of "giftedness" are quantified and dichotomous (Ford, 2003). Renzulli (1986) questioned the term "giftedness" by stating that the term only referred to students being "above average" and did not take into account other qualities, such as creativity. The label "gifted" has been said to be used to indicate high intellectual or academic achievement (Manning, 2006). A student is considered to be "gifted and talented" when he or she performs at, or has the potential to perform at a higher intellectual capability than other students of the same age (Anguiano, 2003). One of the first people to use the term was Terman in 1925 who identified students who were "gifted" by whether or not they scored within the top two percent in general intelligence on the Binet test or a similar measure of giftedness (Manning, 2006).

While many definitions equate giftedness to the students' test ability or potential to perform higher than their peers in various academic settings, other definitions continue to measure giftedness by IQ or test taking performance and scores. In this case, gifted students are those who have a certain IQ or achievement score. To identify "gifted" students, some schools use a variety of intelligence tests, achievement tests, or both (Ford, 2003).

Disagreement over the definition of giftedness still confounds the field of gifted education. In 1993, the U.S. Department of Education issued a culturally sensitive definition of giftedness:

Children and youth with outstanding talent who 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 capacity in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, and unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific aca-

demically 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 (U.S. Department of Education website, 2006).

The 1993 federal definition elucidates the notion of talent development and recognizes that some students face more barriers in life than others by including the word "potential" (Ford et al., 2002). Before the new definition, most states adopted the 1978 definition which did not mention issues of diversity. The most recent definition reminds educators that giftedness exists in all groups. Although the federal definition is one that is inclusive, unbiased, impartial, and unprejudiced, states are still not required to adopt the definition. In moving from state to state, a student may be considered "gifted" in one state and allowed to participate in gifted programs. However, in another state, the same student may be denied the opportunity to participate because he or she does not meet that state's criterion for "giftedness."

In reviewing definitions of "giftedness" on the Davidson's Institute for Talent Development (2006) website, it was found that distinct definitions between states exist. For example, Georgia's definition of "giftedness" is:

A student who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability (ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities (p.86).

To the contrary, the definition in California views the student in a more holistic manner in determining "giftedness". We often assume the things that we do not know. With such inconsistent definitions, giftedness becomes equated with high achievement or demonstrated performance. In schools which follow this philosophy, gifted students must be able to demonstrate tangible evidence of high achievement in the form of grades and high test scores. Otherwise they are unlikely to be identified for gifted programs (Ford, 2002).

THE REFERRAL PROCESS

The "gate keeper" through which students become eligible for official evaluation for entry into gifted pro-

grams is the referral process (McBee, 2006). Most school districts require that a student be referred or nominated before being formally assessed for gifted program placement (Anguiano, 2003; Davis & Rimm, 2004; McBee, 2006). Students who do not receive a referral or teacher recommendation will be unable to enter the program no matter what formal assessment procedures are used to identify giftedness, which may pose a particular problem if teachers lack adequate preparation.

LACK OF TEACHER TRAINING

Due to the over-reliance of teacher referrals and recommendations, the lack of teacher training in gifted education has become a concern (Elhoweris, Kagendo, Negmeldin, & Holloway, 2005; Rhodes, 1992). One of the first classic studies on teacher nominations was conducted by Pagnato and Birch in 1959. Through comparing a variety of screening methods on the basis of effectiveness, percentage of nominated students, efficiency, and the percentage of gifted children nominated by screening methods, they concluded that teacher judgment was a poor method of screening students for individual testing (Ford, 1998; Grantham & Ford, 2003). Teacher judgment was only 45% effective. Much scholarship indicates that teachers are less effective and less accurate than parents in recognizing students who require gifted education services (Ford, 1998; Ford et al., 2002). Similarly, an earlier study by Karnes and Whorton (1991) indicated that teachers receive little or no training to identify "giftedness" and as a result, teachers cannot be considered a reliable source for identifying gifted learners and nominating them for gifted programs. Too often, educators and administrators are not knowledgeable in identification of gifted students. Moreover, teacher nominations may not be an accurate indicator of possible giftedness because a student who does not always receive all A's or is not the best behaved may very well be gifted, but is not nominated for gifted screening (Anguiano, 2003).

LACK OF MINORITY EDUCATORS

Not only are African-American students underrepresented in gifted education, but culturally diverse professional school counselors and teachers are also scarce. The growth of ethnic and minority student

enrollment is creating a critical need for minority teachers to provide positive role models for the students (Tomorrow's Teachers, 2002). According to the Tomorrow's Teachers and U.S. Department of Commerce data, more than one-third of students in today's public schools are people of color; by the year 2025, half will be persons of color. Meanwhile, only 13 percent of their teachers are minority. More than 40 percent of schools across America have no teachers of color on staff (Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 2000). Furthermore, when teachers of color are missing, minority students are frequently placed in special education classes other than gifted, have higher absentee rates, and tend to be less involved in school activities (Ford et al., 2000). Other experts argue that a lack of minority teachers hampers staff's ability to relate to a diverse student body and boost parental involvement (Tomorrow's Teachers, 2002).

Ford (1999) found that minorities are underrepresented in the teaching profession despite the fact that the student population is becoming even more diverse. The article indicated that 41% of the student population is minorities, while only 15% of the teacher population is comprised of the culturally diverse. Ford stated that the need for minority teachers is vital in gifted education as they are adept at mentoring and advocating for minority students. Likewise, minority students profess to identify more with school when they have minority teachers. Ford, Grantham, and Harris (1996) contended that by enlisting minority teachers to model professional behaviors to students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, it could help resolve some of the underrepresentation that exists in many gifted programs. Minority gifted teachers will expose students to the perspectives that minority instructors bring to the classroom.

ATTITUDES AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

School Counselors' Attitudes

Increasing school counselors' awareness and competence in multiculturalism has become to be recognized as an area of professional development (Constantine, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) presents position statements articulating the inclusion of multicultural awareness among counselors and the need for counselors to be culturally competent. The Education Trust's

Transforming School Counselor's Initiative's mission statement states:

Everyone working in school systems has a critical role to play in helping schools meet the needs of underserved students, especially school counselors. Compelling data underscore the need for school counselors to work effectively to improve academic results for low-income students and students of color (Education Trust, 2006).

These positions suggest that counselor education programs require significantly more training in multicultural competence (Rayle & Myers, 2004; Taylor & Adelman, 2000). In order to meet the needs of all students, professional school counselors are required to deliver comprehensive school guidance. Escehanuer and Chen-Hayes (2005) argued that the needs of students, families, and educators located in urban areas have outgrown the traditional individual-focused model of school counseling. Similarly, Bemak and Chung (2005) suggested that school counselors need to take a more active role by becoming leaders and change agents by infusing advocacy into their work and training; this is due to some old practices being outdated and obsolete in terms of being effective for all students. This role calls for professional school counselors to be advocates and take on many roles, such as team facilitators and collaborators with members of their schools, families, and communities (Bemak, 2000; Bryan, 2005).

School counselors are in a unique position not only to work with children, but to initiate conversations concerning some of the issues raised in educating at-risk, gifted, and under-identified gifted students (Gentry, 2006). Lee (2005) stated that specific competencies are needed to effectively address the personal, interpersonal and structural challenges of students in urban areas. Lee suggested that school counselors in these areas should:

- Have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with the culturally diverse.
- Base their individual and group counseling skills on helping students build empowerment and help students develop positive attitudes toward school.
- Focus on understanding the systems (family system, political system, criminal justice system) in which the students live.

- Intervene in social systems to help their students if needed.
- Work with other educational professionals to promote student development.
- Be in the forefront of developing educational initiatives that promote the development and academic achievement of students.

With this said, it is vital for professional school counselors to acknowledge and recognize that underrepresentation of racially and culturally diverse students in gifted education is a problem and one that they can help to solve.

In an empirical study, Mitcham-Smith (2005) investigated the role of the professional school counselor, the perception of the role, and school counselor self-efficacy. The data reported significant findings in perceptions regarding promoting diversity agendas. African Americans and Whites differed significantly when asked how important promoting diversity and multicultural agendas were as a role for school counselors. African-American school counselors perceive promoting diversity and multicultural agendas as being significantly more important than Whites. Moreover, African-American school counselors performed this role more often than White school counselors. African-American school counselors reported that professional development in promoting diversity and multicultural agendas would enhance their performance as a school counselor. Conversely, White school counselors indicated that professional development in promoting diversity and multicultural agendas would not enhance their performance.

Teachers' Attitudes

The referral process has become a potential source of unfairness in gifted education (Elhoweris et al., 2005). The principle barrier to the recruitment and retention of African-American students in gifted education is the pervasive deficit orientation that exists in society and its educational institutions (Ford et al., 2002). The deficit perspective exists whereby students who are culturally different from their White counterparts are viewed as culturally deprived or disadvantaged. This perspective keeps educators from recognizing the gifts and talents of African-American students (Ford et al., 2002). A study by Burstein and Cabello (1989) found that teachers believed that poor academic achievement

and performance among minority students was a result of cultural deficit. Similarly, McBee (2006) found that inequalities in the nomination procedure may be one of the primary reasons for under-representation of minorities in gifted education. The study concluded that Asian and White students were much more likely to be nominated than Black or Hispanic students when analyzing demographic information, gifted nomination status, and gifted identification status for all elementary school students in the state of Georgia. A study by Elhoweris et al. (2005) on the effect of children's ethnicity on teachers' referral and recommendation decisions for gifted education programs found that students' ethnicity did make a negative difference in the teacher's referral decisions.

Teachers often bring to the decision making process their own assumptions of what is giftedness. The attitudes and unjustified beliefs that some teachers hold may limit access and opportunities for students to participate in gifted programs. This is affected by the ideology behind what educational professionals determine to be "gifted" or "intelligent." Because of the idea some educators may have about intelligence being natural and static, it is less likely that racially and culturally diverse students will be referred (Ford & Grantham, 2003), specifically if the belief is that racially and culturally diverse students are not as intelligent as White students. Elhoweris et al. (2005) found that when teachers were given equivalent descriptions of a child with gifted characteristics whose ethnicity was labeled as African-American and a child whose ethnicity was not labeled, teachers were more likely to refer the nonlabeled child to gifted education.

Ford's (1999) review of the literature indicated that teachers often attribute behaviors such as cooperation, answering correctly, neatness, and punctuality as criterion for making referrals. What happens when gifted racially and culturally diverse students do not demonstrate these behaviors? Deficit thinking among teachers, administrators, and school counselors may increase the misunderstanding of characteristics in those that are culturally different (Ford et al., 2005). Ford et al. (2003) also noted that characteristics such as verve and movement, which is common in African American students, may be misinterpreted as hyperactivity. Students who are culturally different may be perceived to be dysfunctional and their values and practices may be viewed as "abnormal" or "incorrect"

(Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005). These negative perceptions of racially and culturally diverse students held by teachers can result in a shortage of referrals for minority students to be evaluated for gifted education. Consequently, this action denies racially and culturally diverse students access to challenging programs.

Students' Attitudes

Ford et al. (2003), articulated that many of the concerns of gifted students include pressure from their peers resulting in poor peer relationship, the goal of working toward perfectionism due to expectations from significant others, and confusion about their gifts. However, these concerns are intensified for gifted Black students, especially where anti-achievement is an attempt to maintain cultural identity and avoid social isolation (Ford & Harris, 1995). A student's connection with school and the ability to identify with academics is very important in determining whether he or she will remain in school and graduate.

According to Ford et al. (2003), Black students who lack positive or healthy racial identity are likely to succumb to negative peer pressure; of being accused of "acting white." Gifted minority children find that they must choose between academic success and social acceptance. They are frequently alienated and isolated from both Black and White students (Ford et al., 2003). Being singled out makes Black students feel alienated and limits their interest in gifted programs (Grantham, 2004). Gifted African-Americans often go to the extreme of sabotaging their academic careers by refusing to be placed in gifted programs because their friends would not be present in the classes (Ford, 1996).

Ogbu's (1992) cultural inversion is the tendency for involuntary minorities to regard certain behaviors as inappropriate for them because they are characteristics of White Americans. Ogbu defines involuntary minorities as people who were originally brought into the United States or any other society against their will...through slavery, conquest, colonization, or forced labor.

The behaviors involuntary minorities value are usually the opposite of that of whites, and therefore, more appropriate for them. This has a great deal to do with explaining how involuntary minorities, such as Native

Americans and African Americans, approach schooling. This leaves many otherwise high achieving Black students to experience achievement dissonance or a conflict with what is expected of them and of what they are actually capable. An earlier study by Kunjufu (1985) concluded that some Black youths concealed their academic achievements for the fear they would be labeled as "acting white." Students were often forced to choose between being popular among peers or achieving academically. A later study by Steinberg (1996) also argued that Black youth's presumption that academic success is incompatible with Black identity is the cause for the achievement disparities between Black and White students. Peterson-Lewis and Bratton (2004) found that some high achieving Blacks were complimented by apparently well-meaning White authority figures external to their schools for their high academic performance by telling them that they did "not really seem Black".

Steele's (1997) stereotype threat is also important to consider. Stereotype threat exists when one faces a situation in which one's performance could confirm the negative stereotype about one's group, and this threat may further impair performance in the domain of interest. For example, if a student is constantly told by peers or teachers that Black students do not perform as well as White students, the student may engage in off-task cognitions and then begin to conform to the stereotype; performing poorly because he or she is expected to do so. Steele and Arson's (1995) study supported the stereotype threat hypothesis. In this study students were placed in both diagnostic and nondiagnostic testing situations. The study concluded that Black students had lower test scores than whites when all students were asked to identify their race before taking the test, but the students showed similar performance when racial identity was not requested.

MULTICULTURAL PREPARATION

Students' cultural background, extra-curricular activities, native language, personality and maturity must all be considered when making referrals for gifted education. This can be accomplished by providing multicultural preparation for educators. Multicultural education preparation among all school personnel, including teachers, counselors, psychologists, administrators and support staff may aid in helping to in-

crease the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education (Ford et al, 2002). The input from the students' parents, teachers, the school counselors, and other professionals should be considered when screening and testing for gifted education. Professional school counselors and teachers must be cognizant of any biases, deficit thinking or closed mindedness they harbor pertaining to minorities. In addition, professional school counselors and teachers must closely examine their beliefs about those students they serve that are culturally different and from diverse backgrounds. It is imperative to be aware of ethnocentrism and to be careful not to judge others based on the predominant race. Professional school counselors and teachers cannot assume that the family life and background of racially and culturally diverse students is the same as their own. It is important to understand the values of the cultural diversity that exists and learn to not only tolerate differences but to embrace and celebrate these differences. The authors have adopted Ford's model of the Multicultural Educator and have applied it to the professional school counselor. Ford's model contends that the multicultural school counselor will possess the following knowledge, skills, and dispositions:

- Adopting a social justice ideology entails:
- Developing democratic attitudes and values
- Gaining knowledge of the stages of cultural identity
- Immersing oneself in diverse settings
- Recognizing that we are all prejudiced, but seeks to change
- Adopting a multicultural framework
- Possessing the ability to view society and issues from multiethnic viewpoints
- Appreciating and respecting diversity
- Multiple Theories of Intelligence Considered

Many theories of intelligences and giftedness exist, but only a few take a holistic approach in order to include racially and culturally diverse students. School counselors can advocate for using a holistic approach for these students. Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) defined intelligence as having the ability to solve problems or to fashion products valued in one or more cultural settings. Gardner differen-

tiated among seven different types of intelligences—linguistics, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and bodily kinesthetic, spatial, and musical. The MI concept is a more viable cognitive functioning and educational theory because it takes into account the nature of real-world intelligent behavior (Matthews, 1988). The MI theory also provides an educational and developmental context for the 'talent' identification and programming portion of giftedness/intellectual exceptionality, by incorporating musical, bodily, kinesthetic and spatial intelligences as part of the artistically-creative domain; these are areas where Blacks perform particularly well. In addition, in the theoretical underpinnings of MI, cross-cultural relevance is an important factorial-inclusion criterion. MI theory therefore leads to a broader identification and educational programming policies that can capture gifted children from culturally-diverse backgrounds.

Sternberg's (1999) Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence is also relevant in assessing intelligence with multicultural groups for the purpose of selection and placement into gifted programs. Sternberg notes that the concept of intelligence is variable: there are different meanings across different cultures. He concludes that, intelligence is to some extent, culturally defined. He also observed that various conceptions of intelligence have sound effects on a child's performance in school where a match between the intelligence conceptions of both parties resulted in better performance by the child. This has very important implications when assessing abilities in diverse cultures and thus, one cannot assume that conventional tests of intelligence measure equally valued skills.

Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence (EI) also takes into account a more holistic approach in determining what can be qualified as intelligent behavior, in a social context. According to Goleman, EI is how we balance and manage our emotions. EI is also a predictor of how we will act and succeed in life. Emotional Intelligence enables us to have the ability to manage our relationships and interpret other's feelings. According to Pfeiffer (2001), with regards to giftedness, many of the defining criteria for EI (e.g. decoding social information, social perceptiveness, using feeling to motivate, plan and achieve) are abilities that constitute outstanding youth leadership potential.

Leadership is currently included in ten state defini-

tions of gifted and talented (Davidson, 2006). Additionally, given that the gifted field is interested in figuring out how to promote excellence among talented youth, empirically supported psycho-educational strategies that promote EI may support talent development. The EI construct may also be a framework to assist gifted students who are troubled with social, emotional or interpersonal behaviors. It may be possible to increase positive learning by altering curriculum and academic demands to match the gifted student's social competence/ emotional maturity.

The work by Sternberg (1999), Goleman (1995), Gardner (1983), provide an initial framework for developing a selection battery that may be leveraged to increase the number of racial and ethnic minorities in gifted education. This is especially true to the extent that operational measures of these assessment tools assess facets of intellect that may be viewed as non-traditional. Because of the traditional ways in which assessment tools have placed minorities at a disadvantage, research dealing with the creation of relevant norms, evaluation of the psychometric properties, and the subsequent validation of the battery are all relevant aspects to consider before a serious effort to integrate these tools into a giftedness selection program is undertaken.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS

The potential role of professional school counselors in increasing racially and culturally diverse enrollment in gifted education should not be underestimated. Professional school counselors can play a key role in the referral/identification process, changing gifted education programs to make them more culturally responsive, and in providing support to culturally diverse students in gifted education in order to increase recruitment and retention. Professional school counselors can advocate for systematic gifted screening for all students. According to Davis (2005), "one way that school counselors can be prepared to work with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds is to develop multicultural competence – to understand and develop attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills that are needed to work with culturally diverse populations" (p. 130).

Professional school counselors can be instrumental in

educating parents, teachers, administrators, and students about special educational opportunities that exist within their school system. This will require school counselors to improve communication with culturally diverse families so they are aware of gifted education programs and are involved in the screening and placement process (Mitcham-Smith & Bryant, 2006). Professional school counselors can also advocate for increased teacher training in the identification of gifted characteristics, particularly in African American populations.

Counselors should also find ways to promote non-biased procedures and testing for culturally diverse students. They can advocate on the school and the district level to promote changes in policies that guide referral processes. According to Shore (2001), strategies for success must be incorporated in order to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, specifically ESL students. These strategies include assessing needs, empathizing, family involvement, and fostering a sense of belonging. In addition, professional school counselors can explore ways to increase nominations and referrals, possibly by identifying and including this concern in the annual school improvement plan. A comprehensive guidance and counseling program should include recruitment and retention plans for the gifted education program. Moreover, the process of the recruiting and retention efforts must be monitored in order to be effective and to recommend adjustments of objectives from year to year.

Furthermore, in order for professional school counselors to be responsive to the challenges they face in schools today, they must continue to seek out professional development opportunities focusing on working with students from diverse backgrounds (Davis, 2005). Professional school counselors must infuse multiculturalism into their comprehensive school guidance plan and counseling by means of awareness through classroom guidance, multicultural school-wide activities that promote cultural awareness, and family outreach programs to include culturally diverse parents in school activities.

In adopting Sue's (1991) model of the culturally skilled counselor the authors have applied it to the role of the professional school counselor. A culturally-skilled professional school counselor will be one who is actively involved in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behavior, values,

biases, and preconceived notions. A culturally-skilled professional school counselor would also be one that actively attempts to understand the worldviews of his or her culturally and ethnically diverse students. Finally, a culturally skilled professional school counselor will be one who is developing and practicing the appropriate, relevant, and sensitive intervention strategies and skills when working with his or her culturally and ethnically diverse students. Finally, the adoption of Sue's model would require professional school counselors to participate in an ongoing process in the recognition of the complexity and diversity of each student.

Implications for Counselor Education Programs

Counselor education programs and teacher education programs must offer extensive training in multicultural education and curriculum design. Gifted education teachers and professional school counselors need training on how to integrate multiculturalism in the gifted program. The paucity of research suggests that multiculturalism is not currently integrated in gifted educational programs. Increased multicultural training can result in a larger number of minorities being referred for gifted education screening.

Therefore, in order to prepare future counselors to be able to effectively advocate for all students, it is vital that the structure, requirements, and goals of many graduate training programs are modified in order to assist students in developing competencies to intervene at an extensive level (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). These multicultural initiatives can include the opportunity for students to translate their academic knowledge into real-world contexts by developing and implementing innovative models and programs within large community sites (Constantine et al. 2007). For school counseling students, this can mean that they get the opportunity to intern or complete practicum at schools located in urban communities where there will be interaction with students from many different backgrounds that may be different. School counselor education programs may also wish to encourage students to consider participating in events that reflect the values, beliefs, and practices of these students' cultural groups, such as attending religious services or other community events.

It is evident from most studies that the inclusion of a multicultural course in the counselor's training pro-

gram resulted in higher levels or self-reported multicultural competence. Having said this, it is critical that counselor education programs include multicultural counseling coursework infused throughout the curriculum. Holcomb-McCoy (2005) also states that it would be beneficial if counselor education programs even included additional multicultural counseling courses. It is also vital that programs evaluate the content of their multicultural counseling courses to ensure that students are receiving training in all domains of multicultural competence (Holcomb-McCoy). It is vital that counselor education programs begin to require more than one course in multicultural counseling or even require students to take courses in subjects such as diversity of education or a course on African-American studies or other coursework in order to help students to receive a thorough understanding of the needs of students of color.

CONCLUSION

The increase in the culturally diverse population in the United States is not paralleled in gifted education. Increasing professional school counselor training as well as teacher training in multicultural education will help these professionals more readily recognize the gifted characteristics exemplified by culturally diverse students and increase their referrals. School counselors can and should become advocates in helping to identify and retain racially and culturally diverse students in gifted education. This will continue to be a great concern as the population becomes more diverse. As the representation of culturally diverse students in gifted education is slowly increasing, so must the representation of racially and culturally diverse professional school counselors and teachers in gifted education.

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