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Talent Development and Creativity

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Expanding Gifted Education, Opportunities for Disenfranchised Populations, and Dissemination of Information through a Worldwide Network for Talent Development

Taisir Subhi Yamin; Ken W. McCluskey

We have been gratified by the response to the first volume of the *International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity* (IJTDC), which was published in July of 2013. In one sense, though, it has been even more rewarding to produce the second issue than the first, since this volume will clearly solidify our readership, broaden an emerging subscription base, and give us a truly stable foundation on which to build. We wish to thank all our contributors, Associate Editors, members of the International Review Board, and reviewers from the University of Winnipeg for their work and support. And, of course, we are especially indebted to our Editor-in-Chief, Karen Magro, for her dedication, scholarship, and tireless efforts on behalf of IJTDC.

The partnership between the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) and *Lost Prizes* International (LPI) continues to thrive. As we promised in the first volume of IJTDC, "ICIE and LPI will continue to work in unison to forge partnerships with other individuals and groups through professional conferences that connect educators and create a spirit of global citizenship." In pursuit of this goal, we have been active hosting conferences in 2013 and preparing for upcoming ones in 2014. Specifically, we co-sponsored the 1st annual *Lost Prizes*/ICIE Seminars held July 10-13, 2013 at the University of Winnipeg, which featured strong breakout sessions by UW faculty and program associates, and keynote presentations on Ethics and Equity by Don Ambrose (Rider University, New Jersey), on Bullying by John Hoover (St. Cloud State University, Minnesota), on Creativity by Todd Lubart (Université Paris Descartes), and on Reclaiming At-Risk Youth by Steve Van Bockern (Augustana College and Reclaiming Youth International, South Dakota). The Seminars attracted almost 200 participants, and the conference-connected Post-Baccalaureate in Education courses ran at full capacity (i.e., just under 400 registrants).

This coming summer of 2014, ICIE will host its 11th annual international conference from July 7-10 in Paris. Included among the keynote addresses at this Innovation in Education-themed event will be sessions by Chris Rogers (Tufts University, USA), Ken McCluskey (The University of Winnipeg, Canada), Todd Lubart (Université Paris Descartes, France), Patrick Blessinger (Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association, USA), Christopher Chapman (University of Glasgow, UK), Jacques Grégoire (Catholic University

of Louvain, Belgium), LIM Cher Ping (The Hong Kong Institute of Education, China), and Barbara A. Kerr (University of Kansas, USA). After Paris, it will be back to the University of Winnipeg for the 2nd annual *Lost Prizes*/ICIE Seminars from July 16-19, with Fred Hines (amiskwaciy Academy, Edmonton, Alberta), Dorothy Sisk (Lamar University, Texas), and Don Treffinger (Center for Creative Learning, Florida) now confirmed in keynote roles.

Again, as we said in the previous volume of this journal, our hope "is to move beyond the talking stage by disseminating information via books and other publications, by providing tangible materials and training sessions for practitioners, and by sponsoring in-the-trenches international programs that truly make a difference in the lives of students, parents, and educators." We believe our mission is now well underway.

To illustrate, besides IJTDC, ICIE has also published three recent books by University of Winnipeg authors: *A Zen Companion In a Just and Effective Classroom* (Mike Bergsgaard), *Thoughts about Tone, Educational Leadership, and Building Creative Climates in Our Schools* (Ken McCluskey), and *Community Connections: Reaching Out From the Ivory Tower* (Laura Sokal & Ken McCluskey). And there are several more titles about to go to press: *A Transformative Quest: Memories of a Global Citizenship Practicum* (Lloyd Kornelsen), *Assessing the Effectiveness of an ACCES Partnership at the University of Winnipeg* (Annabelle Mays), *ADHD: Disorder or Gift?* (Ken & Andrea McCluskey), *Lost Prizes Two Decades Later: Identifying and Developing the Talents of At-Risk Populations* (Ken McCluskey, Don Treffinger, Phil Baker, & Alan Wiebe), *Innovation in Education* (Taisir Subhi Yamin, Ken McCluskey, & Todd Lubart), and *Mentoring for Talent Development in a Canadian Context* (Alan Wiebe, Ken McCluskey, Kevin Lamoureux, & Phil Baker).

Perhaps even more importantly, we continue to be heavily involved with hands-on projects for talented, marginalized students of various ages. Most notably, our *Lost Prizes* Winnipeg initiative, which will provide support to 13 off-campus programs serving some 350 at-risk youth in the Winnipeg School Division, will formally get underway February 3, 2014. With concrete support from UW mentors and student teachers, this undertaking will emphasize Creative Problem Solving, mentoring, and other strength-based approaches. As well, we continue to develop *Lost Prizes* and other training programs/courses for Lifeline Haiti, the African University of Creativity and Innovation in Kenya, Lertlah Schools in Thailand, and Maple Bear International Schools in Brazil.

So, it is clearly a busy and productive time for ICIE and LPI. Once more, we sincerely thank everyone involved with IJTDC: it has been an honour to work with all of you. We are especially grateful to Dorothy Sisk for writing the tribute to Edna McMillan for our *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants* section. In her various roles with the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Edna had a significant influence on ICIE. And she was a strong advocate for the University of Winnipeg and its bid to house the WCGTC Headquarters, and a valuable resource during the 2006-10 run while the organization was in fact based on our campus. Furthermore, Edna was a powerful voice during our UW planning sessions (held in 2005-06) directed towards reactivating and energizing *Lost Prizes*. In short, in her collegial and empathic way, she had a tremendous impact on our work. We miss her dearly.

In any case, it is now time to begin the arduous task of making the *International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity* part of our ongoing service delivery. To this

end, we are now moving from special invitation to calling for articles in the traditional manner. (When there is a need to focus on specific topics, we will invite papers and produce special issues.) As the journey continues, it is our hope that IJTDC will contribute in a meaningful way in terms of enhancing information exchange and networking, fostering creativity and innovation in education, and expanding gifted education across the globe.

Crystallizing Innovation and Imagination in Learning Contexts: Pathways to Transformative Change

Karen Magro

The University of Winnipeg, Canada

Welcome to our 2nd issue of *The International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity.* This issue includes research articles, position papers, and theoretical discussions that reflect different facets of creativity and talent in varied international learning contexts. Innovation and creativity can be applied to learning in both formal and in non-formal contexts; increasingly, leadership in business, the arts, and the sciences reflect a fusion of disciplines that require divergent ways of thinking that will lead to finding solutions to the problems of our time: planetary sustainability, inequity in education and employment, gender equality, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. As educators, we also need to address the systemic and institutional barriers that hinder personal and social transformation. Talmadge Guy (2011) argues that an absence of critical media literacy prevents individuals from thinking independently and creatively. He asserts that "the power of the media to influence the thought and actions of people is at a level unprecedented in human history …. the concentrated power of the media has the consequence of steering consumers (learners) away from critical, socially conscious forms of learning and social action" (p.363). Indeed, the presence and influence of the media is becoming, notes Guy (2011), a kind of "fifth estate" that represents a primary source of information and learning for many individuals. Erroneous assumptions about gender, social class, political systems, access to resources, culture, ethnicity, and power are packaged as news, entertainment, and advertising that reproduces and "crystallizes existing power relations in society" (p.373). Guy presents a compelling argument supporting the need to integrate critical media literacy in both formal and in-formal learning settings.

Creating pathways that will enable more individuals to think more reflectively and to fully engage in positive ways with their communities should be an educational priority. Along these lines, Howard Gardner (2007) writes that "the ability to knit together information from disparate sources into a coherent whole is vital today. The amount of accumulated knowledge is reportedly doubling every two or three years. Sources of information are vast and disparate, and individuals crave coherence and integration" (p.46). Integrative thinking that challenges individuals to examine problem solving from multiple lenses is not an "innate capacity" but rather it is a skill that can be taught (Avishai, 2013). A successful educational program that teaches leadership skills to secondary students at the John Polyani Collegiate in Toronto, Canada exemplifies this point. In partnering with the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto, the "I-think" initiative helped students at the collegiate to reduce problems of discrimination at their school. Similarly, successful initiatives at the Derek Taylor School (K-9) in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada had a strong, systematic strategic focus on integrating emotional intelligence into the curriculum. Drawing from the ideas of Daniel Goleman (1995), the teachers at this school were given professional development opportunities to gain the skills and explore key learning strategies would be needed to apply emotional intelligence qualities such as self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and self-regulation into the content areas (Murgatroyd, 2013, p. 28). Innovation is evident in other subject areas as well. Several schools in Canada are adapting the program *Musical Futures*. Based on a United Kingdom initiative from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, this innovative approach is transforming the way musical education is being provided for students. Stephen Murgatroyd (2013) found that schools with successful and

lasting initiatives had certain characteristics that included: (1) a school system that values, welcomes, finances, and supports innovation and change; (2) the shared values of the administration and faculty; and (3) professional development opportunities and the extent to which the faculty and staff has had to adopt new work practices, new strategies, and new ways of thinking. Organization-wide impact, outcome, and sustainability are also important. To what extent can the innovative project be applied and transferred to other organizations? How can partnerships between schools, universities, and community groups be strengthened?

While there may not be a shortage of creative and visionary people in education, a lack of system-wide support and financial resources may erode the *implementation* of significant and lasting change. Barriers that may inhibit visionary change include fear, the availability of financial resources, support, and the collaborative will to sustain the changes proposed. Ron Canuel (2013) writes that "we need a work environment that openly values creativity, risk-taking, and courage" (p. 25). As a consequence, "innovation remains more of an elusive objective in education rather than an emerging reality" (p. 25). Too often, schools are only surviving rather than thriving. For instance, while technology has the potential to be a key catalyst in learning, the access to innovative technological sources is unequally distributed in schools. Canuel (2013) posits that the "economies of scale" surpass transformative innovation that would make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals in terms of literacy access, gainful employment, healthy lifestyles, and contributing to the good of the community. The investment in quality education cannot be underestimated: "If we injected actuarial costs to the educational system and held it financially accountable for graduates over a 20-30 year period of time, we would quickly realize that investing heavily now greatly reduces societal costs in the future" (p.25).

In this issue, our contributors address a number of the timely themes and topics identified above. In "Creative Leadership", Dorothy A. Sisk develops an important discussion connecting creativity and leadership. The *Social Change Model of Leadership Development* (SCM) involves the basic principles of situational leadership and eight core values that enhance the level of self-awareness of individuals and their ability to work effectively with others. A focus is placed on exemplifying four creative leaders who question the status quo and view the world in a different way that could help develop and nurture creativity in themselves and others. *A Five Stage*

Creative Problem Solving Model (CPS) outlines the way divergent and convergent thinking can be expanded to include a "visionizing process". In "Who Decides What Giftedness Is?", Roland Persson challenges readers to examine the way studies of giftedness and constructs of giftedness too often occur in a vacuum that may undermine the complex interplay of politics, dogma, economics, and social values. The history, sociology, and psychology of science are domains of study that researchers rarely address. His article examines the motives and ethics behind many studies of giftedness. Why are we pursuing, for example, an understanding of giftedness and talent? How might giftedness and talent be applied to the global economy? What are the ethical implications of the specialization of giftedness in domain specific areas such as technology, medicine, or economics? Who decides what is important to study and why are certain domains of knowledge valued more than others? How can giftedness and creativity be applied toward the common good? Persson raises critical questions that provide a basis for future research. In "Creative Potential and its Measurement", Todd Lubart, Franck Zenasni, and Baptiste Barbot explore the concept of creative potential and its link to talent. The authors examine conceptual differences between constructs of giftedness (outstanding ability or aptitude) and talent (outstanding mastery of systematically developed abilities or competencies). The creative potential to complete particular tasks, for example, is influenced by multivariate factors such as specific dimensions of intelligence, knowledge, cognitive styles, personality, motivation, affect, and physical and socio-cultural contexts. Innovative theoretical models to assess these multivariate constructs are presented.

Innovation and transformation in education involve significant learning in both personal and social domains. In "The Art of Environmental Adult Education", Darlene Clover describes an innovative environmental

adult education art project that challenged the building of a natural gas-burning plant at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. As the island developed and energy needs increased, many public-owned utilities started to plan to expand their power generation on the island. Clover describes how one woman organized a group of women to create quilts that showed images or words that expressed their feelings and reactions to the proposed power plant. This "visual protest" provided a vehicle for many people to participate in a form of political struggle and resistance. In "Predicting the Birds: One Student's Poetics of Difference", Cynthia M. Morawski and Andrew Williams research conceptions of "special" in education by integrating poetry into a content area classroom. Their articles exemplifies the way poetry can expand learners' opportunities to build relevant subject knowledge while establishing personal connections on the way to knowing the world. The "special" in education is framed through multiple lenses that include the co-author's past and current experiences. Theoretical and practical insights into poetry and literature are used to support the researchers' perspectives. The value of narrative inquiry and storytelling as a way to encourage self-awareness, creativity, and transformative learning are explored.

Several of our theoretical and research articles address issues related to at-risk students and the importance of engaging our learners in meaningful ways that will foster self-direction and problem solving. In "Opportunities and Challenges of Talent Development for Students Placed At-Risk", Donald Treffinger describes the practical model of four levels for talent development called *The LoS Model of Talent Recognition and Development.* This model is based on the vision that schools are places in which educators could work collaboratively with parents and the wider community to recognize, nurture, and celebrate the skills and talents of all individuals. Treffinger identifies several ways in which the model can be applied to at-risk students.The approach emphasizes inclusiveness, flexibility, and responsiveness. The LoS model further exemplifies the importance of educators providing practical tools and resources in their proactive stance to locate and nurture the strengths and talents of all children and youth. Timothy D. Baker and John H. Hoover examine

the correlation of suicide ideation as a function of being bullied among youth. The authors draw from a 2010 detailed study of Minnesota youth who contemplated suicide. Baker and Hoover found that in addition to the bullying factor, alcohol, and other drug use, mental health, gender, and family violence were among the "predictive factors" that could predispose youth to suicide ideation. A factor analysis was also completed to reveal that strong protective factors that encouraged mental health included an individual's positive connection with family, community, and school. Important implications for fostering mental health are presented.

In "Acceleration for Talent Development", Australian researchers Selena Gallagher and Susen Smith examine the attitudes of parents and talents toward academic (grade-based) and subject-based acceleration. The authors assert that there is little empirical research that directly examines the views of parents about acceleration practices as most of the studies focus more on parental advocacy rather than on "special provisions". The merits and concerns of acceleration are discussed with reference to qualitative data from the interviews with parents and teachers; perceptions and insights into the potential impact that acceleration can have on the social, cognitive, physical, and psychological development of children are presented.

Socialization and the child's self-concept and social well-being depends, in part, on interacting with peers of the same age group. How might grade-based acceleration impact psychosocial development? Key issues related to "part-time" acceleration (e.g., single subject acceleration) are discussed in this article. Despite both teachers and parents agreeing that single subject acceleration could be an effective compromise, the implementation of this would require a collaborative effort of the entire school.

Diana Boyanova, a researcher on giftedness and talent in Chile, examined the basic premise that the early identification of talented students is critical. Some researchers suggest that the use of non-verbal tests, dynamic assessment, portfolios, standardized tests, and early investment definitely improved the identification of economically-disadvantaged talented children. The PENTA UC Escolar program is designed for talented children

(Grades 1-4), who had not given opportunities to experience talent education in the regular classroom.

Drawing on Robert Sternberg's *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence*, three instruments were applied to measure the creative, practical, and analytical intelligence of students. The results suggests that there are at least two directions for further research and that the knowledge from these further studies would help teachers develop more effective teaching and learning strategies that would help build academic talent among children.

George J. Sefa Dei introduces the idea of Africentric Schools to the Toronto School Board as a counter alternative to traditional education in his timely article "Africentric Schooling: What Next?". J.Sefa Dei challenges readers to critically reflect on current educational discourses that purport to value cultural inclusion and inclusive education. Educational institutions should engage and not alienate students, particularly students that have been traditionally marginalized. Yet, many schools fail to help their most vulnerable learners learn essential skills and advance toward higher education. To what extent do factors such as the teaching faculty, the curricula, the learning strategies, the mission of the institution, and the approach to assessment represent and reflect the cultural diversity evident in our schools? Do faculty members truly represent the diverse cultural mosaic of countries like Canada in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, age, and experience? How can educators encourage a climate of true inclusivity in education? The concept of Africentric Schools highlight the importance of recognizing the myriad identities of students in the learning process. An Africentric approach to curriculum design and education would emphasize a groundedness in the community, integrating wisdom from the Elders, recognizing and understanding colonial and post-colonial histories, social identities, spirituality in learning, and the intersection of race, ethnicity, and politics in education. Important implications for creating transformative educational systems that integrate cultural diversity and racial identities in meaningful ways are outlined by J. Sefa Dei.

Tebbs captures the unique qualities that made Nelson Mandela a transformative leader and an inspiration to so many. Tebbs reflects on the qualities of empathy, hope, compassion, and perseverance as essential to nurturing the creative spirit. He reflects on the importance that Mandela made in his own life. In his profile, Tebbs analyzes the barriers that prevent individuals from fully self-actualizing. In exploring Mandela's life and legacy from a humanistic and creative paradigm, life lessons on the importance of creating psychological, social, and cultural contexts that help individuals become more fully functioning begin to emerge.

Trevor J. Tebbs reminds readers that Nelson Mandela was gifted in many ways. Mandela became the leader of a divided nation and will go down in history as one of the most widely admired leaders for any age. With compassion, forgiveness, and empathy, he crossed cultures and borders (social, cultural, psychological, and geographic) to urge for "truth and reconciliation" in order to move forward, transform inequities, and build a more productive and peaceful world. Tebbs rightly points out that Mandela's life holds the promise for a better future for all. Along similar lines, Laurent Daloz (2000) writes that "time and again over his subsequent lifetime, intensified by his twenty-seven years of imprisonment, Mandela describes engagements with others…increasingly with those who stand apparently opposed to him." (p. 109). Mandela was able to see that each individual has a "core of decency" (Daloz, p. 109). Mandela's formative years in a small village gave him the foundation to build self-confidence and self-determination. Journeys of social transformation begin with individual self-awareness and personal transformation.

Our Exemplary Schools section profiles the innovative work done at Elmwood High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Mike Babb, Joanne Sabourin, Grant Andruchuk, and Elouessa Polyzoi focus their research on identifying talent among disenfranchised youth.

Dorothy Sisk's tribute to Dr. Edna McMillan reflects the passion and talent of a lifelong scholar committed to making a transformative difference in the field of gifted education.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the contributors of this 2nd issue of the *IJTDC* for their commitment and valuable research. The varied and compelling selections in this issue can provide a catalyst for future studies on creativity and talent development.

I welcome your letters, research contributions, theoretical and position papers, book reviews, and feedback. If there are future themes and topics that you feel be of interest to our readers, please let me know. I wish you a successful and happy 2014.

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Creative Leadership

Dorothy A. Sisk

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Definition

We live in a world of massive institutional failure, a world that presents leaders with phenomenal challenges that call for creative leadership. Min Basadur (2004), a pioneer and researcher of the Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) in Buffalo, New York, said one essential ingredient of high performing individuals, teams, and organizations is creativity. Yet, defining creativity can be difficult because it depends on the context and the form of creativity. Scott Isaksen (2012), another early leader in CPSI, said if there were no universal definitions of either creativity or leadership, and if creativity is considered as the making and communicating of meaningful new connections, and leadership as an influence process, then creative leadership is the kind of influence process that results in meaningful new connections. More specifically, Isaksen defined creative leadership as an inclusive influence process in which the leader functions as a catalyst for navigating change. Creativity has also been defined as a state of mind in which all of our intelligences are working together, involving seeing, thinking, and innovating, in which creative people question the assumptions they are given, and they see the world differently (Lucas, 2001).

Historically, the study of leadership involved a search for traits and characteristics of leaders which could be described as a single dimension approach. The trait theory was explored at length by Thomas Carlyle and Francis Galton. In *Heroes and Hero Worship,* Carlyle (1841) listed the talents, skills, and physical characteristics of men who had risen to power. Galton (1869) in *Hereditary Genius* concluded that leadership was inherited and leaders were born, not developed. Both of these major works set the stage for viewing leadership as being traits or characteristics of a leader, and this view dominated the thinking about leadership for decades. This was followed by examining leadership as a blend of concern for people and tasks which was a two-dimensional approach. McGregor (1960) identified two management tasks. Theory X, in which power is viewed as stemming from position, and subordinates are considered lazy and unreliable. Theory Y viewed leadership as being given to the group and subordinates are considered self-directed and creative, if they were motivated. Tannenbaum, Weschler, and Massarik (1961) described leadership on a continuum of leadership behaviour with Boss-Centered Leadership on one end and Subordinate-Centered Leadership on the other. The work of McGregor, Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik was a forerunner of the current approach to the study of leadership involving multi-dimensions in situational leadership with a transformative component.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, l996) described leadership as a relational, transformative, process-oriented, learned, and change-directed phenomenon (Wagner, 2006). The Social Change Model (SCM) is based on principles of situational leadership being a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process resulting in positive social change. In the SCM, social responsibility and change for the common good are achieved through the development of eight core values targeted toward enhancing the level of self-awareness of individuals and their ability to work with others. The individual core values include: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment. The group core values include: Collaboration, Common Purpose, and Controversy with Civility. The core value for society and the community is Citizenship. The interaction between and across the seven core values facilitates social change for the common good which is the eighth value. The SCM model is depicted in Figure l.
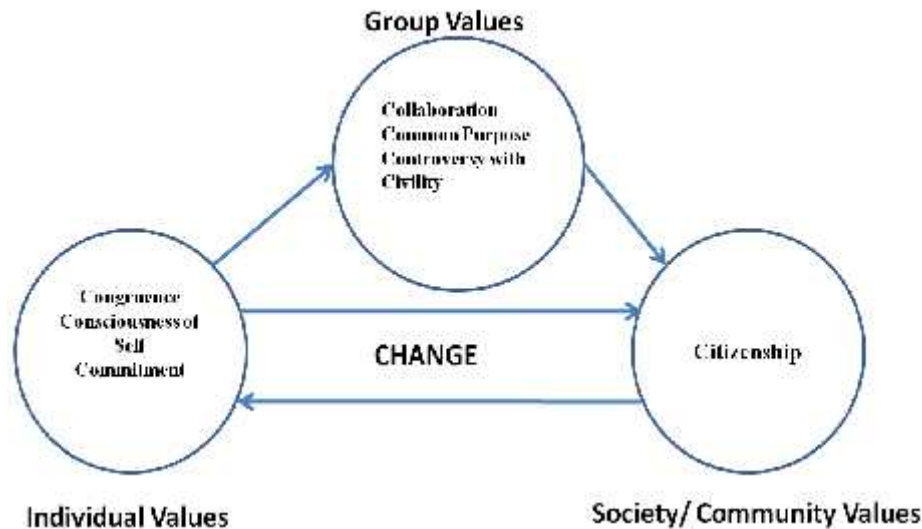
Figure 1: Social Change Model (SCM).

Developing the seven Cs of the Social Change Model (SCM)

Individual values

Consciousness of self can be developed and nurtured by providing opportunities for individuals to use and to develop intrapersonal skills. Activities and discussions with opportunities to examine beliefs, values, attitudes, emotions, and the impact of motivation on action are helpful in developing consciousness of self. The emotional state acts as a "perceptual lens" in interactions with others and with information affecting us both cognitively and affectively.

Congruence can be developed and reinforced by reflecting in journals and engaging in discussions concerning socio-cultural issues. It is helpful to "step outside" one's self and reflect on the values and beliefs consciously held in one's values and beliefs repertoire, then check for congruency between actions and beliefs. An examination of leaders who were able to behave with consistency in the face of stress includes behaviours such as genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others (Vidergor & Sisk, 2013).

Commitment involves the making of a significant investment in individual or organizational tasks and activities. When leaders have a significant investment in projects, their energy for the activities is reflected in increased intensity and perseverance.

Group values

Collaboration can be experienced working on group projects focused on generating creative solutions and actions with shared group responsibility and accountability. The power of the group process can be strengthened if the groups are dissimilar in ethnicity, gender, and skill level.

Common purpose is essential in the SCM model and a shared vision and a group purpose are necessary for creative leadership to emerge.

Controversy with civility is necessary for group members to be able to listen to all points-of-view. Leaders can be critical and dominant and responding to controversy with civility can lead toward creative outcomes that may be mired down with heated and personal attacks on individuals with different points-of-view.

Community values

Citizenship is reflected in a group when individuals recognize and value the interdependence of the members with feelings of responsibility for others in the group or community.

Change is the essential goal of leadership development in the SCM model, with engagement in activities that lead toward positive social change.

Emerging Leaders for Innovation across Sectors (ELIAS):
A Theory U-Inspired Model

Scharmer (2009) said the single-person-centric concept of leadership is outdated and real leadership takes place through collective, systemic, and distributed action. In the Emerging Leaders for Innovation Across Sectors (ELIAS) Theory U-Inspired Model, leaders innovate across sectors. As individuals work through the ELIAS program, they experience systems change in a number of stages. Scharmer calls the first stage **Downloading** and **Denial** in which there is a focus on the past. This stage is followed by **Debate** in which the problem is viewed with blame placed on others. Then, there is **Dialogue** in which multiple perspectives are viewed including each individual's part in creating the issue. This stage is followed by **Connection to Source** in which there is an uncovering of common will and a conscious shift from a "me" to a "we" focus. This stage is followed by **Envisioning** in which there is a crystallizing of the vision and intention; then **Enacting** in which there is a prototyping of the "new" by linking head, heart, and hand. Finally, there is the **Embodying** stage in which there is institutionalizing of the "New" in processes and practices. Throughout the ELIAS leadership experience, there is an emphasis on open mind, open heart, and open will.

Character traits and values of leadership

Leadership as defined by Hakala (2008) is the ability to get others to willingly follow. He identified nine characteristics of leadership qualities: integrity, dedication, magnanimity, humility, openness, fairness, assertiveness, sense of humour, and creativity. Creative leaders think outside of the box and reward the ingenuity and originality of group members.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Greensboro, in North Carolina is a global provider of executive professional development works with individuals worldwide to develop creative leadership. They conducted a study between 2006 and 2008 designed to explore the concern that creative leadership skills are lacking. They surveyed 2,200 leaders from fifteen organizations in three countries. The key findings of the CCL study identified seven leadership skills that are consistently viewed as most important now and in the future. These included: leading employees, strategic planning. inspiring commitment, managing change, being resourceful, being a quick learner, and doing whatever it takes. Leading people, strategic planning, inspiring commitment, and managing change were among the weakest competencies (Leslie, 2009). This combination of leadership skills is complicated as they do not appear to the same extent in any one leader. Yet, many of the leadership skills can be nurtured and learned, but potential leaders need to be supported to develop their creativity.

The importance of developing creative leadership

In September of 2009, the World Bank held a round table meeting to discuss leadership development. They began the meeting by acknowledging, as this article does, that we live in a world of massive institutional failure, a world that presents current and emerging generations of leaders, with unprecedented challenges. They discussed the need to co-sense problems and co-create solutions (Scharmer, 2009). They stressed that more than 50 percent of the global population at present is under the age of 25, and these young people are the stakeholders of the future in their countries.

Manifested creativity

Creativity is a state of mind in which all of our intelligences work together. Creative leaders question status quo assumptions and practices and they view the world differently. They see a problem and begin to think how it could be changed, then they fearlessly experiment, taking risks. They are comfortable with making mistakes. Creative leaders according to Lucas (2005) in *Discovering Your Hidden Talent* seize opportunities throughout their lives to broaden their knowledge, skills, and attitudes and to adapt to an increasingly changing, complex, and interdependent world. Creative leaders provide the conditions, environment, and opportunities for

others to be creative. An examination of a number of individuals who have manifested their creativity throughout their lives will illustrate the importance of thinking and acting beyond the boundaries that limit effectiveness.

Maria Helena Novaes de Mira from Brazil

The first individual creative life to be examined is that of Maria Helena Novaes de Mira. I had the pleasure of working with her in providing a course on *Psychology of the Gifted* at Pontificia Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in 1975, when Maria Helena was the director of the Institute of Applied Psychology. Throughout her life, she sought to broaden her knowledge, skills, and attitudes. She was awarded a scholarship from UNESCO to study in Switzerland at the University of Geneva and at the Institute Jean Jacques Rousseau. This was an opportunity for her to attend classes and to participate in studies conducted by world-renowned researchers in cognition, child psychology, and psychological measures, including Jean Piaget, Barbel Inhelder, and Andre` Rey. Maria also went to Paris to work with Rene` and Bianca Zazzo at the University of Paris and collaborated in studies conducted by outstanding scholars, such as Borel-Maissony and Greiout-Aalphandery (Alencar, 2013).

Maria Helena was awarded a scholarship from the British Council to participate in an internship in the field of professional rehabilitation of youth and adults. This experience enabled her to found the Brazilian Beneficent Association of Rehabilitation. She organized the psychological service of this association and was appointed coordinator. Throughout her life, Maria Helena sought professional development and was awarded a scholarship from the Ford Foundation to work with the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. During her stay in the United States, she visited several American universities and focused on learning more about test development with well-known American psychologists, Cronbach and Anastasi returning to Brazil, Maria Helena adapted several tests including Piaget's Operatory Diagnosis, the tests of perceptive segregation of Rey, and several projective techniques and tests of school adaptation to the Brazilian culture (Alencar, 2013).

Maria Helena was interested in discovering ways to stimulate memory, corporal image, perception, attention, imagination, socialization, and creativity not only in students, but in the elderly. In Prague, at the World Council for Gifted and Talented Conference, I shared a proposal with her that I was developing on to engage elderly individuals with gifted youth for a summer project to be implemented at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. These two groups would work together in activities such as improvisation to build greater understanding in the youth of the gifts in the elderly, and to stimulate creative and cognitive development for both groups. A similar project had been developed and implemented at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida as part of the Saturday Enrichment Program from l968-90. When the gifted children and youth were brought to the enrichment classes, they were often accompanied by their grandparents. These grandparents said, "Why can't we have a program like our grandkids?" This question resulted in the offering of special seminars on creativity development for the grandparents and improvisation activities were held outside in a courtyard. Open-ended terms like "*Topsy-Turvy Creativity*" were given to the two groups and "improve" began, resulting in playful performances that engaged everyone.

Maria was working with a colleague Suely Dessandre on a project called Sociocultural Recycling for the Elderly in 2011. They worked with individuals who were sixty-five years or older and adolescents. Maria was concerned that the elderly need to continue to grow and develop their cognitive and creative skills to prevent cognitive deficits, especially memory deficits common in later life. She and Dessandre worked with elderly people from low, middle, and high social economic groups and engaged them in playful "hands-on" exercises in 90 minute sessions. The program of ten weeks worked with elderly participants who had no serious neurological or psychological impairments. The program used many of the activities that Maria Helena developed in an earlier program (1996-2010) called Creative Cerebral Activation Program aimed at stimulating cerebral functioning. The program was a resounding success and Novaes and Dessandre submitted a report on their results in 2012, the Sociocultural Reciclage Program for the Elderly.

Maria Helena's creative leadership led to significant outreach to others, including the founding of the Brazilian Association for the Gifted and the Brazilian Association of School Psychology. She received many national awards including the National Order of Educative Merit from the President of Brazil in l994, and in 2000 she received this same award in recognition of her many contributions to education. She wrote more than one hundred articles, book chapters, and more than twenty books, and many of her books were translated into Spanish. The titles of her books reflect her broad interests, ranging from *Tests and Measures in Education, Psychology Applied to Rehabilitation*, *Psychology of Creativity*, *The Gifted*: A *Constant Challenge of Society*, *Education*, *Culture and Human Potential*, *The Rediscovery of the Self in Grief*, and *Commitment or Alienation in the Next Century*. Maria Helena served as the Brazilian delegate to the World Council for Gifted and Talented and she was preparing to attend the 2013 conference in New Zealand at her death. She spoke about the value of a creative life saying:

> What is significant is not what one person attains, but what the person intends; it is not what is harvested, but what is sowed; it is not the success, but the attitude and the seeding depends on us, while to succeed or not depends on multiple factors, most of them alien to our wish. (Novaes, 2008, p. 72).

Sidney J. Parnes

Transforming is one of the characteristics of a creative leader whether transforming education or business and it starts with transforming one's mind, and that inner transformation starts with opening to, indeed welcoming, the inevitable bursts of creativity. Sidney J. Parnes is one of the world's leading experts on creative problem solving, innovation, and creativity and he said, "I dream a dream, a vision great...my world will appreciate." (Parnes, 2004). Sid is a life-long researcher, author, and world class educator who has presented thousands of seminars and courses on creativity and creative problem-solving for leaders in business, education, and government on five continents. For over fifty years, Sid has worked in the "living laboratory" of the Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) sponsored by the Creative Education Foundation (CEF) in Buffalo, New York.

Sid first came to Buffalo, New York, as an Assistant Professor in the Retailing Department of the University of Buffalo, New York. At that time, one course in creativity was being taught at the University in an extension division known as Millard Filmore College. This creativity course was taught by account executives from the advertising company of Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn. Alex Osborn initiated a conference in Buffalo on Creative Thinking and Creative Problem Solving. Sid attended this conference and was so enthusiastic about the program that he said he realized his life's mission was to pioneer and nurture the vast untapped potential everyone has for enhanced creative behaviour. Sid and Alex worked together for over ten years to develop a comprehensive educational program for CPSI, and they were able to bring together pioneers of the creative thinking movement including: Calvin Taylor, J.P. Guilford, E. Paul Torrance, and Donald MacKinnon.

At the death of Alex Osborn, Sid assumed the leadership of the Creative Education Foundation (CEF). In l966, CEF sponsored the nation's first graduate course in Creative Studies at Buffalo State College, and in l967, CEF launched the *Journal of Creative Behavior*, a research publication devoted entirely to the science of creativity. Parnes published the work of the CEF's creative training programs in the *Creative Behavior Guidebook* and in the *Creative Behavior Workbook.* Reflecting on those years, Sid said, "Seeing the wonderful students I've mentored grow personally and develop even more effective programs than they were taught, remains a source of pride and deep satisfaction" (Kuby, 2012).

As Director of the annual CPSI and its regional Institutes, Sid initiated and sustained the unique and distinctive "soul and spirit" that characterized CPSI. He continued to develop and modify Alex Osborn's original seven stage CPS Model (orientation, preparation, analysis, hypothesis, incubation, synthesis, and evaluation) and after numerous adaptations the Osborn-Parnes Five Stage CPS Model

was introduced. The stages of the model are: Fact-Finding Problem-Finding, Idea-Finding, Solution-Finding, and Acceptance-Finding. It is illustrated in the following figure:
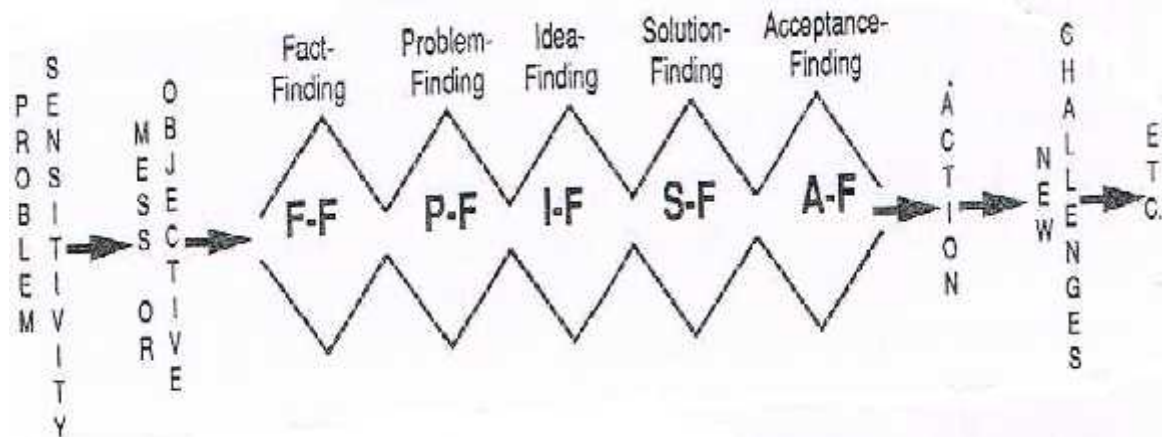
Figure 2: Alex Osborn's original seven stage CPS Model.
Note: The Publisher grants permission to reproduce this model (Creative Education Foundation)

The Osborn-Parnes Model has the advantage of depicting the alternating processes of divergent and convergent thinking introduced by J. P. Guilford. The concept of divergent and convergent thinking takes place in every stage of the model, and emphasizes the dynamic nature of creative thinking. However, the five steps are merely a guide rather than a strict formula for problem solving. A change of sequence may be introduced into the process, and Parnes advocated leaving plenty of time for incubation. The main emphasis throughout each step is to accumulate alternatives. Sid also stressed that intellectualizing the creative processes is different from effectively internalizing them (Parnes, l997).

Sid taught graduate level creativity courses at Buffalo State College and designed and implemented an undergraduate and graduate program in Creative Studies in l975. Over the years, Sid established an eclectic approach to the development of a comprehensive program for nurturing creative behaviour. Sid said:

> Inherent in this effort is the importance of developing a balance. A balance between the judgment and the imagination-- between the open awareness of the environment through all of the senses and the deep self-searching into layer upon layer of data stored in the memory cells--between the logic and the emotion--between the deliberate creative effort and the incubation between the individual working with the group and alone (Parnes, 2004, p. 340).

Creative problem solving and visionizing

In 2004, Sid designed a visionizing process to expand the front end of the CPS process by providing opportunity making, dreaming, and visionizing. He said "These dreams and visions can then be engineered into the "best reality" manageable (Parnes, 2004, p. 8). Visionizing focuses on dreams, visions, and on ways of making these come into reality. The Visionizing Model starts with "desires" rather than "objectives" or "messes" and deals explicitly with imagery. The model is a more intuitive, imagery-driven approach and is overlaid on the earlier more verbally-driven CPS model. Parnes in *Visionizing: Innovating Your Opportunities* (2004) provides an overview and state of the art of CPS. The Visionizing Model is depicted in Figure 2. Sid described CPS as the heart of visionizing and summarized the importance of imagery in CPS by saying:

Deliberately applying imagery processes within CPS steps may be more analogous to adding electrical power to an effective hand operation, while at the same time providing increased illumination for the task (Parnes, l992, p. l52). The Visionizing Model is depicted in Figure 3.
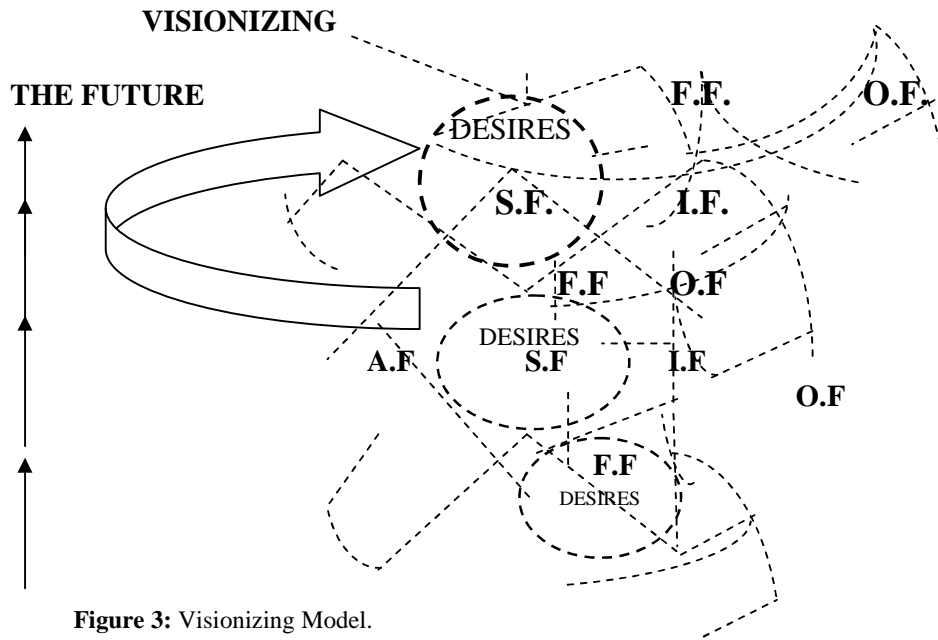
Figure 3: Visionizing Model.

Note: The Publisher grants permission to reproduce this model (Creative Education Foundation)

What makes an effective facilitator

Sid Parnes described the behaviour of an effective facilitator working with creative problem solving as:

> The person facilitating creative behaviour is aware of the creative process and first understands it in himself/herself, and then is able to help others see and strengthen it in themselves (Parnes, l997, p iii).

In addition, Sid said the facilitator needs to be enthusiastic, spontaneous, flexible, and invite ambiguity, remaining on the sidelines. The facilitator is a hard worker, self-motivated, sincere, dedicated, and confident that the creative process will carry one through; and willing to take calculated risks. With this description, Parnes aptly described himself as a creative leader.

Accolades and awards

Over the years, numerous organizations expressed appreciation to Sid Parnes for his creative leadership including the Odyssey of the Mind Organization. The State University College at Buffalo gave the President's Award for Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Fostering Creative Behavior. The Creative Education Foundation named him its first Colleague and presented him with its first Service Commitment Award for volunteer services spanning more than three decades. Sid received the E. Paul Torrance Award for his contributions to Giftedness, and the Innovation Network presented him a Lifetime Achievement Award. He was inducted into the CPSI Hall of Fame, while concurrently, the American Creativity Association, inducted him into its first Hall of Fame.

Future efforts

One of the future efforts that Parnes, at age 90, would like to explore is the integration of the CPS principles and procedures within the self-healing processes. This process would involve individuals being able to effectively apply CPS to self-healing toward the goal of high level wellness, not merely physical wellness, but psychological, sociological, political, and spiritual wellness. Parnes said that he has lived his life with a creative attitude and by Osborn's credo that a fair idea put to use is better than a good idea kept on the polishing wheel. The creative leadership of Sid Parnes has enabled thousands of individuals to grow in both adaptive and innovative directions and to be able to balance these two strengths, as needed.

Annemarie Roeper

A third example of a creative leader is Annemarie Roeper whose work in the field of gifted education is legendary. Kane (2013) said Annemarie could have easily been one of the five women Mary Catherine Bateson wrote about in her book, *Composing a Life.* Bateson examined the creative potential of her subjects, and Kane points out that Annemarie's life story is a study in creativity and the narrative that emerges is one that reflects flexibility and resilience. I met Annemarie and her husband George on a visit to their school in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan in l975. The Roeper School's basic philosophy was humanistic with an emphasis on respecting the inner agenda of the child. Annemarie said considering the academic, social, and emotional well-being of the child is essential and that school-wide decisions at Roeper were made focusing on child-centered methods. In her book, *Educating Children for Life*, Annemarie summarized the Roeper School philosophy as a philosophy of self-actualization and interdependence, with the primary goal of education being education for life, rather than achievement and college preparation. Roeper described the essence of the Roeper School's philosophy:

> There is a goldmine of hidden creativity in each one of these children, which can blossom into spiritual, emotional, creative, and scientific growth. We need to build bridges between the inner world of the individual and the outer world of society, so that knowledge, thoughts, and emotions can flow freely between them. To contribute to the accomplishment of this great goal, continues to drive my life passionately (Kane, 2006).

Annemarie was born in Vienna to Max and Gertrud Bondy, and both parents were intellectually gifted. Her father had a doctorate in Art History and her mother trained by Otto Rank was one of the first women psychoanalysts with a medical doctorate. The Bondy couple established a residential school in Marienau on a three-hundredacre farm outside of Hamburg, Germany. Annemarie and her brother, Heinz and sister, Ursula attended the school. One of the students was George Roeper, who later became Annemarie's husband. As the Nazi influence increased in Germany, the curriculum and educational agenda of Marienau was changed to reflect their views, and the Bondy family being Jewish left Germany to survive. Gertrud and Heinz went to Switzerland to begin a new school, Ursula was sent to England, and Annemarie stayed with her father, so she could graduate, and they could sell the school. Annemarie decided to follow in the footsteps of her mother, and she enrolled in the study of medicine in Vienna, Austria. Annemarie tells of being interviewed by Sigmund and Anna Freud, when she was admitted as the youngest student in the study of psychoanalysis. When the Nazis invaded Austria, Annemarie and the entire family came to the United States. Annemarie said:

> I survived because I had a mission. My task in life was to help children with their feelings, especially so that they wouldn't have a huge reservoir of anger that they needed to act out. It was up to me that groups like the Nazis would never rise up again. Most people fled Germany to flee, but I left so that I could help children to find goodness (Kane, 2006, p. 15).

George Roeper and Annemarie were married shortly after arriving in the United States, and they started a summer camp, then established the Windsor Mountain School in Massachusetts. In l941, they left the east coast to go to Michigan. Annemarie directed the Editha Sterba Nursery School and George began the Roeper Grade School in Highland Park, Michigan. The Roeper School eventually relocated in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan where it is in operation today.

The creative and innovative aspects of the Roeper philosophy are described by Kane (2013), including aspects that at the time were considered controversial:
- Progressive education combined with psychoanalysis provided the basis for curriculum and instruction;
- Non-graded education as students begin to exhibit asynchronous development;
- Open-classrooms are implemented that create more of an individual approach within the school 'community'; aligned to Roeper's Philosophy and child-centered, as goals are developed by the child and not the institution;
- Racial integration of the school;
- Focus on gifted education beginning in 1956; and

- Participatory democracy and the rights of teachers/students/staff are equally respected, non-hierarchical (Kane, 2006).

One of Annemarie's passions was global awareness and she worked closely with Linda Silverman, a psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Center in Denver, Colorado to establish a division, now known as a network in the National Association for Gifted Children. Annemarie reiterated that global awareness is the realization that we are all interconnected and interdependent with every facet of life around us (Kane, 2013).

Sylvia Ashton Warner

Sylvia Ashton Warner was an artist, writer, and controversial educationalist. White (2013) said that Sylvia was a highly creative, complex individual with intensity, passion, drive, and vulnerability evident in her writing and biographies. Dobson (2007) described Sylvia as an individual who had an insistence on living a life of originality and flare. Her writing, speech, and poetry reflected her rich use of language. She was unconventional and she was in constant search of herself through philosophy and Freudian psychology. She enjoyed pursuing deep philosophical conversations with her friends. She also had a rage to master and her need for intellectual creativity was evident in her determination to master the Maori language and understand its culture (White, 2013).

Sylvia was a perfectionist and she looked for perfection in herself and from those she idolized. Sylvia spent many years teaching Maori children and she found that Maoris, being taught according to British methods, were not learning to read. She described them as passionate, moody children, bred in an ancient legend-haunted tradition. She searched for a way to build a bridge to European culture that would enable the children to take hold of the great joy of reading. Sylvia devised a method whereby written words became prized possessions for her students. Her book, *Teacher* was first published in l963 and received excited acclaim. Today her findings are strikingly relevant in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) students and economically and socially disadvantaged at-risk students.

Sylvia enjoyed international repute in her lifetime as an educator, primarily in America, but she also produced several novels. Her greatest legacy is the superbly written autobiography, *I Passed This Way,* written in l979. She had ambivalent feelings about New Zealand, displays both caustic criticism of a conformist and repressive society alongside intimations of the pride she felt for what could be achieved in such a small, unassuming nation (Dobson, 2007).

Over the years, Sylvia Ashton-Warner was asked to establish schools in America, in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In the Vancouver Project she introduced her method into several Vancouver primary schools. Sylvia! *The Biography of Sylvia Ashton-Warner* went on to win the Goodman Fielder Wattie Award and the PEN First book of Prose Award. She occupies a key place in New Zealand literature and her international fame and success was phenomenal. Her autobiography made a substantial contribution to New Zealand's literature and has historical value with its revelations about life as a creative artist in New Zealand. She wrote eleven books, including her *Autobiography* and *Teacher*.

A quotation of Sylvia's tells much about her belief in creative leadership. She said:
"You must be true to yourself. Strong enough to be true to yourself. Brave enough to be strong enough to be true to yourself. Wise enough to be brave enough to be strong enough to shape yourself from what you actually are."

Conclusion

Creative leadership is basically about connecting people, and in a sense creative leadership is a form of servant leadership in which the leader's task is to connect different people , ideas, and ways of thinking. Leaders further develop the skills of their co-workers and co-create and co-sense problems of their organizations. Creative leadership comes from a deep-rooted passion that was illustrated in the four individuals: Maria Helena Novaes, Sid Parnes, Annemarie Roeper and Sylvia Ashton Warner. All four of these individuals manifested the seven Cs of the *Social Change Model* (SCM). Their individual values included a strong consciousness of self, and they sought activities and

experiences to examine their beliefs, values, attitudes and emotions to form a strong "perceptual lens" for them to interact with others. They behaved with consistency in the face of stress and their behaviors included being genuine, authentic, and honest toward others. In addition, they all had a significant investment in their projects and works, and the energy to carry out those activities with intensity and perseverance. In their collaborative work with others, they were able to develop a shared vision and purpose. This was particularly evident in the lives of Maria Helena, Sid, and Annemarie. Sylvia Ashton Warner had many creative outcomes in her life, but she did become mired down with criticism of her work and experienced personal attacks by individuals with a different-point-of-view. Of the four creative individuals, she was the most independent and could have profited from the SCM group value of controversy with civility. In examining Sylvia Ashton Warner's creative life from the perspective of the *ELIAS* model, she did not move to the stage of Connection to Source in which there is an uncovering of common will and a conscious shift from a "me" to a "we" focus. Yet, the creative leadership of Sylvia along with the other three individuals can be described as having an emphasis on open mind, open heart, and open will.

All four of the creative leaders responded to problems by acting and thinking differently, trying things out, making mistakes, but always keeping their focus on the potential and possibility of creativity at the micro-and macro-levels. They demonstrated a creative "mindset" that affected their leadership on a daily basis, as they developed and nurtured that creative flow of energy in themselves and in others. In today's world with the myriad of global challenges creative leaders are needed who are aware of their operating world view and able to examine critically alternative ways of understanding the world and social relations to implement positive global change.

All four of these individuals responded to problems by acting and thinking differently, trying things out, making mistakes, but always keeping their focus on the potential and possibility of creativity at the micro- and macro- levels. They demonstrated a creative "mindset" that affected their leadership on a daily bas is, as they developed and nurtured that creative flow of energy in themselves and others.

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Who Decides What Giftedness Is?

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Abstract

Who, rather than what, decides what giftedness is? The academic world traditionally focuses on theoretical descriptors whereas society as a whole is more interested in practical function. This partly divided focus is becoming increasingly critical and problematic as economies are becoming global and the political objective is to create a knowledge economy. High-achieving and creative individuals are becoming key individuals in making the emerging global economy possible. In the wake of this development follows a shift from theoretical understandings of giftedness to a focus on what the gifted and talented can actually do. There are therefore a number of deciding factors in defining what giftedness is: academic concerns and practical concerns as defined by society. Within each social group with various vested interests in high ability are individuals promoting and defending their own agenda for a number of reasons, prompted unaware by human nature. Whoever has dominance in any social context also reserves the right to definition of how to understand giftedness and talent irrespective of whether such a definition is scientifically right or wrong. In concluding the article, the current state of affairs in the light of the global superculture and its constituting knowledge economy is discussed.

Introduction

For this article I will embark on a complex and somewhat unusual task: I will attempt to explain *who*, rather than *what*, decides what giftedness is. While the void of consensus on definitions in gifted education has been addressed formidably by several learned colleagues (e.g., Dai, 2010; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrell, 2012), still lacking in theory, research, and in the general discourse is an interest in the dynamics and impact of social context. Also, theory and research tend to be generated in conspicuous *isolation*. We are well aware of the facts and ambitions of our chosen academic disciplines, but academics within these are often quite unaware—or even uninterested—in the facts and ambitions of other disciplines. Arising from such relative isolation is a void of understanding for the social dynamics by which labels, values, and theory in science, are generated.

One might argue that "giftedness" is entirely defined by scientific effort and hard-working objective researchers, ever keen on making progress and new discoveries. While this is perhaps how it ought to be, one must also consider what is a "scientific effort" and what *motivates* scientists to say what they say and do what they do? This is by no means as straightforward as one might think. I need only, as an example, mention the numbers of fraud and dishonesty in research increasing in direct proportion to the also increasing degree of industrialization and political control of the world of research (e.g., Bennich-Björkman, 2013; Lock, Wells & Farthing, 2001; Nocella, Best & McLaren, 2010; Widmalm, 2013). The history, sociology, and psychology, of science are domains of study that a majority of researchers rarely or never acquaint themselves with.

My aim with this article, therefore, is to provide context to the understanding of giftedness and gifted education in a way that will hopefully facilitate their further development and prompt a sustainable and more *realistic* understanding of these. I will focus on the following three issues:

First, *why are we at all mindful of the gifted,* which are the driving forces behind our interest?

Second, I will address the problem of *dogma and conflict* as well as *the denial of human nature*. Human behavior is relying on much more than the psychometric states and traits constituting so much of the basis for our current understanding of giftedness and talent.

Third, and also concluding the article, I will address a few aspects of *culture* in regard to the current and future state of gifted education.

Why are we mindful of the gifted and talented?

Why are we at all pursuing an understanding of giftedness, talent, and its education? There appear to exist a few main reasons. In a global perspective, I think that there is also emerging a priority order amongst these.

Increasingly important is the potential contribution of the gifted and talented to the global economy, which is why policy makers and the leaders of business and finance express a growing interest in gifted education in its various formats. However, the world of business tends to pursue talent recruitment and training separate from national education systems. The gifted and talented are often also discussed as problem solvers in the interest of national welfare and of the hoped-for development and economic success of individual nations. The least prioritized motive is surprisingly the individual needs and wants of the gifted and talented themselves. I have found that this is, and continues to be, that which primarily motivates educators and parents.

Contribution to the global economy

The gifted have been described as "the world's ultimate capital asset" (Toynbee, 1967), and also that they "… guarantee a constant reservoir of individuals who will … lead, both … research and development, and education, thus continuing to propel recruitment of the community, the State, and humanity at large toward a knowledge-based economy" (Sever, 2011; p. 454). In Korea "creativity has come to the forefront in considering Korea's future in the global economy" (Seo, Lee & Kim, 2005; p. 98). The same is true of Azerbaijan (Mammadov, 2012); and of course true also in Europe as well as in the U.S. Policy makers are urged to meet the needs of intellectually precocious youth because they represent "extraordinary *human capital* for society at large" (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski & Benbow, 2004; p. 223; my italics).

The idea that education serves the purpose of individual enlightenment and empowerment is increasingly overshadowed by the global knowledge economy's demand for growth by innovation. The continuous discovery of new marketable products and services often emerges from high-achieving gifted and talented individuals. According to the World Bank "only educational spending that is immediately profitable is … justifiable and studies [such as] in anthropology and cultural studies are … irrelevant" (Puiggros, 1997; p. 218). For this reason, according to some scholars, we need to "persuade policy makers of the desirability of gifted education programs and services … [and] to improve our communication regarding the prospective and actual economic benefits of gifted education" (Clinkenbeard, 2007; p.7).

Their contribution to saving the World

The world really does need problem solvers in view of recent years global problems and crises, from shattered economies, to environmental disasters, and the emergence of an increasingly fickle climate for the entire planet. Who are equipped to better assist than the gifted and the talented? However, consider what Joan Freeman (2005) has argued, namely that the gifted need *permission* to be gifted. This is a most important aspect of the hopes and efforts we tend to invest into the pursuit of gifted education.

The World Economic Forum has recently published a report on global risks (Howell, 2013); problems that we may all encounter irrespective of in which country we live. These are *severe income disparity, chronic fiscal imbalances, rising greenhouse gas emissions, water supply crises*, and *mismanagement of population ageing*. The report rates these critical issues in terms of how likely it is that they can be avoided or are, in fact, already a manifest problem. They all rate as "almost certain" (that is, on a scale from 1 to 5, certainty ranges from 3.84 to 4.14).

Also quite recently, the rather unique Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford University, published an equally alarming report

on the current threats to the survival of the Human Species (Bostrom, in press), which immediately caught the interest of the press and media. The researchers of the Institute point out that humanity has indeed had a knack for surviving every cataclysmic and threatening calamity over time thus far. But during the last few decades or so there have developed threats for which there are no track records of surviving, namely *synthetic biology, nanotechnology, machine intelligence, computer algorithms controlling the stock market*, and *the manipulation of genetic structure*.

As a global community, why do we not take appropriate action immediately to protect the environment and to work toward real world peace? Technological advancements have far exceeded advances in moral and spiritual development (Bostrom cited in Couglan, 2013). How great an interest does the scientific community actually have in focusing on human survival as a research problem? Bostrom (in press) compares the number of published scholarly articles on three randomly chosen research topics plus studies focusing on human extinction. These were all published in 2012 (as listed in Scopus, August 2012). He found that there were approximately 1000 studies on "dung beetles", about 600 on "snow boarding", 100 on the chemical compound "Zinc Oxalate," and only a handful of published papers were devoted to "human extinction". Apparently, the interest to study and ponder the survival of humankind carries little weight in the scientific community. A fair guess of why this imbalance of priorities exists is that there is no or little research funding available to study something that does not immediately support economic growth. It is therefore also unlikely that such study would fast-track any scholar to a distinguished academic career and therefore be of limited interest (see Waluszewski, 2013).

The needs and wants of the gifted and talented

Most will know the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs from 1994 (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1994). It speaks compassionately and very reasonably on the *individual* needs and rights of every child:

> Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs (p. viii)

With the emerging global knowledge economy, however, there has been a rapid shift of emphasis in many school systems worldwide, from an individual right to education satisfying individual children's needs to school systems mainly producing quality manpower capable of developing and sustaining a knowledge economy. In the wake of this shift, the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) was launched in the year 2000. Seventy nations worldwide are involved and their aims include "evaluating" evaluate education systems by testing students' abilities in reading, mathematics, and science, every three years. The testing program is, above all, a *political* instrument economic in nature (Lundgren, 2011). It has very little to do with the needs and interests of individual students.

By and large, I think that educators currently experience the impact of the changing motives for education, but most have *probably not reflected on why, and by what structural means, these changes are taking place*. As policies of education are in the process of changing, therefore, a majority of educators would still tend to prioritize children's individual needs. So much so that educators are encouraged to increasingly emphasize the *economic* benefits of their work when interacting with policy makers to be listened to (Clinkenbeard, 2007).

Dogma and conflict: on the denial of human nature

We need and want the gifted and talented for their potential input into the global economy; their ability to resolve difficult problems potentially threatening the welfare of the humanity, and of course, because they have educational needs and individual interests that need to be met. This all seems quite straightforward and uncomplicated, so why does gifted education have problems with theory, with implementation, and even with worldwide recognition of the field? Only about 17% of the

World's countries pursue some type of systematic educational intervention for gifted and talented children (Sever, 2011).

I propose that there are two main reasons for these problems: The first is *dogmatism* and the second the frequent failure of much of the academic world to recognize *human nature* and taking it into account in research and application.

Dogmatism is often defined as—and I quote Boreland's (2010) definition and elaboration of the original Milton Rokeach (1954) construct—a closed mind characterized by a stubborn refusal to acknowledge truth; a willful irrationality within a context in which rationality is a valid criterion for assessing the soundness of one's thinking.

Human nature, on the other hand, tends to refer to the distinguishing characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that humans tend to have naturally, *independently* of the influence of culture (as defined by Wikipedia, undated). In other words, these are adaptive aspects of human behavior not necessarily subject to a learning process (Saveliev, 2010; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990).

Dogmatism must not only be understood as a psychological construct designating certain individuals' disposition. It is also a defense mechanism protecting "Self" and everything that constitutes identity (Greenwald, 1980). In consequence, dogmatism can be understood not only as maladaptive but quite the contrary: it could just as well be the result of adaptation to the expectations and demands of any social context. Hence, dogmatism may certainly promote coping and helps survival in a certain social environment.

The history of science is not one always characterized by humility. A number of scientists through history have argued that their contributions to science were nothing short of the ultimate discovery after which few worthwhile further discoveries could ever be made. Nobel Prize Laureate Albert Michelsen, for example, in 1888, proudly stated that, "the more fundamental laws and facts of physical science have all been discovered" (as quoted by Sheldrake, 2012; p. 19). But after his demise Quantum Physics arrived, Einstein's Theory of Relativity was proposed, nuclear fission was discovered, and we learnt that there were billions of galaxies beyond our own spiral galaxy The Milky Way. Apparently there was more to learn after Albert Michelsen!

In the social sciences it has been much the same. Well known, and surprisingly still often quoted, is the audacious statement of Behaviorist John B. Watson (1930) that any end result is possible given the right upbringing of children. Equally astounding is the insistence on "non-essentialism" by social constructivists. This tenet precludes the influence of genes or hormones on human behavior (Burr, 1995; Pinker, 2002). However, we have learnt through discoveries in other disciplines such as genetics and physiology, that all things are not possible irrespective of how stupendous an environment is for bringing up children (e.g., Sternberg, 1996). Also, human behavior is most certainly swayed by physiological factors even down to the choice of a life partner if such a choice happens to be a cultural option (e.g., Vincent, 1990).

The scientific community often speaks of and enthusiastically envisions almost unbridled progress and development, but it surprisingly often acts as if knowledge was absolute, static, and new discoveries were uninteresting (e.g., Sheldrake, 2012). Robert Sternberg (2011) has very succinctly pointed out that the knowledge and research constituting the foundation for gifted education is, in fact, also largely static. It has changed surprisingly little over time. He has suggested three main reasons for this:

1. *The urgent societal need for real world practice* in education. Particularly the Western World has little patience to wait for what stringent and time-consuming research processes have to suggest.
2. *The accountability movement* insisting on the pursuit of "quality" through business models on every aspect of work and education and their means of control, which tend to be insensitive to human abilities and individual needs (see also Sahlberg, 2010).
3. *Budgets:* the shortage of money for particular programs and research. These are usually dependent on political will as well as of the ideological recognition of the field, which varies worldwide.

These three reasons are more or less the result of neoliberal ideals by which education is

currently motivated and transformed by to better fit a global knowledge economy (e.g., Leydesdorff, 2006). But, there are further likely reasons why our understanding of giftedness and its education have progressed very little over a long period of time (as reported in Ambrose, Sternberg & Sriraman, 2011).

4. We have *narrow understandings of giftedness* with a bias towards the analytic and its testing.
5. We are usually unaware of the impact of *cognitive conservatism and familiarity;* that is, we tend not to like to change; not even if necessary in light of research evidence.
6. We are similarly unaware of *a variety of personality traits, stereotypes, and group behaviors* prompted by human nature.

The latter three are all due to dogmatism and to the very tangible, but usually ignored influence of human nature. Our refusal to acknowledge human nature, Harvard University's Steven Pinker (2002) has argued, "is like the Victorians' embarrassment about sex, only worse: it distorts our science and scholarship, our public discourse, and our day-to-day lives … The dogma that human nature does not exist, in the face of evidence from science and common sense that it does, is … a corrupting influence" (p. ix)

Modern knowledge monopolies

Furthermore, we often speak enthusiastically of academic freedom. It is often argued to be the basis of all higher education and research. However, the academic world has in spite of such an age-old ideal never been entirely free to think, say, write, or study everything in pursuit of personal convictions and interests. The academic world, for good and for worse, has been ruled not necessarily always by external political influence but by internal and dominant *knowledge monopolies* deciding definitions of truth and their suitability. More importantly, such monopolies tend also to suppress new ways of thinking (Christian, 1980; Innis, 1951). However, monopolies usually have political sanction and tend to be motivated by gain, power and influence rather than by epistemological conviction, empirical discovery, objectivity, and accuracy. Henry J. Bauer (2012) of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University has studied three such current knowledge monopolies:

In astronomy, everyone must accept the Big Bang Theory of the origin of the Universe. If not there is an influential group of 510 astronomers worldwide insisting that such alternative research must not be funded nor should proponents of an alternative theory even be allowed a mainstream public forum to be heard (Arp *et al*, 2004).

In medicine, scholars must embrace the assumption that HIV is always the cause of AIDS. Scientists who argue otherwise will find it difficult to be taken seriously and can expect rejection when submitting manuscripts for publication in the most famous journals for medicine. A group of 2600 researchers and others stand behind this normative single explanation insisting on the causality of HIV (Thomas *et al*., 1991).

In studying climate change, to retain credibility and the continued support of political leaderships, one usually needs to accept the dominant position that the climate is changing and that this change is caused mainly by human intervention (e.g., Doran & Zimmermann, 2011; Mann, 2012).

I would like to add another monopoly to these. How is *giftedness* understood in various parts of the World? Which of the two following views is the more politically correct one?

a) To understand giftedness as normally distributed and therefore constituting an attribute of a small group in any population, or
b) to understand giftedness as a possibility for everyone in any population given that school systems and their teachers are sufficiently trained and knowledgeable?

My observation is that in Europe, particularly in Northern Europe, it is politically very difficult to discuss giftedness as exclusive to only a few. The issue of labels is generally avoided but if used the term "talent" is preferred signifying a potential development for each and everyone. It matters little whether the underlying assumption is scientifically right or wrong, the similarity and equality of each member of society is *ideologically* enforced. Contrary views are discouraged, ignored, and sometimes even publicly ridiculed (e.g., Henmo, 2009). Arguing talent for all is acceptable, condoned, and

rewarded, whereas arguing giftedness for a few is, as a rule, not an option for any career-minded scholar in need of political support and research funding.

There certainly are very earnest and honest scientists generating well-considered research and theory; making new discoveries, but with differing views of the origins of the Universe, on the underlying causes of AIDS, on the reasons for climate change, and the understanding of giftedness in society. As a result of their politically incorrect stance they tend to be ignored, marginalized, and sometimes even stigmatized by the dominant knowledge monopolies and by everyone with a vested interested in retaining a monopoly unchanged. There are unavoidable forces, both internal and external to universities, motivating each academic, for good and for worse, to conform to a variety of canons (e.g., Bourdieu, 1990).

Robert Quinn (2004), heading the Scholars at Risk Network, based at New York University. He has pointed out, that

> Evidence suggests that academic communities remain favorite targets for repression. In the information age, the scholar's role in shaping the quality and flow of information in society is an unquestionable source of power. Repressive authorities intent on controlling societies naturally seek to control that power. Scholars are obstacles to these goals because the nature of their work requires the development of ideas, exchange of information, and expression of new opinions. Where the ideas, information and opinions are perceived by authorities as threatening, individual scholars are particularly vulnerable. Such scholars are labeled— explicitly or implicitly—as "dangerous," "suspect," "disloyal," "dissident," or "enemy" of the state, society, faith, family, culture, and so on (p. 1)

It is important to recognize that repression here must *not* be understood as referring to any specific country (Table 1). Repression of information or knowledge contrary to dominant knowledge monopolies is *universal*. Only the means and the degree of ferocity by which such repression is pursued differ. All nations do this no matter how democratic, and they have always done it, prompted by human nature.

Table 1: Actions taken towards scholars worldwide as identified and recorded by Scholars at Risk Network in 2013 (Scholars at risk, 2013).

Type of actions taken	Frequency	Country
Violence	19	Afghanistan, China, Jordan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syria
Wrongful imprisonment	13	China, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe
Wrongful prosecution	6	India, Tunisia, Turkey, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Retaliatory discharge from position	4	Belarus, Uganda
Travel restrictions	2	China, UAE
Other restrictions, harassment, imposed limitations	20	Azerbaijan, China, Guatemala, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Singapore, USA

Human nature and the gifted mind

Dogmatism should be understood as the impact of *dominance behavior through aggression*, especially the defense and conquest of territory; the assertion of dominance within well-organized groups, and as the disciplinary action used to enforce implicit and explicit rules of any group (Wilson, 2004). Aggression is unavoidably part of human nature and has biological determinants (Kemp, 1990; McBride-Dabbs & Goodwin-Dabbs, 2000). We are programmed by evolution to defend our interests for as long as they somehow serve our survival. Perceived threats are handled by humans and other animals alike by a) Posturing; b) submission, c) escape, and d) attack and elimination (Barnard, 2004; Grossman, 1995).

Our first choice is generally not to eliminate the threat posed by another individual. It is to scare the threat off by demonstrating superiority. If this proves successful, and whoever threatened us is convinced of the opposing "greater strength," he or she may choose to simply leave to seek safety elsewhere. However, the threatening individual may resort to forming liaisons instead. It is better to be friend and ally to perceived superiority rather than to be its foe. As a last resort, if nothing else works, we address the perceived problem with an intention of eliminating it once and for all.

In the light of dogmatism and dominant knowledge monopolies it is prudent to consider the degree of submission and adaptation *necessary* to fit into any social group ruled by the dynamics imposed on all social animals by evolution, and compare with the typical characteristics of gifted behavior. Winner (1996), for example, has portrayed the gifted as:

> … risk-takers with a desire to shake things up. Most of all they have the desire to set things straight, to alter the status quo and shake up established tradition. Creators do not accept the prevailing view. They are oppositional and discontented (p. 276).

Researchers Janos and Robinson (1985) have summarized the known characteristics of intellectually gifted individuals as self-sufficient, independent, autonomous, dominant and individual, self-directed, intellectually curious, reflective, creative, imaginative and non-conformist.

Given that these studies of the gifted personality are reasonably correct for a majority of gifted individuals, although perhaps not all, it raises a most important question in the light of why we are interested in promoting the gifted and the talented: How feasible is it to expect the gifted to contribute to the global economy; to be the warrants for any nation's future welfare and wealth, and if need be, perhaps also serve the World as saviors of the human prospect?

Reaching a place of influence and trust in any society, the gifted—like everyone else—first have to adapt, conform, and prove loyal to the many existing canons and dominant knowledge monopolies and their influential leaders. Their allegiance must also be proven and rewarded (e.g., Carpenter, Bowles, Gintis & Hwang, 2009; French & Raven, 1959; Gintis, Bowles, Boyd & Fehr, 2003). This means that they often have to compromise their own identity, their personal values, and the way in which they tend to function without socially imposed restrictions. I have encountered enough a number of highly gifted individuals in a variety of walks of life to know that making such compromise is an almost insurmountable challenge to them. It is almost always tied to conflicts, self-doubt, frustration, and over time to alienation and clinical depression.

I would like to make a bold proposal at this stage, namely that the gifted seem often to have the means to *override* their human nature. Being aware of it they may decide to act contrary to their human nature and not necessarily follow their "instincts." They often refuse to accept that which does not conform to their own logic, conviction, or insight. Since their conclusions rarely coincide with those of the dominant knowledge monopolies, conflict—both internal and external—with their immediate social context arises and becomes a problem to continued employment or co-operation (e.g., Shekerjian, 1990). As a result the gifted individual becomes regarded as a difficult troublemaker threatening both social cohesion and the perceived competence and standing of individual leaders (e.g., Furnham. 2008; Kelly-Streznewski, 1999; Persson, in press).

Note that difficulties such as these are also what research into the work satisfaction of gifted adults employed by rigid and formal organizational settings have found (Lackner, 2012; Nauta & Ronner, 2008; 2013; Persson, 2009). I can only envision one exception to when the gifted mind does not suffer in a strictly formal and often contradictory setting, namely when a gifted individual is subject to a more or less psychopathic disposition. Individuals with such a personality tend to be daring, charming, highly intelligent, visionaries and risk-takers, often with no moral compass and have little or no empathy (Babiak & Hare, 2006); or to put it like Kevin Dutton (2012) at Oxford University does: "psychopaths are less morally squeamish, but only when it comes to playing for high stakes" (p. 212, adapted by the present author). Such individuals are increasingly being seen as role models in the corporate business world (Boddy, Laddyshewsky & Galvin, 2010), and it has been

suggested also that they played a major part in causing the latest global financial crisis commencing in 2008 (Boddy, 2011). It is worth considering perhaps, if it is in this light we need to consider "the scary rich who are also the scary smart"; as recently referred to in the *Forbes* business magazine by Jonathan Wai of Duke University (Wai, 2012a; 2012b).

The gifted are in all likelihood able to live up to most of our expectations in theory. They are no doubt potentially phenomenal assets to any institution, nation, organization, or employer. But *only* if permitted to be gifted in accordance to how they actually function, and if the social context in which they work is accepting of them, supportive, and the setting is relatively free of imposing formal strictures (Amabile, 1988; Judge, Colbert & Ilies, 2004; Persson, 2009; Shaughnessy & Manz, 1991). There is a considerable difference between what the gifted can do and what they are socially sanctioned to do!

Culture in defining, identifying, and promoting giftedness.

In conclusion, I also need to focus briefly on culture in reference to how we perceive giftedness and talent. In a recent issue of *Gifted and Talented International* devoted to cross-cultural issues, it was concluded that addressing cultural uniqueness and its significance to gifted education is by no means novel in research and application (Persson, 2012a). It is, however, a fact that in spite of the available knowledge base it has had a relatively limited impact. In view of the discussion thus far, this is not difficult to understand. Knowledge monopolies and the dogmatism that accompany them may certainly explain why—as Sternberg (2012) pointed out—gifted education has changed little over a long period of time.

There are at least four different types of human culture (Figure 1): Unique ethnic cultures, subcultures within these, a general culture shared by all, but most importantly in this context, there is also an overarching *superculture*. This is highly relevant, since the notions of globalization and knowledge economy constitute such an influential superculture (see Wolf, 1977; for a detailed definition).
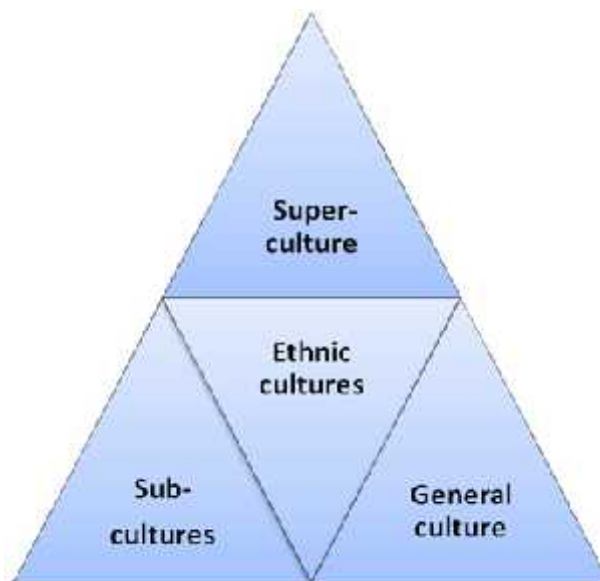
Figure 1: The societal culture field impacting daily life, work, science and nation building (From Persson, 2012b).

This supranational system of ideological and mainly neoliberal values (e.g., Harvey, 2005). exerts an increasing influence on what we do as researchers and educators and also how we increasingly learn to think about giftedness and science in general. The gifted and talented, however they are defined theoretically, are undoubtedly in the process of becoming commodities on the global

market, being embraced by the superculture and its production needs rather than by native ethnic cultures.

Note that there are 53 multinational corporations in the World; all with an accumulated wealth *greater* than 120 of the World's nations. Needless to say, these corporations will go to great lengths to acquire the talents they need for continued success (Chambers *et al.,* 1998). It is worth pointing out that researchers of the global economy and its influence on daily life actually warn that multinational corporations pose a potential threat to democracy in their sometimes relentless pursuit of growth and profit (Chandler & Mazlich's, 2005). A large portion of control flows through a small tight-knit core of financial and global institutions This core is termed a "super-entity" by a group of Swiss researchers at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zürich (Vitali, Glattfelder & Battiston, 2011).

With the neoliberal superculture fully developed in the form of a knowledge economy, we can expect that gifted human capital will be very appealing to every policy-maker and corporate executive worldwide with a vision of global dominance convinced of economic growth as the model to follow. However, this is assuming that such highly desired human capital actually can be made to fit into rigid organizational structures, which I have shown in this paper is often a considerable problem.

Not all countries have the same inclination to embrace a knowledge economy entirely and uncritically. While Europe, and I think much of the Western World, has more or less relinquished the idea that cultural expression and age-old tradition have an intrinsic value not necessarily profitable (European Cultural Parliament, 2006), India, and I think a number of other nations in Asia, Africa and in South America, have a more balanced understanding of combining tradition and cultural expression with the notions of progress and economic development.

Conclusion: Who defines giftedness?

So, who does define what giftedness is? We could probably haggle over which theories and constructs are the best to define giftedness and talent for a very long time to come. However, considering current global development, as well as the related increase of interest in individuals capable of more and better achievements than most others, it is quite obvious that a focus on what the gifted are able to do is much more interesting to policy makers and multinational corporations than is a focus on how such human capital assets are defined theoretically (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Corporate life, the world of entertainment, the world of policy and ideologies, all tend to understand the highly able in different ways (Table 2). To these giftedness is mainly a *function*. To the academic world high ability has rather been understood as a set of theoretical descriptors. Understanding giftedness as function in a social context has, to my knowledge, not even been on the agenda.

Table 2: The understanding of talent/giftedness in different societal groups (adapted from Persson, in press).

Sphere of interest	Common Label	Perceived Prevalence	Key Question
Corporate (Leaderships)	Talent	Rare	What can they do?
Corporate (Production)	Talent	Common	What can they do?
Popular (Entertainment)	Talent/Giftedness	Rare	How much do we like it?
Political	Talent/High achievement	Common	Do they conform ideologically?
Academic (Psychometric)	Giftedness	Rare	Do they fit theoretical criteria?
Academic (Cognitive Expertise)	Talent	Common	Is educational support excellent and have they learnt to train deliberately?

The pragmatic answer to the question of who decides what giftedness is, is that there are a number of deciding factors; there are academic concerns, but there are also more practical concerns as defined by society with little interest in the theoretically finer points made by academics. Furthermore, within each group with vested interests in high ability are unavoidably individuals promoting and defending their own agenda for a number of reasons, prompted unaware by human nature, often resulting in dogmatic attitudes and creating new knowledge monopolies.

As complex as this pattern of social dynamics appears the bottom line is, that whoever has dominance, by whatever means, also ultimately reserves the right to definition. This is dominance as based on social power and influence. The foundation for such dominance rests not on factual accuracy, rational logic, or empirical evidence, but on aggression in its various expressions.

My conviction is that the academic world is at a crossroads. Perhaps this is true of the World in general as well (e.g., Marjan, 2011). Google executives Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen (2013), for example, foresee a future in which we exist in two parallel civilizations: the physical and traditional one and the virtual one. Other thinkers and researchers speak of a new world order (e.g,, Ohmae, 1995; Slaughter, 2004). However, as Oxford University's Future of Humanity Institute, has pointed out, while we are quite literally going "where no man has gone before," we do so in incredible haste, characterized by little understanding of moral responsibility, and in the wake of a global economy we seem mainly motivated by corporate growth and gain, aided and sustained by Information Technology, which we are increasingly allowing to operate without human control.

I find it deeply disconcerting that the World is so obsessed by technological progress and prowess and that education systems worldwide are made to serve this development uncritically; while equal importance is not given to moral responsibility, individual concern, and unique cultural expression.

It is also worrisome that high ability is viewed as a commodity and is increasingly becoming a key issue in policies embracing global development towards a knowledge economy. There is already a "War for Talents" in full operation (Chambers *et al.,* 1998; Dychtwald, Erickson & Morison, 2006).

I do think there are choices to be made in regard to how we wish our future to look like, but do we as scholars and educators have the mindset of the gifted and talented? Are we risk-takers with a desire to shake things up? Do we have the desire to set things straight, to alter the status quo and question established tradition challenging current knowledge monopolies?

We do need the gifted and talented in our day and time more than ever! Moreover, I think, to the extent that it is possible, we need to be more like them at heart!

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Creative Potential and its Measurement

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Abstract

This article presents the concept of creative potential and its link to talent. Psychological measures to assess creative potential in children and adolescents (EPoC) and adults (Creative Profiler) are then described. Implications for developing creativity are proposed.

Creative potential and its measurement

Creativity has received increasing attention over the past decades. It is viewed as a valuable asset for individuals in their daily problem solving and their professional careers. Organizations seek creative ideas to improve themselves and stay competitive. Societies benefit from creativity in terms of social and technical improvements in quality of life and cultural development. Recent surveys rank creativity among the most sought-after characteristics; for example, an IBM worldwide survey of 1541 CEOs in sixty countries and thirty-three major industries found creativity to be the most valuable ability for future top managers (Berman & Korsten, 2010). An ADOBE survey of 2000 teachers (K-12) and 2000 parents in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia found creativity as a highly desired educational goal (ADOBE, 2013). Creativity is one of the four key "21st century skills", together with critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (http://p21.org). Creativity can be defined as the ability to produce original work that fits with the context and responds to task constraints (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). Compared to classical intelligence, which focuses on analytic ability, knowledge and expert resolution of familiar problems with known solutions, creativity concerns generating new, previously unknown ideas and behaviours in novel situations or treating familiar situations in new ways (Sternberg, 1985; Lubart et al., 2003). Whereas intellectual ability results typically in academic success, creative ability is best manifested in unique accomplishments, recognized as valuable in a domain-based context.

The concept of creative potential

An important distinction can be made between potential and talent. Gagné (2004) in his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) notes that *giftedness* designates outstanding abilities, called aptitudes whereas *talent* is linked to achievement and designates the outstanding mastery of systematically developed abilities, called competencies (knowledge and skills). In this vein, potential refers to a latent state which may be considered part of an individual's "human capital" (Walberg, 1988), as well as a resource for the person's larger social group or society. This potential may be put to use if a person has the opportunity. The individual may be aware of his/her potential or may be blind to it. Each person can be described as having more or less potential in a domain of work, and more specifically, in a given task.

The degree to which an individual shows different levels of potential across domains and tasks depends on the nature of the required cognitive and conative factors that are involved in each task; for example, making a creative still-life drawing and a creative collage most probably call upon similar factors. In comparison, there is potentially less similarity between a still-life drawing and poetry

composition, each task involving a somewhat specific set of factors. The degree to which tasks are similar can be estimated by correlational studies, in which people complete the two tasks and then shared variance is calculated; however, additional methods allow a fine-grained task analysis in order to specify the precise resources involved in a task (see Caroff & Lubart, 2012).

The extent of task similarity concerns the nature of factors solicited in each task, the extent to which each factor is solicited, and the way in which the factors come into play during task execution. Thus, if two tasks involve metaphorical thinking, there is some degree of similarity between the tasks. If this metaphorical thinking is involved to the same extent in each task, and comes into play in the same way during task execution, the similarity will be enhanced. Given that each task may be characterized as partially similar to other tasks and partially specific, it is most useful to conceive a person's creative potential in terms of a set of potentialities. An individual may show high potential in scriptwriting, average potential in poetry composition and low potential in graphic design. This heterogeneity is normal (Lubart & Guignard, 2004). Indeed, in studies of general population samples, it is common to observe relatively low correlations between creativity scores in tasks from different domains (Baer, 1993). In studies of eminent creators, it was found that high levels of creativity in several lines of work in a domain (e.g., painting and sculpture) are rare, and eminent creativity in more than one domain (e.g., visual art, literary work) is extremely rare (Gray, 1966).

Creative potential for a task is envisioned, according to the multivariate approach as the confluence of several distinct, but interrelated resources (Lubart, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995; Lubart, Mouchiroud, Tordjman & Zenasni, 2003). These resources for creativity are specific aspects of intelligence, knowledge, cognitive styles, personality, motivation, affect, and physical and socio-cultural environmental contexts. Examples of each are: metaphorical thinking ability (intelligence); a rich, diversified associative network (knowledge); preference for intuitive thinking (cognitive style); risk taking trait (personality); intrinsic task-focused interest (motivation); the presence of rich, idiosyncratic emotional experiences (affect); and a context with diverse stimuli or a rich setting (physical and/or social environment). These resources can be classified broadly into cognitive factors, conative factors, and environmental factors. Cognitive and conative resources are person-centred factors for creativity whereas environmental resources are context-centred factors.

With regard to the confluence of resources, Sternberg and Lubart (1995) propose that creativity involves more than a simple sum of an individual's level on each of the components for creativity. First, there may be thresholds for some components (e.g., knowledge) below which creativity is not possible, regardless of an individual's level on the other components. Second, partial compensation may occur between the components in which strength on one component (e.g., motivation) may counteract weakness on another component (e.g., knowledge). Third, although each component contributes in its own way to creativity, a component is always acting in the presence of other components and this coaction can lead to interactive effects; for example, high levels on both intelligence and motivation could multiplicatively enhance creativity. The interactive nature of the resources, in particular the person-centred and context-centred factors, is also developed in Gagné's Developmental Model of Giftedness and Talent, with the environment serving as a catalyst for person-centred "gifts" to be activated.

Creative potential remains latent until it is called into play in a task. At this point, through the application of an individual's resources during the creative process, a production (idea, work) occurs. Here, the creative process refers to a sequence of thoughts and actions. Based on more than a century of work, the process can be conceived in terms of divergent-exploratory actions, which are extensive or expansive, and convergent-integrative actions, which are intensive and bring focus (Lubart, 2000). These two "modes" occur in cycles, and various facets of the cognitive, conative, and environmental factors come together in these processes. Over time, the creative process leads to a production, which can be evaluated (by the creator, [him or herself], and by the creator's "social group", and appreciated as a more or less creative output. This output can be called a creative accomplishment, if it is deemed sufficiently original and context appropriate. By inference, the creative potential of the production's

author can be inferred. To the extent to which an individual produces consistent work that is evaluated as creative, it is useful to use the term "creative talent". Thus, a series of creative works or accomplishments is the hallmark of creative talent; however, the exact criterion for talent varies, in practice, from one domain to another.

The measurement of creative potential

There are two main paths to the measurement of creative potential. The first is more holistic, whereas the second is more analytic. The first is more process-based, whereas the second is more resource-based.

1. The production-based (process-based) approach

In the first approach, an individual is presented with a task and asked to produce creative work. This assessment situation solicits the creative act in a specific task context. It allows the process to be engaged during a limited, standardized time. The latent cognitive and conative resources can be activated and they enter the productive process as the individual judges fit. The extent to which a person produces work evaluated as creative in this context, compared to other individuals who have completed the same task is a measure of the person's creative potential. It is relevant to speak of creative potential rather than creative accomplishment because the work produced is the reaction to an elicit request to see what a person can do. In this logic, it is best to inform the individual that the goal is to be as creative as possible. In this way, the maximum potential can be observed.

In this tradition, Lubart, Besançon, and Barbot (2011) proposed a new tool, EPoC (*E*valuation of *Po*tential *C*reativity) to assess creative potential in children and adolescents. EPoC consists of four tasks in each domain of creative work. Two tasks engage divergent-exploratory thinking and two tasks involve convergent-integrative thinking. Thus the two modes of creative work are assessed per domain. The battery is comprised currently of three domains of creative production that include, graphic-artistic, verbal-literary, and social problem solving, with additional domains under development (such as musical creativity and scientific creativity). In terms of sample tasks, in the graphic-artistic domain, a simple graphic form is provided and the participant must make as many drawings as possible, which engages divergent-exploratory thinking. In the graphic-artistic convergent-integrative task, a set of photographs of objects are provided and the participant must produce a complete drawing using at least four of the eight objects provided. Tasks in each domain use a similar structure (e.g., literary divergent-exploratory: generate many endings to a story, literary convergent-integrative: generate a complete story based on descriptions of several fictional characters, which are provided). In each domain divergent-exploratory and convergent-integrative scores are obtained that allow an individual to be situated with respect to others of the same scholastic grade level.

As there are scores for the two creative process modes in each domain of creative activity, a person's intra-personal profile can be examined, showing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the individual child or adolescent. Based on the multivariate approach, this kind of measure allows an estimation of the joint involvement of cognitive and conative components of creativity, as well as interaction effects between cognitive and conative components, rendering it an interesting and powerful approach to the measurement of creative potential in children and adolescents.

New versions of EPoC were developed by the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE). More recently, the ICIE has developed the EPoC online system for scoring. Online training is also available. This system will offer EPoC to researchers and institutions interested exploring and assessing creative potential. There are international versions in English, French, German, Turkish, and Arabic. The norms are constantly being enhanced and updated as new people complete the measures; this dynamic norming procedure avoids outdated norms and allows norms to be refined using the largest available sample. The use of technology has also offered a new perspective on training judges

to score children's productions in the convergent-integrative tasks. For the convergent-integrative tasks, an elaborate drawing, story, or other production must be scored for creativity. Judges learn the scoring system through an interactive website in which they are shown sample productions (such as drawings from the convergent-integrative task), they suggest a score, and the system gives feedback on this proposed score. Judges learn interactively, and develop knowledge of the diversity of productions that children may show. After a training sequence, a judge-in-training can take a test of his/her mastery of the scoring system by scoring a new set of productions (previously scored by expert judges). The judge's ability to score children's productions in accordance with EPoC's guidelines is enhanced through this kind of training.

2. The components (resource-based) approach

In this second approach to creative potential, an individual is presented with a series of measures designed to assess the components or resources underlying creative work. This assessment situation covers, ideally, both cognitive and conative factors. It allows the "ingredients" of creativity to be inventoried. In contrast to the production-based approach, the individual being tested does not produce samples of creative work. Instead, several measures (tasks, questionnaires) are presented to assess specific cognitive and conative resources relevant to creativity. The resources, as noted earlier, combine in interactive ways. The set of cognitive and conative resources can be summarized in a person's profile. The term "profile" comes from the Italian word "profilo" meaning "a drawing of outline". In order to propose a relatively complete profile of creative potential we selected five cognitive and five conative resources, based on their importance as identified in the literature.

Cognitive resources

(a) Divergent thinking

Introduced by Guilford (1950), *divergent thinking* is often considered to be an "essential" ingredient of creativity. This generative/ quantitative capacity enables the individual to consider alternative pathways of exploration in problem solving, which increases the probability of finding a rare idea. Classic standardized measures of divergent thinking (e.g., Guilford, 1950, Torrance, 1988; Wallach & Kogan, 1965) elicit multiple responses for a single familiar stimulus in a given time, such as generating uncommon uses from common everyday objects during five minutes (e.g., a chair). The divergent production can be scored for the number of ideas (ideational fluency). High fluency is important for creativity because there is a trend for common, socially-available ideas to come first and more idiosyncratic, rare, and unusual ideas to come later (Lubart, Mouchiroud, Tordjman & Zenasni, 2003; Beaty & Sylvia, 2012).

(b) Analytic thinking

Although analytic thinking has sometimes been opposed to creative cognition, authors such as Guilford (1967) suggested that analytic thought is necessary in creative work because it allows ideas to be filtered and evaluated systematically (Lubart , Mouchiroud, Tordjman & Zenasni, 2003). The involvement of analytic thinking allows strengths and weaknesses of new ideas to be considered, weighed, and isolated. Indeed, examining new ideas for value may be both a conscious and unconscious part of creative cognition. In this regard, Henri Poincaré (1921) in his introspective account of creative thinking highlighted how his "intelligence" served as a "delicate sieve" screening out poor mathematical ideas and allowing the most valuable and aesthetic ones to break into consciousness for further elaboration. The involvement of analytic thinking leads to a weak positive link between creative ability and general intellectual ability.

(c) Mental flexibility

Flexibility refers to the capacity to change perspectives, to explore a new direction during problem solving. It is often contrasted with mental rigidity, or fixedness. Associated with divergent thinking, flexibility allows a person to move from one line of ideas to another and thus explore a topic more widely. Adaptive flexibility is the ability to switch strategies or idea categories when required for task performance. Spontaneous flexibility is the ability to move from one line of thought to another in the absence of external pressure. Thus, flexibility is related to cognitive mobility, which is by definition one of the keys to adopting new approaches to a problem or task.

(d) Associative thinking

Associative thinking is a fundamental ability to bring together ideas, to make connections (e.g., Mednick, 1962). Being able to find possible associates, in particular ones involving elements that are not commonly connected is facilitated by a rich knowledge base. From this perspective, associations based on personal experiences or emotional traces are particularly relevant for creativity because they are idiosyncratic, unlikely to be suggested by other people (Lubart & Getz, 1997). In contrast, associations based on common, shared-world knowledge have less probability to lead to new ideas.

(e) Selective combination

This capacity refers to the synthesis of disparate elements in new ways. According to Koestler (1964), bringing together two incongruent thought "matrices" is the hallmark of creativity; he used the term "bisociation". For Rothenberg (1979, 2011), Janusian thinking , homospatial thinking and Sepconic processing (connecting separate elements) are essential abilities evidenced in case studies of eminent creators, allowing multiple views to be simultaneously considered and then combined to form a new totality, a new concept, a new approach to a topic.

Conative resources

Conation refers to preferred ways of behaving as expressed through personality traits, cognitive styles, and motivation. Five components can be highlighted.

(a) *Tolerance of ambiguity*

This trait is defined as a tendency to support and perhaps even be attracted to ambiguous situations. Ambiguity occurs when a problem, task, or situation is characterized by missing, unclear, or contradictory information. A natural tendency in problem solving is to seek closure, to find a solution as quickly as possible and "resolve" the issue; however, this closure may come at the price of deep, high quality processing that often is needed for complex problems. Tolerating ambiguity facilitates keeping a problem active and this prolonged treatment is favourable to the emergence of novel thinking (Zenasni, Besançon, Lubart, 2008).

(b) *Risk taking*

Risk taking is central to creative work because originality involves breaking from habitual ideas (Prabhu, 2011). Risk taking, as a psychological trait, has been found to be relatively domain- specific with an individual showing various, different levels of risk-proclivity across situations (Slovic, 1987). Thus, specific measures based on situational details have been developed. To engage in creative behaviour, one must risk the use of personal resources (time, money, energy), and risk social criticism (new ideas are often met with resistance and rejection). In this line of work, Lubart & Sternberg (1995) observed that adults who expressed a willingness to take risks in a content domain of creative activity (such as an artistic or literary domain of work), as they envisioned their behaviour in hypothetical situations, tended also to produce more creative productions in the sector.

(c) *Openness*

Reflected in features such as a general appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination, curiosity, and variety of experience, this trait has consistently been associated with

creativity (see Feist, 1998). A high-level of openness is thought to facilitate the exploration of alternative solutions in the divergent thinking production (e.g., McCrae, 1987). Individuals with low openness tend to have more conventional or traditional interests as well as being more dogmatic.

(d) *Intuitive thinking*

Intuition is conceived as a preferred information-processing style. It can be contrasted with the preference for rational thinking (Epstein, 1994). Style preferences are distinct from processing ability. Preference for intuition is characterized by focusing on one's own experience and emotional reactions. This style of thinking accentuates idiosyncratic, personal experience-based processing as opposed to a more logical, rational type of processing. It is expected that logical, rational processing is a more standardized, commonly shared mode that leads to shared ideas. Empirical research suggests that preference for intuitive-thinking style is associated with creative productions (for a review, see Raidl & Lubart, 2001).

(e) *Motivation to create*

Motivation to engage in creative work, to invest one's energy and time, may come from several sources (Barbot, Besançon, & Lubart, 2011). Both, intrinsic motivational orientation (e.g., task-oriented, personal desire to accomplish a creative work) and extrinsic motivation (reward-oriented motivation) contribute to an individual's desire to create. Intrinsic motivation is regularly viewed as a good predictor of an individual's likelihood to engage with a creative work and is associated with related traits such as perseverance and commitment to the task. Long viewed as "detrimental" for creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1983), the importance of extrinsic motivational orientation is increasingly acknowledged as relevant and potentially beneficial as well, at least for certain parts of creative work. It is indeed likely that extrinsic motivators, such as monetary rewards or prizes, may encourage an individual to commit effort to overcome obstacles or to complete their work. Correspondingly, Baer, McKool, and Schreiner (2009) suggest that under some conditions, extrinsic motivation can help individuals get through difficult creative assignments (see also Crooker, 2006), and in some cases, might "compensate" for a lack of intrinsic motivation. The contribution of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations may depend on the domain and the creative task to accomplish. In creative writing, for example, authors may be intrinsically motivated to write as a way of expressing their emotions, but also as a way to seek public recognition from readers, illustrating the engagement of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations in this domain (see e.g., Magnifico, 2010).

Putting the components together

Because each of the key creative profiler's components do not have the same importance as a function of the creative work or domain of creative expression under consideration (per the multivariate approach of creativity), it is not conceptually and empirically relevant to summarize an individual's potential for creativity with a single, unitary composite score (such as a total IQ score, for example). Rather, the creative profiler approach consists of measuring the likelihood that an individual's profile is similar to an "optimal" creative profile for a given kind of creative work. To do so, the creative profiler capitalizes on modelling individuals who are recognized for their high creative potential in a given domain (or a specific creative task). After obtaining a measure of these individuals on the ten key components of the creative profiler, we obtain an average "optimal" creative profile for a specific creative task. This average profile becomes a "target" profile against which additional individuals, who are screened with the creative profiler can be compared, using classic statistical measures of distance (squared Mahalanobis distance, D^2) between an individual's multivariate profile, to the centroid of the "expert" group profile (for additional details on this approach, see Barbot et al., 2012). The squared Mahalanobis distance is a standardized distance adjusted for the variance in the target profile (based on the individual differences in the sample of individuals who contributed to derive this target profile), and the correlation between the creative profiler's components within the sample of individuals who contributed to derive the target profile (see e.g., Rencher, 1995). This approach is illustrated in Figure 1.
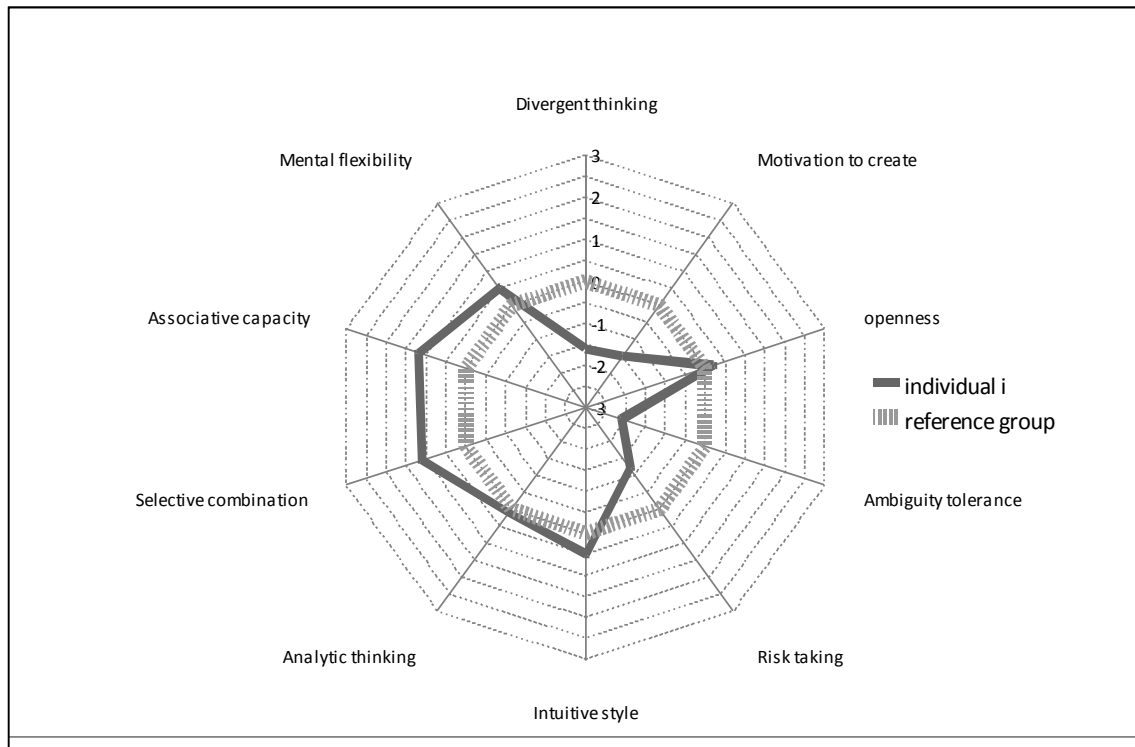
Figure 1: Individual profile compared to a group's average profile.

In an extended version of this approach, an individual's multivariate profile can be compared to several optimal, or "target" profiles, representing high potential in a wide range of creative works or domains. This possibility is illustrated in Figure 2. An individual "candidate" is shown with respect to the several other people who are creative in three different fields (artists, designers, managers); however, the graphic representation does not reflect the fact that the distance from the individual (candidate) to each group is actually measured over the ten dimensions that form the creative profiler. It is shown in the example (Figure 2) that the smallest distance occurs between the individual (candidate) and the creative manager group. This suggests that the candidate has the most creative potential with respect to this group; however, the fit is not perfect and the candidate cannot be expected to show the highest level of creativity as the person's profile deviates to some extent from the creative manager's collective profile (represented as the centre of the cloud, with only 55 % similarity to the ideal profile). The distance to the designer (45% similarity) and artist (25% similarity) "clouds" is even greater, suggesting lower potential for these sectors. These differences can however be reduced, at least to some extent, through training, which will be described in the next section.

Towards talent development

Measuring creative potential leads to the possibility to help individuals to identify the tasks and domains in which they may have the greatest creative potential. This information can be valuable for career counselling. For children and adolescents, EPoC offers some initial indicators of strengths and weaknesses; for adults, the profiler approach pinpoints the resources that may be developed to complete a person's profile with regard to a specific task, and an "ideal" reference group's profile.
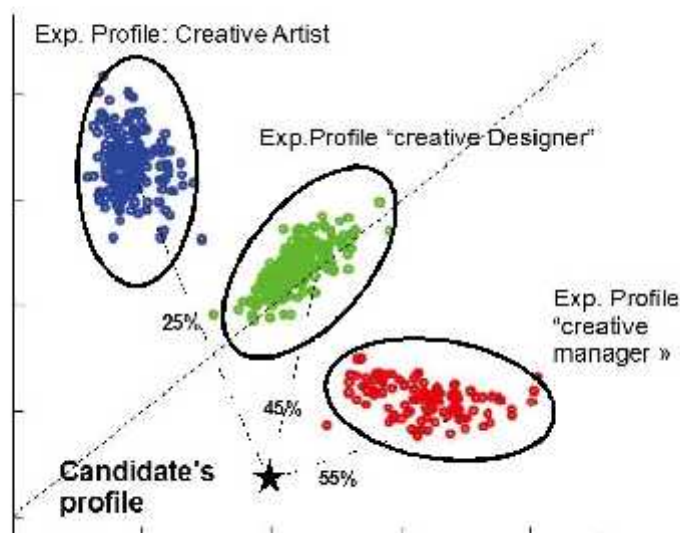
Figure 2: Individual (candidate) profile and profiles for several creative groups.

EPoC offers an opportunity to estimate creative potential in children and adolescents. It provides scores by creative activity sector (e.g., graphic-artistic, verbal-literary). Within each activity sector, detailed scores on divergent-exploratory and convergent-integrative thinking are available. It is possible to situate a child or adolescent with respect to others of the same age or school level. This allows the inter-individual differences in potential to be scored. Thus, children can be oriented in various activities, or tracks to build either on their existing potential or to offer enrichment and discovery for new areas in which the child or adolescent does not yet have strong potential. In addition to the inter-individual differences, the same scores by activity sector and type of creative thinking allow an intra-individual pattern of personal strengths and weaknesses to be seen. This intra-individual variability is valuable to examine because it is possible that within a domain, such as the verbal-literary one, a child is strong in one aspect of creative processing, such as convergent-integrative thinking, but relatively weak in the other aspect, divergent-exploratory thinking.

Thus, a child may have a restricted potential in a domain, in general, because he or she is "missing" part of the creative process. Selected activities, such as verbal-literary, divergent-exploratory activities, can be offered to the child to develop creativity in an efficient way through this kind of analysis. For example, a child can be given a concept such as "dog" , asked to find many idiomatic expressions that involve this concept (such as it's a "dog-eat-dog world", "it's raining cats and dogs"), and then use associative thinking to suggest new expressions.

The Creative Profiler offers a different angle on talent development. The comparison between an individual's profile and the ideal profile of highly creative people in a given task or domain allows the specific cognitive and conative factors to be compared. Thus, the distance between an individual's scores on these factors and a criterion group's scores indicates the most important aspects to be developed for creativity. Based on Figure 1, the most important aspects to be developed for the individual concerned are divergent thinking, motivation to create, ambiguity tolerance, and risk taking. In the example in Figure 3, the individual's profile is shown with respect to the needed values for two tasks. Training on divergent thinking could help enhance the individual's potential for Task 2; however, training on ambiguity tolerance could enhance the person's potential on Task 1. Thus, this profile approach allows individual training programs to be developed.
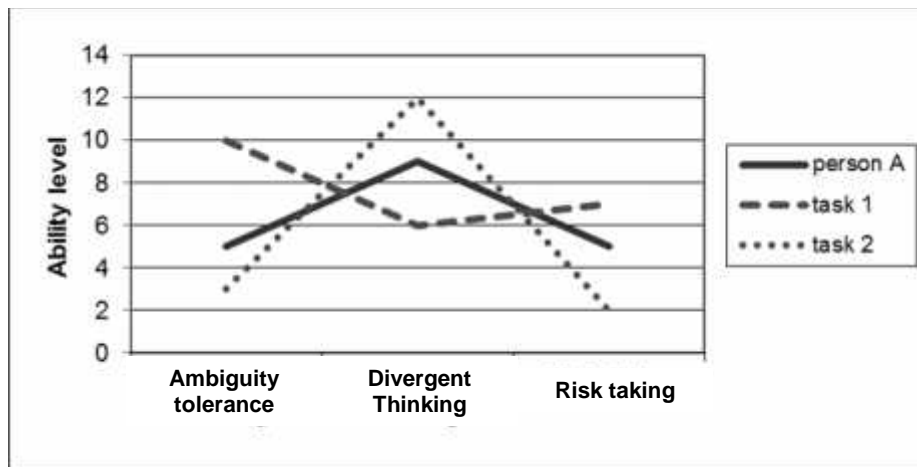
Figure 3: Hypothetical example of individual profile and ideal task profiles.

Conclusion

Recent advances suggest that creative potential can be defined and measured. In children and adolescents, creative thinking tasks can be used, as in EPoC, to assess the extent to which a person is able to engage in creative work. The productions are indicative of creative potential. For adults, creative potential can be measured differently, focusing on the "ingredients" or factors underlying creativity. Through a set of cognitive and conative measures, it is possible to obtain a multivariate profile. This profile can be compared to known profiles of people considered creative in specific job settings and thereby identify proximity, or on the contrary distances, between individual profiles and ideal ones in a task situation. Its use may help to identify individuals with characteristics allowing them to be highly creative in specific domains or tasks, which is useful for career counselling. It can also be used to identify those who may benefit from training programs that develop specific cognitive or conative factors relevant to creativity.

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The Art of Environmental Adult Education: Creative Responses to a Contemporary Ecological Imperative

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Abstract

In this article, I share the story of *The Positive Energy Quilts*, a collective environmental adult education art project on Vancouver Island, British Columbia that challenged the building of a power plant. I illustrate how this project creatively, poignantly, and stealthily drew out knowledge, and visual-counter narratives, challenged mainstream messages, and attracted media attention. This project provided an imaginative, intentional forum where power was both contested and exercised on the neo-liberal ecological landscape.

Keywords: Environmental adult education; quilts; arts; visual-counter narratives; women.

> *As we grow older, we should become not less radical but more so.*
> **Margaret Lawrence, 1958**

Drawing on the energy from Margaret Lawrence's words I feel obligated to begin by reflecting upon how I got to this place in this time; to reflect upon my now twenty years of accumulated national and international work in the field of adult education. Over the course of twenty years, I have facilitated community workshops, taught in academia, researched and written, mobilized and organized, and felt both joy and struggle. I came to the environmental theme not through choice, but rather through necessity. I was working for the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), focusing on adult literacy, and undertaking an undergraduate degree in English Literature at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, when the United Nations announced they would host their Conference on Environment and Development, colloquially known as The Earth Summit, in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The ICAE found itself, whether through proficiency or insouciance, tasked with organizing the grandest environmental education activity the world had yet to witness. Problematically for us, however, was the verity that although discourses of peace, feminism, poverty, class, and human rights sinuously dotted the landscape of adult education, the environment, except for certain scant notations in its literature, had been little entertained (Author, 1999). Upon hearing of our providence to surmount this 'minor' problem by organizing the Environmental Education event, my Brazilian colleague, Moema Viezzer, turned to me and stated emphatically: "You are the one amongst us attending the university so you must be the one to learn what we must know about the environment." Shuffling between misgivings around the university's ability to foster such learning and confidence in the process of adult education and learning, I switched my major to Environmental Studies and joined this conflicted environmental movement.

I also came to the arts and their creative purpose somewhat unintentionally, albeit also out of necessity. Although speaking of another time and another place, these words by Arundhati Roy at the 2003 World Social Forum in India capture the copiousness of the days leading up to and during the Earth Summit:

> "Our strategy should be not only to confront the empire [neo-liberal capitalism] but to mock it . . . with our art . . . our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness, and our ability to tell our own stories; stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe."

They also reflect the national and global work a group of colleagues from Asia, South Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean and myself, undertook to coax into being an educational practice true to the vitality, promise, critical needs, and challenges articulated at Rio de Janerio and by Roy. Indeed, we had little choice but to follow the advice of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado: 'to make the road by walking', as we negotiated the treacherous curves of an environmental education movement focused solely on children and schools, and the ecological loose gravel of adult education noted above. What emerged over time was an admixture of theory and practice labelled environmental adult education. It responded to the world of adults, was politically oriented, but perhaps most importantly, placed a determined emphasis on the potential of the human aesthetic dimension to politicize and invigorate learning and action. We believed unleashing creativity through the arts was a potent means not only to make neo-liberal ideology explicit, but to rework it, rendering visible what was left unsaid and unseen by exerting a powerful influence, the imagination, upon problematic normative depictions of the world. Much to our delight, we found that we were not alone. That running parallel to our own work, were environmentally focused, arts-based activities, that were stunning in their creativity, skill, and scope. This article illustrates just one of these activities through a story of *The Positive Energy Quilts,* a project by a group of women on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. This story exemplifies an often ignored, but very powerful process of aesthetic and intentional community learning process, a critical, creative process of collective engagement that addressed one aspect of neo-liberal economic determinism and the local/global environmental change imperative dialectic.

Challenges for environmental adult education

It would be politically naïve to advise [children and youth] that the loss of work, income and self-realisation… constitutes a sacrifice that they ought to make in order to enable future generations to live in greater 'harmony' with their natural environment.
(Stehr, 2001)

When we entered the environmental education world, we encountered a conceptual space based on a number of assumptions that helped us to clarify our own theory and practice. There is insufficient space in this chapter to elaborate on all of these assumptions, therefore, I have identified three of the most significant ones. The first was the assumption that audiences were children and schools. We argued that this was the height of folly and that it was politically naïve to ignore, or simply to leave to volunteers, non-educators, or chance, the critical learning and engagement needed by those who actually had, to varying degrees, political power and the knowledge of experience. We did not invite it nor did we necessarily take the blame but as adults, the environmental crisis was happening on our watch and the changes and sacrifices had to be ours to make. But I will never forget a time in the Philippines when the facilitators attempted a game created for children titled 'The Web of Life' with a group of women. The game was introduced and the women began to throw the ball of yarn around in a comical but predominantly, lacklustre way. When I could no longer help myself I asked if they had 'learned' anything from this exercise. One woman smiled at me and quietly stated:

"If you wanted to talk about life's connections, you did not need this string. Have you ever watched what happens to a spider when you take the broom to her web? How she must begin again, re-spin her life? We know how we, and this community, are 'webbed' together. We have had to re-build our lives many times due to the 'brooms' of environmental destruction. We realise the links between what the world does and the poisoning of our water, our trees, our children, our lives."

The second foundational principle of environmental education, this has remained constant over thirty years, is the centrality of the concept of behavioural modification, defined as a process aimed to "change and control…[people's] actions" in order to assert the correct desired behaviour and thereby extinguish what is considered to be undesirable (Scott, 1998, p.101). On one hand, this ambition had echoes in our own work. As adult educators committed to social justice, our work focused on disrupting and transforming racist, sexist, and homophobic thought and practice. However, our

emphasis was always on the collective and we therefore were compelled to problematize and reconfigure ecological emphases on the individual.

Individual behavioural change seemed to all but ignore the powerful structures and systems at the heart of ecological destruction, choosing instead to chastise the individual for the growing list of environmental woes with a catalogue of 'to do' items. While we would never disagree with the collective potential of small, individual changes, we were wary of discourses of 'personal choice' such as, deciding to purchase only local, organic foods, just 'saying no' to air transport, and putting up signs to reject the thousands of propaganda flyers that litter Canadian doorsteps daily. Making these 'choices' is important but the discursive lens neglects issues of class and privilege, gender, and location, government chemical subsidies, and the prolific marketing machine that is the corporate world. Eagelton (2004) succinctly sums up the major political challenge we face in his colourful proclamation on the predatory nature of capitalism:

> "In its hunt for profit it will travel any distance, endure any hardship, shack up with the most obnoxious of companions, suffer the most abominable humiliations, tolerate the most tasteless wallpaper and cheerfully betray its next of kin…When it comes to consumers who wear turbans and those who do not, those who sport flamboyant crimson waistcoats and those who wear nothing but a loincloth, it is sublimely even-handed. It thrives on busting bounds and slaying sacred cows. Its desire is unslakeable and its space infinite. Its law is the flouting of all limits, which makes law indistinguishable from criminality. In its sublime ambition and extravagant transgressions, it makes its most shaggily anarchic critics look staid and suburban (p.19).

Environmental problems are in fact a direct outcome of this predatory capitalism, economic development, corporatization, and a market economy that buys, sells, and finds the cheapest methods possible with little regard for human or ecological well-being as so many believe (e.g., Foster, 2001; Speth, 2008; Stehr, 2001). Paying little mind to this commanding social, economic, and political force is to misunderstand its ability to undermine individual behaviour change. Our challenge was to be cognizant of the politics and develop an educational practice that could expand socio-ecological questions rather than reduce the answers, launch us into the skirmish rather than disentangle us from the menace, and cultivate an equally outrageous collective sense of power and ability to demand, control, and manoeuvre. We contextualized our environmental adult education work within the discursive framework of the politics of capitalism and aimed to make its normative ideology explicit and visible. Without ever losing sight of the individual, we moved our practice from the diminutive to the potent force and promise of the collective.

A final pervasive discourse we encountered on our foray into the environmental milieu was a combination of awareness-raising and scientific proficiency. On the one hand, this helped to explain why adult education had not taken up the environment challenge. Whilst social issues are easily understood, science is an altogether different story and the environment was presented as a precarious narrative of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and unassailable expertise. But there were also concerns raised as we pondered the complexity of the unaware public and the prowess of science. Indeed, awareness-raising pivoted and continues today, on the notion of an uninformed public requiring "large numbers of fairly capable specialised technical personnel" (Wang, Zhu, Tang, He, Xu, Gao & Gu, 2010, p.83). The aim is therefore to provide reams of ecological facts, statistical, and scientific data to demonstrate the severity of the environmental crisis at hand. The argument is the more the public understands the science and the more information they have, the more likely they are, to return to the point above, to "change the behaviours required for long-term sustainability" (Stainstreet, 2008, p.9). Scientists, although the efficacy of findings such as those around climate change are hotly contested and oftentimes, politically motivated or manipulated, have provided invaluable information. Moreover, no one person can know everything and introducing new information is how we expand new understandings and make new connections. But Stehr (2009) reminds us "despite the broad scientific consensus about the reality of climate change…in the last two decades, for example, the world has inched no closer to a reduction in the growth of greenhouse gas

emissions" (p.70). Going further, Boden (2010) reminds us that any new idea, "in order to be [useful] must be it intelligible. No matter how different it is, we must be able to understand it in terms of what we knew before" (p.8). A litany of environmental woes decontextualized and unconnected from how people live in or understand the world can leave them feeling dazed, confused, and worse, utterly powerlessness. Indeed, a common response from exasperated adults in many workshops we facilitated was to question what they were meant to do with all the 'conflicting' environmental information offered by different groups.

Relying heavily on outside and scientific knowledge also dismisses or ignores people's existing and diverse ecological knowledge, re-enforcing the idea that we can attribute different levels of status to knowledge, based on the rationale that some people have knowledge that is valuable while others do not. In other words, this creates an inimical positioning of privilege and precedence on one side and marginality and diminution on the other. For example, Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) cite studies that suggest women have much less environmental knowledge than men. This, of course, begs a number of questions such as, What is this 'knowledge?; How is this knowledge being judged or defined?; What is the standard being used? Does this mean men alone will change the status quo? Clearly this biased and indefensible position of superiority is easily refuted by studies demonstrating women's profound ecological knowledge(s) of traditional seed production or medicinal plant cultivation and usage to name but two (i.e. MacGregor, 2006; Strathy, 2004). Through our work around the world, we came to recognize and appreciate the plethora of other knowledge displayed in each workshop or university classroom including experiential (through lived experience with poisoned water or traffic congestion), embodied (the manifestation of disease linked to chemical pollutants), and indigenous knowledge that spoke to us of "meanings beyond Western rationality; of agriculture and the supernatural; we know how to read the iconography of nature when the news hasn't arrived yet; ecological understanding is not rooted in the intellect but in the desire to understand the process of life" (Cole, 2006). Indeed, just as subjectivity is multiple, positionally variable, and contingent, so too are knowledge positions and we often witnessed adults juxtaposing multiple understandings and ideas, argued from diverse subjective knowledge positions thereby laying waste to normative notions of adults as entrenched in one particular *Gestalt* (mind set). We grounded our environmental adult education, therefore, in the concept introduced by Paulo Freire as 'concientización' (1970) and expanded by feminists as the practice of consciousness-raising (e.g., Allen, 2000). We began not from a platform of ecological deficiency (or knowledge narrowly defined) but rather from a stand of "cognitive respect [for] all those who cannot claim the status of 'experts'" as defined in our male-centred, rational world (Berger in Solway, 1997, p.108). Our spaces of 'concientización' drew on the circumference of existing experiences and ways of knowing, challenged hidden assumptions, encouraged diversity of opinion, and often sought to cultivate instability in order for learning to be truly transformative, it must encourage risk-taking (Eccleston, 2004). For us, 'concientización' also served as a springboard for subversive thought and this brings me to another critical type of knowledge: aesthetic, creative, and imaginative knowing.

Aesthetic, creative, and imaginative knowing

In a situation where the miserable reality can be changed only through radical political praxis, the concern with aesthetics demands justification. It would be senseless to deny the element of despair inherent in this concern.
(Herbert Marcuse, 1939)

Of all knowledge, aesthetic, creative, and imaginative knowledge, the art of knowing, is the most undervalued. Some argue atom bombs and tar-sand oil extraction (i.e. Science) entailed high degrees of creativity and imagination and therefore, these terms were too problematic and contested to be of value. For others, the arts and the aesthetic are nugatory, irrelevant to the rational learning required for contemporary problems and thereby banished to an ontological homelessness in an outburst of contempt (Felshin, 1995; Greene, 1995; Shakotko and Walter, 1999). Further, Boden (2010) perpetuates the unrelenting hierarchy of 'art' and 'craft': "the crafts aren't dependent on highly imaginative combinational creativity, nor driven by increasingly adventurous exploratory creativity,

nor sporadically progressed by transformational creativity – as fine art is" (p.4). But these do not stand without challenge.

To my mind Foucault (1970) provides a thought-provoking challenge to the limitations of Cartesian, scientific rationality and knowledge assumptions when he wrote:

"…out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage [in Borges], all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our [western rational] thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the plans with which we are accustomed to take the wild profusion of existing things, and continued long afterwards to disturb and threaten…This passage quotes 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that "animals are divided into: a) belonging to the Emperor; (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.' In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing that we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that…is demonstrated…is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that* (emphasis his, p. xv)."

His use of 'our' notwithstanding – for whom in fact is 'we'? – Foucault identifies a system of classifying, ordering, and understanding the world that makes radically different connections, that go well beyond the restrictions of contemporary rationalist, monolithic lenses that threaten to control the parameters of what can be thought and known. I, and a great many other feminists, challenge that atom bombs and their like are conceived within a rationalist, masculinist, capitalist framework of dominance and the maximization of profit and therefore, stand irreconcilably apart from feminist, activist art, social, and ecological framings of the creative and the imaginative (Author, 2009; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Mullins, 2003). As to Boden's diminution of craft, I shall shatter that fragile façade in my example of the *Positive Energy Quilts*.

To paraphrase a point made in a talk by Canadian poet Nourbese-Philip, the arts are not the insignificant site of struggle many presume them to be, but their power often lies in masking that very fact. Of all our *cognitive* capacities imaginative and creative thought through aesthetic cultural engagement are the ones that permit us to give the most credence to alternative realities (Greene, 1995). The arts are simultaneously cognitive and affective (e.g., Branagan, 2005; Author, 2012; Lipson Lawrence, 2005; Vaugeois, 2009). In the service of social and ecological justice, they are embodied practices emerging from lived experiences as much as they are intellectual tools of ecological interrogation and socio-political learning. Yet they are also irrational and fun and in the struggle against neo-liberal environmental deterioration, we need their vivacity and irreverence. This brings me to my story of the *Positive Energy Quilts*. I begin with the context.

The context

Vancouver Island is considered ripe for economic growth and development with its British Isles moderate climate, temperate rainforest, sandy beaches, wilderness parks, year-round fishing, surfing and diving and golf and picturesque mountain vistas, villages, and coves. Indeed, it has become a magnet for people from across Canada and around the world. With doors thrown wide-open to unfettered development by the current neo-conservative government of the province, many 'jump onto the bandwagon'. Private developers find fertile ground to profit from the influx of new homebuyers and create elaborate plans for new subdivisions, for example, that sprawl across the landscape, eating up the green space.

With an increase in population comes an increase in energy needs and the opportunity for expansion. The once fully public-owned utility British Columbia Hydro (BC Hydro) is actively developing stronger partnerships with energy corporations in the United States to expand power generation. One plan, and the platform from which our story springs, was to construct a natural gas-

burning power plant at Duke Point at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. There are, as one would expect, contesting views around this source of energy. On their website, the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) argues "natural gas has the potential to play a significant role in a carbon-constrained energy future as a relatively low-carbon fuel source." The Suziki Foundation counters that although natural gas has some advantages over other energy sources, relying on natural gas is still problematic. Gas-fired plants do emit sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that contribute to acid rain and ground level ozone, both of which can damage forests and agricultural crops.

B.C. Hydro's idea was to include a new pipeline that would carry natural gas from Sumas, Washington to a new gas-fired power plant proposed for a sensitive ecological location. The purpose of the power plant would have been to generate surplus electrical power that could be sold to the United States while creating some jobs for an area that was in need of new employment strategies, given the major downturn in many traditional areas such as, mining and forestry. The basic rationale, as quoted on the website of the Nanaimo Citizens Organizing Committee (NCOC) in 2003 was that "with growing North American demand, especially for natural gas used in power plants, [we must] support continental energy security." However, on the other side, the perceived socio-environmental risks associated with the proposed Duke Point Power Project (DPPP) ignited a fire under many citizens not only on Vancouver Island, but the smaller islands just offshore as well. Almost immediately, a diverse coalition of environmentalists, activists, artists, and a variety of others began a series of organized, non-violent oppositional activities to the plant (Mace, 2005).

Before construction could begin, and as this is a crown corporation, the government mandated hearings and public meetings. These, however, were problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, developers disseminated artistic renderings, often idealized computer graphics, which did not tell the whole story of its environmental impact. The reams of data and information produced by B.C. Hydro focused on the economic benefits and pending blackouts and brownouts the Island would experience without the project. This polarized somewhat a community in need of jobs on the one hand, but also, particularly environmentally conscious on the other. Secondly, while these public meetings purported to give voice to the community they were seen merely as a façade of consultation since many felt the decision to develop had already been made and the corporation was simply going through mandated motions since this is so often the case in Canada. Thirdly, and related to the above, the inequitable power dynamics that surrounded this plant and the public information gatherings discouraged and silenced adversaries. Although there are many reasons for this, a key factor is that the correct and most important information and knowledge about the project was seen to lie with the corporation, rather than the people who made up the community. In other words, the process was simply a cloud of information that emanated largely from the corporation and the government as rhetoric that obscured their agenda and power and acted solely "as a steam-release device for the general public" (Saul cited in Branagan, 2005, p. 37).

The story

In response to the proposed power plant, approximately four hundred people attended a public meeting sponsored by the Nanaimo Citizens Organizing Committee to discuss ways to intervene, to develop strategies for opposition, including a more informed public. Fabric artist Kristin Miller attended this meeting because, as she noted, "this power plant thing was in my front yard." During the meeting, Kristen agreed to join the Canvassing Committee and engage in outreach and educational work. Since Kristin had never before in her life been involved in anything political, she spent the first part of the meeting wondering how she could get out of this when suddenly an idea struck her which would involve her skill in fabric craft, creating something that would be a form of protest and voice. She argued to the group that women were used to tackling problems with a needle and thread so it was a logical thing to make quilts. She explained the quilts could be a medium through which a community could express its thoughts and feelings about the proposed plant. "And they all just looked at me like I was crazy - at first."

Over fifty people immediately contacted Kristen to say they wanted to work on the quilt project. Many had never quilted before; others had never been politically active. But what they all had in common was a desire to connect with the visual protest. A core group of fifteen women artists and activists was struck who disseminated squares of fabric to elder-care facilities, artists, community organizations, schools, and to a number of other venues in Nanaimo and on Gabriola Island. No guidelines were given for what could or should go onto the quilt other than the suggestion that people make images or write words that expressed their feelings and reactions to the proposed power plant. There was an assumption, as Kristin remarked, "that [you] were meant to show opposition to the plant and so if you were in favour you maybe did not get what we were talking about!" Within a relatively short period, over forty squares were returned. Some of the squares were created by individuals; others were created by a group. However, all were colourful and heart-felt, ranging from very traditional quilt patterns to strong, political statements/images.

The core group of fifteen women came together to arrange and rearrange the squares until they finally reached consensus on the layouts of the various quilts and then the sewing began. In order to make a stronger educational connection, the women decided to engage in what they referred to as 'quilting in public'. They began by quilting outside an arts shop and café on Gabriola Island. They also quilted in public at a rally opposing the gas plant and beside the local TV studio in Naniamo to gain media attention. Following this, the group decided to do something even more controversial and set up their quilting operation on the sidewalk outside the building where B.C. Hydro was holding a public information session in Nanaimo.. Numerous curious passers-by stopped to chat with the women about what they were doing, and discussed the issue. But here, as Kristin remarked, "was the first time the police noticed us." Together, the women and the police discussed the legality of quilting in public, and you will be delighted to know that quilting in public is in fact legal in Canada, unless it is attempted on an aeroplane and then, of course, the needles would be confiscated as weapons of mass destruction, but I digress.

Once the quilts were completely finished, they were taken for display at the Interveners' Table of the Environmental Assessment Hearings in Nanaimo about the gas pipeline that would be linked to the plant. However, upon their arrival, the administration at the site said they were "too political" and they were not allowed to be placed on display. So the women moved them to an active community centre nearby. The quilters then again tried to take the quilts into the Utilities Commission Hearings but were asked to leave, again for the same reason. So the group stood with their quilts outside on the sidewalk and again drew the attention of people walking by and those leaving the hearings. The quilts were worn like cloaks at many other public events such as a protest march with hundreds of others who followed a brass band up the hill to Naniamo City Hall. The quilters slipped into the Council chambers and hung the quilts on the walls.

Some people who made the squares took a softer approach, stitching windmills, shrimp, and scallops, or solar panels to identify various aspects of the environment that would be harmed or to draw attention to alternate energy forms. Others connected economic gain with environmental plundering such as, the image of a stream of satiny water disappearing down the throat of a coin purse accompanied by the moniker [www.stupidity.com]. In the same vein, another square read "What a bleak future, if we plan with a short-sighted vision of wealth and a barracuda mindset." Still other participants in the quilting activity showed a deep understanding of the polluting and toxic components of the plant. For example, the image of a red devil in the shape of oil gushing forth, (This is, in fact, a case of 'poetic license' to which I return shortly) was surrounded by the words ammonia, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and particulates.

Other squares carried much bolder, political statements that challenged government positions and discourses on the gas plant. However, they truly introduced some comic relief. For example, one image was a caricature of Uncle Sam (an iconic image of the government of the United States) roasting the world over a vivid orange flame. Another was the stars and stripes of the U.S. flag with the maple leaf from the Canadian flag, replacing one star and the words "No, eh" being added. Shaw

and Martin (2005) remind us of the critical, subversively illuminating capacity of humour to speak truth to power. Humour, through art, does not simply make ideology explicit, but reworks it through a punitive and creative irony that taps into the energy of irrationality. In other words, humour "does not dismiss a subject, but rather, opens that subject for discussion…It can be a shortcut, an eye-opener…to get to the truth of the matter. The best humour allows…for joy… and a new way of looking at a very old world" (Barreca cited in Roy, 2004, p.61).

Returning to the issue of poetic license noted above, one group created a square with the image of a factory spewing thick grey-black smoke. At first, the core group of quilters attempted to argue with them because they knew B.C. Hydro had said only white steam would be emitted. It is important to note here that in the world of activism, as many of you know there is always the issue of getting the environmental facts correct if one wishes to be taken seriously by those in the 'know'. However, the group that produced the square argued that the smoke was grey because it represented dirt. They believed that what was coming out of the stacks would still be polluting, and they did "not want to breathe it, even if [we] can't see it." Through much debate, the group came to see

> the grey-black smoke as symbolic of the pollutants, trace elements, and particulates that B.C. Hydro admits will be emitted in the steam. The sooty-coloured black smoke may also symbolize the quilters' own feelings about an industrial plant in their backyards, or even dismay at the global climatic effects of burning fossil fuel to produce electricity.

Power and potential

Moore Lappe (2009) asks the question, What keeps us creating in a world that often violates our deepest values in a downward spiral towards climate chaos? Although The Positive Energy Quilts Project was only one of a number of protests and outreach actions against the plant, it was an important player in helping to turn the tides against the project. And there are a number of things that made it powerful.

Corporations and governments alike have the resources, the time, and the human-power to mobilize the data and information required to launch a full-scale assault on communities that do not have such resources at their disposal. Moreover, they can quickly organize public consultations and produce drawings, glossy pamphlets, and charts and disseminate these far and wide. They are produced often under the guise of helping people to make 'the right' decision but their aim is often to seduce and to coerce. Something seldom called for is the knowledge of so called ordinary people – what they know, think, and feel about the issues in ways that are truly expressive. Recognizing, tapping into and validating people's ecological knowledge is a foundation of environmental adult education and was a foundation of this project. People were asked through symbol, colour, imagery, and text to speak out and to share their knowledge that ranged from understandings of the toxic by-products of the plant to the larger political situation.

By using the process they did, the quilters were able to engage the public in two very important ways. The first was to reach out, through the squares of fabric, to people around the community who had deep concerns about the proposed power plant but they were not necessarily the type, or at the age, such as seniors in care facilities, to participate in rallies or attend public hearings. Just because people are not or cannot be active in the more traditional ways, does not mean they should be excluded. In fact, they were very much present, their issues and concerns were very visibly stitched into the mosaic of the quilts. Picking up on this stitch so to speak, by quilting in public in so many diverse locations, the quilters were able to engage many other people in the process. Kristen Miller in particular, believed perhaps it was the soft, gentle approach as well as the beauty and colour of the quilts that drew people in and then they gradually began to get the message that a serious concern was being addressed:

> "One man came up, who was almost in tears, said, "How can I find out about this?" He…was struck by the art and he hadn't known anything about what we were protesting. And it didn't matter what else was going on in the street, this man had to talk to me. He said, "I don't even

know which questions to ask...And he was really feeling devastated in himself, so we had quite a good conversation."

One thing that will always be certain, where there is art there will be censorship. It is interesting to note in the story that it seems to be totally acceptable to invite community members to a public hearing to voice their concerns, but it does not appear to be acceptable to have a concrete visual of those concerns hanging on a wall at the public hearing. After all, it was the quilts that were tossed out of the public forum, not the audience. As Griffiths (1993, p.30) suggests, the arts are understood to be "far more than mere self-expression or decorative pastime". The counter-images projected on these quilts that combined beauty and politics, facts, and feelings raised red flags needing to be stamped out because they were so "vigorously effective" (p.31). The arts are attention-grabbers and attention is something that can be useful to social-movement actors aiming to get their point of view out to the larger public. The quilting in public activity and the quilts themselves attracted hundreds of passers-by who stopped to enquire, listen, and discuss the issues. Some professed they had not heard what was going on, and were pleased to listen to what the women had to say. In addition, the arts are a darling of the media. The women were photographed and interviewed often, something that would not have happened to the same degree had they simply sat outside the hearings handing out protest leaflets. It was the quilts, these soft, innocent, yet subversive and highly political objects that drew the media into the quilts' messages.

Stories are what we use to grab things, to hold onto them. Wherever the quilts were put on display, people were asked to 'read' the messages they contained. The quilts told a story of a community: a past, a present, and a future. The images and stories reconceptualized, deconstructed and undermined the 'promise' of development and created new conceptual and analytical spaces of community landscape and life. In addition, the power plant officials were extremely confident with their charts and graphs, so convincing were their arguments and stories of employment or the prevention of blackouts, and so logical that it was virtually impossible for people to fight back using solely the same tactic. As Kristen Miller noted "We had strong feelings, but they were not necessarily logical, and the facts, other than those pre-packaged by the power companies, were surprisingly hard to find. I could not argue at their level, but I could say what I thought through my quilt square and encourage others to do the same."

Conclusions

> *With an enriched understanding of the nature of the imagination... arts can be seen as [not] needing to be above or beyond politics in order to retain their creative character.*
> (Amy Mullin, 2003)

The Positive Energy Quilts Project is one of many creative activities in Canada and worldwide illustrative of the potential of the arts as an instrument of environmental adult education, of creative subversion, of public intervention and of engagement that confronts, includes, mobilizes, educates, and challenges for a better world. The quilts provided a vehicle, a presence of the knowledge and concerns of many, who perhaps would not otherwise be able or be willing to participate in traditional forms of political struggle. Further, by quilting in public in diverse locations, the quilters further engaged the community and here is the most substantive challenge to Boden's narrow view of craft, I noted earlier.

Perron (1998) argues "textile practices being treated with disregard for so long that it is almost inconceivable…to acknowledge them as discursive formations from which meaning can emerge" (1998, p.124). Indeed, quilts, as alluded to above, are associated with comfort, warmth, security, familiarity, and mindless domesticity. This project blurs this conventional thinking. While the shape and construction suggest one thing, the narrative images tell a very different story as it juxtaposes the conventional with the unconventional (the critical stories), thereby providing an opportunity to

perceive something on and of an object that was otherwise not part of its ordinary experience. And therein lies another source of power. Through the seemingly gentle and comforting activity of quilting in public, (mind you, BC Hydro was not fooled by this aura domesticity for a minute), passers-by were drawn to the women and absorbed in iconographic discussion and debate and provided the springboard for the litany of toxins to come into view.

The future quality of the environment depends upon people's ability to use their creativity and imagination, their sense of social responsibility, and their ecological knowledge to address and work through environmental problems and take political action. I recognize that not all community actions defeat corporate environmental onslaughts nor are all arts projects as highly educational and powerful as this project. But under the glare of a highly politicized public, determined to shut down the power, the government intervened and BC Hydro cancelled the proposal abruptly.

Fundamentally, a more expressive pedagogy of citizenship is about opening citizens up to significant learning, and the role of the educator is to create the conditions in which such a process can germinate and grow (Shaw and Martin, 2005). Maxine Greene expresses this idea well: 'All depends upon a breaking free, a leap and then a question … the educative task is to create situations in which [learners] are moved to *begin* to ask, in all the tones of voice there are, "why"?' (Greene, 1995, p. 6). One of our contributions as environmental adult educators is to remind the world of the potential of the human aesthetic dimension to boost radical democratic education and action, as well as of the power, but also of course the challenge, of combining art and adult education as a means to both contest and exercise power within the neo-liberal landscape. Combining art and adult education can be a decisive means to render visible, recast, challenge, reconceptualize, and expand the parameters of dissonance and public engagement and political action. Indeed, let us never forget how

> "a defiant imagination…defies the constraints of expectation and the everyday…because the imagination – liberated by engagement in cultural expression – is necessary to the achievement of all we hope for as a society...Imaginative responses are humanity's greatest glory" (Wyman, 2004, p.10).

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Predicting the Birds:
One Student's Poetics of Difference

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Poetry may speak
  about one,
but it speaks
  to many.
                (Furmann, 2005, p. 35)

Prologue

One day, over four centuries ago, Daniele Barbaro, a Venetian nobleman, tried an interesting experiment (Upton & Upton, 1980). He decided to use a convex lens from a farsighted man's spectacles to expand the viewing power of his camera obscura. To his delight, "the lens projected images much superior to those previously supplied by the simple pinhole camera" (p. 52). Much more recently, my high school art teacher encouraged us, her second period second year art students, to use the human eye like a camera, to expand our own visual fields by reading poetry with the suspended pigments of watercolour lights—a trompe l'oeil for the mind. So much depends on your sight when reading a poem in colour:

> With the stroke
>   of a brush
>   orange washed into red,
> turning
>   Williams' wheelbarrow
>   yellow.

Albers (2007) refers to the range of meanings that readers have attributed to *The Red Wheelbarrow* by William Carlos Williams. In particular, she claims, "writers, especially poets, continually push readers to consider concepts through their word choices, their setting, and their characters" (p. 203). The above poetic experience that my art teacher provided, fitted me with another lens, another perspective, which, in the life of teaching proved invaluable for pushing me, and, in turn, my own students to see the world anew. Finn (1985) remarks, "It is another story if you are fortunate enough to be with an inspired teacher who…opens your eyes, to things you could never see on your own (p. 54). Presented in the pages of the following paper is a specific poetic illustration of one of my graduate student's visual investigations, prompted by an assignment from my course.

> Poetry, narrative, and
>   difference, come together to
>   offer the reader
>   a student's perception—
>   his own storied view of the special
>   in education.

Predicting the birds: One student's poetics of difference

According to Butler-Kisber (2010), poetry has forever had the power to attract humankind because of its ability to convey poignancy, musicality, rhythm, mystery and ambiguity" (p. 82). In

content learning areas such as physical education (Baker, 2007) social studies (Statz, 2012), and visual arts (Moorman, 2006), poetry can expand learners' opportunities to build relevant subject knowledge while establishing personal connections. Leggo (2008) so aptly conveys that poetry is "a way to know the world…a way to be and become in the world" (p. 46). That is, as learners transact in subject content, they also transact in the content of their lives. In the pages that follow, my co-author, a former graduate student in my course on research in special education, and I illustrate the value of incorporating poetry into a content area classroom. Conveyed with the aesthetic and efferent elements of poetic prose, he presents his completed assignment—a paper narrating his position on the existence of special education in society, while I reflect on my role to encourage him to produce such a work. But first, I begin with background information.

Background information

During a recent winter term, I taught a graduate course on research issues in special education in the Faculty of Education at The University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Ontario. The course, which spanned thirteen weekly three-hour classes for 36 graduate students representing a diversity of professional backgrounds from counselling to secondary school teaching to adult literacy instruction, offered various opportunities for students to constructively consider and constantly question the concept of the "special" in education in today's society. The possibilities of multiple perspectives— political to economic, historical to aesthetic, technological to emic—provided contexts of collaborative investigation, while the application of multimodalities encouraged a diversity of learning possibilities to support in-class activities and out-of-class assignments. To facilitate students' critical inquiry into the subject content of the course, I included various means of expression and representation such as journaling (Stone, 1998), creating body biographies (Morawski, 2010), constructing foldables (Fisher, Zike, & Frey, 2007), and responding to relevant film clips and works of literature (Chevalier & Houser, 1997; Wear, 1989).

The final assignment for the course consisted of students critically synthesizing their theoretical and practical positions on the concept of "special" in education in a five-page paper. More specifically, students needed to address the conditions, contexts, and practices that contributed to the existence of special education in our educational system, while referencing past and current experiences that helped shape their subjective perspectives. In keeping with the emphasis on multiple means of engagement used throughout the course, students had the option of including different forms of expression such as poetry, visual images, or three-dimensional representations to complete the assignment. One student in particular, Andrew Williams, the co-author of this paper, elected to compose his paper with the aesthetic and efferent elements of poetics and prose in concert with narrative inquiry.

Narrative and poetry. According to Chase (2005), narrative inquiry revolves "around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (p. 651). Storied recollections concerning such events as early moments of learning to read or an unexpected encounter with a former teacher can supply potential working material for creating narrative, subjective perceptions of our living lives. As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) state, "These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities" (p. 35).

In her work on research on poetic inquiry, Butler-Kisber (2010) emphasizes that poetry can act as a form of generated introspection bringing "new and unexpected insights into the world of everyday experience" (p. 83). Furthermore, Lubarsky (2002) refers to poetry as a critical and interpretive lens for experiencing and understanding the complexities of life (2002), while Leggo (2008) so thoughtfully articulates that poetry, "…is best perceived as a site where diversity of language and emotions and points of view and experiences can be explored" (p. 41). In the classroom, the production and consumption of poetry has the potential to expand students' repertoires of meaning-making across the curricula of life.

During the process of preparing her students for a field trip to an art museum, Moorman (2006) engaged them in the collaborative writing and performing of ekphrastic poetry, poetry inspired by visual art. She found that the experience of pairing poetry with the study of art, allowed her students to better appreciate the complexity of specific works, while putting "…them in tune with the intentionality of the creative process" (p. 50). Baker (2007), a high school English teacher, focused on poetry to help him make pedagogical and personal connections between academic and extracurricular activities offered at his school. By reflecting on his use of poetry to encourage the varsity basketball team as well as to establish a poetry club for students enthusiastic about the genre, Baker came to know that "Students' developing expertise in self-selected disciplines may act metaphorically to help them learn to participate in unknown, or less familiar, disciplines" (p. 41). Considering the power of poetry as a tool for being more reflexive in her own practice, Statz (2012), a high school learning specialist, studied her students' and her own reactions to an array of activities on creating and studying poems for such purposes as reading novels, participating in class discussions, and studying vocabulary in specific subject areas. Statz discovered that she became more conscious of her instructional decisions, while expanding her students' own options for meaning-making across the curriculum.

MacKenzie (2011), drawing on the capacity of poetry to help educators revisit and research their professional and personal experiences, views this form of inquiry as a way of knowing that "… (it) is always unfolding, blurring and becoming, sending off reverberations of language, sound, and emotion to be distorted, embraced, and reorganized toward new meaning" (p. 3). Andrew's narrated position on the existence of "special" in education, and my role in encouraging him to generate such a paper, now unfolds, occurring along what Rosenblatt (1968, 1982) refers to as an aesthetic and efferent continuum of responses, forever moving as a lived-through event or happening.

> *To produce a poem...,*
> *the reader must broaden the scope of attention to include the personal,*
> *affective aura and associations surrounding the words evoked*
> *and must focus on—experience,*
> *live through—the moods, scenes, situations*
> *being created during the transaction.* (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. *xvii*)

Cynthia

Early one evening in late Fall,
I review my graduate course outline
A critical eye casts questions
Education specializes in margins beyond the fringe—

A continuum of neighbourhood networks
Define one,
And then the other…
    us
     them
       special
         regular
           compliance
             defiance
               diagnosis
                 psychosis
                   intervention
                     descension

Within and outside school halls

Standards silence the promise of today's innovations
Labels chart the course of future lives
All, while the curious dog goes with incident into the night.

Pulled from under a cupboard door
I open a biography of Georgia O'Keefe
Train tickets note remembered passages
Penciled lines score important parts.

On page 31,
Two paragraphs down
An artist teacher colours her lessons
My turquoise pen circles the following quote.

> *The point was not*
> *to teach them to paint pictures,*
> *but to show them*
> *a way of seeing.* (Lisle, 1986)

Inspired by O'Keefe's words to her students,
I tuck the ticket back into the text
Place the book beside my computer
And begin.
To see
Requires the power of vision
A set of lenses
Produced by the imagination

> *... to disclose*
> *something beyond*
> *the ordinary...,*
> *never suspected before* (Greene, 1986, p. 57).

In the curriculum of special education
Perceptions once seemed beyond the ordinary
Provide current openings
Where barriers formerly stood.

> A boy almost lost in a sea of red ink
> Finds acceptance to survive and finally think (Sheehan & Sheehan, 2000).
> A professor's unlabelling of a student's self-perception
> Exposes a diagnosis told in disregard and deception (Clark, 2003)

> A younger sibling's essay on an older brother's fear
> Brings courage and bravery where differences dare (Orth, 2004).
> A reader's written response left little to assess
> Until poetry uncovers his potential to express (Hynes, 2003).

Written into the plot of a novel entitled *Sight Reading* (Kalotay, 2013), a master violin teacher proclaims, "We limit ourselves every day without even knowing it, simply by doing what we always do, falling into patterns, not pushing ourselves further" (p. 71). Armed by the force of his words, he urges his students to move past their fear and free themselves.

> *...such exchange of meaning*

can encourage individuals to
unexpectedly perceive patterns and structures
they never knew existed in the surrounding world

(Greene, 1986, p. 57)

It is those instances of (in)sight, when, at last, we find ourselves seeing (a)new, that I want for my students, for all of their future students. In the pages that follow, narrated in the efferent of story and the aesthetic of life, Andrew responds to my invitation to compose his position on the "special" in education with the pedagogical possibilities of a poem.
We live stories all the time.
We understand the past in terms of stories,
just as we seek to understand the future in stories (Leggo, 1995, p. 6)

And poetry, a form of story in life,
"*…can help us see differently,*
understand ourselves and others,
and validate our human experience (Perfect, 1999, p. 728).

Andrew

When I initially considered the opportunity to complete a research assignment using poetry as the main medium, I reacted with skepticism. In their work on the use of multiple-sign systems in the classroom, Short, Kaufman, and Kahn (2000) conclude, "…many adults are uncomfortable with some…sign systems, but that is the result of exposure to, and use of, those systems in school (p. 169). I considered their words in relation to my own initial resistance. I don't consider myself an "artsy" person, and truthfully, I usually find it difficult to relate to people who seem to participate in the world with a heightened sense of aesthetic awareness that allows them to detect things that others cannot , such as the beauty of the way light shines in a picture, or the pleasure of hearing a bird singing on a path as one walks to work. Such events of the senses, originating from more of an emotional, rather than a cognitive domain, appeared as extraneous events, which would never have a place in my world. Having always struggled with writing as a time-consuming and inefficient process, naturally, I felt nervous about completing my assignment with poetry, while adhering to the rigorous criteria a research paper in a graduate course would require. Would I produce amateur and nonsensical sentences posing as art, or a well-articulated paper without the conventional elements of a more standardized text? But, as Damico (2005) contends, poetry can help students engender understandings about complex social issues (p. 138), and ultimately, according to Leggo (2008) (who) states, know the world, as a way to be and become…(p. 29). In her book entitled *The Writing Life*, Dillard (1989) describes her life in writing as finding yourself in a new territory: "Is it a dead end. Or have you located the real subject?" (p. 3). In the end, I decided to accept my instructor's invitation to locate myself in a new territory and compose my paper with poetry. Would I arrive at a dead end or locate my real position on the "special" in education? My answer, which I actually looked forward to representing and expressing, unfolds below.

Predicting the birds: My position on the "special" in education

…your own life has a meaning both for you and for others. Your own life tells a story (or a series of stories) that when narrated well, can deliver to your readers these delicious aha! moments of self and social insight that are too rare in more conventional forms of research (Nash, 2004, p. 24).

There is a story in need of telling
A story about someone's life
A story about a boy's life

Enter the Boy

The boy was different; he always was, always will be
In the beginning, he was unaware
Gradually he fell out of pace with his counterparts
Literacy was challenging; he hated reading
He was also poor at writing
He was below his peers, feeling more and more unlike them

This is so common to those that I serve; social rejection and isolation (Greenham, 1999).

The boy could see the difference
He a jaybird, they the ducklings—the precocial
Extras, he needed extras; extra time, extra effort, extra focus
Or was it simply a matter of pacing
His own pace

I am the "special" in special education
I serve those who are labelled, those who are medicalized and those who are stigmatized
Some would say I serve the undisciplined; the poor parented
According to society they are the unmotivated, the low self-esteemed, the socially inept
Despite appearances, they are individuals
Regardless of who they are, it is the services I provide that must be questioned

But the boy was not a jaybird either
A little too able, but not able enough
Between two divides: alone in this regard

To the heart of the issue the boy brings forth
How does one gauge how different or similar one from another is or ought to be?

Normally this was not a problem
But as time grew on his desires to fit in became more important

Rooted in the writings of early statisticians, the notion of normal came alive
For when one is determining what he or she should strive for,
who should they consider?
According to Davis (2006) the early fellows answering this question were all eugenicists, hoping to improve humans by eliminating the deviations
Embrace the idealization of the average person:
Neglect the pressurizing paradox it creates
 An unreachable Ideal: "a position devoutly to be wished for" (Davis, 2006)
And so the standard deviation is born
A deviation itself

Oh to be able thought the boy
To be able to swim and fly like the ducks
So natural and quick, with so little effort

The misinformed; they are the **ableists**
They are victims of a culture, which deceives us into believing everybody must be as able as the most able individuals
They wish to enable everyone instead of accepting and embracing difference
 For the ablest "it is better to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than Braille,

spell independently than use a spell check, and hang out with non-disabled kids as opposed to disabled kids" (Hehir, 2002, p. 4)

Assumptions these are, based on the invisible order that is always in the background of society (McDermott & Varenne, 1995)

An order, which refutes the idea that we should respect and value these individuals for the people they really are

I ask again, whose place is it to make the above distinctions?

The boy was fortunate
Too close to the standard to receive my specialized care
But not far enough as to survive without it
He was capable of flying, though it was very taxing
Apart of the MAINSTREAM the boy became
Too capable

These are the worst of **Ableist** assumptions
And held by those you would least expect
Oh yes my deepest secret; a practice revealed
Special expectations are for those in my care
Expectations lower than most
"The most damaging ableist assumption is the belief that disabled people are incapable"
(Hehir, 2002, p. 27)

> 86% percent of teachers and principals believe that setting high expectations for all students would have a major impact on improving student achievement…36% of teachers and 51% of principals believe all students have the ability to succeed academically…53% of students strongly agree that all of their teachers in their schools want them to succeed (MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2009,
> p.3).

Assumptions present themselves from within.

The boy knew he came across as stupid
Though he did not feel he was a fool
Humour was his cloak
It was always better to be seen as a clown rather than a fool

Oh yes, the pervasive "dilemma of difference" (Coleman, 2006, p. 141) the **STIGMA**
Socially constructed from our ancestral desires to avoid the unfamiliar— the unknown
The non-stigmatized look so quickly for a single difference
Rather than the many similarities that may be shared (Coleman, 2006).
Fear is what fuels this prime evil behaviour
Harmful, unjust, though **NATURAL**

Cometh the young man

But a fool the young man was not, nor would he appear to remain
The power of his father's socio-economic status propelled him
Off to a university to learn how to think
Not the most academic school nor discipline, but a part of the "pond" nonetheless
A teacher of all things he wanted to become
The prospect of helping others seemed familiarly welcoming

A teacher, a young teacher
In search of his place; in search of his practice
Looking to others for direction, inspiration, and mentorship
An idol he saw. A woman of greatness
She was one of my greatest practitioners
Welcome, wanted, and worthy she made her students feel
EXPECTED the best from her students
Achievements no one saw before are seen despite what subjective interpretations one could make about the attributes and characteristics of a student's social class
Too often, I see this as the foundation upon which expectations are based
A self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education (Rist, 1970)

But in the pursuit of this goal, he, overcome by another
The desire to deviate from the norm on the other side of the bell curve
An obsession with overachievement brought him to graduate school
Challenging and rewarding, but costly; too costly
And upon faltering, the boy understood his struggles

It was at university that I met him
I recalled him vaguely from our slight encounter in early high school and the help I gave him during his undergraduate degree
Help in hidden ways, through several extensions
But not until the last month of his six and a half years did I serve him like only I can
What I am known and celebrated for, the gift of self-knowledge and exception, I bestowed upon him
For the boy, the young adult, was indeed in need of help; his working memory deficient

It was the professors that made all the difference
They saw the ducks flying with the jay; the jay flying with the ducks
Without their perspective the young man would have crashed and burned
No doubt a victim of circumstance

As educators, teachers are always focused on promoting the need for students to reach their potential
But whoever said potential is fixed in a definitive time and place?
Those that believe in the modifiability of human potential have long ago advocated for educators to take the *active-modification approach*. Believe in the possibility of potential, while not falling victim to passive-acceptance (Feuerstein, Rand & Rynders, 1988)
What role do you play in the extent to which "the social resources, interventional; processes, and educational practices are geared toward meaningfully modifying the individual himself as well as shaping his environment to be more modifying?" (Feuerstein, Rand & Rynders, 1988, p.14)

So how high are your expectations and your commitment to keeping them?
Like so many things, it is widening and reorienting one's perspective that counts

Indeed they had pushed him, farther than he had thought
It was at graduate school where the young man was awakened
Trying to make sense of the practice he was entering
Perplexed by his own lack of attention to a question posed during class:
What is so "special" about special education?

Enter the adult

Where does the boy, the young man, and the adult stand?
A standard among deviations, a deviation among standards?
Who determines whether the next to come are blue jays or ducklings?

Look me in the pedagogy when you ponder over why I am so special
Ask yourself what role you are playing in the growth of birds
Do you see ducks or jays?
If you do not see a **BIRD** you have missed the point
Perhaps you better think again…and remember the boy's story

Exit
all

Poems are singular,
individual creations
and they communicate
in their own singular ways.
(Kuppers, 2008, p. 142)

According to Ely (2007), "Poems spotlight particular events in ways that lift them out of the often overwhelming flood of life so that they can be understood as part of that complex business" (p. 575). The narrative told above, comprised of my lived-through experiences, locates me within my own position in the "special" of education.

The learning opportunities offered to me during my Master's of Education program instilled in me a personal and professional awakening. The poetic project in particular, encouraged me to understand my life, especially in relation to my future teaching situations in special education. More specifically, the poetic inquiry helped me to explore, reflect on, and more clearly and vividly articulate the important, valuable, and meaningful elements of my position on the "special" in education. Approached with a deep sense of personal and professional commitment, this assignment, emerging as one of the most authentic pieces of work I have ever completed, profoundly shaped my reality of the ever-changing world of special education. I hope that my poetic narration will inspire others to take a risk and engage in the potential possibilities of critical reflection by way of multiple forms of expression and representation. Your story is more interesting, and in need of telling, than you think. As Smith and Sparkes (2008) state, "…exploring narrative is potentially useful for the insights it can give into the active, self-shaping qualities of human thought and the power of stories to create and refashion selves and identities in their multiple guises and different contexts (p. 18). It is poetry that "allows for maximum input in and between the lines" (Ely, 2007, p. 575), to bring to life those experiences of people and places.
[My] poem is not a finished statement of epistemology;
it is a question,
a work always in progress.
(Smith, 2001, p. 387)

Cynthia

When we see the world through a poet's eyes, ordinary things can become extraordinary.
(Statz, 2012, p. 19)

When I first offered my students the opportunity to compose their positions on the "special" in education in forms other than a conventional paper, I too felt skepticism, vulnerability, yet, at the same time, wonder and excitement, entering into new territory, which could either be, as Dillard described, "a dead end or the real subject" (p. 3). As it happened, Andrew accepted my invitation with the view of composing his assignment by way of poetry. According to Statz (2012), "Whether it's finding poems in student work, class discussions, content folders, journal entries, or all those other places where they hide just waiting for us to discover them, the doorways into poetry are plentiful" (p. 24). With the casting of an insightful eye through the aperture of poetry, Andrew made effective use of both efferent and aesthetic stances to thoughtfully and metaphorically articulate his past and current experiences, referring to pertinent research literature to support his text. Like Leggo (1995),

who, as a poet, seeks "to live in the dark places of experience…to leak a little information about myself" (p. 10), Andrew faced himself and narrated his life in the "special " in education, inquiring into such places as ableism, isolation, bell curves, and more, until he began flying with the ducks, and the ducks began flying with him. Finally he asks, "*Who determines whether the next to come are blue jays or ducklings*?"

An assignment
Allows an instructor to discern
What their students have taken away
The efferent—
The residue left after reading (Chaplin, 1982).

Hidden between the lines,
The imagination provokes
Feelings and attitudes (Chaplin, 1982)
The aesthetic—
Half the story never told

Cloaked in humour
Amid circumstances of extra time
Fitting in becomes a struggle
An obsession in overachievement
Better think again

Too capable
A narrator writes
Disclosing stories in need of telling
Transactions beyond information
Feelings double the text

Epilogue

Andrew

While attempting to further understand the "special" in education, I made direct connections to what I hoped would one day become my career in teaching. Since writing my poetic narrative, I have become a special education teacher. After entering teaching and overcoming the immediate anxiety of the unknown, I have to say, the vestiges of what came out of this assignment still lingers with me today. While attending classes and completing my assignments, I came to realize that a recurring position on education constitutes an essential part of the teaching process, especially in relation to special education. This poetic project compelled me to stop and actively reflect on some very important questions. In doing so, I acquired the enormous advantage of entering my teaching practice knowing that I have and will continue to consider the complex nature of the "special" in education. All students need to receive an education aimed at fostering their full potential, no matter what challenges life has placed in their path, as I alluded to in my poem. It is this philosophical outlook on education that permeates my thoughts and influences my actions in the classroom, forever alerting me if I lapse into an ableist position. The notion of balance needs to be at the forefront of educating students with special needs, always staving off any possibility that their education become a mere system of efficient categorizations. Smith and Sparks (2008) emphasize that narrative has the power to incite thought, emotion, and action. I hope my own narrative becomes an inspiration for other educators. More than you realize, your stories also need to be told. Poetry can become your voice.

Cynthia

In his pioneering work on encouraging teachers to face themselves, Jersild (1955) emphasized the importance of personal significance "…in connection with everything we seek to learn and everything that is taught from the nursery school through postgraduate years" (p. 136). Andrew's

assignment on the "special" in education illustrates the potential of a narrative told in the poetics of prose to critically inquire into the personal in relation to the "special" in education, while offering others the possibility to hear his words and reconsider their own positions. In their work on the use of poems for multiple voices to teach creative writing, Bintz and Henning-Shannon (2005) state, "In writing, authenticity involves the willingness of authors to make themselves vulnerable, to put their emotional and intellectual thumbprint on their work for all to see" (p. 35). Inspired by Andrew's narrative in poem, my future course agendas will include opportunities for students to participate in class sessions and complete course assignments with the possibilities of multiple means of expression and representation. According to Leggo (2007), the telling of stories allows others to make sense of our experiences from a multiplicity of possible interpretations. That is, "Instead of trying to close down understandings, we ought to focus on opening up possibilities for wide-ranging connections, questions, and insights" (p. 195). Poetry, with its pedagogical potential for thinking, feeling, and meaning, provides a space for individuals to "…break open locked chambers of possibility…(Rich, 1993, p. xiv).

> *You write it all,*
> *Discovering it*
> *at the end of the line of words.*
> *The line of words,*
> *is a fiber optic, flexible as wire;*
> *it illuminates the path…* (Dillard, 1989, p. 7)

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Opportunities and Challenges of Talent Development for Students Placed At-Risk

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Abstract

Let us suppose that schools are, or might strive to become, places in which educators work collaboratively with parents and the wider community to recognize, nurture, and celebrate the strengths and talents in all people (cf., McCluskey, Treffinger, & Baker, 1995). Based on such a vision for education, this article describes a practical model of education for talent development and identifies several ways in which that model can contribute to effective educational experiences for students who have been placed at-risk.

*Keywords***:** Talent development model; students at-risk; effective programming; autonomy, productivity.

A Model for Talent Development Programming

Treffinger and Feldhusen (1996) argued that talent development might be viewed as the "successor" to gifted education, an emphasis on talent development that has more recently been echoed by Olszewski-Kubilius (2011) in her National Association for Gifted Children Presidential Address and by others. The Levels of Service (LoS) model for talent development in education (Treffinger, 1998; Treffinger, Young, Nassab, & Wittig, 2004; Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby, & Wittig, 2008) presents a practical framework for implementing contemporary, inclusive programming in a single school, throughout a school district or division, or even in broader policy and program contexts. Applying the LoS approach can point the way for educators to become *talent scouts* who seek out and nurture the talent potentials in all children and youth. Significantly, this includes many students who might never be considered for services under more traditional views of "gifted education" (McCluskey, Baker, O'Hagan, & Treffinger, 1995, 1998; McCluskey, Place, Treffinger, & McCluskey, 1998; McCluskey & Treffinger, 1998).

LoS programming is *flexible, inclusive, responsive, proactive,* and *unifying* (Center for Creative Learning, 2010). It is *flexible* and does not follow a fixed formula, curriculum, or set of services and activities for all students. Instead it involves many different kinds of activities, people and places, as appropriate for each student, based on his or her needs and interests. As an *inclusive, responsive, and proactive* model, it addresses many talent areas and responds to the positive, emerging, and expanding needs of students, providing guidance for instructional planning and delivery. LoS challenges teachers, schools, districts, parents, and the community to take deliberate, constructive action for talent development, thus offering a *unifying* structure for communication and collaboration among many constituents.

The LoS model's four levels are illustrated in Figure 1; they are: Level I (programming for *all* students), Level II (programming for *many* students), Level III (programming for *some* students), and Level IV (programming for a *few* students). Let us consider briefly the nature of each of these four levels; interested readers can find more extensive descriptions and case study examples of each of the four levels at www.creativelearning.com/talent-development/about-los.html, the website of the Center for Creative Learning.

Level I: Programming for *All* students

Level I of the LoS approach involves instructional activities aimed at all students. Level I activities are often short in duration (e.g., a single event, lesson, or unit). The objective is to build a foundation of experience, through which students discover and begin to pursue their personal interests and strengths. Level I activities might take place in any classroom, school, or other learning setting. They engage students in activities that provide broadening experiences or "exposure" to new ideas and places, opportunities to think creatively and critically and to apply higher-level thinking (beyond the knowledge and recall level), or to learn in ways that are adapted to their unique interests and styles. Level I activities can serve as a springboard for students or adults who work with them to recognize areas of particular interest and talent potential. Upon observing a learner's strengths, teachers, and parents encourage him or her to follow-up with more in-depth and demanding involvement in a particular area of interest. Level I activities also provide a foundation for students to acquire independent learning skills and to begin to assume responsibility for setting personal goals and for managing and directing their own learning.

I. Services for ALL Students
(e.g., thinking skills, learning styles, group projects…)

II. Services for MANY Students
(e.g., Destnation ImagiNation, FPS, Inventing, Science Fair, based on interests & emerging talents)

III. SOME Students—need alternative opportunities.
(Planned modifications which extend beyond school program)

IV. A FEW Students– benefit from services that are highly individualized.
(Activities planned through careful, detailed assessment of student's unique characteristics)

Figure 1: The Level of Services Model ©2004, Center for Creative Learning (Reproduced by permission).

Level 11: Programming for *many* students

Level II programming invites students to build on their initial curiosity about or interest in particular subjects or talent areas and to explore them in more depth. All students *might* participate in any Level II activity; however, not every student *will* become involved in all activities. While other people (e.g., teachers, youth workers, or parents) might recommend or encourage students to become involved, voluntary participation is a key element of Level II, building students' ownership responsibility for talent development.

Level II activities vary in scope and duration, but generally have fixed points at which students can decide whether to continue or move on to other interests. They often involve creating some product or taking part in a public performance or presentation. Level II programming may include elective classes, self-selected in-class enrichment projects, open-

performance groups (such as a glee club, newspaper, or theatre group), and other interest-based activities (such as a science club, computer group, or debate team) and programs that nurture teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving skills (e.g., the Future Problem Solving Program International; www.fpspi.org). School-based offerings are often supplemented by community activities with open membership (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, sports groups, and scouting). These activities not only allow students to test their level of interest and commitment to a particular field, but allow supportive adults to work with them, to observe and record their accomplishments, and to urge students with potential to move on to more demanding and in-depth work.

Level III: Programming for *some* students

Level III programming offers services for students who are enthusiastic about the particular field of study or talent area and who aspire (and are expected) to perform at a consistently high level of engagement and accomplishment. In Level III the focus shifts away from foundation-building or exploratory activities to differentiated responses to a student's maturing strengths and talents. Students sustain their participation in Level III activities (individually or in groups of talented peers) over an extended period of time, and devote a considerable amount of time on their own to study, practice, or prepare.

Level III opportunities might include auditioned musical, speech, and theatrical groups, extended science, social studies, or art projects (which may move to higher levels of competition or presentation), inventing or community service programs or competitions, creative writing for publication, individual study in any domain, or clubs. Examples of opportunities outside the school might include private lessons or advanced tutoring, or participation in auditioned community-based performing groups. Mentors, teachers, parents, and coaches continually challenge the students to stretch and move on to more demanding work, and a greater sense of accomplishment.

Level IV: Programming for *a few* students

Level IV programming in the LoS model recognizes and responds to the exceptional needs that may be demonstrated by a few students in any domain who have outstanding records of expertise, experience, dedication, passion, and ability to attain or approach a "professional" level of performance and accomplishment in that subject or talent area. Students engage the content of the domain creatively, acting as a professional in the field would, following a professional process of inquiry, and problem solving that deals with real-life issues. They will often share their accomplishments and products with others in their field and with the public. They may receive recognition and support for these products with advanced academic credit, publication, professional performance, selection for highly-competitive programs or groups, or having their work patented. Students might take part in regional, national, and in some cases, international, competitions or attend special seminars, concerts, or workshops designed to bring them together with other students who are highly accomplished in their field of interest.

Level IV services often also extend beyond the school setting, through connections with mentors who are successful in their field, internships, active involvement in professional organizations or societies, or advanced learning through web-based distance education courses or projects.

Students who are at-risk

Despite our idealistic vision of education as an exciting, engaging, dynamic set of experiences that captivates and nurtures every student, it has long been the reality that for many students, this view has been unrealistic. These students have found little stimulation, challenge, or success in school and have become disillusioned, disenchanted, or "demotivated," removing themselves emotionally, psychologically, and physically from school, from learning, and even from a productive role in society (cf., McCluskey, Baker, Bergsgaard, & McCluskey, 2001; McCluskey & Treffinger, 1998).

Work in this area has often focused on characteristics of individual at-risk students, commonly describing them as likely to display low academic self-concepts, unfocused personal and career objectives and expectations, external locus of control, reliance on extrinsic, rather than intrinsic motivation, inadequate study skills, and passive resistance to the efforts of parents or teachers (e.g., Ender & Wilke, 2000).

At-risk students often demonstrated a sustained record of failure and low academic achievement. While there might be at-risk students from any socio-economic level, many come from poverty or from homes in which there is little value or support for education. Tending to be older than classmates, at-risk students have been described as demonstrating emotional and behavioural problems, being alienated from school, and associating with other low-achieving and unmotivated peers.

They tend not to be active in school activities and to demonstrate disciplinary or truancy problems that lead them to fall behind farther and farther from successful completion or graduation. As they fall behind, their alienation from school and educators grows, and personal or family problems, substance abuse, or encounters with the justice system increase.

In an article on "at-risk," the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL, undated) cited an alternative perspective advanced by Hixson (1993) that "the central dilemma is that we have framed the problem incorrectly and, as a result, have been looking for solutions in the wrong places. This predicament derives from widespread, but nonetheless incorrect, assumptions" that must be reframed.

Hixson argued that it would be more productive to approach the challenge by considering that:
" • Students are not 'at-risk,' but are placed at-risk by adults.
• Building on student strengths (e.g., knowledge, experiences, skills, talents, interests, etc.), rather than focusing on remediating real or presumed deficiencies is the key.
• It is the quality of the entirety of the school experience, rather than the characteristics of the students, that will determine success or failure--both theirs and ours. The two can never be separated."

Thus, Hixson proposed,
"Students are placed 'at risk' when they experience a significant mismatch between their circumstances and needs, and the capacity or willingness of the school to accept, accommodate, and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional, and intellectual growth and development. As the degree of mismatch increases, so does the likelihood that they will fail to either complete their elementary and secondary education, or more importantly, to benefit from it in a manner that ensures they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be successful in the next stage of their lives, that is, to successfully pursue post-secondary education, training, or meaningful employment and to participate in, and to contribute to, the social, economic, and political lives of their community and society as a whole. The focus of our efforts, therefore, should be on enhancing our institutional and professional capacity and responsiveness, rather than categorizing and penalizing students for simply being who they are."

Effective directions

Given an emphasis of the interaction between student characteristics and the school experience, then, talent development, especially when viewed in a contemporary, inclusive way, is a relevant and potentially important component of an effective response to the needs of students at-risk. The LoS model for talent development programming, for example, is well-suited for addressing the opportunities and challenges in a constructive way. Table 1 identifies nine principles of effective programming for students at risk and the relevance of the LoS model for meeting them.

Our world is in great need of innovative and effective solutions to an ever-expanding array of problems and challenges. At the same time, however, life today is rich in opportunities for invention and creative accomplishments in the arts, humanities, science, and technology. We can hardly afford to waste the talents of any of our children or youth. Many young people who may now be experiencing frustration, failure, withdrawal, low productivity, and limited prospects for future career success or personal satisfaction, are capable of much more. Within the population that has now been

placed at-risk may be the talented leaders we will need for the future. The LoS Model of Talent Recognition and Development challenges us to locate and nurture those students and provides us with practical tools to do so.

Table 1: Relating LoS to principles of effective At-Risk programming.

Principles of Effective Programming for Students Who Are At-Risk	Relevance of LoS Talent Development Programming Model
Place more emphasis on students' potentials and strengths than on problems, what's wrong, and "faults".	Services involve recognizing and responding to a variety of student strengths, talents, and interests.
Avoid negative stereotypes and labelling of students.	Recognize that all students have the potential for talent development (rather than identifying a single "select" group based on test scores or past achievement).
Recognize that individuals have unique strengths and preferences as learners, and will perform better when enabled and supported in using those strengths.	Make a fundamental commitment to "bringing out the best in every student" and view nurturing students' strengths as more important than selecting pre-defined groups or categories of students.
Provide flexible programs in which curriculum and instruction are tailored to individual students' needs, and are structured and delivered in innovative ways.	Talent development learning plans involve a profile of each student's skills, experiences, interests, learning styles, and talents.
Create programming that is delivered in alternative settings and offers a broad range of options.	Consider a variety of programming services, offered in varied formats and settings, rather than a single, school-based program.
Place a strong emphasis on personal attention and relationships with qualified, caring staff.	Engage students in working with teachers, peers, community members, and mentors (in person or virtually) based on the student's unique strengths, interests, and talents.
Provide learning opportunities that are "process-rich," engage students in learning and applying methods and tools for generating ideas, focusing ideas and making effective decisions, and engaging in constructive, forward-looking problem solving.	Involve learning and application of specific tools and methods for Creative Problem Solving.
Guide students in constructive social behaviour and responsible decision-making and self-management	Recognize that autonomy and self-direction are not just traits that are "present or absent" in students, but skills that can be learned and applied successfully and gradually over time.
Engage students in real-life learning challenges, practical skills, and opportunities for application.	Emphasize engaging students in original individual and team or group projects that lead to real-world products and audiences.

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The Relationship between Bullying and Suicide in A Sample of 53,000 Young Minnesotans

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Abstract

Data from the spring 2010 Minnesota student survey were analyzed in order to quantify the risk for suicide ideation as a function of bullying variability. Other factors available from the survey included alcohol and other drug use, within-family violence and abuse, mental health symptoms. In addition, a factor analysis revealed a protective connectedness factor (with family, community, and educators). A principal component analysis was conducted to determine systematic variables that were subsequently entered into a logistical regression equation. The bullying factor (victimization plus some mild bullying), alcohol and other drug use, mental health indicators and gender (coded as Female), and family violence all significantly and strongly predicted suicide ideation among 53,000 Minnesota youth. Connectedness with family, school, and community turned out to be a protective factor (e.g., demonstrated a negative correlation with suicidal thoughts). Additional results demonstrated that bullying also was associated with with self-reported suicide attempts.

Many media reports direct the attention of helping professionals to the connection between bullying and suicide; a term that has gained currency online and in the popular media is "bullycide" (coined by the journalists Marr and Field [2001] in their book *Death At Playtime*). At first glance it makes sense that the often-brutal abuse of young people at the hands of their peers produces levels of stress that naturally lead to, among other issues, somatic complaints, depression, and even suicidal ideation and attempts (see excellent reviews by Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Rigby & Slee, 1999). As will be developed below, a complicated relationship exists between bullying and thoughts about suicide, ideation, attempts, and completions, commonly known as "suicidality… a broad term that includes both suicidal ideation and behavior, both nonfatal and fatal" (Food and Drug Administration, 2010).

Bullying. If child-on-child aggression predicts suicide ideation then the incidence of bullying becomes a public health and suicide prevention concern. Several reasonably large-scale, population studies have revealed that bullying remains a significant problem in the United States (U.S.). For example, in 2001, Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt reported that among 16,000 students in grades six through ten, 13% reportedly bullied others, 11% experienced bullying, but seldom bullied others, and 6% both bullied others and suffered peer aggression (bully-victims). This means that seven in ten students did not participate in some way.

Rose, Espelage and Monda-Amaya (2009) reported similar findings based on a study of 22,000 third- through eighth-grade students: Fifteen percent were rated as chronically victimized, 17% ringleader bullies (e.g., led others in the mobbing of individual students); Rose et al. rated 8% as bully-victims (participating on both aspects). This leaves 60% as bystanders or non-participants. Simanton, Burthwik, and Hoover (2000) sampled over 2,300 youth in North Dakota, reporting roughly 62% as bystanders; 19.6% bullying others, 9.2% categorized as bully-victims, and 8.8% victims only. Simanton et al. noted that self-reported bullying systematically increased as a function of grade, while self-reported victimization declined between late elementary (19.5%) through middle

school (14.7%) to the high-school figure of 8.8%. Self-admitted bullying, on the other hand, increased significantly as a function of grade level.

S*uicide.* As is true of bullying, experts list suicide as a significant problem in the U.S. and elsewhere. In the U.S., for example, suicide is responsible for about 37,000 deaths per year (12 per 100K, Kochanek, Xu, Murphy, Miniño, & Kung, 2012). It was the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2009 (the most recent year for which figures are available), rises to third among teens and young adults (Kochanek, et al., N = 4,371, 10.1 per 100K) behind accidents (28.9 per 100K) and homicides (11.3 per 100K).

About 8% of adolescents and young adults report having participated in an attempt in any given year, obviously non-fatal (Gould, Greenerg, Velting, et al., 2003). In our present investigation based on a poll of approximately 135,000 Minnesota students, 13.6% reported that they thought about an attempt during the year prior to the investigation, with 5.5% reporting an attempt during the preceding year.

Bullying and suicide. According to Lubell and Vetter (2006), bullying and suicidality share several noteworthy traits meaning that they should be considered simultaneously in prevention programming. At some level the relationship, if not the causal direction, of bullying and suicidality is fairly well established. Lubell and Vetter wrote that both suicide ideation and bullying appear mediated by levels of interpersonal problem-solving and coping skills. Once investigators decipher the relationship between bullying and a host of mediating individual and environmental variables, practitioners might strengthen community-wide suicide prevention programs through integrating them with anti-bullying efforts. An alarming possibility exists that suicide ideology may play a role in school shootings (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Vossekuil et al. reported that nearly eight-in-ten school shooters participated in suicide-related behaviour prior to harming their peers. It is perhaps less than surprising that targeted school shootings often end with the death of the perpetrator.

Researchers have addressed several aspects of the relationship between aggression and suicide-related factors, assessing first-order relationship between bullying and suicide and studying it in combination with other factors (e.g., depression, Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010), demonstrating that both bullying and depression tend to predict suicide ideation together and in combination, when controlling for gender and grade level (Dempsey, Haden, Goldman, Sivinski, & Wiens, 2011). However, other, longitudinal studies found that frequent bullying accompanied by depression was a stronger predictor of suicide risk than bullying alone (Klomek, Sourander, Kumpulainen, et al., 2008; Klomak, Kleinman, Altschuler, Marrocco, Amakawa, & Gould, 2011).

Klomek, et al. (2008) studied the relationship between bullying, depression, and suicide ideation in a sizable sample of nearly 10% of Finnish males born around 1981. The investigators studied risk factors twice, once when participants were about eight years of age and a second time when they turned 18. The investigation is noteworthy, not only for the excellent sampling procedures, but because the researchers treated age-eight depressive tendencies as a control variable. Frequent bullying of others at age eight predicted severe depression but not suicidality at age 18 (when early depression was held constant). Infrequent bullying predicted neither depression nor suicidal ideation. Klomek, et al. (2008), argued for the existence of a threshold level of aggression (bullying) in boys for predicting later psychiatric problems, possibly because higher levels of aggression remain somewhat normative in males and the fact that even mild levels of bullying or victimization tend to be associated with depression and suicidal ideation in females (see particularly Klomek, Marocco, Kleinmn, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). Finally, these data suggest that depression, perhaps particularly early depression, "…mediates the association between bullying, and suicidal ideation" (p. 53).

Klomek, Kleinman, et al. (2011) confirmed the relationship between bullying and depression at a later date in a study of 236 students in the eastern US-. The investigators followed up on thirteen-

through-eighteen-year-old students subsequent to a four-year tracking period. The researchers categorized participants into groups based on data from the original study, bullying (either bullies or victims, but few risk factors), at-risk plus bullying, and at-risk plus no bullying). Klomek, Kleinman et al. confirmed that bullying exacerbated risk; students who either bullied others or experienced bullying *and* risk at baseline proved significantly more depressed compared with members of a risk-only group. Klomek, Kleinman et al. noted that bullying victims experienced higher levels of both depression and suicide ideation after four years when compared with students who picked on others.

Researchers have combined peer-on-peer and intra-familial aggression prediction of suicide-related behaviour from both peer-on-peer (bullying) and intra-familial aggression suggesting that both predict suicide ideation, though the effect appears to occur more strongly in females (Baldry, & Winkel, 2003; Bond, et al., 2001; Dempsey, et al., 2011; Klomek, Maracco, et al., 2007). Other research teams have identified exacerbating factors such as loneliness (Hay & Meldrum, 2010) and protective mediating variables, such as intra-familial and school connections (Cui, Cheng, Xu, Chen, & Wang, 2011; McKenna, Hawk, Mullen, & Hertz, 2011; Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Koenig, 2011). Gender appears to mediate the relationship between bullying and suicide-related behaviour, with females responding more negatively to bullying and thus demonstrating stronger reactions to peer aggression.

It is essential to understand that suicide is a significant problem in the U.S. and across the world among adolescents and young adults. In the present investigation, we examine the relationship between bullying and suicide, simultaneously examining other factors that may prove relevant to the prevention community, including gender.

Males complete suicides five times as often as do females (National Institute on Mental Health, 2007), though females report suicidal ideation and attempt self-injury at higher rates than do their male peers. In one study, gender served as a mediating variable for the suicidality-bullying nexus (Klomek, et al., 2009). Specifically, with conduct disorder and depression controlled, significant variance (predicating suicide ideation from bully status) occurred in females, though not in males (Klomek, et al., 2009). Based on an exploratory analysis of a very large data set we [attempted to] predict suicide ideation from bullying (mostly victimization and correlated aggression variables), alcohol and other drug use and abuse, intra-familial aggression (Baldry & Winkel, 2003). Finally, based on an initial exploratory structural analysis, we included a protective factor, namely connectivity (with family, community, school, friends).

Method

Instrumentation

We obtained permission in September of 2011 to procure data from the 2009-2010 versions of the *Minnesota Student Survey* (*MSS*), collected across the state in late February of 2010 (Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team, 2010). The Minnesota State Department of Education (Minnesota, 2010) views the MSS as a partnership with other state agencies charged with evaluating and thus enhancing the well-being of children and youth (school districts, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Health, Human Services, and Public Safety), arguing that results may prove useful "in planning and evaluation for school and community initiatives and prevention programming."

We could not locate a script for administration of the instrument, but noted, via the Minneapolis Public School's web site (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2010), that passive or "opt-out" consent as well as child assent were obtained. State and local education officials administer the MSS every three years, targeting students in sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades.

Other than demographic information allowing for disaggregation by age, grade, gender, region, and site (e.g., alternative schools/ corrections facilities), the instrument includes over 300 items

covering topics including safety near school, physical activity and nutrition, emotional health, alcohol and other drug use, school performance, family life, and future plans (Minneapolis, 2010).

Minnesota Student Survey content differs as a function of age; in a sense an item sampling approach is employed. Ninth- and twelfth-graders receive items about sexual behaviour not seen by sixth-graders, but in other aspects are the same.

Participants

Altogether, 135,494 Minnesota teens responded to the instrument in 2010. In some ways, the survey process itself suggests that the *MSS* process is closer to a census than a survey. However, almost no individual survey item was answered by every respondent, therefore item responses become samples, with all of the potential unreliability that comes with volunteer effects. Nonetheless, the numbers were large enough on all pertinent items to warrant a reasonable estimate of risk issues. We discuss response rates in more detail later in the analysis section. Table 1 (below) shows the grade characteristics for the entire sample, whereas gender and other characteristics of samples and sub-samples appear later.

Table 1: Grade subdivisions for the entire sample and for the sample used in the analysis .

	Total Sample		Sample used in logistic regression analysis (responded to all items)	
Level	N	Valid Percent	N	Valid Percent
Not applicable	69	0.1	41	0.1
Grade 6	46791	34.5	1	<0.1
Grade 7	74	<0.1	24	< 0.1
Grade 8	137	0.1	53	0.1
Grade 9	47775	35.3	27365	51.8
Grade 10	665	0.5	283	0.5
Grade 11	1226	0.9	579	1.1
Grade 12	38718	28.6	24476	46.3
Total	135,445	100.0	52822	100.0
Missing	49	.0	19	< .1

We calculated a mean age of 14.5 for the entire sample (SD = 2.5, range = 10 to 21). The corresponding data for the final sample employed in analyses (responded to all items in the logistical analysis) was 16.1 (SD = 1.6, range = 11 to 21). It appears that older students proved more able or willing to respond to items. The racial and ethnic characteristics of the two samples are shown in Table 2 (Page 8).

Table 2: Racial and ethnic characteristics of the sample.

	Total Sample		Sample used in logistic regression analysis (responded to all items)	
Level	N	Percent	N	Percent
American Indian	2,120	1.6	531	1.0
Black/ African American	7,943	5.9	1,944	3.7
Hispanic/ Latino(a)	6,176	4.6	1,711	3.2
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	7,164	5.3	2,633	5.0
White/ Euro-American	96,844	71.5	41,973	79.4
Mixed Race (checked more than 1)	9,285	6.9	3,099	5.9
Don't Know/ No Answer	5,962	4.4	950	1.8
TOTAL	135,494	100.0	52,841	100.0

Statistical approach

Because of the diverse array of topics addressed in the survey, we approached this exploratory analysis of the relationship between bullying and suicidality by means of a three-step process.

(1) We attempted to detect latent structure in the data set through an exploratory factor analysis, by which we derived defensible scales and non-scalar variables that loaded together and that produced the lowest-possible between-factor correlations.

(2) We constructed scales and variables based on the PRINCOMP (though we added gender as a variable because of findings from the literature review).

(3) We entered the variables into a logistic regression equation, with suicide ideation (bi-variate- none versus some) as the criterion variable.

Results

Factor analysis

We converted as many variables as possible to meaningful scalar versions (wherein higher values represented "more" of some trait). When this proved impossible, we converted other items to reasonable bi-variate entities (coded as vectors of 1s [trait present] and 0s [trait not present]).

All pertinent variables (those related to safety, drug use, suicidality, mental health, and interpersonal connections, N = 101) were subjected to a principal components analysis. Through an iterative, trial-and-error process, we discerned that a five-factor, orthogonally rotated (Varimax) solution generated the most reasonable simple structure. We chose to interpret a model wherein (1) the most items loaded on at least one factor at .40 or greater; (2) the fewest items loaded on more than one factor at .40; and (3) a scree plot of eigenvalues depicted a reasonable break from randomness. (4) We also produced what we considered an "eyes on" sense that the resulting latent variables were thematically and theoretically sensible. After NFact = 5, idiosyncratic entities appeared that did not tie to any reasonable theory of human behaviour.

Factor solution

The five derived latent variables are shown in Table 3 (Pages 9-10). These results should be interpreted cautiously in that scales designed from the factors correlated from .19 (alcohol and drug abuse and family abuse) to .43 (absolute value, actually -.43, [mental health/ wellness & connected support]) despite the orthogonal rotation; in fact all 10 correlations proved statistically significant even with the Bonferroni adjustment). Of course, the method of rotating factors held these correlations within scales to the smallest possible values (the meaning of orthogonal rotation).

Table 3: Explanation and description of the five rotated factors.

Factor		Percent Variance Explained	Description	Sample Variables
1		21.1	***Significant alcohol and other substance abuse***. This factor was made up of the propensity to use and especially to abuse mind-altering substances; the variables loading most strongly all reflected substantial substance abuse with negative outcomes	Significant alcohol use, use of illicit drugs, blacked out, missed significant school days due to substance use; experienced trouble with legal authorities related to substance use
2		9.1	***Mental health and wellness.*** This factor represents general levels of mental health across several categories of stresses and treatment modalities	Mental health treatment (now or past), somatization, sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, experience of stress (within 30 days of completing the questionnaire)
3		4.0	***Connected support***. This entity measures the degree to which individuals are integrated into their schools, families, and communities. It looks very much like a protective factor, though purely empirical, not reflecting any extant psychological or sociological theory	School attendance, intent to pursue more education, intent to stay in school, sense that teachers take an interest [in me], relationships with other adults, "friends care" [about me]. Felt supported by spiritual leaders.

| 4 | | 3.3 | ***Tendency to "provocative" peer victimization.*** This factor consists of the degree to which the individual had been victimized in specific ways over the school year, but included an "exclude others" and "exhibit conduct aggression" items; students scoring high would reflect Olweus's (1993) constructsof both passive- and provocative victization | Someone threatened you at school [last 12 months], pushed you, kicked you, touched [unwanted] in sexual way, comments of a sexual nature, damaged, stole, you were excluded, you excluded others, conduct problems |
| 5 | | 2.6 | ***Family abuse.*** This factor measures the respondent's level of conflict and abuse encountered in their domicile and immediate surroundings | Abused by adult in household, family member(s) hit family member(s), adult in (out of) family touched you [inappropriately] |

Predictors

Based on the factor solution and a review of the literature, we constructed five predictor variables. Descriptions of bi-variate variables employed in the analysis are laid out in Table 4 (below). By way of comparison, we included numbers and descriptive results for both those individuals (N = 52,841) included in the predication equation (responded to all items in the logistical analysis) and those among the entire sample who responded to each item, but not to all of them. The proportions of respondents selecting choices proved remarkably similar across samples (except for age as noted above).

Table 4: Descriptive data for bi-variate variables in the investigation.

	All Respondents				Included in the logistic regression (responded to all Items)			
	Indicated		Not Indicated		Indicated		Not Indicated	
Variable	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Female (indicated) Vs. Male (F not indicated)	67,847	50.1	67,647	49.9	28,005	53.0	24,836	47.0
Suicidal ideation (criterion variable): Ideation at any time vs. no suicidal ideation (at any time).	27,385	21.4	100,661	78.6	12,124	22.9	40,717	77.1

1. Provocative victims

We constructed a bullying scale by summing all items for Factor Two—simply because all of the items that factored together had similar formats. We recoded as bi-variate seven variables related to victimization within the past year (experienced versus never experienced; threatened you, pushed you, kicked you, sexually touched [you] in an uncomfortable way, made sexual comments that made you uncomfortable, stole property from you). Several items referred to events over the past 30 days; we coded these from 0-2 (0 = never, 1-2 events = 1, and more than 2 events = 2) (excluded you, you excluded others). The last item that included bullying related to conduct problems (0-3 events, hit or beat up others). Thus, the provocative victimization scale ran from 0 to 13. Descriptive data for the two samples are shown in Table 2 (Page 8). Seven items related to types of victimization experienced while three related to victimization of others; all variables shared significant variance in the factor solution.

2. Gender = Female

We included gender = Female (F = 1, M = 0) in the analysis because of consistent findings that females typically experience greater levels and suicide ideation. The raw data for our sample matched this expectation from the literature with 18.3% of all males evidencing a threshold level of suicide

ideation (N = 4,551). The same indicator for females was 27.0% (N = 7,573). As might be expected, the chi square associated with the GENDER by IDEATION cross-tabulation was significant, with a value of x^2 (1 df) = 565.8, $p < .0001$.

3. Family abuse

The four variables loading on family abuse, with total possible values of 0 (no indicated items) to 1 (at least one indicated item identified via the factor analysis). Descriptive results are shown in Table 2 (Page 8). Because the total range of scores range from 0 (no abuse reported) to 4 (the respondent selected all examples of abuse), we can lay out more refined descriptive data for this variable. As can be seen in Table 2 (Page 8), 44,209 (83.7%) identified no instances, of those reporting one or more instances, 5,003 (9.5%) selected one example of familial violence; 2,755 (5.2%) selected two, 638 (1.2%) selected three, with the remaining 236 (0.4%) selecting all four exemplars.

4. Mental health/ wellness indicators

The variable constructed around Factor 2, approximated a normal distribution, though with a floor effect at value = 0. The resulting scale ran from 0 to 39, with an overall mean of 12.7, SD = 7.89, with 78,601 students responding.

5. Connected support

The connected support indicant was made up of a roughly normally-distributed variable running from 0 (selected no support mechanisms) to 42 (selected the highest value on all support choices). Descriptive data for both sub-groups are provided in Table 5 (below).

Table 5: Descriptive data for scalar variables included in the logistic analysis.

Variable (description)	Total responding to the item			Included in logistic analysis (responded to all items)		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Chronic Mental Health subscale/ Range 0 (no issues or treatment variables selected) to 39 (all variables selected at the highest level)	78,601	12.7	7.89	52,841	12.3	7.69
Connected Support/ Range = 6 (selected lowest level of all 10 variables [some started at 0, some at 1]) to 43.0 (selected highest level of all variables)	77,177	30.2	6.27	52,841	30.7	6.05
Provocative Victimization/ Range = 0 -13 (1 vs. 0 on 6 items and 0-2, on two items, and 0-3 on one item)	80,337	2.43	2.60	52,841	2.30	2.53
Family Abuse/ Four bi-variate (0-1 items, range = 0-4)	126,355	.30	0.70	52,841	.25	.65

6. Significant alcohol and other substance abuse

In examining the factor associated with alcohol and other drug abuse, we observed a distribution with three modes; the entire possible range of responses ran from 8 (lowest possible response on all items) to 70 (highest possible on all variables). First, a significant number of respondents (34,210, or 53.0%) indicated no use (e.g., obtained a raw score of 8). Next a roughly normal distribution ran from 9 to 24. These values clearly reflected use, perhaps experimentally, but few respondents in this range reported serious sequelae (passing out, missing school, criminal justice contacts, entering treatment). Finally, a third range ran from 25 to 70, indicating agreement with use-only items but also agreeing with choices related to negative consequences. Thus, we identified a three-level IV associated with drug and alcohol use, with a value of 0 assigned to abstainers (28,560 of those included in the logistic analysis [54.0%]), 1.0 for those in the mid-range (use, but little evidence of negative outcomes, 4,184 or 7.9%). We assigned a value of 2.0 to 20,097 participants

(38%). Over the total sample, a value of 0 accrued to 34,210 (53.1%), 1 = 5,515 (8.6%), and 2 = 24,672 (38.3%).

The criterion variable

The above five variables were employed in a logistical regression predicting suicide ideation. This variable was constructed such that all subjects who had reported any suicidal ideation at any time made up one level and those who had never engaged in such ideation made up the second level.

Logistic regression

As can be seen from Table 6 (Page 14), all variables lent significant predictability to the experience of suicide ideation, with, as might be expected, connected support proving to be a protective factor (e.g., negative predictor). The model Nagelkerke (1991) R^2 was .36, suggesting that over 30% of the probability of suicide ideation could be predicted from the model. As shown by the betas, the occurrence of bullying and family abuse proved the strongest predictors. When we ran a second model that only included bullying and mental health indicators, the Nagelkerke estimate of R^2 only decreased to .33.

Table 6: Logistic regression results.

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	Log$_b$
Female	.088	.026	11.5	1	.001	1.09
Provocative victimization	.370	.031	143.3	1	< .001	1.45
Mental Health	.132	.002	4,654.9	1	< .001	1.14
Connected Support	-.038	.002	288.9	1	< .001	0.96
Family Abuse	.442	.018	612.6	1	< .001	1.56
AOD Pattern Abuse	.205	.013	247.2	1	< .001	1.23
Constant	-2.628	.085	955.0	1	< .001	0.07

Descriptively, the odds that students who had experienced threshold bullying would consider suicide were 45% higher than those who had not experienced such abuse, controlling for all other variables. In a separate analysis, we calculated probabilities for students who had experienced three or more types of peer abuse (versus those who had experienced fewer types or none at all, see below).

As Baldry and Winkel (2003) found, peer abuse and abuse suffered in the home or from a near relative both predicted suicidal ideation. The odds ratio suggested that students experiencing the highest levels of family abuse were 42% more likely to report suicidal thoughts. As might be expected, the odds ratio for connected support proved less than one, suggesting that interconnections in the school, home, and community may serve as a protective factor for suicidal ideation, even in the presence of the other risk events; students scoring at the highest levels of connected support were about 4% less likely to engage in suicidal thinking. Females proved slightly more likely to engage in suicidal ideation than did males.

The effect seems to be additive. To show the strength of the model, we created a cohort of students who scored above the mean on scalar variables (or where the value of the bi-variate variable = 1, excluding FEMALE), and below the median on *Protective Factors*. Nearly 800 males in the high-risk group (N = 789, 62.5%) reported suicidal ideation, while 473 (37.5%) did not. The values for females were parallel (High-risk = 2,107, 69.4% engaging in SI, while 929, 30.6%, did not). As might be expected, given results of the logistical analysis, the Female value for suicidal ideation was higher.

Discussion

The results of this large-scale study suggest that bullying in school and aggression among family members should be considered in constructing comprehensive suicide prevention programs. While the effects for mental health indices are objectively larger, given the beta weight and the fact

that the variable in the present study ran to 39, the effect is objectively larger than for a two-level index. Nonetheless, the effect for bullying on suicidal ideation proved significant.

Many anti-bullying programs and safe schools experts (see Hoover & Oliver, 2008 for a review) advocate for developing and strengthening students' sense of connection with school and community. While it is impossible to make a case for causation in a cross-sectional snapshot such as the present one (suicidal ideation could cause one to reject or avoid connections), these results seem to lend equivocal support to such efforts. All else being equal, students connecting with family, community, and educators proved less likely to think of ending their lives.

These results lend support to the importance of bullying as an issue in the lives of young people. As might be expected, several research teams have shown a connection between physical and psychological safety and learning. In fact, elsewhere we have argued that after general intelligence and teacher effectiveness, psychological safety might well be the third best predictor of learning (Hoover & Oliver, 2008). As a result, prevention experts may want to consider bullying reduction as part of dropout prevention efforts (Simanton, Burthwick, & Hoover, 2000).

However, above and beyond learning and the general quality of school life, bullying prevention may well save the lives of significant numbers of students. To provide a sense of the effect size, we estimate that 68.8% of Minnesota students reported experiencing one or more types of bullying (based on our factorial combination of variables), with 36.1% reportedly undergoing three or more types (minus "excluding others").

For a sense of how these results play out on the ground, note that among the 23,080 respondents who reported facing no bullying, 561 (2.4%) reported a suicide attempt; the parallel figure for those experiencing one or more types of bullying was 4,571 [attempts] or 8.3%; the associated chi square was 951.1 suggesting that this difference did not occur by chance. Of the 6,066 who reported undergoing three or more types of peer abuse, 3,407 (11.4%) also reported an attempt (x^2, 1 df, = 1557.7, p < .0001, versus no attempts). Finally, for those experiencing from 5 to 7 types of negative peer interactions, 15% reported a suicide attempt. These compelling figures are shown in Figure 1 (Page 16). If student self-reports are to be believed, a dosage effect occurs.
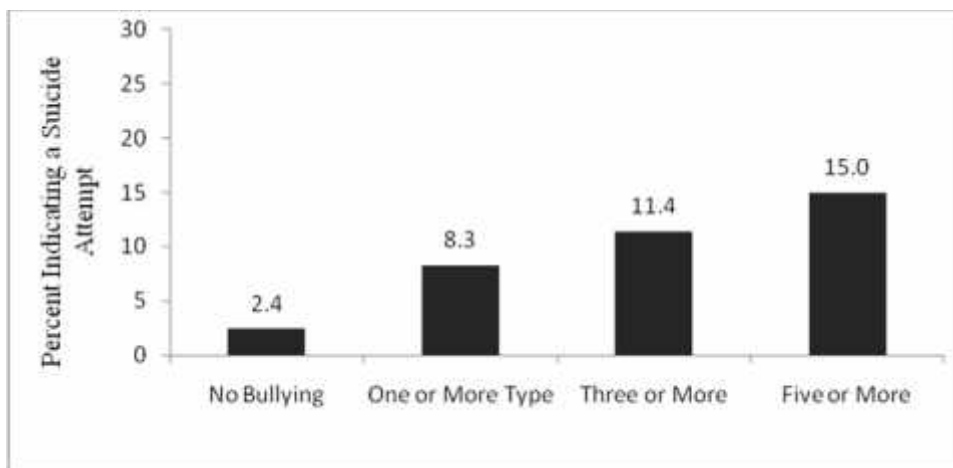
Figure 1: Reported suicide attempts as a function of the number of types of bullying experienced or perpetrated.

These results appear so compelling that it seems time for investing resources in a longitudinal study of suicide indicators that expressly include school bullying metrics.   Models for such studies exist in Finland (Klomek, Sourander, et al., 2008). We suggest that officials in regions in the U.S. partner to capture a longitudinal look at a sizable cohort of individuals to look for patterns predicting both suicide and homicide that include defensible bullying indicants. Given the present results, this

might prove an excellent investment of resources for the prevention of suicide, homicide, and dropout status.

When we entered all 101 variables into a seat-of-the-pants prediction equation the Nagelkerke R^2 proved to be near 50%; when we streamlined the analysis based on factor analytic results, the explained variance reduced to 36%. This suggests that we missed a considerable amount of important variability. We believe that such factors as short-term stress (e.g., breakup of relationships, sudden familial disharmony) probably explain a significant amount of variability in suicide ideation, as might physical health factors. Though the Minnesota Student Survey includes health indices, they did not fall cleanly into any of the factors that we derived and were thus excluded from analyses.

What probably occurs is a "straw that broke the camel's back" chain of events, with such entities as familial abuse, peer abuse, and mental health issues setting the stage (perhaps via the mechanism of increasing hopelessness), but requiring an event to trigger serious intent, incidents of self-harm and ultimately a suicide attempt. A longitudinal study would go a long way toward deciphering causal and protective chains.

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Acceleration for Talent Development: Parents' and Teachers' Attitudes towards Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Children

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Abstract

Acceleration is a theoretically supported intervention to support talent development of gifted students, but prolonged beliefs about its potentially damaging consequences for gifted students have inhibited its use in practice. This study formed part of a larger qualitative, multi-site case study, which examined intellectually gifted primary school students' educational provisions in Queensland and how the perspectives of primary school stakeholders were reflected in their school policies. The component of the study reported here used the results from interviews and discussion forums to compare the implications of the attitudes of teachers and parents towards the use of acceleration for academically gifted students and their socio-affective needs in Queensland primary schools. Overall, both teachers and parents expressed positive attitudes towards specific acceleration techniques, with subject acceleration receiving almost universal approval from the teachers in this study. The main finding was that the attitudes and opinions of the parents towards the range of accelerative practices strongly mirrored those of the teachers, with some concerns for associated social difficulties still paramount. However, the exception was that parents, who had accepted the need for acceleration for their own children, expressed more support for accelerative interventions. This research suggests that the overwhelmingly positive research evidence in support of acceleration for talent development may be starting to influence an attitudinal change from both parental and teacher perspectives.

*Keywords***:** Acceleration; gifted; teachers; parents; social and emotional development.

Introduction

Acceleration is one of the most well-supported interventions for gifted students in the research literature (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004; Gross, 2006b; Kulik, 2004; Lubinski, 2004; Merrotsy, 2003; Rogers, 2004; van Tassel-Baska & Brown 2007), "though it remains a controversial and underutilized strategy" (Siegle, Wilson, & Little, 2013, p. 28). It appears that educators have traditionally been reluctant to use it because of prolonged beliefs about its potentially damaging consequences, particularly in regards to the social and emotional development of gifted students (Bain, Bliss, Choate, & Brown, 2007; Hoogeveen, van Hell, & Verhoeven, 2005; Neihart, 2007; Siegle, Wilson & Little, 2013; Southern, Jones, & Fiscus, 1989; Townsend & Patrick, 1993).

Historically, parents have been in the position of advocating for acceleration for their children and some have documented their battles with the education authorities (Kumekawa, 2008; Merlin, 1997; Rogers, 2002). Therefore, it could be assumed that while teachers may hold a negative attitude towards acceleration, parents may hold a more positive one. However, there is little in the empirical research literature that directly canvasses the views of parents about acceleration practices, as the

extant literature tends to focus more on parental advocacy than specific provisions (Gross, 2004a; Osborn, 2001).

Acceleration refers to the educational practice of moving through the prescribed curriculum at a faster pace or a younger age than is usual (Pressey, 1949; Seigle, Wilson, & Little, 2013). There are two main categories of acceleration: grade-based acceleration, which reduces the number of years spent in the school system and; subject-based acceleration in which the student studies advanced content in a specific area of ability, with varying types of acceleration approaches within these categories (Rogers, 2004). Grade-based acceleration can also be thought of as a full-time accelerative option, while subject-based acceleration is a part-time option (Merrotsy, 2003). For the purposes of this article, four types of acceleration were discussed: early entry, where a child enters school or university before the usual entry age; grade-skipping, where a child moves ahead by one or more years and 'skips' the intervening grade; subject acceleration, where a child may go to another year level for a specific subject; and in-class acceleration, where a student works on advanced content within the regular class.

These distinctions are necessary because opinions and attitudes of parents and educators can vary widely depending on the model of acceleration being discussed. For example, 'grade skipping' appears to be the most controversial accelerative approach that engenders the most concerns from teachers (Rambo & McCoach, 2012; Siegle, Wilson & Little, 2013). However, much of the literature treats the word 'acceleration' as synonymous with 'grade-skipping', and indeed much of the research has focused on grade-based accelerative practices (Bain, Bliss, Choate, & Brown, 2007; Hoogeveen, van Hell, & Verhoeven, 2005; Southern, Jones, & Fiscus, 1989), but to assume that one necessarily means the other can lead to generalisations which may be misleading.

Recent reviews by Rambo and McCoach (2012) and Siegle et al. (2013) identified four main parent and teacher perceived concerns regarding acceleration, these being: feasibility; achievement/academic impact; teacher efficacy and; socio-affective impacts, especially regarding early entry and grade acceleration, with socio-affective concerns apparently still the most influential (Rambo & McCoach, 2012).

Acceleration and the social and emotional needs of the gifted student
Sociocultural perspective supports acceleration for gifted students

Gifted students learn at a faster rate and more easily than other children and therefore, an appropriate response involves, "matching the level and complexity of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the child" (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p. 1). It has been suggested that the field of gifted education has suffered through not having a clearly identified theoretical model behind it (Cohen, 1996; Margolin, 1994; McGlonn-Nelson, 2005). However, it would seem that much of the best practices advocated by gifted education proponents have been informed by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory even if such links are not always made explicit. In particular, the Vygotskian notion of the zone of proximal development would seem to offer robust justification for the practice of acceleration for gifted learners (Gallagher, Smith & Merrotsy, 2010).

For Vygotsky, learning which is oriented at a child's existing level of cognitive development is ineffective, as the mental processes at that level have already been mastered. Instead, learning should target that area of development that is just out of reach of the child independently, but which they can master with assistance. Students should be put into the position where they have to reach to understand and in this way, real learning is possible.

In fact, Vygotsky suggested that, "the only 'good learning' is that which is in advance of development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). These ideas have clear implications for gifted learners, many of whom spend the majority of their time in the classroom firmly entrenched in a different zone – their comfort zone.

In adopting a sociocultural perspective of education, acceleration becomes a natural response to the learning needs of gifted students. Instead of grouping students according to their chronological age, students should be placed within their zones of proximal development (McGlonn-Nelson, 2005). If we accept, as Vygotsky suggested, that the only good learning is that which is in advance of development, then it is imperative that gifted students be allowed to move out of their comfort zone and into their zone of proximal development through accelerative educational contexts.

Teacher attitudes towards acceleration options for gifted students

Despite the sociocultural perspective,and the overwhelmingly positive research evidence in support of acceleration for talent development, it appears that among teachers and educators it is still not a popular option for gifted students (Bain, Bliss, Choate, & Brown, 2007; Neihart, 2007; Plunkett, 2000; Siegle, Wilson & Little, 2013; Southern, Jones, & Fiscus, 1989). When educators express a negative attitude towards acceleration, their most frequently cited concern is that it will result in social and emotional damage for the students concerned (Gross, 1997; Neihart, 2007; Rambo & McCoach, 2012; Siegle, Wilson & Little, 2013; Townsend & Patrick, 1993). Swiatek and Benbow (1991) found that teachers and principals often believed that grade-skipping would lead to academic burnout, gaps in knowledge, poor social skills, isolation within peer groups, poor self-concept and arrogance. In a study of teacher education undergraduates, Bain et al. (2007) found that 82% of their respondents believed that skipping a grade would have a negative effect on gifted students' social skills.

A New Zealand survey of 152 experienced teachers and 140 teacher trainees revealed that both groups held generally negative attitudes towards acceleration (Townsend & Patrick, 1993). Most participants expressed more negative views about the social and emotional effects of acceleration than about the academic effects and more than 60% did not agree that there might be potentially harmful effects from keeping a gifted child with their age peers (Townsend & Patrick, 1993). The pre-service

teachers surveyed by Harris and Hemmings (2008) nominated grade-skipping as their least preferred educational strategy for use with gifted students. Southern, Jones and Fiscus (1989) reported that instead of relying on research literature, teachers tended to rely on information from the popular press, their colleagues, or even from their experiences with other children who were not gifted and who were not accelerated. Teachers are also more likely to blame any observed difficulties in accelerated students on the acceleration rather than on normal behavioural patterns (Colangelo, Assouline, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2004).

A common concern expressed by teachers in relation to acceleration is how students will cope when they are in the position of having to go to university at an earlier age than normal (Vialle et al. 2001). This is even a concern for kindergarten teachers, as evidenced by this comment from a teacher in Gallagher's (2006, p. 53) study: "Unless there's a huge assessment done on their maturity, I don't agree with [acceleration], because I often look at the other end of the scale where I read about 15 and 16 year olds that are doing university, and that's fantastic but I think, how are they coping socially?"

In a study investigating teacher attitudes towards acceleration and accelerated students in secondary schools in the Netherlands, Hoogeveen, van Hell and Verhoeven (2005) found that Dutch teachers tended to hold more positive attitudes towards acceleration than has been reported in other countries. When teachers did express concerns about possible negative effects of acceleration, those concerns were focused around the students' social and emotional development. Teachers were most concerned about isolation and social adjustment and least concerned about the academic welfare of accelerated students (Hoogeveen, van Hell, & Verhoeven, 2005). After the teachers had attended an information session on acceleration, they expressed fewer concerns about the possible social or emotional problems of the practice. One of the teachers in the study commented that they only tended to notice the accelerated students with problems, rather than the ones who were coping well. Gagné and Gagnier (2004) echoed this sentiment in relation to early entrants, suggesting that while thriving early

entrants are overlooked, any case involving maladjustment is highlighted and seized on as evidence that acceleration causes social and emotional problems.

Parental perspectives of acceleration options for their children

When it comes to parental attitudes towards acceleration, there is little in the empirical research literature that directly addresses this, especially in relation to the socio-affective impact on their gifted children. Parents' views towards both ends of the acceleration spectrum have been examined by Noble, Childers and Vaughan (2008) and Sankar-DeLeeuw (2002), who surveyed parents regarding early entry to university and early entry to school respectively. In the case of early entry to university, a descriptive study surveyed 64 parents whose children were directly involved in one of two early entry programs targeting gifted students (Noble, Childers, & Vaughan, 2008).

One hundred percent of parents declared themselves satisfied or very satisfied with one of the programs, while 76% of parents were similarly satisfied with the second program. At the other end of the acceleration spectrum a small sample of Canadian parents and preschool and kindergarten teachers were surveyed by Sankar-DeLeeuw (2002) regarding their views towards early entry to school. While 76% of parents and 32% of teachers agreed that gifted preschool children required a differentiated curriculum, early entry was not a popular option for either group. However, it seems that in this case, the parents surveyed did not have any direct experience with the strategy. Parents were still more likely to be in favour of early entry than teachers were, with 37% of parents and just 7% of teachers supporting this strategy. Both parents and teachers agreed that a child's development in the socioemotional domain was the most important factor when considering early entry, while intellectual and physical development were ranked second and third respectively (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2002).

In a personal account of her own experiences with acceleration, Chapman (2005) expressed no regrets about her own educational choices. Similarly, several parents have also published their own retrospective accounts of their experiences with acceleration (Kumekawa, 2008; Merlin, 1997). Although acknowledging the difficulties and frustrations along the way, most notably with the educational system, these accounts tend to be overwhelmingly positive in their consideration of the benefits of acceleration for their gifted children. While a few studies have found some inhibitive socio-affective ramifications for selected accelerants (Gagné & Gagnier, 2004; Neihart, 2007), overall, the research suggests that acceleration, in its various forms and especially early entry and grade-skipping, inordinately supports the social and emotional needs of gifted students (Gross, 2006b; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2010; Vialle et al. 2001).

Purpose of the study

The irony is that there is such strong research support for acceleration as the most appropriate provision to meet both the socio-affective and intellectual needs of many gifted students, yet the most significant concern teachers express about acceleration is based on the impact of the socio-affective development of gifted children (Rambo & McCoach, 2012; van Tassel-Baska & Brown 2007)! As teachers' and parents' perspectives are most influential on their students' and children's interrelated academic, social and emotional development, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' and parents' views of different forms of acceleration, so this study specifically sought to address the research question: *What is the relationship between parents' and teachers' perspectives of acceleration and the social and emotional needs of gifted primary school students?*

By understanding views of parents, as advocates, in relation to teachers - who will be identifying the students most eligible for acceleration and providing acceleration programmes - there may be a way of influencing more positive teacher reactions to acceleration in the future and more appropriate accelerative provisions for gifted students. Assisting participating parents and teachers to understand the interrelationship between the well-being of gifted students and accelerative techniques was another aim of this study. Additionally, identifying common perspectives may help to dispel some misconceptions that each group might have about the views of the other.

Method and context

The data reported in this article form part of a larger qualitative, multi-site case study, which examined intellectually gifted primary school students' educational provisions in Queensland and how the perspectives of primary school stakeholders were reflected in their school policies. Other aspects of this study have been reported elsewhere (Gallagher, Smith & Merrotsy, 2010; 2011; 2012). This component of the study includes interviews and group discussion fora from which were used to collect data from both teachers and parents.

Participants

Of the four schools that participated in this study, three were public primary schools serving students from Kindergarten to 7th Grade and one was an Independent school that served students from Kindergarten to 12th Grade, all within a single educational district of Queensland, Australia.

While there were 163 staff across all four schools and only thirty teachers altogether volunteered to participate, the response rate cannot be verified, as the Coordinator of Gifted Education at each school disseminated the information about the research project within the school and sought expressions of interest from teachers and administrators who were willing to be interviewed. Hence, it cannot be certain which staff were approached in each school. However, of the thirty participants, there were three principals, three deputy principals and four gifted education teachers, with a gender distribution of twelve male and eighteen female respondents, ranging from 23 to 57 years of age. There was a wide range of experience among the participants, from a beginning teacher in her second year of teaching, to teachers with more than 30 years of experience. Additional demographic data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher participant demographic data.

Pseudonym	Age (approx. in some cases)	Length of Teaching Experience	Current position	Additional Notes
Pelican Point State School				
Amanda	50	30+ years	Grade 1	
Barbara	51	3 years	Grade 3	Mature age grad.
Charlotte	40	20+ years	Kindergarten	
Debra	53	10 years	Grade 2	
Emily	39	18+ years	Grade 5	
Frances	39	18+ years	Grade 7	
Gail	Late 40s	20+ years	Head of Curriculum	GEM (Gifted Ed Mentor)
Henry	50s	30 years	Dep. Principal	
Black Swan State School				
Ingrid	50+	4 years	Kindergarten	Mature age grad.
Julie	28	7 years	Grade 7	GEM
Kevin	39	20 years	P.E. teacher	On gifted ed. Committee
Linda	52	31 years	Learning Support	
Mike	50s	35+ years	Principal	
Nancy	47	26 years	Head of Special Ed.	
Kingfisher Independent School				
Oliver	49	26 years	Extension & Enrichment Coordinator	1st year in role
Philip	Late 40s	20+ years	Principal	
Rachel	35	3 years	Grade 2	
Scott	37	14 years	Grade 3	
Timothy	32	10 years	Deputy head: primary curriculum	
Ursula	46	23 years	Grade 3	Deputy Head
Veronica	46	16 years	Learning support	

William	57	20 years	Grade 5	
Heron Haven State School				
Xavier	39	5 years	Grade 5/6	
Yvette	54	12 years	Grade 6/7	
Zachary	Mid 50s	33 years	Grade 7	
Anna	23	2nd year out	Grade 1	
Byron	Mid 40s	20+ years	Principal	
Cherry	45	20 years	Grade 3	GEM – 1 day/week
Declan	55	33 years	Grade 3	
Estelle	48	20 years	Grade 5	

Parent participants were recruited via academic extension workshops targeting intellectually gifted upper primary students, which were held in each of the participating schools. The schools were asked to distribute letters to the parents of the gifted students selected for the workshop, inviting them to attend a group discussion forum following the workshop, or to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview. Of the 55 parents whose children participated in the extension workshop, thirty-three participated in the study, indicating a response rate of 60%. Of this group, mothers were more likely to participate than fathers, with 27 of the participating parents being female and six being male. As the data was collected from groups, no other parental demographics were collected.

Data gathering processes

Teachers who volunteered to participate in the study took part in an individual semi-structured interview. Interviews were held in a quiet room on school grounds with teachers being advised of the interview protocols, that the interviews would be audio-recorded and that they could stop the interview at any time. Following the interviews, they were shown a copy of the transcripts to make amendments if needed. During the interviews, an overview of the definitions of the four main types of acceleration considered by this study was provided. Examples of teacher interview questions included:
- How are gifted children catered for in your school?
- How do you feel about acceleration of gifted students?
- What experiences have you had with acceleration?
  Teacher interview questions emulated the examples of parent questions that were used to prompt discussion during parental forums:
- What educational provisions have been made by this school for your child?
- What do you think about acceleration of gifted children?

Data analysis

The interviews and forum group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, resulting in 295 pages of raw data across the two data sources. A two-stage data analysis process was then undertaken, involving a descriptive level of analysis, followed by a typological analysis (Hatch, 2002). Data analysis was conducted manually by reviewing the interview transcripts and coding each statement according to initially broad, and then more refined, categories. Co-coding and the constant comparative method maintained the facility for contextual interpretation and supported reliability. Analytical statements were generated in response to the research question and tested against the data (Bassey, 1999).

In the reporting of results, pseudonyms are used throughout for individual participants and schools – Heron Haven, Black Swan and Pelican Point for the three public schools and Kingfisher for the independent school.

Findings
Teachers' attitudes

Overall, the teachers in the study were quite positive about the use of acceleration for talent development for intellectually gifted students, although their attitudes and opinions were very dependent on the type of acceleration strategy being discussed (see Figure 1 for results).

	Grade-skipping	Subject Acceleration	In-class Acceleration	Early Entry
Pelican Point State School				
Gail*	-	+	-	
Amanda	+/-	+	+	+/-
Barbara	+/-	+	-	-
Emily	+/-	+		
Charlotte				+
Debra	+	+	+	
Frances	-	-	+	
Henry†	+/-	+		+
Parents	-	+	+	
Black Swan State School				
Nancy	-	+		-
Linda	-	+	+	
Ingrid	+	+	+	+
Julie*	+	+	+	
Kevin				
Mike†	+			+
Parents	+/-	+	+	+/-
Heron Haven State School				
Estelle	+	+	+	
Yvette	+	+	+	
Xavier	+	+		+
Anna	-	+	+	
Byron†	+	+	+	-
Zachary	+/-	+		
Declan	+/-	+	+	+/-
Cherry*	-	+		-
Parents	-	+	+/-	
Kingfisher Independent School				
Rachel	+/-	+/-		+
Veronica	+		-	-
Ursula†	+/-	+		+
William	-	+	-	
Scott	+	+	+	+
Timothy†	-	+	+	-
Oliver*	+	+	+	+
Philip†	+	+		-
Parents	+	+	+	+

Figure 1: Parent and teacher views of acceleration.

Key:
† Principal or Deputy Principal
 * GEM or person responsible for implementing gifted education programs in the school

| Positive | + | Negative | - | Undecided | +/- | No data | |

Note: As the data were gathered via qualitative interviews, not all teachers gave opinions about all forms of acceleration. The parent data represented here is the majority view of the parents in each discussion forum.

Part-time models of acceleration, such as subject acceleration and working on accelerated content within the regular class, received a more positive response than full-time models, such as grade-skipping and early entry. In fact, subject acceleration received almost universal approval from the teachers in this study, with only one teacher objecting to this strategy. Her objection stemmed from the fact that she taught students in the final year of primary school, so subject acceleration would necessarily involve working with a local high school, an option this teacher felt would single the child out as different and be potentially harmful.

> I think it would be more appropriate to maybe accelerate in just one or two subjects rather than skip a whole grade. Because you're keeping them with their peers then which is so important. (Rachel, Individual interview, October 30, 2008)

Amongst the teachers in this study, the next most favoured accelerative strategy was working on accelerated content within the students' own class.

> I think that would be great. I wouldn't have a problem with that either. You're not making the child look any different. Yes, the other kids are aware they're doing different work but we do different work in the classroom anyway.
> (Frances, Individual interview, August 5 2008)

While, most teachers who supported this strategy thought that it would be an effective way of providing for a gifted student's needs without highlighting differences from peers, many supporters also recognised that it would create extra work for the teacher. Objections to this strategy could be categorised into two different philosophical positions. Two teachers shared the view that such a strategy would not be fair on the gifted child, as he or she would often be left to work alone without the benefit of quality teacher time or peers to work with, while the second objection was based on a preference for 'horizontal' enrichment, rather than 'vertical' acceleration. For example,

> Just because they can do maths well doesn't mean that they shouldn't be taught and given quality time. I still think they need to be taught and given the time that any child . . . needs. So I just think that for me, it would be tricky, to feel that I was doing them justice. (Barbara, Individual interview, August 19, 2008)
> I think . . . you're going to create problems if you're continually sneaking in on next year's work. Just because they've covered . . . curriculum issues, doesn't mean that there's not sideways ways that they can go . . . There are lots of other skills that would consolidate and use the skills they learn . . . in ways that would not encroach on the curriculum of the following year. (Veronica, Individual interview, November 11, 2008)

Grade-skipping proved to be a divisive topic, with many teachers 'on the fence' on this issue. Overall, the balance of opinions was positive, but all of the teachers who expressed a positive attitude towards grade-skipping were careful to stress that it would be very much an individual decision based on what would be in the best interests of that particular child and that it would not necessarily be suitable for every gifted student.

> I definitely believe in it. (Ingrid, Individual interview, September 18, 2008)
> If they're going to be accelerated we would have a plan - to make sure we don't lose track of that child - where we would have a review, and in every case so far the review has been good. (Philip, Individual interview, October 30, 2008)

Maturity and socialisation skills were frequently mentioned as being an important barometer of readiness for acceleration, in addition to academic ability. Social concerns were also of paramount importance for those teachers who rejected the strategy. These teachers tended to have more rigid views, believing that any departure from a child's age cohort was a bad thing.

> But, I think it's generally better to stay in your own year level but then do higher-level work. (Gail, Individual interview, August 5, 2008)
> I guess from my teaching experience some children can be very gifted academically, but socially and emotionally they're still within that year level (Linda, Individual interview, September 18, 2008).

Although these were primary school teachers, there was a tendency among some of them to adopt a future-based orientation, focusing on the belief that a child would be disadvantaged by finishing school too early. Teachers who expressed these sorts of beliefs often seemed to be basing their opinion on some sort of personal experience or association.

> And I have a friend whose daughter was accelerated but then it's been a big disaster for her. (Amanda, Individual interview, August 5, 2008)
>
> I think it can be a good thing for some students, especially in their early years of schooling, but I can see it as being a real, real thorn in their side in their later years of schooling. (Timothy, Individual interview, November 11, 2008)

Attitudes towards early entry were similar to those for grade-skipping. Opinions were divided, with just over half of the teachers supporting the strategy. Of the principals, two of the State School principals held positive opinions of early entry while the other State School principal, and the Independent school principal, opposed the strategy, suggesting that a child starting school was too much of an 'unknown quantity' to risk acceleration with, or that children were simply not ready for school before the usual starting age. In contrast, the other two principals accepted that there may be a need for more flexibility where gifted students are concerned.

> What's in the best interests of the child … If we're being realistic about providing an education that's suited the needs of the child then we've got to start looking at them a bit differentially. (Mike, Individual interview, September 18, 2008)
>
> There would be a case for it. Genuine gifted kids may be able to start early, have early entry. (Henry, Individual interview, August 5, 2008)

Most applications for early entry come from students who are within a few months of the usual school starting age, and in many cases, within a few weeks of it. However, as with grade-skipping, teachers with a negative attitude towards early entry tended to present extreme examples of very young children coming to school or raised concerns about whether they would place an unfair burden on the teacher. In general, those teachers who expressed reservations about early entry had concerns about the effect on students' social development:

> They are a whole person and just because . . . there are fields that you're advanced in doesn't mean that you should be missing out on your whole social and emotional thing with other children. (Barbara, Individual interview, August 5 2008)

Some teachers were also inclined to consider the implications of starting university early when articulating their opinion on early entry to Kindergarten, but at Black Swan State School, Nancy presented a unique argument, suggesting that school would be the worst place for young, gifted children.

> If a child is that bright, coming into grade one . . . the only thing grade one does really, is institutionalise them . . . So if you're getting a child who's right into the academics you're still only looking at them learning the institutionalised things, the unwritten rules, the boundaries. You will eat at this time, you will go to the toilet here, you will sit here, you will stand here. So if you've got a gifted and talented child who is very bright for their age and they're reading and writing, I honestly believe that there is a better place for them than school. I don't think any child should come to school until they have to. (Nancy, Individual interview, September 25, 2008)

However, just over half of the teachers expressed positive views towards early entry, generally favouring a more flexible approach. On the whole, teachers would prefer to see gifted students allowed early entry to Kindergarten, rather than skipping Kindergarten altogether in favour of early entry to 1st Grade. Several teachers across different schools called for a more flexible system that could see gifted students complete half a year of Kindergarten before moving on to 1st Grade, or being allowed to start part-way through the year.

> I think there should be allowances made for early entry . . . But there should even be a mid-year intake for Kindergarten, where they do half the year . . . A half-year intake . . . would be

a good idea for those kids who are a little bit young to hit it at the beginning of the year . . . (Charlotte, Individual interview, August 5, 2008)

I don't see any problem with that at all because they will still progress through the years, they're not going to be skipping out a year. They're just going to be doing it a little bit quicker than maybe others. (Rachel, Individual interview, October 30, 2008)

Parents' attitudes

Amongst the parent participants, there were similar attitudes towards acceleration as those expressed by teachers. In general, models of part-time acceleration met with a more positive reaction than the idea of grade-skipping, as many parents shared the concern of some teachers that children should remain with their age cohort wherever possible, although some differences of opinion emerged between schools. In contrast to the findings related to teachers, where supporters and opponents of whole-grade acceleration were fairly evenly spread across all four schools, clear differences emerged between schools when considering parental attitudes. Parents at Kingfisher Independent School and Black Swan State School were far more inclined to hold positive views about whole-grade accelerative strategies than parents at Heron Haven State School or Pelican Point State School. While grade-skipping was generally not a popular idea with these parents, most were more comfortable with the idea of their child working on accelerated content within their regular classroom.

> I'd prefer there to be extra opportunities in class to work at an advanced level, rather than move them away from what they're used to and from their friends (Poppy, Parent group discussion forum, March 3, 2009).

Objections to grade-skipping generally echoed those of the teachers, with parents being concerned about the social ramifications of their child mixing with older children, although no specific consequences were suggested. At Heron Haven State School, one parent suggested that between Kindergarten and 3rd Grade, some mixing of ages was acceptable, but once children reached 4th Grade they should stay with their age-peers. The majority of those present seemed to agree with this generalisation. Another parent reported a grade-skipping success story involving her younger cousin, but this was greeted with skepticism by the other parents and the expressed belief that children who were accelerated would miss out on the social side of school and be emotionally stunted. One parent also suggested that she would prefer her daughter to remain at the top of her current class, rather than be accelerated into a higher grade level and lose her position.

> I don't think there's anything wrong with them doing a few exercises ahead in their books if they're finished and they're done. It's a fine line between being top of the class and going on to the next year and being mediocre, as well.
> (Patsy, Parent group discussion forum, March 3, 2009)

By far the most positive views towards the various models of acceleration came from parents at Kingfisher Independent School. These parents were more likely to have consulted a gifted education support group and also had more personal experience of acceleration than parents at other schools. However, even some of these parents admitted that they had not been philosophically in favour of acceleration until it had proven to be a necessary intervention for their own child. Amongst these parents, one had applied for early entry for her youngest child, one had engineered a grade-skip after moving from another country, one was negotiating subject acceleration for their child in mathematics, while a fourth had a child who had skipped a year, was being radically subject accelerated in two subjects, and who was being considered for another grade-skip. Not surprisingly then, these parents had a lot to say on the subject of acceleration.

> And it wasn't a decision that we made terribly easily, but I just felt, how many years was she expected to sit around and wait for somebody to give her something to do, other than paint or colour. Which is good, but if she wants to read, why not let her? (Phoebe, Parent group discussion forum, March 27, 2009)
> He probably ... could miss another year. But that's going to be his decision.
> (Penny, Parent group discussion forum, March 27, 2009)

I think acceleration can be a good way to go but I guess we haven't really had to . . . both of them have had programs at different schools in the past where they've done special cluster programs or they've done different things but really now is the first time that anyone's sort of starting saying perhaps we should be skipping some years in maths. (Pauline, Parent group discussion forum, March 27, 2009)

Discussion

Attitudes towards some forms of acceleration may be shifting

A substantial proportion of previous research has reported that acceleration is unpopular with teachers (Bain, Bliss, Choate, & Brown, 2007; Lewis & Milton, 2005; Rambo & McCoach, 2012; Seigle et al. 2013; Southern, Jones, & Fiscus, 1989; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991; Townsend & Patrick, 1993), but there have been some conflicting views (Hoogeveen, van Hell, & Verhoeven, 2005; Rambo & McCoach, 2012). Across the four schools involved in the study, part-time models of acceleration certainly elicited more positive responses than did full-time ones, but overall, attitudes and opinions towards acceleration in general, from both teachers and parents, tended to be fairly positive, as shown in Figure 1.

The contradictions between previous research outcomes and the findings in this current study suggest that the consistently positive research findings in support of acceleration (Gagné & Gagnier, 2004; Gross, 2006b; Kulik, 2004; Lubinski, 2004) may be having some impact on education practitioners and consequently attitudes may be shifting.

Academic and socio-affective needs for acceleration

Other similarities with previous research were also noted. While many teachers expressed positive attitudes towards grade-skipping, they still tended to accompany that with a statement about the potential social or emotional hazards of such a strategy if it were not used judiciously. The parents in this study also echoed these concerns. This phenomenon has previously been reported amongst American teachers by Southern, Jones and Fiscus (1989) as well as among teachers and teacher trainees in New Zealand (Townsend & Patrick, 1993). Neither teachers nor parents seemed overly concerned about the academic ramifications of skipping a grade.

Academically, maybe acceleration works, but . . . I've talked to gifted adults and they've said it wasn't a good thing . . . would the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, because I think socially . . . we're all social creatures and that's a big part we sometimes forget about. And an important one (Cherry, Individual interview, February 17, 2009).

There was no mention of other academic concerns highlighted in the research (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991), such as accelerated students being at risk of academic burnout or gaps in knowledge. In fact, many teachers in the present study who expressed a positive attitude towards acceleration highlighted the risks associated with not accelerating, such as disengaging from school, boredom, frustration and lack of talent development, which supports the findings in the wider research literature (Colangelo, Assouline, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2004; Robinson, 2004; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2010; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991).

Only two teachers suggested that students considered for a grade-skip should be equally advanced in both literacy and numeracy, while one parent expressed a concern that if a child were accelerated, they may lose their position at the top of the class. However, the majority of comments regarding acceleration focused on social ramifications and those teachers and parents who expressed a negative attitude towards acceleration invariably cited social concerns. The vast majority of these were not specific social or emotional concerns, but rather general statements about 'social issues,' 'maturity,' and 'getting on in social groups'.

On the whole then, the participants in the study were generally positive towards acceleration and, while grade-skipping generated the most divergence in responses among both teachers and parents, attitudes towards it were rated positively overall.

Concerns expressed in relation to acceleration, both by participants with positive and negative opinions towards it, ranged along the socialisation dimension. Social adjustment was frequently mentioned as being of concern when considering a grade-skip, with teachers who were opposed to the strategy most likely to focus on the implications of finishing school and starting university at an earlier age than usual. Parents were less likely to look ahead to university, but shared the concern of many teachers that children needed to remain with their same-age peers. It was unclear where this idea that children's social well-being depends on their constant exposure to same age children has come from. The research literature also reported that socialising is rated higher than scholarliness in describing the attributes of an ideal student (Geake & Gross, 2008), and those feelings were very much in evidence here.

> So I think it would be nice to see acceleration but so that students could stay with their age level. (Linda, Individual interview, September 18, 2008)

Part-time acceleration regarded more favourably

Given this preoccupation with keeping children with their same-age peers, it can be seen why part-time acceleration strategies were regarded more favourably by the participants in the current study. Despite both teachers and parents seizing on single subject acceleration as a useful compromise which would cater for students' academic needs whilst keeping them with their age peers, many teachers also recognised the difficulty of implementation as it relied on whole-school cooperation in order to be effective. These findings mirror those of Siegle et al. (2013) who pointed out the irony that the least favoured strategies were actually the easiest to implement.

Parents less likely to express objections to early entry than teachers

Traditionally, parents have often been encouraged to delay their child's entry to school, especially for boys, in order to ensure their child had a head start on learning (Devine, 2009) although this is not supported in the research (Elder & Lubotsky, 2009; Martin, 2009; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2010). In the present study, attitudes towards early entry were similar to those expressed towards grade-skipping, with a preponderance of vague social concerns expressed, such as maturity, placing additional demands on teachers, or finishing school and being too young for university. However, parents were less likely to express an objection to the early entry strategy than teachers were. In line with previous case study research (Vialle et al. 2001) and with the findings relating to grade-skipping in this study, some teachers were also inclined to consider the implications of starting university early when articulating their opinion on early entry to Kindergarten. Conversely, several of the teachers who did not support early entry did believe that delaying entry to school should be considered in some cases.

One unique objection to early entry was articulated by Nancy, who suggested that school would be the very worst place for young, gifted children. Coming from a background in special education, which aims to place students with special needs in the 'least restrictive environment,' Nancy believed that for many gifted students, the regimented institution of school would be the most restrictive environment for them. This view is echoed in the literature with Robinson and Weimer (1990, cited in Diezmann, Watters & Fox, 2001) arguing that gifted children, who enter school with already advanced skills, may be the least well-served there. However, delaying entry is not likely to alleviate this situation and will only serve to widen the socio-emotional and learning gap.

Early entry has been promoted in the literature as being the least disruptive form of acceleration (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004), and Rachel highlighted this aspect in her response, suggesting that it would be an advantage for the gifted student to be able to continue through school with their cohort, rather than skipping a grade at some stage after starting school. Parents also recognised this advantage, as it would avoid difficult choices later on, once friendships had been established. Other teachers called for more flexibility within the Kindergarten year, with a mid-year entry possible for some gifted students who were considered too young at the beginning of the year, or a compacted Kindergarten and 1st Grade within a single year.

Need for greater communication between parents and teachers regarding acceleration

One unique feature of this research was the comparison between parental and teacher perspectives. While the teachers and parents in the study shared many similar views with regards to acceleration, neither group seemed aware of these commonalities, a similar phenomenon to that reported by Seigle et al. (2013) in relation to teachers and administrators. Parents expressed frustration about being kept 'in the dark' and not being informed about what provisions the schools were making for their child. They wanted to avoid being seen as 'pushy', but also wanted to be more involved with their children's education. Conversely, the teachers expressed concerns that some gifted education strategies would not be well-received by the parent community, or that parents would prefer their child to be top of the class rather than accelerated to an appropriate level of challenge. Mike, the principal at Black Swan State School, thought that many teachers were threatened by the knowledge that parents had regarding gifted education and that was a reason why communication and collaboration was lacking. However, apart from the parents at Kingfisher, who had actively sought information and support from gifted associations, most parent participants seemed to have relatively low levels of knowledge regarding gifted education, and most tended to talk positively about the efforts the schools were making.

> She had a fabulous teacher in year one and she had a really lovely experience with her and I felt that she was nurtured there . . . and J has recognised that she has a gift for language and she's given her extra responsibilities within the class and I think, just accommodated her abilities. (Pansy, Parent group discussion forum, March 3, 2009)

Limitations and recommendations for future research

It is important to note some restrictions and shortcomings of this investigation. Methodological limitations included context, participants and data collection. While this study only involved small cohorts from across four schools in one region, the response rates were high among parents and identifying the specific response rate of teachers will be needed in the next phases of the study. Almost equal numbers of parents as teachers participated, but there were fewer males than females and balancing this aspect in future studies may engender different outcomes.

The data collection protocol relied on attaining perceptions through interviews and forums to collect information relating to respondents' experiences, feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Although recognising the importance of measuring perceptions, the cross-participant approach utilising a different data-gathering procedure for each cohort, must be considered a limiting factor of the study, as one-on-one interviews may have gleaned more in-depth data from the teacher group than the parent forum group. Nevertheless, it is still plausible to discuss inferences from the relationships found based on the previous theoretical research. Given the limitations of the sample and data-gathering process, it is acknowledged that relationships between the key concepts and variables could be further explored.

These limitations are recognised, along with some recommendations to guide future research. Future research needs to consider to what extent teacher perspectives in one-context transfers to other situations. It may also be prudent to explore parental perspectives using a larger cohort and across more regions and include student perspectives for triangulation of data. Additionally, the tracking of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs across a variety of educational contexts could help to inform future acceleration programs and techniques across a broader context. Examining effective and collaborative communications between parents of gifted children, gifted children and their teachers in multi-aged contexts would be efficacious in allaying misconceptions about the socio-affective concerns regarding acceleration, especially for grade skipping and early entry.

Conclusion

This study helped to provide data supporting assertions that often are made based on experience or hearsay. Overall, both teachers and parents expressed mainly positive perspectives towards part-time subject- and content-accelerative techniques. Except for those parents who had accepted the need for acceleration for their own children, the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of the parents towards

the range of accelerative practices strongly mirrored those of the teachers. This might suggest that most teachers' views about acceleration are borne out of 'common sense' notions, rather than being greatly influenced by their teacher training or professional practice, neither of which were mentioned in their interview responses. Despite this, the overwhelmingly positive research evidence in support of the academic benefits of acceleration may be starting to influence an attitudinal change, due to the wider acceptance of in-class accelerative approaches and subject acceleration in this study.

Teasing out the concerns that still exist about the possible social and emotional implications of grade-based acceleration suggests that future advocacy efforts would do well to focus on addressing those concerns specifically. Drawing on research which investigates multi-aged educational practices may also help to dispel some of the anxiety surrounding age-based thinking and so foster greater understanding of the benefits of acceleration regarding grade-skipping and early entry and engender improved attitudes towards the full range of acceleration options.

Fostering improved communication and collaboration between parents of gifted children and their teachers should be a priority. Building on the commonalities that already exist can be an effective way to increase acceleration advocacy efforts on behalf of gifted students, in order to translate research into practice and gifts into talents. It has been theorised that some reluctance to accelerate may be due to perceptions of what others believe, rather than the individuals' perceptions of acceleration itself (Seigle, Wilson, & Little, 2013). Therefore, disseminating research which compares the beliefs of different groups of stakeholders may help to give those with the power to change policy the confidence to do so.

Acknowledgements

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"Obvio!" – There are More Questions than Answers in the Early Identification of Children with Academic Talent – A Perspective from PENTA UC Escolar, Chile

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Abstract

PENTA UC Escolar is an extracurricular, intra-school enrichment educational program designed for children from first to fourth grade. It consists of a System for identification and selection, Curriculums in language and mathematics, and a Model for program management. Theoretically, it is based on Sternberg´s Triarchic theory of intelligence and states that the outstanding intellectual performance results from the joint use of three types of abilities – analytical, practical and creative. Correspondingly, three instruments are applied to measure the abilities in question and to identify students with academic talent. The sample in the present study consists of 5041 children, 519 of which were identified as gifted. Results demonstrated that among talented children, there is generally a negative relationship between creative, analytical and practical abilities. Girls demonstrated higher practical abilities among students in all age groups who were not identified as talented. Boys performed better than girls in tasks for analytical abilities, in the group of talented children, only among older ones.

Keywords: Chile; identification; academic talent; PENTA UC Escolar; Triarchic Theory of Intelligence; extracurricular activities.

The early identification of talented children

The importance of early identification is well recognized from the experts in the field of gifted education. Childhood as a developmental period is the most important stage for maximizing the potential of the gifted (Huang, 2008) and "preschool and primary years represent a critical period of time in terms of both cognitive and psychosocial development" (Hollinger and Kosek, 1985, p.168). In a recent review on the theoretical and research achievements in intelligence, Nisbett et al. suggest that "measuring nonanalytic aspects of intelligence could significantly improve the predictive power of intelligence tests (Nisbett et al., 2012, p. 131). In the case of economically disadvantaged talented children who are often underrepresented in the programs for gifted students, the use of multiple criteria approach (non-verbal tests, dynamic assessment, portfolios) in addition to the traditional standardized tests would definitely improve their identification (VanTassel-Baska, Feng and Evans, 2007). Not less important is that returns to early investment in children from disadvantaged environments is higher compared with the returns to late childhood investment and remediation at later age - "later remediation of early skill deficits can be costly" (Cunha, 2006, p.58). The first years of the basic education establish children's relationship with the educational institution and it is vital not to "uproot" them from the regular classroom. That is why PENTA UC Escolar (Arancibia, 2005) was created. As an attempt to propose educational intervention for younger children, PENTA UC Escolar is an extracurricular, intra-school enrichment program designed for children from first to fourth grade. It consists of identification and selection system, language and mathematics curriculums, and a program management model. In 2009 the PENTA UC Escolar was acknowledged as the best innovative educational project in Chile. Its' goal is to bring talent education into the regular classroom and to offer challenging early enrichment opportunities to talented children who have not received such attention before. Theoretically, PENTA UC Escolar is based on Sternberg´s

Triarchic theory of intelligence (Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg, 1999; Sternberg & Clinkenbeard, 1995; Sternberg et al., 1996). This is a "multifactorial model of giftedness" (Heller, 2003) which states that the outstanding intellectual performance results from the joint use of three types of abilities – analytical, creative and practical. Talent is based on being able to coordinate these three abilities and know when to use each of them. *Analytical abilities* are involved in the processes of learning, comparing, analyzing, evaluating and judging. They correspond with the formal logical thinking and are usually measured with the standardized tests of intelligence. *Creative abilities* are related to the invention of a novel object or idea. They take part when usual situations are interpreted in a nontraditional, original way. *Practical abilities* are related to the "tacit knowledge". They are those by which the person selects, modifies or transforms the environment in order to fulfill his/her goals (Sternberg et al., 2006). PENTA UC Escolar program employs these three dimensions as an understanding on intelligence and incorporates them in the identification process (Preiss, D. et al., 2010), curriculums in language and mathematics and teacher training.

Method

Three tests were elaborated in order to measure the analytical, creative and practical abilities of the children. The test for *analytical* abilities is based on the Berlin's Intelligence Structure Model (BIS), which represents general intelligence as 12 facets of intellectual abilities. (Jäger, 1982 in Bucik and Neubauer, 1996). It was standardized from Rosas (1996) and later adapted for the purposes of the Program (Preiss, D. et al., 2010a). *Practical* intelligence is measured by means of "if-then" situations related to the everyday social life of the children at school and at home. The instrument was especially designed for the program (Preiss, D. et al., 2010b). The *creativity* test was also designed at PENTA UC on the basis of similar tests, applied by the PACE Center of Tufts University (Preiss, D. et al., 2010c). The main goal of the present study was to explore analytical, practical and creative abilities of children who were identified and not identified as talented. As recent studies demonstrated that the relationship between intelligence and creativity is negligible (Kim, 2005), it was also aimed to reveal what is the relationships between the three abilities. Attention to gender differences was also given.

Results

The sample consisted of 5041 children. A total of 519 children (223 boys and 296 girls) were identified as gifted. There were 231 students from first and second grade and 288 from third and fourth. Students' scores in the three questionnaires were standardized and a total score was computed. Identified as talented were those children who were in the 90th or higher percentile in their z-score. A series of correlational analyses was conducted for both age groups, and separately for boys and girls. Tables 1 and 2 present the results for students not identified as talented and tables 3 and 4 for their talented counterparts.

Table 1: Summary of intercorrelations, means and standard deviations for scores on analytical, creative and practical abilities at first and second grade level for boys and girls who were not identified as talented.

Abilities	Analytical	Practical	Creative	*M*	*SD*
Analytical	___	.351**	.041	-0.129	1.017
Practical	.366***	___	-.005	-0.218	1.006
Creative	.098**	-.005	___	-0.150	0.888
M	-0.117	-0.021	-0.202		
SD	0.924	0.929	0.777		

*p .05; ** p .01; *** p .001

Intercorrelations for boys who were not identified as talented are presented above the diagonal (N=866), and intercorrelations for girls who were not identified as talented are presented below the diagonal (N=847). Means and standard deviations for the boys presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for the girls are presented in the horizontal rows.

Table 2: Summary of intercorrelations, means and standard deviations for scores on analytical, creative and practical abilities at third and fourth grade level for boys and girls who were not identified as talented.

Abilities	Analytical	Practical	Creative	*M*	*SD*
Analytical	___	.119**	.009	-0.223	0.826
Practical	.043	___	.071*	-0.231	0.962
Creative	.019	.111**	___	-0.136	0.969
M	-0.168	-0.027	-0.144		
SD	0.849	0.976	0.930		

*p .05; **p .01; ***p .001

Intercorrelations for boys who were not identified as talented are presented above the diagonal (N=991), and intercorrelations for girls who were not identified as talented are presented below the diagonal (N=834). Means and standard deviations for the boys are presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for the girls are presented in the horizontal rows.

It can be observed from Table 1 and 2 that among students who were not identified as talented, both genders from first and second grade demonstrated positive moderate correlation between analytical and practical abilities. Among older students practical abilities correlated weakly in positive direction with creativity. Only girls from first and second grade showed positive relationship between analytical and creative abilities, but the magnitude was negligible. Only boys from third and fourth grade displayed weak positive correlation between analytical and practical skills. A strike difference in the relationship between the three types of abilities was reviled when only talented children were studied (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3: Summary of intercorrelations, means and standard deviations for scores on analytical, creative and practical abilities at first and second grade level for boys and girls who were identified as talented.

Abilities	Analytical	Practical	Creative	*M*	*SD*
Analytical	___	-.118	-.135	0.907	0.720
Practical	.064	___	-.393***	0.834	0.743
Creative	-.179*	-.325***	___	1.486	1.106
M	0.907	0.931	1.213		
SD	0.722	0.735	1.087		

*p .05; **p .01; ***p .001

Intercorrelations for boys who were identified as talented are presented above the diagonal (N=110), and intercorrelations for girls who were identified as talented are presented below the diagonal (N=121). Means and standard deviations for the boys are presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for the girls are presented in the horizontal rows.

Table 4: Summary of intercorrelations, means and standard deviations for scores on analytical, creative and practical abilities at third and fourth grade level for boys and girls who were identified as talented.

Abilities	Analytical	Practical	Creative	*M*	*SD*
Analytical	___	-.125	-.410***	1.176	1.028
Practical	-.325***	___	-.288**	0.833	0.732
Creative	-.285***	-.269***	___	1.121	0.841
M	1.343	0.878	0.740		
SD	1.020	0.659	0.790		

*p .05; **p .01; ***p .001

Intercorrelations for boys who were identified as talented are presented above the diagonal (N=112), and intercorrelations for girls who were identified as talented are presented below the diagonal (N=174). Means and standard deviations for the boys are presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for the girls are presented in the horizontal rows.

Creative abilities of both boys and girls with academic talent from all age groups were moderately correlated to practical abilities but in negative direction (such relationship existed among not talented students, but with positive magnitude and only for first and second grade). Most interestingly, between analytical abilities and creativity we revealed a strong negative correlation among talented boys from third and fourth grade. Such type of relationship but with weak and moderate magnitude was also discovered among talented girls in all age groups.

Next, gender differences were explored separately for analytical, creative and practical skills. Children were divided in two groups – identified and not identified as talented. Among the group of not identified as talented first and second grade children, girls (M = -0.021; SD = .929) demonstrated significantly higher practical abilities compared with boys (M = -.218; SD = 1.00); (t(1711) = -4.222; p = .000; Cohen´s d = -0.20). In older children (third and fourth grade) girls also (M = -0.027; SD = .976) showed higher practical abilities compared with boys (M = -0.231; SD = .962); t(1795) = -4.447; p = .000; Cohen´s d = -0.21. In the group of talented students there were no significant differences in any of the studied abilities among first and second graders. Third and fourth grade boys (M =1.121; SD=.841) showed significantly higher analytical abilities compared with girls (M = 0.878; SD =.659); t(226.3) = 3.876; p =.000; Cohen´s d = 0.52.

Discussion

Results regarding the relationship between students' abilities were intriguing. It was demonstrated that among children who were not identified as talented there is generally a low to moderate positive correlation between some of the abilities. What was interesting is that all significant correlations in the group of talented children were negative (moreover strong negative in the case of analytical abilities and creativity of talented boys from third and fourth grade). This suggests that cognitive abilities of talented students are developed in different degrees and that being highly creative, for example does not mean being excellent in analytical skills. The significance of this result is evident in the light of talent identification at early age. It seems that analytical and creative abilities not only do not correlate positively, but moreover they are negatively related among talented children. Considering gender differences, it was shown from the results that girls not identified as talented have higher practical abilities in both age groups.

There are two potential perspectives that may be extrapolated. The test of practical intelligence comprises mainly situations from school life and home, and girls are usually conducting themselves better than boys in these contexts. Moreover, in Chile it is expected from women to "manage" the household and it could be speculated that practical abilities are encouraged in girls at young age so that they would be successful in life. Our results suggested that only at older age boys outperform girls in analytical abilities, but since the BIS model is an hierarchical model of intelligence (comprising four types of cognitive operations and three types of content where the operations are performed), it is not clear in which facets of intellectual abilities this is presented. In summary, our results suggest at least two fascinating directions for further research. First, it is necessary to explore in details the relationship between creativity and analytical abilities among talented children. Second, although gender differences in analytical abilities are generally well documented, there is still not enough information in which concrete aspects (or facets) boys perform better than girls or/and whether there are facets of analytical skills in which girls demonstrate better results. The knowledge about those relationships and gender differences would not only facilitate the identification process, but also would help teachers to build more effective techniques and methodologies toward young students with academic talent.

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Acknowledgment

Africentric Schooling: What Next?

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Abstract

This article introduces the idea of Africentric schools to the Toronto School Board as a counter alternative to promote the idea of including the myriad identities of students in the learning process. The sociological and philosophical tenets of Africentric schooling are presented under the headings of: The Afrocentric Idea; Groundedness in the Community; Social Identities; Spirituality in Learning; and Racial Solidarity is not a Guarantor of Success. In conclusion the discussion highlights courses of action in moving forward to consider ways to strengthen Canadian schooling.

Keywords: Africentric education; transformative learning; cultural awareness; alternative education; minority youth identities; action research.

Introduction

Schools are established to educate, to impact knowledge onto learners. As an educational site the school must be a welcoming place for every learner. This means every learner must see themselves in terms of the curriculum, classroom instruction, representation of physical bodies in staff, faculty, and students, other aspects of both the social and the physical landscape (e.g., environment, culture, and social organizational lives of the school). Learning happens when students are able to identify with the process of educational delivery. Feeling a sense of disconnection, disaffection, isolation, and in effect not belonging, does not bode well for the education of learners. It is for this reason that many critical educators and researchers have argued strongly for inclusive schools; however, the problem is not just because of a lack of trying. There are many educators who have well-meaning intentions to educate all learners. Some of these educators we know will go the extra mile to ensure that their students feel a sense of welcome in their classrooms.

Inclusion is about equity, power, and knowledge. Inclusion is about sharing power and resources and it is also about engaging multiple knowledge systems in order to develop a complete understanding of the history of ideas, events, practices, and experiences that have shaped and have continued to shape our worlds. Inclusion cannot be lip service and an approach to 'feel good' about education. The liberal, seductive take on inclusion has depoliticized the concept and taken away the hard questions about responsibility, accountability, and transparency.

The experiences of learners contribute to the learning process. If a knowledge system fails to work with students' experiences, learners could feel a sense of disconnect. Similarly if classroom texts, school curriculum and teachers' pedagogical styles, strategies, and practices are not inclusive of the different learning styles that abound in the student population, we must expect some learners to have that sense of not belonging to the school.

The on-going push to develop counter-visions of schooling and to promote alternative educational outlets is a recognition that all is not working well for every student in our classrooms of today. This means that educators, school administrators, policy-makers, parents, students, and local communities and community advocates all need to come together to seriously think thorough the issues and map out effective strategies to ensure that success is not only broadly defined by it, it is also shared by all learners. We cannot be defensive when critiques of conventional schooling are offered in order to lay the groundwork to justify a need to rethinking and re-visioning schooling. Educators, for example, are trained to work with ideas. This means we must always welcome fresh ideas (sometimes critical, oppositional) and try them out as we continually search for ways to educate a complex, diverse student population. This necessitates thinking outside the proverbial conventional box.

As a parent, I am concerned that schools work for all youth. When students succeed we all succeed. The failure of some students should be a concern for all. We cannot afford to be complacent in the face of overwhelming evidence that what we are currently doing is not serving the needs of all our students. Local communities must be supported to think out solutions to their problems but we must do so with a sense of collective destiny and a desire to ensure that education is not restricted to particular groups. It used to be some shared understanding that conventional school systems were designed for a certain class of people and to uphold particular social class values. If this was the case, it must be subverted in the face of the growing diversity in our communities and the understanding that we are all part of multiple, diverse, contested and yet interconnected histories, experiences, and cultures. Our past, present, and future are intertwined. Our histories and experiences are part of a collective destiny. When certain segments of our communities raise concerns about the school system we need to hear the voices of concern, pain, and frustration and not be dismissive just because we do not share and feel their pain, anguish, and yearning for a better and different world.

We need a counter-vision to the neoliberal, corporate, colonial education (a counter paradigm for education of young learners today). Such counter-vision will be oppositional to the conventional ways of knowledge production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination. Such vision would welcome creating multiple centres of knowledge (not necessarily new, since knowledge has always existed, but as opposition to how knowledge from our diverse communities is currently perceived). Such counter-visioning of alternative and multiple educational sites would become a place to decolonize and reclaim or recapture the myriad identit(ies), knowledge(s), and experiences of our learners, as well as the varied teaching and pedagogical styles of educators. Considerations of such alternative educational sites should include the structural and institutional aspects (administration, funding), the research (for whom, by whom, for what purpose), the teaching (Where does the curriculum and pedagogy come from?, What is its genealogy?), and the learning (What is the purpose of having an education?,

What is the experience of the learner?). How is the curriculum structured so that there is a facilitated engagement with histories, identities, and embodied learning. The specific histories of the land on which these schools are situated should be front and centre of our discussions and constitute part of a broader comment about history, colonization, and imperialism. Decolonizing faith and spirituality in relation to the role of religion in conquest and ongoing colonization and imperialist discourses should be noted as well.

Schooling today is a battlefield. There are no guns being drawn but there is a fierce contestation of ideas and knowledge. Similarly there is an on-going contestation of futures as particularly marginalized communities are looking for easy-to-advance solutions to their own problems and to challenge the designing futures. We also witness a rethinking of liberal notions of inclusion and our conventional understandings of social justice. Currently, there is a domestication of culture and diversity which is more about celebrations and merry-making rather than responding concretely to the difficult questions of knowledge, power, and resources. Inclusion has become so benign that ideas of accountability and transparency are off the table. Even when equity issues are broached there is no discussion of accountability. There is also a failure to focus on the broader systemic dimensions of the problem. The result has been a de-politicization of inclusion. The school curriculum must be looked at critically to respond to the calls for representation in knowledge and power sharing (e.g., multi-centric knowledge, physical bodies in positions of power and influence). We need effective curricular and pedagogical initiatives that support anti-racism initiatives and to redirect and to place equity front and centre in our work as educators (e.g., centre race, speak on equity, ask for institutional accountability).

There is no universal subject; in fact, the universal learner is about a particularity. Schooling is as much about culture as about race, class, gender, sexuality, and [dis]ability. There is a place for affirming Indigeneity, and anti-colonial education in contemporary schooling and we must rethink Inclusion (e.g., the depoliticization; lack of centredness, accountability, and the neoliberal agenda).

In this paper, I reflect upon the question of Africentric schooling in Canada insisting upon the value of counter-visioning of schooling so as to uphold and foster the myriad identities of students in the learning process. The paper is informed by a key question: How can we have effective schools to foster individual innovation and creativity among youth and adults who have been traditionally marginalized in the school system? The education of youth in pluralistic contexts present us all with important challenges. How do we provide education for young learners that ensures a critical understanding of the history of all peoples and the contributions to science, arts, humanities, and academic scholarship in general?

I come into this discussion as someone who has been at the forefront of debates and discussions about the necessity of Africentric schooling in the Canadian context. I have had some personal struggles as a result of this leading role, including the backlash from those who have been misinformed about the basic tenets and ideas behind such schooling. The historical fact of long and collective community struggles for Black and minority education in Canadian contexts is often ignored when opponents of Africentric schooling argue it is separatist or feeds on segregation. In Dei and Kempf (2013) many of these charges have been rebutted. The fact still remains that the history of community activism around Black youth education laid grounds for Africentric schooling.

The idea of Africentric schooling locates Black and minority youth education in epistemological, cosmological, ontological, ethical, and aesthetic practices of African peoples. The reinvention of Africanness for youth education emerges from an understanding of the African human condition, as well as African peoples' encounter with Europeans who sought to impose an identity on Africans. African peoples have never defined themselves by the colour of their skin. Such understanding of Africa and African peoples in terms of a colour descriptor, has meant that we cannot dismiss the question of what it means to be Black in an anti-black society. Black and Blackness only exists as a product of European construction.

Throughout human history education has served to reproduce the structure of coloniality through such dominant practices as the production, validation, interrogation, and dissemination of what is considered knowledge and what is being knowledgeable. While dominant knowledge have often been used to justify exclusionary practices we can use counter and oppositional knowledge also to challenge such dominance. As Marker (2004) notes "knowledge is powerful and potentially dangerous if one is not ready to receive it properly" (p. 106). Coloniality is about the structure of power and oppression emerging from colonial and re-colonial relations and systems of domination. Coloniality is also about power and subjugation of ideas, values, and practices, as well as the disciplining of bodies. Discourses of modernity have ensured the domination of European/Western perspectives, practices, and conditions.

All epistemologies are embedded within particular traditions and cultures (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 206; Gadamer, 2004). Dominant perspectives, ideologies, and orthodoxies are situated within Western European traditions and cultures, History, and Science as tools of colonization. In order to disrupt the dialectic of coloniality and modernity we need to position the production of critical and oppositional knowledge (e.g., counter perspectives) at the centre of educational practice. Such knowledge compels action.

Effective transformation of school systems cannot happen solely through dominant scholarship. In putting forward counter-visions of schooling we are also challenging the ways Western European modernity has "created an image of itself, …[since]… the time of the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras, as *Western Civilization*, and presumed itself as the arrival point of human existence and as the point of reference of global history" (Kerr, 2-13, p. 24).

In her excellent work, Kerr (2013) shows that questions about the who and the where in teaching, and the learning and administration of education, have profound educational relevance. A Westocentric epistemological move that obscures the body and place of potential colonizing relations creates conditions for social inequity. Our anti-racist work must attend to the material conditions of

existence for student bodies, as well as the discourses that influence the opportunities and constraints that impact these bodies.

Sociological and philosophical tenets of Africentric schooling
A. The Afrocentric idea
Afrocentricity is a perspective that has roots in United States scholarship as advanced by its chief proponent, Molefi Asante. Africentricity, on the other hand, while borrowing from the ideas of Afrocentricity seeks a Canadian uniqueness by grounding its knowledge base from African culture and history. Africentric schooling is defined by the philosophical ideals of Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity as a perspective ensures the centrality of the African experience, as well as a centring of African peoples' cultures, identities, and agencies in schooling (Asante, 1991). Afrocentricity, as a paradigm shift, is not a thing or subject. Rather it constitutes a system of thought that seeks to centre African peoples in their histories, cultures, identities, and agencies. This perspective offers a counter-visioning of schooling and education in the sense that African learners are at the centre of their education. They begin to read the world from that centred position in relation to other experiences. This is important to give a sense of 'ownership and identification' with the learning process. Consequently, the Africentric school is not defined by the physical bodies present in the school. This is why it is erroneous to call the school a 'black school'.

All who share in the ideals espoused by the Afrocentric paradigm can find a place in the school as an educational/learning site. Furthermore, the school works with the Afrocentric ideals of community building, responsibility of learner and educators, a search for mutual interdependence of learners as a 'community of learners', a definition of success broadly to include social and academic success, a need to situate spirituality in schooling and education, a search for a link between culture and pedagogy, and a reading of African history as a totality of lived experiences of all African peoples constitute a cardinal knowledge base. The Afrocentric idea also argues that the politics of self-separation is a matter of survival as far as marginalized, oppressed, colonized, and Indigenous bodies are concerned. In addressing the education of minorities, schooling cannot be approached as simply a matter of choice or determination of markets. In other words, the school is not defined by market demands. Africentric schools then run contrary to dictates of the neoliberal educational agenda (e.g., definitions of success, excellence, competence, individualism, commodification, and corporatization of education). The Afrocentric idea also asks what and who gets to define Blackness. Afrocentricity challenges the Eurocentric conception of Blackness as homogenous (e.g., as in criminalization of Black youth) and instead forges an African-centred conception of Blackness in terms of its complexities and its collective and shared struggles of African peoples, which are not singular.

B. Groundedness in the community
The school is a community and schooling must be approached as community. The idea of situating the school within a community is to draw knowledge, representation, and relevance from a source. Every school must have a direct link with the local communities from which it draws the population of learners. This means educators, parents, Elders, and students know each other, as well as the community history, and there is a commitment to community building. Parents and Elders are fully integrated in the school as educators and they can be instructive on issues of morality, character building, social responsibility, and community mindedness. Education is also approached in the school as one of building communities of learners with collective implications and responsibilities to each other. The notion of community is about a social connection and a relation that can be understood within social, affinal, and fictive lines. The Africentric reading of community is about interdependence and connections. The community is as good as its members collectively work to make it. Schooling, as a community, demands that learners and educators become responsible for each other's success. Responsibilities are shared and while the individual creativity, hard-work, and resourcefulness must be noted and rewarded, it is enthused that such individual achievements reflect strong community connections and contributions. The individual is enriched by the community they are part of.

C. Social identities

Identity is about what one is, i.e., one's sense of self, whether determined authentically through the self or experienced as socially constructed and imposed -- read -- upon the body. An important distinction to be made is the tension between 'authentic' [as in what people see as themselves as opposed to imposed] and 'socially constructed' determinations of identity (e.g., experiences of the self-versus generalizations based on group politics and identities). Identity is important in schooling. We know 'identity' is very complicated, speaking to multiple selves, and also highlighting notions of fluidity given the constantly shifting nature of the subject identity and her/his identifications.

The education of a learner draws on the conceptual links of 'personal' and 'social' identities (Tajfel, 1978, 1981). Understanding one's identity brings a self-awareness and group consciousness and navigating around the myriad racial, class, gender, sexual identities. Through identity reinforcement/affirmation as a form of 'symbolic knowledge' and 'community capital' the learners come to know and act in their worlds (Dei, 2010). As noted elsewhere (Dei, 2010), the interface of the local, national, global, and transnational has brought forth new and emerging identities with implications for the categories we use in education. This is particularly profound for our youth today. The emerging new, complex [as in fluid and hybrid] identities call for discussions of representations (how we seek to represent ourselves) and identifications (what identities we chose to inhabit and the practices called for), [see also Wright, 2005]. We also know that our communities themselves are characterized by a remarkable degree of socio-cultural complexity that go beyond the traditional lines of difference, that include race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality. What does working with the notion of social identity mean for Africentric schooling? Clearly, the Africentric school would work with the myriad identities of learners. There is a recognition that the student is not simply a universal learner. Rather, learners are embodied beings with racial, ethnic, class, gender, sexual, [dis]ability, linguistic, and religious identities. Such identities are connected to schooling and knowledge production. Learners are supposed to speak from their embodied identities and are encouraged to come to know through such situatedness. Identities are not simply about knowing oneself; they are also about pursuing politics and the act of going to school is also to come to a broad social movement of politics that fights and advocates for equity and social justice. This is significant given that the history of a significant portion of learners and educators in our schools is about exclusion, marginalization, disempowerment, and resistance.

D. Spirituality in learning

In conventional schools, spirituality is a subject deemed not worthy of investigation. In fact, one runs the risk of being seen as 'anti-intellectual' when spirituality is affirmed in schooling and education. Yet we need a revisioned education that upholds a complex reading of the relevance of spirituality for schooling. For many Indigenous and local communities they uphold the idea that the spirit is within themselves. It is openly acknowledged that the self is made up of a body, mind, soul, and spirit. The splitting of body, mind, soul, and spirit is considered problematic and limited to knowing. A holistic learner embodies a spirit, a mind, a soul, and a body. Learning passes through these dimensions of the body. It is the spirit that ensures a high sense of morality and justice in the learner when it is affirmed. This emphasis on spirituality is a very distinguishing feature of the Africentric school. The Africentric school teaches that the spiritual is about relations between the inner and the outer environments. It is about the affirmation of a Creator/Supreme Being, Mother Earth, an understanding of communion or relations of self to the group/collective as well as a necessity of developing a sense of purpose and meaning in Life. Evoking the spiritual in schooling therefore, is to stress the relationship of learners and educators to the outer environments and the forces of Nature, Society, and Culture. It is in the interdependence of body, mind, soul, and spirit that makes the learner a complete being. Education cannot, therefore, be approached outside of the nexus of body, mind, soul, and spirit interactions. Working with both the physical and metaphysical forces of nature and affirming the relations of society, culture, and nature helps brings a sense of responsibility to communities, lands, environments, material and non-material worlds, we all inhabit. Conventional schools tend to dismiss emotions of learners as 'irrational' and not intellectual. Yet to many local communities, this is how they come to know about their worlds and develop a world sense

(Oyewumi, 1997). An Africentric school ensures we locate the spirit, spiritual, and the soul in coming to learn, know, and act in our everyday worlds. In advancing counter [and sometimes oppositional] discourses and discursive practices to disrupt Western rationalism the Africentric schools takes up the 'intellectual-emotional' binary. Which is to say, it argues and insists that the intellect[ual] is embedded in emotion[al] and vice versa and therefore, we must avoid continuing the splitting of the two. More to the point, what is 'intelectual activity' as we engage knowledge that works with embodied knowing? Embodiment as understood in the context of Africentric reading of Indigenous and Indigeneity is more than understanding knowledge as socially and discursively constructed. Embodiment is also seen as about "sentient perceptions and the search for a symbiotic relationship between physical, mental, emotional and spiritual experiences" (Batacharya, 2010; p. 6) and the 'intelectual' is as much about feelings, emotions, senses, and perceptions (see also Dei, 2012).

E. Race and schooling: Racial solidarity is not a guarantor of success

The Africentric school works with a positive (solution-oriented understanding of race). It notes that within the context of racism and white dominance there are possibilities of identity politics [however limited] for racialized bodies when it comes to resistance around issues of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia). These oppressions are not only interconnected but are also collective struggles which may be defined by entry points of using particular identities to pursue [educational] politics. While race is significant for schooling, it does not necessarily follow that having solidarities around particular racial identities by themselves produce school success. Educational success is strived for beyond identity politics. In effect, the Africentric school offers no guarantees for success simply by affirming racial solidarity among learners. But this is not to say that race is not significant for schooling and education.

In fact, as already noted, schooling must come to terms with the racial identities of students as much as it recognizes their class, gender, sexual, [dis]ability, linguistic, and religious identities. These identities are all significant for schooling outcomes. The positive force of an Africentric school is that it affirms students' racial identities rather than deny their significance. Issues of race and racism are deemed necessary to address so that the learner does not feel any sense of racial inferiority among her or his counterparts. Given the historic denigration of Black and African identities and the equation of such identities with criminality, students must be encouraged to love their Blackness and Africanness. The African identity is not a colour descriptor. It is about land, place, and history. It is also about culture, language, politics, and spirituality. The African identity needs to be constructed outside of that identity imposed within Euro-American hegemony. Such identity is about a history of resistance and what it means to be called African in both the colonizing and the anti-colonial encounters. Black is a racial signifier, but it is also a political one. To claim a Black or African identity is to resist European colonization and oppression and to be proud of one's ancestry, heritage, and culture. There is much denial of race in the school system. Many educators do not want to talk about it. They feel that to speak about race is to stir trouble; however, race is itself not the problem. It is the interpretation that we must talk about our racial differences that is the problem. Racial hierarchies work with tropes of inferiority and superiority.

We can only deal with racism if we critically interrogate race and racial differences and what these mean. If we reclaim that race is about identity and politics, it offers new possibilities in working to resist oppression. It is simply wished away or placed in a closest as if by not speaking about it, we have peace and harmony. For most racially oppressed bodies, race is always the big elephant in the classroom space. We cannot simply address racism by remaining silent. Education must affirm that race is about Black, Asian, Indigeneity and White. These identities evoke different responses, some punishment, and for some, privilege, and power. Education should teach about the social construction of racial identities and how they are systemically paired with rewards and punishment. Notwithstanding good intentions we have a bankrupt educational system. The system needs overhauling as it is built on a rotten foundation, that can easily crumble (e.g., normalization of Whiteness; the cultural, emotional, and physical dislocation of learners; and the privilege of Western science as neutral, normal, objective, and the only valid knowledge required to be learned).

On moving forward

There are five key points that are outlined below that are needed to be discussed, researched, and/or planned to incorporate Africentric schools as part of the provincial school systems (see also Dei and Kempf, 2013):

(a) Going beyond one school – elementary/secondary grade level

- It is important to extend the concept of the Africentric school to other grades and jurisdictions in Ontario and Canada.
- Disengagement starts early so we need to catch students very early. Yet, we must also think of extending the school to later grades given that the current dropout rate of Black youth is 40% in Toronto District School Board.
- Today's (December 12, 2013) interview (The Evolution of Multiculturalism) with a Toronto Star reporter (Tara Walton) about a second focused secondary school in Toronto, Ontario, in line with the Black Historical Colleges of the U.S. helps to support going beyond the idea of only one school.

(b) The necessity for action research

There is also a need for action research on pilot projects.

- Action research is necessary to strengthen teaching and to ensure transferability of best practices to serve the needs of other students. Such research must involve teachers and school staff and be directed and used purposefully toward the future developments of the schools.
- Research should examine teaching practices, student assessment, student involvement, strategies for parental/community involvement.
- Action research provides best practices which can then be transferred to other schools, serving the needs of all students.

(c) Africentric curriculum and pedagogic initiatives

- As we consider Africentric curriculum and pedagogic initiatives, the fact that alternative schools must meet the expectations of the Ontario curriculum is non-negotiable. Yet, we must examine larger questions of how and what is taught in order to achieve excellence for all youth. This may, in fact, imply changes to the Ontario curriculum. The question is what do you include in the school curriculum.

To develop an Africentric curriculum the focus must be on all subjects, but to highlight and use the following as entry points:

- The Science and Technological achievements of Egypt and Nubia (pyramids, Science, Mathematics, Arts, and the Humanities);
- West African ancient kingdoms and contributions in Islamic and Western intellectualism, literary traditions, art, architecture, trading systems, and Economics;
- West African Kingdoms: Mossi, Yoruba, Dahomey, Asante, Bono, Kanem Bornu –Arts, Science and Architecture;
- South, East, and Central African History (e.g., Zimbabwe ruins);
- Trans Atlantic Slave Trade: History of Enslavement and resistance of African Peoples; and
- African traditional political systems.

To develop an Africentric pedagogy the focus must be on all subjects:

- Start with the rich intellectual traditions of African peoples in Science, Technology, and Mathematics;
- Teach about these knowledges as legitimate sources of knowledge;
- Show how these traditions have been integral in the construction of Science and Mathematics education in general;
- Research Land and Earth teachings: sanctity, stewardships, custodianship, nexus of society/culture and Nature; and
- Show Africans as making history.

(d) Role of parents, elders, and communities
- Parents and Elders provide a vision for the school. They are also in genuine partnership with the school. They are not there simply to rubber stamp decisions.
- They support the school staff and administration for accountability and transparency to the local community.
- Parents and Elders as teachers, teach about history, community struggles, respect, culture, and local experiences for students moral and spiritual development.
- Parents and Elders and the community ensure the gains of the School are protected.

(e) Partnership with Other Schools
We must also put effort toward developing partnerships between the Africentric schools and other schools, through exchanges among teachers, classroom interactions, sports, quizzes, debating society interactions and so on. The goal is not to isolate the students or the schools.

Concluding thoughts

In an era of "knowledge-based economies", education that empowers youth to contribute to enriching their own lives and social well-being, as well as that of their families and communities is critical. We cannot underestimate the power of education if provided in ways that allow learners to grow their capabilities, skills, strengths, and talents. I see it as the responsibility of today's educator to create the environment that will allow all youth to grow in their intellect to build their self-worth and sense of pride for their collective esteem. This means that educators must be on-deck not only thinking through solutions to everyday schooling problems, but they must also generate with new (and may be radical) ideas to ensure effective schooling outcomes for all learners. The responsibility does not rest with educators alone. School administrators, policy makers, researchers, parents, local communities, and organizations cooperate and put their heads together to devise an effective school system that meets the needs of a diverse student body. We can begin by learning from our successes. There are many successes we can all be proud of. Yet, there are mounting challenges that cannot be swept under the carpet. Educators must work with sometimes very difficult ideas to bring about educational change. This is particularly so when we know the status quo is not working. When facts are there we can only argue and debate to a point. We know that a good number of Black, Aboriginal/Indigenous, and other ethnic minority youth are disengaged from the current school system.

The question is, what are we going to do about it? We can no longer argue that we must continue to do what we have been doing and that somehow change will happen. We need a mental turn in the educational universe. This turn will help re-centre all youth and their identities and their cultures in schooling. We need to relearn how we think and how we take up our theoretical responsibilities as educators and critical scholars. It is important for us not to be consumed solely with critiques of the current school system. Such a narrow focus or preoccupation only serves to solidify unfounded charges of intellectual mediocrity. We must live with fresh ideas and frameworks that point us to counter directions for educational change. I believe that as we look to the future, transformative education should be rooted in the Land to help affirm a people's history, culture, identity, and heritage. This will go a long way to connect learners to their learning; when that happens, success can no longer elude us.

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The Passing of Nelson Mandela and Thoughts Arising

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Abstract

For the author, the recent passing, or 'transitioning' of Nelson Mandela stirred memories and prompted many thoughts. Tebbs is of the opinion that Mandela's own value as a leader, indeed his gift of hope to human kind, is founded on a lifetime dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the unique value each individual represents to society. Although the article reflects what might be described as a 'stream of consciousness,' it is a narrative borne of more than a quarter century of experience studying and working with the population of highly-able and creative-young people. The theme of this piece speaks of their unique value as individuals and as a group and how that value, all too often, appears lost on society. Like Mandela, Tebbs espouses the view that when their ability and creativity is recognized, nurtured, and truly valued, these young people also represent hope for future generations.

The name of Nelson Mandela has been familiar to me for many years. Back in England during the 1970s, because of the links with Britain and the Commonwealth, news out of South Africa was often reported. Images associated with the troubles in Soweto, for example, are still vivid in my mind. Images shared with the world and related to the paradigmatic shift in national policy, with the advent of Mandela as a leader, are as memorable as they are stirring.

Moving from the 1970s and 1980s to the 21st century, while engaged as assistant director of the Honours Program at the University of Connecticut, I had the privilege of meeting the eldest son of Steve Biko, Nkosinathi. Biko was a leading student activist in the 1970s, who was killed while in detention for his political activities. Interestingly, we are told that his 'main occupation was the pursuit of academic excellence (see: http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/stephen-bantu-biko). Nkosinathi agreed to engage in a special event I had organized for the students. It was in March, 1999 and his visit was related to the fact that, at that time, the African National Congress (ANC) signed a partnership agreement with the University of Connecticut to promote international understanding and cooperation based on the principle of reciprocal learning and consultation. As I recall, we spent at least two hours together, engaged in conversation with a group of fascinated students. Nkosinathi was nine when all the troubles were taking place and so we heard the account of the struggle and his father's demise from the perspective of a young boy.

Some while later, in 2001, a conference was organized to honour the fact that the University of Connecticut had received the first and only UNESCO chair in human rights in the United States. Amii Omara-Otunnu, associate professor of history, executive director of the Institute of Comparative Human Rights and the UConn-ANC Partnership, held the chair (see: http://www.unescochair.uconn.edu/Amii.htm). I regard myself as very fortunate to

having been able to gather several visiting UNESCO Chairs for another Honours Program event for my students. Our meeting took place in the secluded warmth of the relatively small sitting room of the Honours House. It was an amazingly powerful, yet intimate and moving experience, shared by all as our visitors spoke admiringly about Mandela, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and a whole new era of hope for the people of South Africa.

I will be the first to admit that the thoughts arising from Mr. Mandela's passing and the celebration of his life may seem both rather odd, perhaps even contrived, in terms of what comes next. Be that as it may, as I thought about Mandel's legacy I understood more clearly that his power was intimately linked with a desire to recognize an individual's *value*. Those who preached and applied *apartheid* did not do so. Indigenous and other 'coloured' South Africans *were not valued*. True, they were segregated and hidden away in conditions of bitter poverty, but more than that, their strengths, their real strengths, accounted for very little except perhaps as slaves and underlings put on the earth to serve European masters. As a result, for providing opportunities for the younger generation of Black Africans to gain any sense of their strengths and value to society, there was no chance. For example, we learn there could be no school for *black* African children conducted anywhere in South Africa if its existence was not considered 'in the interests of the African people'. Anyone, white individuals included, caught teaching a black child to read would be in trouble and if an older black or coloured individual attended even a single lecture at the University of Cape Town, without special permission of the Minister of Bantu Education, he or she would be liable for a large fine or for imprisonment for six months. Efforts to segregate the population were profound. In a recent interview (December 6th, 2013), Mandela's close confidante, Cyril Ramaphosa, is reported to having said; "Black people in South Africa knew no rights…they lost their property, they lost their dignity…" (Amanpour, 2013). This is where my mind makes something of a leap as this train of thought leads me to consider the population of highly-able and creative children.

Although it is the practice of some educational institutions to 'segregate' this population, and even though my own views do not resonate with those perpetuating this practice, it is not my intention to discuss segregation or any apartheid-*like* policies in the context of giftedness or the education of individuals with the potential for gifted behaviours. While sadly I know such policies exist to a lesser or greater degree, what really interests me is '*value*' and lessons we might learn from Mandela. In short, he was anxious to recognize the value of his people and legislate accordingly. This characteristic, in my opinion, is what represented *hope* for his people, value and hope.

What is hope? It is defined in various ways. Some say it is *cherishing a desire with anticipation.* Others conclude it is *the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best*, or *person or thing in which expectations are centred*. Personally, I think the biblical-spiritual perspective is important to note in the context of this discussion, especially as hope is linked with faith and ultimately to trust: *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews Chapter 11 v. 1, King James Version) In whatever way it is defined, Snyder (2013) posits: "Hopeful thinking does not appear to be based on genetic inheritance, but instead reflects learning experiences over the course of childhood. … the emphasis is on the strengths of people rather than their weaknesses."

Lamia (2011) writing about hope and citing Snyder and others studying hope and hopefulness explains:

> Hope structures your life in anticipation of the future and influences how you feel in the
> present. Similar to optimism, hope creates a positive mood about an expectation, a goal, or a

future situation. Such mental time travel influences your state of mind and alters your behavior in the present. The positive feelings you experience as you look ahead, imagining hopefully what might happen, what you will attain, or who you are going to be, can alter how you currently view yourself. Along with hope comes your prediction that you will be happy, and this can have behavioral consequences.

Hope shapes your methods of traversing your current situation. The cognitions associated with hope--how you think when you are hopeful--are pathways to desired goals and reflect a motivation to pursue goals (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, & Holleran, 1991). Better problem-solving abilities have been found in people who are hopeful when compared with low-hope peers (Change, 1998), and those who are hopeful have a tendency to be cognitively flexible and able to mentally explore novel situations (Breznitz, 1986).

A definition of hope (see: http://www.div17pospsych.com/references-to-key-constructs/) offered by Division 17 (the Positive Psychology section) of the

American Psychological Association, also citing the work of Snyder and others, reads:

Goal-directed thinking in which people perceive that they can produce routes to desired goals (pathways thinking) and the requisite motivation to use those routes (agency thinking)" (Lopez, Snyder, & Teramoto-Pedrotti, 2003, p. 94). Levels of hope have predicted athletic performance, health behaviors, coping, adjustment, academic success and psychotherapy outcomes (Lopez & Snyder, 2007; Snyder, 2002).

Hopelessness is, of course, the opposite of *hopefulness*. In a study conducted back in the 1990s on middle-aged men, Everson, Goldberg, Kaplan, Cohen, Pukkala, Tuomilehto & Salonen (1996) found *hopelessness* to be a strong predictor of adverse health outcomes. Research into the interaction between hopelessness and stress revealed hopelessness is more strongly related to depression when stress levels are high. Stress from outside sources, e.g., depression and anxiety at home, has been linked to such negative outcomes as anxiety, depression, and aggression (Jaser et al., 2005), as well as academic underachievement, substance abuse (Feuer, 2013, citing Alva & de Los Reyes, 1999; Cunningham, Hurley, Foney, & Hayes, 2002). You, Furlong, Felix, Sharkey, Tanigawa & Green (2008) citing the work of Gilman, Dooley, and Florell (2006) report that "compared with youth clustered into low- or average-hope groups, the high-hope youths reported significantly better personal adjustment, global life satisfaction, and school academic performance (p.447). Yet another study (Swahn, Lubell, & Simon, 2004, cited in (Daniel, Goldston, Erkanli, Franklin and Mayfield, 2009) established aggressiveness, impulsivity, substance abuse, depression, and hopelessness may increase the risk for both suicidal and violent behaviours.

It has not been my intention to make this article overly dramatic or pessimistic - Mandela's life, after all, has brought significant

hope and a sense of worth to his people. However, on December 14th 2012, a young man randomly ended the lives of twenty children and several other adults in an elementary school in a quiet Connecticut town. On 13th December 2013 a large scale disaster was averted when another young man killed himself after walking into a high school armed with a shotgun, approaching a teacher and ultimately wounding a fifteen year female. A mystery has hung over the country along with all the similar mysteries. The latest will join the lengthening list.

The united appeal is for answers as regards 'why' this happened. It is hard not to make the connection, not simply with hopelessness, but with a sad alchemy that transforms it into a heinous criminal act. (See: Tebbs, T. J. (August, 2013). How many canaries: Thoughts provoked by a recent school shooting. *Labyrinth, Deutche Gesellschaft fur das hochbegabte Kinde*, *34*(117), pp. 16 - 18. See also: Newman, K. (2004). Rampage: The social roots of school shootings. Boulder, CO: Perseus Books Group.

Returning briefly to the early days of Nelson Mandela with the issue of hopelessness and its connection with other unhealthy states of mind, it is not difficult, *from strictly a psychological point of view*, to understand the violence endured throughout South African society. It is only too evident that in conditions

of such conflict, people's sense of their own value was in doubt or in jeopardy, they perceived the status quo offered little or no hope, and their faith in the unseen was so eroded as to be non-existent. Mandela (2013) himself said, *"There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested."*

Again from a psychological perspective, is it so difficult to grasp why many other populations across the globe choose an agenda of violence and the destruction of an oppressor? *That* is a very leading question. Deliberately side-stepping the enormity, reality, and often scary scenarios of grown-up geo-politic issues, my thoughts venture closer to home and to that population of highly-able and creative children mentioned earlier. Serendipity is an interesting phenomenon. At the time of writing this article I was doing some research unconnected with the subject, or so I thought. I was browsing through various web sites associated with school districts and their schools in my state. I was trying to find out if they offered any information that would provide interested parents the sense and comfort that high ability and, or creativity might be recognized and accommodated in the curriculum.

Even though I am aware only 9% of schools in this part of the United States fund some level of enrichment, i.e., support a faculty member responsible for organizing and delivering enrichment, I was unprepared for what I found. I found references to disability and special educational services which was not a bad thing and actually, I *was* prepared for that. The notion that schools served 'all children' was evident, again a laudable mission, and I was also prepared for that. But it was what amounted to the excoriation of references to anything remotely associated with high ability and creativity I found somewhat depressing.

Much of my work in psychology over the past several years has been with highly-able and creative children. They arrive on my doorstep from quite remote areas of northeastern United States. Parents call or email me requesting help with their child or children and when we meet the stories they share are all virtually the same or, at least, contain very similar themes. Mothers and fathers often express deep sadness and often shed tears as they regale me with their concerns. Invariably they *know* their son or daughter is 'smart,' but they rarely use the terms 'gifted' or 'talented'. Sadly, this is a lesson learned from frequent visits to school and an intuitive sense that they are not welcome as parents of a *gifted* child. I know many who have felt profoundly guilty when sharing their concerns with teachers or administrators of learning institutions where all children are gifted and there are 'no' gifted children.

The following story is not apocryphal. I remember one distressed mother telling about her son who was struggling both educationally and social-emotionally in his class and at home. Even in the fifth grade he was giving up, not wanting to leave for school in the morning, coming from school later in the day complaining of stomach pains, headaches, boredom, lack of challenge, and the fact that he had few friends and a teacher who, as far as he could tell, did not like him.

The mother eventually visited the school and shared her concerns with the teacher. The teacher's attitude was disdainful. She said her son was spoiled, should learn to get down to work, learn to socialize with classroom peers, not be so stand-offish … *and*, as for being 'gifted,' he was no different from anyone else in her classroom and actually *quite average* in every way. The corollary to this story is that after doing a psychological evaluation, I found the boy had a reading age at least three years in advance of his same-aged peers and a cognitive ability level of >150. He was also found to possess a personality type almost 100% INFP (introverted, intuitive, feeling, and perceptive), a fact I will explore later.

This is a sad example of a young man whose strengths were *not* valued. Why? I suspect, because they had not been recognized or identified, or if they were identified, they were overlooked or considered irrelevant. Whatever the case, by the time school was ended for the day this sensitive individual was emotionally exhausted, educationally dissatisfied and unfulfilled, demotivated, irritable, depressed, and in his own eyes, failing. His feelings of hopelessness were all too evident to his family but hard for him to articulate. He had decided something was terribly wrong with *him* and therefore failure would dog him throughout

school, even forever! He had lost trust in the system, he had lost trust in himself and he had talked of wanting to die.

This I realize is a powerful story and experience informs me that these themes are universal and not peculiar to the relatively affluent American society. I personally have heard similar stories when visiting Canada, England, France, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, Poland, Ukraine, Dubai, and Turkey. Professionals working with highly-able and creative youth elsewhere in the world have also shared such stories. Overall, my impression is that this population of young people *worldwide* is under considerable and potentially harmful stress and, for this reason alone, is deserving of our consideration.

I anticipate some readers may react strongly to what is written thus far. They will likely want to say that the picture I have portrayed is not wholly true for *all* highly-able and creative children and young people. Not only do I wholeheartedly agree, but also, based on my own experiences, I could happily tell of circumstances quite different to what has been described. In truth, my professional experience over the past few years, has been typically and necessarily of highly-able and creative young people in some degree of trouble or clearly at risk. There has not been the same level of contact with those not so obviously troubled and perhaps more successful. We know many are successful, but it is those that are blessed with parents whose loving and wise support is the antithesis of conditions experienced elsewhere, those fortunate enough to have come in contact with superbly-dedicated teachers possessed of almost magic pedagogical qualities, and, or those whose financial or social circumstances or level of academic achievement has facilitated a choice of the very best available educational accommodations, who are not my usual clients.

Many of my readers will know full well, as I do, that there is also a group of vulnerable young people worldwide, equally deserving of recognition and support, but for whom there is little or no help. It is in this context that the activities, headed up by such insightful leaders working in the field, for example, Taisir Subhi Yamin and Ken McCluskey with *Lost Prizes (see:* http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ953395) Sheryl

Broverman and Andrew Cunningham with *Wiser* (see: http://www.wisergirls.org/) *and* Maksym Galchenko and Stanislav Dovgyi working with the *Institute of Gifted Child* in Ukraine (see: http://giftedphoenix.wordpress.com/directory-of-major-gifted-education-centres worldwide/ukraine-institute-for-the-gifted-child/) are so important as models in educational efforts to identify and realize an individual's potential for development. The efforts of these people and many more besides remain anonymous but never the less work at home or in educational environments worldwide offering hope in the very same way as Nelson Mandela. They recognize and believe in the value of an individual. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: *"It is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him."*

In 2009, I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to present at an International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) conference held at the University of Ulm (see: www.icieworld.net) in Germany. My topic at the time was entitled "The vulnerability of the creative child". I chose the title with various definitions in mind, e.g., an individual in danger of being physically or emotionally wounded, or an individual open to attack or damage likely to suffer unwarranted criticism and to be penalized in some way. With such definitions in mind, I shared my observations and concerns with regards to such children. The topic of vulnerability has become progressively more important to me. Not simply the creativity element, but the implications relating to vulnerability overall.

Despite research suggesting otherwise, (e.g., Robinson, Reis, Neihart, & Moon, 2002), I am strongly of the opinion that highly-able and creative children in particular, i.e., those often among our more able, are indeed vulnerable, social-emotionally and educationally. Why? I think Sternberg (2006) captures the problem well. He wrote: "Creativity may be harder to find in older children and adults because their potential has been *suppressed* by a society that encourages *intellectual conformity*." (My emphasis) This quotation is included in the Working paper of the Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture on the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009) and aptly sets the tone for discussions on creativity and

innovation (Bundesministerium fur Unterrich, Kunst und Kultur, 2009).

A key word employed by Sternberg (2006) is "suppressed." In the context of this discussion it is suppression of a population that was vigorously applied in South Africa. It was the issue that Mandela addressed. The other key phrase is "intelectual conformity". Whether we like it or not none of us totally conform; each of us are different in some way. The notion that any of us can *truly* conform *intellectually* is patently unrealistic. True, we may at times personally choose to suppress our intellectual differences and in some countries we may be forced to do that simply to survive and stay alive. When considering suppression and conformity in the context highly-able and creative children, that they are, or may be become vulnerable, *sadly* makes sense.

Weissbourd (1996) wrote about an African-America seventh grader Keena in his book entitled, *The Vulnerable Child: What Really Hurts America's Children and What We Can Do About It*. Keena is said to have the intelligence, keenness, and clarity of perception of older children. She wants to be a psychologist and one question she is asking is how a six year old can think on a twenty-year-old level (a question I am still asking!):

> Teachers don't doubt her potential. She is very bright, perhaps even gifted. … Yet when asked about school Kenna's face betrays contempt; every day at school is for her unbroken misery. Keena says that she is "tired of teachers who just say write down this president, write down that president." Weissbourd (1996) goes on to say; "Kenna is denied … opportunities because her teachers do not know how to engage her" (p.27).

Herein lies the suppression and demand for intellectual conformity. It is much easier for teachers lacking self-efficacy in teaching someone like Keena, to seek their own level of comfort than to embark on a challenge they may not be *unwilling* to undertake but for which they are unprepared (Tebbs 2000, Tebbs & Yamin, 2006). As understandable as this is, it is no wonder many young people like Keena feel 'disillusioned' and 'defrauded'. Weissbourd (1996) implies she and her peers are vulnerable to the point of being at risk when he writes, "I have spoken with many children who lose their way, who become dangerously passive, or dangerously aggressive because they simply do not believe (p. 28).

Earlier I mentioned the young man with a personality type cateorized as INFP. I have conducted many personality assessments using the Jungian-based Murphy-Meisgeier Type indicator for Children (MMTIC) (see: http://www.capt.org/assessment-mmtic/children-assessment-personality.htm) with children and young people and I think it is interesting that out of all sixteen types associated with MMTIC, approximately 65% of my clients are classified as INFP. Anecdotal evidence from parents, the clients themselves and others familiar with the assessed individual seems to confirm the accuracy of the instrument. As personality-typing is the subject of many available texts, I will provide just a few significant and notable personality-specific behavioural patterns commonly associated with the introversion factor, the 'I' in INFP.

- Preference for working independently or, at most in a small group, marks them out as uncooperative and arrogant
- Thinking before acting may result in long "wait time" between questions and answers making them appear slow
- Waiting for others to initiate interaction makes them appear shy and, or socially anxious
- Reluctance in sharing thoughts and feelings results in appearing stand-offish
- Not being naturally in tune with their own feelings and the feelings of others makes them come across as awkward and out-of-place
- Being very private, reserved and quiet, they experience discomfort in expressing affection and emotion.

Like the well-known Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® instrument, the Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children® (MMTIC™) is a self-report assessment of psychological type. Although the two instruments share the same theoretical approach to understanding personality, first proposed by Carl Jung and further developed by Isabel Myers, they differ in the age groups for which they are

designed. The MBTI® assessment is intended for a mature audience, while the shorter, easier-to-read MMTIC instrument is designed for type assessment in children and teenagers (grades 2-12).The MMTIC has been used with many thousands of children since its introduction in 1987. The new version of the instrument reflects significant improvements in assessment, administration, and interpretation. MMTIC results give educators, administrators, counselors, parents, teenagers, and children valuable insights into differences in learning styles (how information is gathered and how attention is directed) and healthy social interactions. Type has profound implications for both early learning success and lifelong healthy type development and use.

The opposite to introversion (I) is extroversion (E). Fonseca (2014) writes:

> Western culture celebrates extroverted behavior. Schools are microcosms designed to promote extroverted behaviors.,, Competition and collaboration, both are suited to the extrovert, has replaced innovation and creativity as the norm … schools can provide a unique challenge to our introverted children. This can be particularly true for both gifted children and those with learning challenges (p. 93).

In my opinion, when considering the value of an individual, such important information ought not remain unknown, undiscovered, or discounted. If we fail to take personality issues into account with respect to certain patterns of behaviour, it is not difficult to see how the uninformed teacher, or parent, could, for example, misread a child's *natural and perfectly healthy* preference for reflective thinking, privacy and quiet, and equate it with some less healthy behaviour, even a disability. I simply *know* the quiet child is vulnerable. I also know when the quiet child grows up to be a quiet college student, for example, he or she, especially she, becomes vulnerable to their own habits established during perhaps as many as 13,000 hours of education elsewhere, daring to say nothing for fear of embarrassment or some other perceived symptom of low self-worth or failure. Silverman (2013) writes:

> Introverts are not stimulation seekers. They are cautious in new situations until they are sure of what to expect so they can feel in control of their emotions. When they are bombarded by too much stimulation, they feel out of control and want to escape (p. 152).

Such children are prone to profound embarrassment if they are challenged for any reason in front of a group. Highly-able children tend to be very aware of unfairness and unjust behaviours in others and so, if they sense other people are being unfairly treated, they will feel deeply for them. This is especially true if they are not only introverted but also feelers, the F in INFP. An F is usually deeply opposed to and disturbed by any measure of conflict and, or disharmony. While I personally cannot be sure of Mandela's personality-type, there is much to suggest he was at least an introvert at heart and someone strongly opposed to conflict. It is true, he stood before crowds of people in his time, but his preference and strength came to the forefront when working with people in close association. I believe it is no coincidence that he found happiness as a child herding cattle. It is significant in terms of his tendency to enjoy the quiet away from the stimulus of crowds of people. Significantly when he left office, despite his fame and impact on his country, his preference was to go home and to live quietly with his family.

I have already remarked on serendipity. Here is another case, again associated with thoughts regarding Nelson Mandela's passing. On a very recent Sunday morning broadcast on our public radio station in Vermont there was a discussion with Brené Brown (See also: TED Talk http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html) research professor at the University Of Houston Graduate College Of Social Work. She was interviewed exceptionally well by Krista Tippet host of the program 'On Being'. (See Krista Tippet: www.onbeing.org/) The title of the talk was the 'Courage to be Vulnerable'.

Having already started writing some thoughts about Mandela, my mind went immediately to him when Brown (2013) mentioned that in all her research she found not one individual who had distinguished him or herself as a leader who had not been vulnerable. In fact, her research proved to

her that courage is borne of vulnerability. The implications are profound for certain highly-able and creative children who may often be, or are, 'vulnerable.' In Mandela's case, there can be little doubt he was both truly vulnerable and truly courageous as a Bantu activist.

This notion of courage has been of interest to leaders in the field of gifted education for many years. For example, Renzulli (Knobel & Shaughnessey, 2002) as part of his 'Houndstooth' concept has linked courage with the optimism, a sense of having the power to change things and a sense of destiny. In my mind, this raises an important and interesting question: Might it be vulnerability that, de facto, renders the highly-able and creative individual courageous?

Again in the context of vulnerability, Brown also spoke of her studies on shame. Most readers would probably agree that this subject, especially when allied with guilt, is not a subject that we might consider positive. Interestingly, I believe it can be. First, what of shame? According to Brown (March, 2013):

> Shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection. Is there something about me, that if other people know it or see it, that I won't be worthy of connection. … What underpinned this shame, this I'm not good enough … smart enough … The thing that underpinned this was excruciating vulnerability.

I wondered if Mandela experienced shame and guilt. Was shame and guilt underpinning his vulnerability and thus also initiating his courage?

This thought prompted a connection with one of the most important areas of learning discovered during my studies, i.e., the work of Kazimierz Dabrowski. (See: http://positiveintegration.com/ & http://www.sengifted.org/archives/articles/dabrowskis-theory-of-positive-disintegration-some-implications-for-teachers-of-gifted-students). I suspect some readers may know this man's name, perhaps in connection with Over Excitability (OE), and maybe even his Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD). Thankfully, there is an increasing selection of informative resources (e.g., Mendaglio, 2008) available for those who are not so familiar with Dabrowski's important work and wish to find out more.

This discussion affords little time or the place to present his work in any depth. I choose to leave that task to others more knowledgeable than myself. I am, however, particularly interested in sharing some thoughts very much connected with one important aspect of his Theory of Positive Disintegration. TPD is concerned with the process of personality development. It incorporates five distinct levels of progression towards the fullest expression of that development, i.e., Primary or Primitive Integration, Unilevel Disintegration, Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration, Organized Multilevel Disintegration, and the fifth level, Secondary Integration. It is his third level of development, known as Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration, I believe has a particular relevance to high-ability and creativity.

For Dabrowski, the third level in his developmental progression began with values, both the value of self and, I believe, values pertinent to self and how one interacts with the world beyond self. Clearly, establishing a set of values represents a very significant stage in our development. It implies the existence of a cognizant mind becoming aware of what it is to be human among other humans. It also signifies contemplation on and organization of our values into some sort of order of importance. The term used by Dabrowski is Hierarchization. Once this process unfolds, and assuming our thought processes don't suddenly cease, we tend to further contemplate these values. They serve to move us forward in our development. His thoughts link with Krathwohl (1956). (See: http://www.aps.edu/aps/gifted/krathwahl.html) who recognized that after establishing and organizing our set of values we not only endeavour to live by them but we may also be characterized by them. After all, what is the benefit of having values if they don't initiate and underpin action, somehow modifying behaviour, our decisions, our choices and how we interact with our world?

Clearly Mandela possessed a clear set of values, perhaps assembled as he quietly walked among the cattle ruminating in some South African pastureland. He certainly lived, and was characterized by, his values. It is fascinating to imagine what thoughts entered Mandela's head at that time. Based on what we know of his autobiography (Mandela, 1995), we might speculate on an early moral sensitivity. He said he "learned that to humiliate another person is to make him suffer an unnecessarily cruel fate" and "that virtue and generosity will be rewarded in ways that one cannot know". Silverman (1994) (See: http://www.sengifted.org/archives/articles/the-moral-sensitivity-of-gifted-children-and-the-evolution-of-society) talks about such sensitivity of highly-able children and links it with Dabrowski's considerations. She writes: "Dabrowski postulated that certain innate response patterns provide a foundation for the development of higher order values in adult life."

My own experience of this population throughout the twenty-five years of involvement with this population resonates with this proposition. I am reminded especially of two very young highly-able children who visited my office. Don who, at the age of six, collected $2000 to help towards the survival of cheetahs, because he loved them. There was the petitely-built five year-old Guy who read fluently and knowingly from his favourite passage on gorillas in a National Geographic magazine. He was asked about the plight of these animals in the wild. He began his response: with: *Well, according to my latest research …*"

Back to Dabrowski briefly. This is important from a TPD perspective with respect to shame and guilt. As we progress through his third level we grapple with the notion of a 'superior' self, i.e., not a self that is superior in an over-bearing and derogatory sense, but in the sense of some latent personal quality in need of nurture and expression which eventually leads to our betterment and perhaps, indirectly the betterment of others. My own interpretation of this is that shame and guilt emerges at this level if *we* deny the existence of our superior self, suppress it in some way, and not allow ourselves to experience its benefits to the fullest.

Going back to the story of the 5th grader who was pronounced average and like any other child in his class: he knew there was a different, a 'superior' person residing within him. He *knew* he no longer needed hours of unnecessary low-level reading and language work. He had mastered the concepts at least two years ago back in third grade. Similarly, Keena, the African-American 7th grader could probably list, if not all, many of the U.S. presidents in kindergarten. It seems evident when thinking logically about these things that the sense and fear of failure within one's self can cause a deep sense of shame and guilt. Children may be aware, but not always able to articulate, a perfectionistic feeling that is not only associated with letting themselves down but also failure that is in some way has an impact on those we love. It is a point at which they may well be vulnerable, e.g., in danger of being emotionally wounded and, or fearful of some unwarranted criticism, punishment, or embarrassment.

At this stage we have either a negative or a positive choice before us. On the one hand, we can by default or conscious reasoning, become overwhelmed and succumb to a whole raft of feelings. On the other hand, we can choose to experience this as a challenge to be faced and to be overcome. At this time, we are not simply vulnerable but we must also summon high levels of courage in order to move forward.

According to Dabrowskian theory, when, and if, these feelings of shame and guilt *are* faced a whole new understanding of self develops. Dabrowski describes this as Positive Maladjustment. Simply put, we reach a level of understanding that we are 'mal' or badly adjusted or in the 'wrong' place, but for the very best or 'positive' of reasons, this must change. Courage again is necessary. The change should not be simply a matter of shallow and petty discontent. Rather it should be for real and substantial reasons, e.g., where we are is not where we could be and what we are doing is not what we can do best. Reaching this stage on the developmental continuum opens up the possibility of a major transition in our lives. It marks the threshold of Dabrowski's fourth level, Organized Multilevel Disintegration. Reaching that stage is extremely exciting in terms of personal development because

there is now the potential of a very positive shift towards realization of an autonomous and authentic self and ultimately a personality ideal that heralds a Secondary Level of Integration. This level is achieved only after the accumulation of a lifetime of experiences that together give rise to self-understanding, harmony and empathy for human kind.

I know I am not alone when I suggest Nelson Mandela had reached this stage. As Obama (2013) said on hearing of Mandela's passing, "*He belongs to the ages.*" His life has been characterized by his values. History will claim him as a great leader inspiring others in the time to come to overcome their own vulnerability, walk forward courageously while choosing not to succumb to pressure to suppress rather than celebrate individual values. Threaded throughout the narrative are references to the population of highly-able and creative young people. They are our future; trite perhaps, but nevertheless true. So how can they grow to become their true selves and like Mandela, achieve their personality ideal and 'confident in their chosen value hierarchy?'

Innumerable true and powerful stories could be told like parables illustrating a weighty concern. It would be easy to conclude individuals from all walks of life, blind to potential, will continually fail to recognize and to nurture the true gifts and talents of those highly-able and creative individuals with whom they come in contact. I choose to look towards the future with a sense of optimism and thankfully, I have met countless young people whose courage, resilience, persistence, and determination *wholly* affirms my choice.

Mandela's life is also like a parable. After twenty-seven years in prison he could have given up, succumbed to the authorities, and faded away into the dust of history. That was not his choice. By choosing a different path he personalized courage and defined leadership. Writing this paper has been an affirmation of learning for me. I was not certain of the end from the beginning. What has been powerfully affirmed is the importance of a leader who recognizes value, his or her own value, and the value of others. Mandela demonstrated for his people important values upon which to found their personal lives and to re-create a nation. He gave them the opportunity to visit that 'superior self' and consider how their lives could change and during that process of change examine how they might contribute to a more equitable society.

I do believe the highly-able and creative individuals are a population that are largely misunderstood, underestimated, and misrepresented. I also believe this population represents a vast human resource of intellect, innovation, and wisdom. It is a population far too valuable to be dismissed as spoiled, elitist, average, overachieving, arrogant, or for any other reason, somehow undeserving of our attention. I wonder what would happen in villages, towns, and communities large and small worldwide, if parents, teachers, politicians, and presidents took a leaf out of Nelson Mandela's book and began identifying and recognizing the value of these young people, nurturing their strengths and allowing for appropriate application of them?

Mandela (2012) wrote, "I would not and could not give myself up to despair" and "I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward."

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About the Author

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Trevor studied educational psychology with an emphasis on giftedness and counseling with Joseph Renzulli and his team at the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/ GT), based at the University of Connecticut (UConn). In the last decade he has served the community both as an educational consultant with a special interest in the educational and social emotional concerns of highly able young people and as an adjunct professor offering courses at his local college - Castleton State College - in Educational Psychology, Giftedness, Human Development, Introduction to Psychology and Psychological Testing. His special interest is holistic assessment.

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Building Success from the Ground Up: The Three-Year Student Success Initiative at Elmwood High School

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The true value of the Student Success Initiative:
> "When I first came to this school, I didn't know anything and if it wasn't for SSI, I would have left school like my cousin did, but you helped me and now I am the first one to graduate in my whole family." An SSI Graduate

Keywords: Student success initiative; school leadership; action research; exemplary programme.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Student Success Initiative (SSI) Pilot Project at Elmwood High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The article examines Elmwood High School's profile, its guiding philosophy, and its past efforts to support students. Additionally, it outlines the Elmwood SSI model, distinguishes the principal features that led to the model's success, and illustrates the success of the three-year pilot project through multiple data sources showing improved student outcomes.

In the spring of 2010, Elmwood High School was invited by the Winnipeg School Division to join the Provincial Student Success Initiative as the only urban school participating in the project. The goal was to team a middle-years school and a senior-high school together, and since we are a grade 7-12 school, Elmwood was deemed to meet both criteria. Other participating Manitoba pilot schools were Margaret Barber High School and Scott Bateman Middle Years School in the Pas, and Ashern Central, Eriksdale, and Lundar Schools in the Interlake Division. The Student Success Initiative Pilot Project is part of Manitoba's "All Aboard Poverty Reduction Strategy," designed with the following objectives in mind:

- to provide a framework for working in high poverty contexts;
- to identify core strategies to support schools to systematically identify students at risk of dropping out;
- to identify core strategies to support students academically and socially; and
- to provide personnel to support the implementation of the project.

The Student Success Initiative is based upon an Ontario model that placed a Student Success Teacher and a Literacy Coach in all Ontario schools. In September 2010, the five participating SSI schools in Manitoba visited Beaver Brae High School in Kenora, Ontario to see the structure of their program. Beaver Brae School's definition of an at-risk student is one student who, without intervention and/or supports, would be less likely to succeed in the regular school environment. Success is synonymous with increased retention, credit accumulation, graduation rates, and an increased preparedness for life outside and beyond high school. A student may be at-risk academically, emotionally, socially, and/or physically. In addition, students may be deemed to be at-

risk for varying periods and lengths of time. The four pillars of the Ontario model are: (a) literacy, (b) numeracy, (c) pathways (college, university, or workplace), and (d) community, culture, and caring. This introduction to Ontario's SSI model was very valuable for our staff.

Goals of the project

The overall goal of the Student Success Project in Manitoba is to improve graduation rates through the provision of additional school-based supports. In senior-high school, this translates to increased credit acquisition through additional supports and credit recovery strategies. In middle years, it refers to easing the transitions between grades, especially from grades 6 to 7 and from grades 8 to 9. Increasing student engagement is a fundamental underlying principle of this project. To achieve this goal, the province suggested a three-pronged approach: diagnostic identification, targeted intervention, and strengthening school-wide engagement. Each approach involves a subset of priorities, as outlined below:

1. **Diagnostic identification**
   a. Develop an early warning system that identifies students at risk of leaving school;
   b. Use expanded capabilities of the MAYET student record system (e.g., attendance, grades); and
   c. Create a team that acts on the information.

2. **Targeted intervention**
   a. Hire/designate Student Success Teachers to work with students (Elmwood chose to use a new delivery model in the form of a Student Success Centre); and
   b. Offer support to Success Leaders in the form of consultant assistance from the province, support from the Inner City's Machray Learning Centre, and administrative guidance/direction from the school.

3. **Strengthening school-wide engagement**
   a. Engage students academically/intellectually in their learning as well as socio-emotionally in the social life of the school.

School profile

Elmwood High School (EHS) is a grade 7-12 school with 813 students (as of October 29, 2013). There are 575 senior-high students and 238 middle-years students. We have 53 teachers, 35 support staff, and 3 administrators. We serve an area of the city where the average income is $39,200 and 36% of our families are below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) level. Forty-four percent of our families are single-parent families, and that reflects a broad definition of "parent" that includes uncles, aunts, and grandparents. Thirty-five percent of our families are self-identified as Aboriginal, and 7% have English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs. We receive funds for a breakfast program and serve on average over 200 breakfasts per month.

Elmwood High School has a rich history of working hard to help struggling students get on track, and we host a wide range of programming with nine Special Education Programs. These include two Learning Assistance Centres (LACs) that work with students with challenging behaviours, two Life Skills Classrooms (LSs), two Special Education Centres (SECs), a Community Access Program (CAP), and two Integrated Special Education Programs (ISEP). We also host grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 Low-Enrolment classes and a grade 7 and 8 (combined) and a grade 9 Flex Program that utilizes a great deal of cross-curricular thematic individualized learning. In addition, we have a grade 9 Alternative Instructional Methods (AIM) Program that assists students who have failed Math in grade 9 and provides the opportunity for them to earn the credit in the first semester of their grade 10 year, an Infant Lab for young mothers, an Off-Campus Program, and an EAL Program that works with students at all grade levels.

Elmwood also has a wide range of co-curricular programming. There are a variety of sports, training, and visual and performing arts opportunities that frequently involve students who are deemed to be possibly at risk. Our student councils are active, and we feel that we are leaders in developing awareness of environmental and social justice issues. On the environmental front, we have developed a renewable energy project that links a wind turbine and an array of solar panels that power a set of computers in our library and have a team of students and staff developing a Learning Centre around these pieces of equipment. In the area of social justice, we support charitable efforts through the Free the Children Foundation and many other charities, and conduct forums for elementary grade groups on sustainability and social justice issues.

Our goal for the Student Success Initiative Project at Elmwood School is to find a way to build upon what we already do to assist students with their learning and find a way to reach those who struggle and who fail to qualify for other program assistance.

Guiding philosophy

We felt that our school's venture into the Whole Child Philosophy suited the SSI Project well. The key underpinnings of how students are "engaged," "challenged," and "supported" – and ways in which we can ensure student "safety" and "health" – are key areas that we address as a school at all times.

Figure 1 summarizes our school's overall philosophy that has enabled the SSI Project to build upon our efforts to help students succeed. We have adopted American philosopher Ken Wilbur's idea of "transcend and include," where you build upon effective teaching/learning practices that are already in place. The Foundation and Pathway for Success is a framework that encourages teachers to consider what areas of students' lives we can influence and where we can impact on their growth. It recognizes the "multiple contextual factors" that may affect a student's decision to persist or leave school – "family, school, neighbourhood, and peers" (Allensworth & Easton, 2005, 2007). Our role is to link classroom learning to life experiences, provide a firm foundation in core subject areas, provide choice through electives, and build in a variety of co-curricular opportunities that enrich students' development and foster appropriate skills and knowledge for students to become contributing citizens who reach their potential.

The Elmwood SSI Model

Elmwood staff met in the spring of 2010 to start to plan how to move the SSI initiative into reality in Elmwood High School. We wanted to ensure that our efforts complemented existing school philosophies:

- Student learning should be at the heart of everything we do;

- Forward-moving, solution-oriented approaches work best;

- Caring about all of the students in our charge is essential, even the ones that are giving us "a good run for our money." ;

- Collaboration around student learning and sharing of ideas maximizes our effectiveness;

- Systemic change needs to be driven by overriding philosophies (e.g., we went to a five-period day because it rendered a wider range of course availability for our students); and
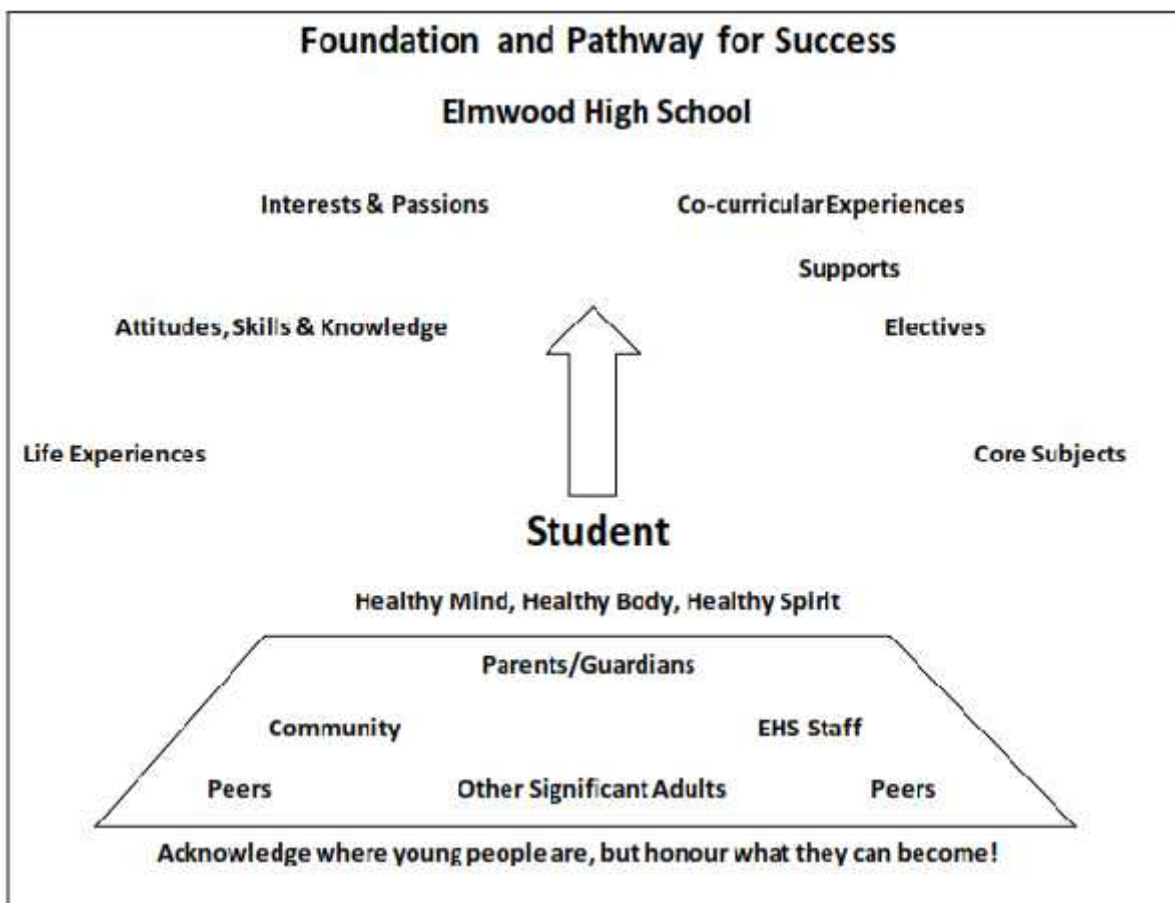
- HEART + MIND + EFFORT = SUCCESS.

Figure 1: Foundation and Pathway for Success.

We decided to build upon an idea from Glenlawn High School in Winnipeg that developed a Support Centre, and we needed it to work with students across all senior-high grades. The initial goals of the Elmwood Student Success Centre were to provide academic support for students in regular classes to help them get through the course the first time they take it, develop a way to honour past learning through a credit recovery model, and support students socio-emotionally. Student supports offered through SSI were voluntary, meaning that students could choose to take advantage of the support or not, but they knew they were always welcome – at-risk students do not need more negatives piled upon them. These founding pillars enabled our Student Success Centre literally to go from zero to phenomenal numbers and provide a wide range of benefits to our school.

The benefits of the Student Success Centre were indeed numerous. The Centre helped students maintain the ability to continue in current credit courses by providing curricular supports in the form of intensive one-on-one support and scheduled tutoring time. The student work was supplied and assessed by the classroom teachers which helped to ensure that credit integrity was maintained. The Centre also helped students get caught up after attendance lapses. It developed individual student success plans, delivered Credit Recovery strategies by covering gaps from previous attempts in courses, and helped to change students' attendance patterns. In addition, the Centre established a strong learning culture, built a supportive learning community, strengthened ties to community programs, and offered time during lunch or spares where students could receive assistance with their assignments.

Measuring the success of the project

1. Diagnostic identification: The early warning system

In collaboration with the Winnipeg School Division Data team, Brent Guinn and Kristine Vielfaure, an Early Warning System was developed that identified students with attendance issues in the first 20 days of a semester and performance and attendance issues at the end of the first term of a semester. In the first year, the grade 9 students were tracked, and the data provided such a useful format that we asked that the tracking be extended to our grade 10 and 11 students. Much of the literature suggests that helping students get through grade 9 sets them on a successful journey in future grades, whereas the data supported our reality that we need to provide supports through grades 9-11 and, in fact, also work hard to keep our grade 12 potential graduates on track.

Our early warning system criteria consisted of the following:

i. **Poor Attendance** – Flagging absences of 10% or more in the first 20 days of a semester and over the first term.
ii. **Poor Performance** – Term marks:
   ▪ Failed Math or English Language Arts (ELA);
   ▪ Failed two or more courses; and
   ▪ Had a 55% average mark or less in the 1st term of each semester.

We did not use a third piece of data involving suspensions.

Figure 2 summarizes the Early Warning Data over the three years of the pilot project and into the beginning of the fourth year for which we received partial funding from the province. By absorbing a Senior High position, we were able to leave the SSI Program intact for a fourth year, at the request of our Department Heads who stated in a planning session that "SSI was essential to our school." Figure 2 identifies the number of students who are "off track" as designated by school absences of at least 10% in the first 20 days of either Semester 1 or 2.
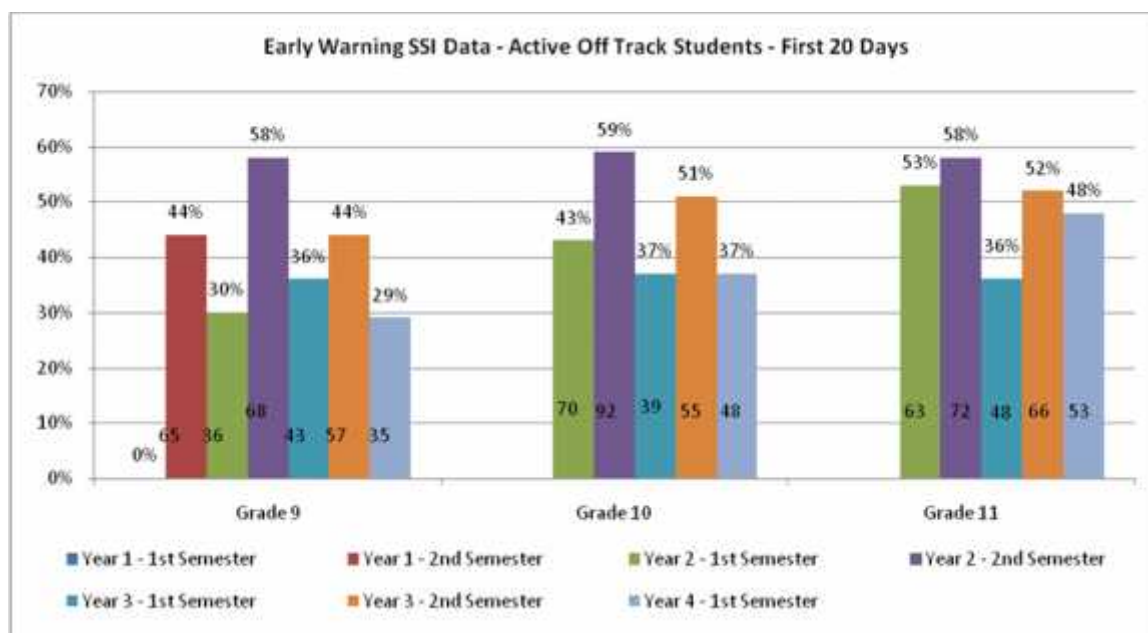

Figure 2: Early Warning SSI Data – Percentage and Numbers of Students (#'s inside the bars) who were Off-Track Based on Poor Attendance in the First 20 Days of a Semester – Years 1 to 4 of the Project.

Figure 3 indicates the percentage of students by grade who are off-track for attendance and/or performance at the end of the first term in the first and second semesters over a three-year period and for the first term of the current fourth year. The Early Warning Data reflect the numerous challenges that many of our students have throughout their senior high years and indicate that support is needed all the way through.
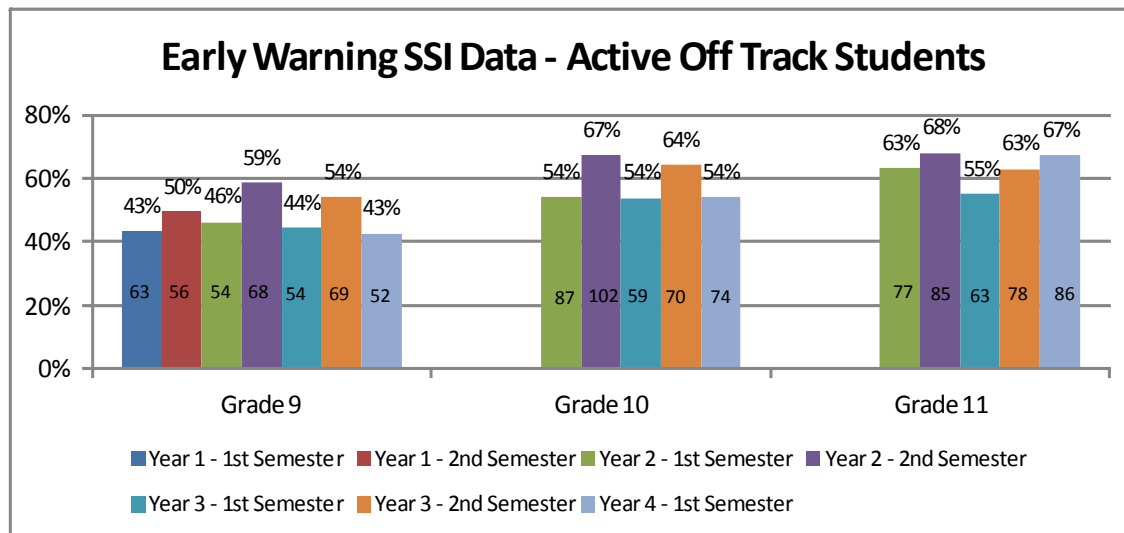

Figure 3: Early Warning SSI Data 2010-2013: Percentage and Number of Students (# inside bars) Off-Track in the 1st Term by Grade Performance and/or Attendance.

The successful credit acquisition rates in Table 1 reflect the tremendous efforts made by staff to help students get back on track and helped to offset the large numbers of identified "off-track" students in both the first 20 days and the first term data pieces.

2. Targeted intervention

a. The Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre worked very well as the targeted intervention piece and the underpinning of the Whole Child Philosophy served us well. The design enabled primarily grades 9-12 students, along with some middle-years students, to receive academic support in multiple subject areas and/or socio-emotional support. The first goal was to support students at the SSI Centre their first time through a course. If a student fell short but achieved a 40% or higher, a Credit Recovery Plan would be established with that student, the classroom teacher, and the SSI teacher. We also developed ways to honour past learning that proved extremely motivational for many students.

The tremendous impact that the Student Success Centre had on our school is indicated in Table 1, which shows that the number of students supported increased from 90 in Year 1 to 296 in Year 3. As well, the number of credits earned rose from 60 in Year 1 (with a successful credit acquisition rate of 55.5%) to 235 in Year 3 (with a successful credit acquisition rate of 76.3%). The increase in both number of students and the credit acquisition rate lets us know that something very positive was taking place, and demonstrates the value of gathering supporting data.

Table 1: A Three-Year Comparison of SSI Data.

SSI's Student Success Centre	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
# of Students Supported	90	145	296
# of Credits Earned with SSI support	60	101	235
# of Student Success Plans	51	65	73
# of Community Connections	29	31	31
# of Graduates with SSI Support	3	20	50
# of Math Credits Earned	19	68	118
Peers Working With Peers	Low	Frequent	Frequent
Use at Noon Hour	0-3	5-10	15-20
Successful Credit Acquisition Rate	55.5%	73.2%	76.3%

The SSI teachers were able to create a remarkable learning culture. They worked shoulder-to-shoulder with students and let them know that they were not going to give up on them. We were able to enhance our person power in the Success Centre by providing Educational Assistant time through our regular staffing and, in the third and beginning of the fourth year, using "mentoring" pre-service teachers from the University of Winnipeg's Faculty of Education, which helped our students build connections with young people succeeding in university.

The academic-support teachers brought a strong Math/Science background to the table which enabled us to serve the extensive Math needs. Our SSI Lead teacher worked on building strong relationships with the students by providing socio-emotional supports, fostering family connections, helping students and families strengthen their connections in the community, and building connections with grades 7 and 8 students. Regular subject teachers were also on board and helped to develop student success and credit recovery plans. With respect to the community connections, Kani Kanichihk's Restoring the Sacred is an after-school program that provides our Aboriginal students who are new to the city cultural resources and social outings. Elmwood High School students have been supported by and have become mentors in this program. The Urban Eagle Transition Centre (UETC) provides resources for our students and families. They have used UETC in many capacities including job skills, employment, and family supports. The Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD) provides social programming as well as employability skills and training opportunities. They also provide a link to organizations that are seeking employees of Aboriginal descent, and some of our students have, in fact, obtained employment.

Former students and parents have accessed employability-skills training related to specific job qualifications. The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre (Mamaway) works on providing the Aboriginal community with many resources. Our youth have accessed the Centre's cultural teaching and employment opportunities. Further connections have been made with VOICES, a support organization that supports youth who have been or are currently being supported by Child and Family Services. The Manitoba Metis Federation and the Louis Riel Institute support our students' links to employability training and post-secondary scholarship opportunities. A connection has been created to support our students who need to obtain proper identification through tracing their geneology. SSI also provides a personal link to support staff at our local universities and colleges. Students receive support with scheduling meetings and are provided transportation to and from the post-secondary institutions.

Figure 4 shows the breakdown for subject-area support in Year 3, which reflects the pattern over all three years, with Math requiring the greatest amount of support.
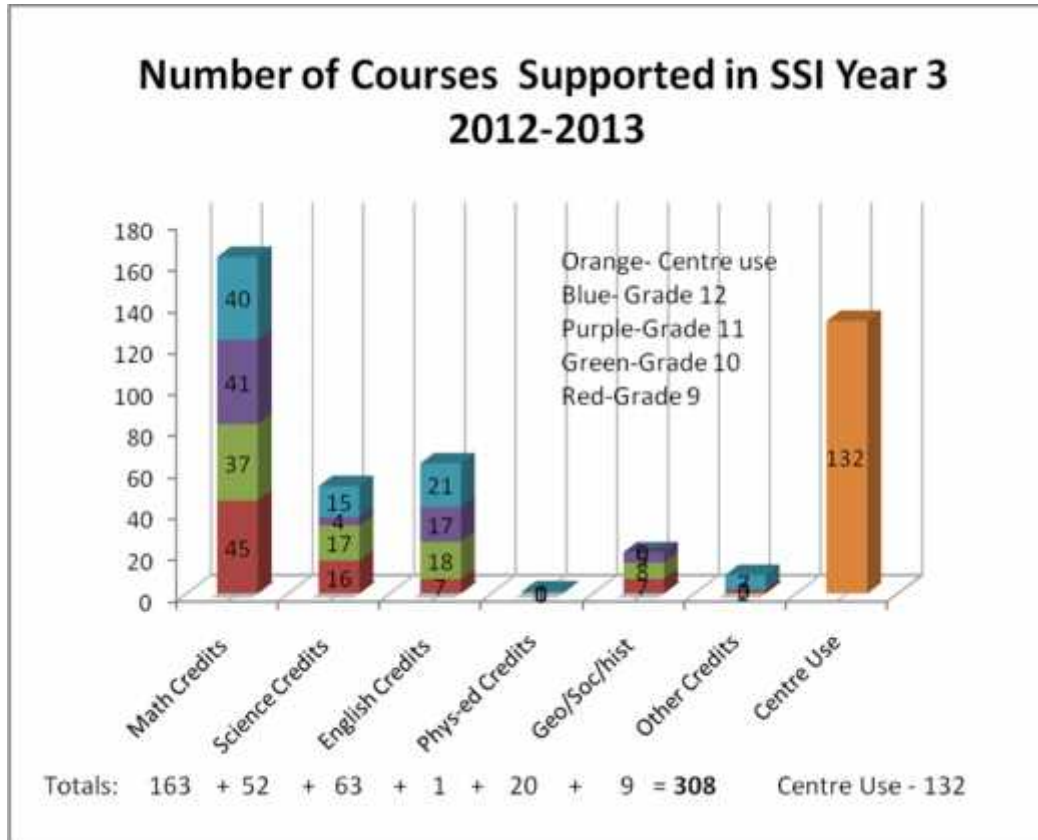

Figure 4: Number of Courses Supported in Year 3: 2012-2013 (Reflective of all 3 Years).

Figure 5 visually represents the second line of data in Table 1 that deals with the number of credits earned in each of the pilot years. The growth from 60 to 235 is a positive indicator of the success of the program.
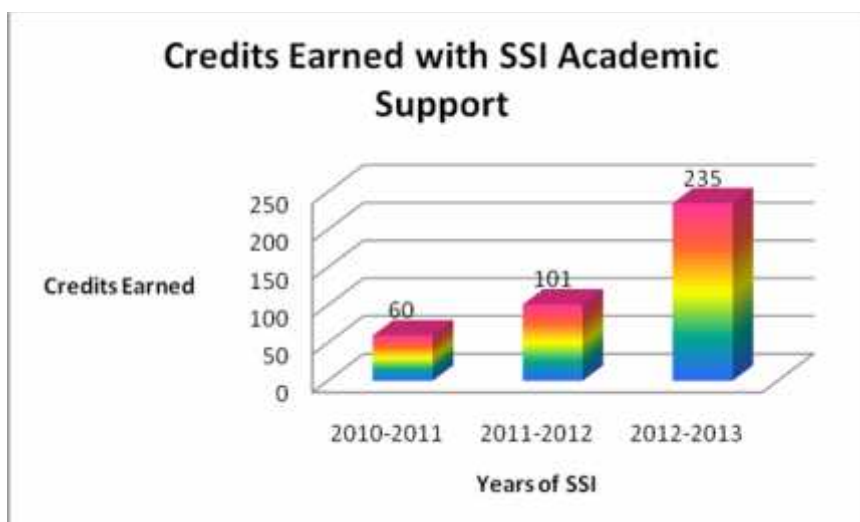

Figure 5: Credits Earned with SSI Support over 3 Years: 2010-2013.

In the first year, we pursued web-based courses which proved too difficult for many students, so we started to deliver courses through SSI in a variety of ways in Years 2-4. One of the findings over the first year was that many at-risk students were uncomfortable with using technology as a platform to enhance their learning. The Winnipeg School Division's substantial investment to upgrade the networking and wiring to enhance technology in the Success Centre has helped many students utilize technology more effectively to support their learning.

b. The Elmwood SSI Team

Joanne Sabourin was our Lead Success Teacher who focused on providing socio-emotional support for students and building connections with the families of SSI students. Grant Andruchuk is the current SSI Academic Support Teacher and has built upon the work of Madelaine Bongiorno in Year 1 and John Hasenack in Year 2. Mike Babb is the Lead Administrator for the project and has been a main author for each year's final report. Fran Davies is our Guidance Department Head and was the main guidance contact for SSI students. We drew the Educational Assistant (EA) supports from Elmwood High School Staffing.

Dr. Eleoussa Polyzoi from the University of Winnipeg is our Researcher in Residence and helped guide our data collection, analysis, and reporting of results. Brent Guinn and Kristine Vielfaure are the WSD Data Team that developed the SSI Early Warning System. Kathy Collis and Marc Kuly of the Machray Learning Centre received SSI funding to support all of the SSI schools in big-picture thinking. The University of Winnipeg mentors were an important addition to the Student Success Centre because they increased the ability to provide more individualized attention to more students. The connections they made with students gave them insights as to why students struggle and fall into the off-track categories. Sheila Geisbrecht was the lead for the province for the entire project and organized the SSI school meetings and the trips and provided encouragement and support throughout. The following comments from our Math Department Head reflect the support for the SSI program from regular classroom teachers:

> "The SSI centre provides at-risk students an opportunity to succeed academically. The centre offers a flexible program to fulfill students' individual needs by setting goals and steps to achieve them. Teachers in SSI work along with the subject teachers to ensure that students are getting parallel fundamental concepts with their peers in the same subject. The diversity of the program can simply range from a quiet place for students to concentrate to one-on-one teacher assistance. As a Math teacher, I really appreciate what the SSI center is offering my students." Thao Vo, Elmwood Math Department Head, 2012

3. Strengthening school-wide engagement

Early on, we had adopted Dunleavy and Milton's (2005) Stages of Engagement that highlighted the idea that students' progress from social engagement to academic engagement to intellectual engagement.

In all three years of the SSI Project, we found these ideas, in fact, reflect students' real paths in moving toward academic success. Schools that deal with poverty in their school communities require expanded programming that is open to all and not elitist or costly in nature, because of the importance of drawing kids in – the all important first step. Involvement in school athletics, visual performing arts, student groups, and after-school programs have helped to establish this important first step for many students.

Another effort to engage students started with Elmwood's first Pow-Wow, which evolved into an active Aboriginal Leadership Group that strengthened social engagement by connecting with students from northern and rural communities and helped them become more comfortable in an urban setting. In Year 4, we are building connections with Elders for our students through the SSI program.

Filling in gaps in learning is another way to engage students, and Joanne Sabourin, our SSI lead teacher, worked with our Social Studies Department Head, Leslie Dickson, to develop and implement a Literacy Pilot Project. The results of this project in the second year of SSI were so successful that interest from staff helped move this to a school-wide literacy project in Year 3. Word development was strengthened through targeted *Words their Way* efforts in English Language Arts classes. Subject areas strengthened content and generative vocabulary using strategies from *Vocabulary their Way*. The Manitoba School Improvement Program has contributed time, funding, and guidance towards this project. A major theme of Elmwood's Literacy project is "Equity through Literacy" as literacy is so important in determining what doors students can open to their futures.

Lessons learned

One of the keys to the success of the Student Success Initiative was that it was voluntary for students to accept the supports offered and that, even if they refused them, they knew the door was always open. Students who did not accept the supports were generally unable to turn things around on their own and were mostly unsuccessful in acquiring credits. One of the remarkable things that happened over the three years was the number of students who accessed SSI support though self- or peer referral. Other positive indicators are that lunch hour use went from zero students to many and September numbers over four years went from 8 students in Year 1 to 125 in Year 4. At the beginning of the first year, students did not want to be in the "rubber room" (their term).

The learning culture that the teachers were able to establish was very positive, and students worked harder than ever before and gained confidence in their ability to learn. Following their SSI experience, many students have been able to successfully complete courses on their own or with limited SSI supports. Many students continue to use the Student Success Centre as a home base.

The dual approach of academic support and/or socio-emotional support was a key factor to the project's success, as was the fact that students completed real courses. Credit integrity enhanced both student and staff support for this program. During the SSI pilot years, 6 of 8 subject areas in our school saw increased credit acquisition rates, and the two that stayed the same already had healthy passing rates. Many teachers developed their own credit recovery plans, and the focus on student success helped educators develop more proactive plans to maximize student engagement and motivation. Sharing ideas and progress with the other SSI schools and the support of the Machray Learning Centre, the Researchers in Residence, and the province were greatly appreciated and invaluable to helping the project continue to move forward.

Our SSI project evolved to address the four pillars of the Ontario model: literacy – with the establishment of our school-wide literacy programme; numeracy – the extensive support of all Math courses; pathways to community – our enhanced community connections; and culture and caring – a key part of the Student Success Centre.

The Student Success Initiative has been a tremendously inspiring three-year journey that provided a wide range of experiences that enabled us to better meet the needs of our school community. It helped strengthen connections with students who were off-track and move them onto a more successful pathway, and it helped us focus more intently on the primary purpose of our jobs – helping students to be successful. SSI gave us an avenue to help strengthen the building of trusting, caring relationships. When the Deputy Minister, Dr. Gerald Farthing, visited our Student Success Centre in 2011, he supported our efforts to build relationships with students with the statement, "It's all about relationships." Our jobs, after all, are not just to work with students who are "easy to reach, easy to teach" (Mendler & Curwin, 1999 quoted in Guskey, 2009) but to work with all of the students in our charge and help all of them move onto more successful pathways.

The support from the Winnipeg School Division and Manitoba Education is greatly appreciated. Their trust gave us a license, with a few parameters, to develop an effective means to help students who are off-track or at-risk of not completing school. The SSI project at Elmwood High School

allowed us to have a positive impact on a phenomenal number of students over the three years of the pilot, and the fourth year of SSI continues to reach a large number of students who – despite the decrease in provincial funding – need support for their learning. The challenge will be how to continue this tremendously successful project if funding is further reduced.

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About the Authors

Mike Babb, Principal of Elmwood High School, has thoroughly enjoyed his 30-year career as a physical education/biology teacher, vice-principal, principal, and coach. He honours the extensive amount of time he has been able to work with young people in both curricular and co-curricular settings and is proud of the efforts that have helped many young people get on track and move forward along their life's path. He is in his 10th year as an administrator at Elmwood. Mike was honoured to receive the MHSAA Volunteer of the Year Award in the 50th Anniversary year of that organization.

Joanne Sabourin, SSI Lead Teacher at Elmwood High, is actually a graduate of the school. As a former student, her pride in the community has deep roots. She considers it a privilege to have the opportunity to give back to the community that has given her so much. Joanne's life journey has helped her with having some insight into some of the challenges Elmwood's youth face today, along with an understanding of the amount of resiliency some of these students possess. She knew that the SSI program could further support, encourage, and provide students some of the missing links that could be crucial to their success. Joanne feels blessed to work alongside her colleagues as they further support Elmwood High School's students. She has had the honour of seeing the positive ripple effects of the Student Success Initiative go from students to parents and to the community.

Grant Andruchuk is a recent graduate of the University of Winnipeg's Faculty of Education, where he was an active participant in a targeted mentorship project. More specifically, in that initiative – developed in cooperation with Manitoba Probation Services – Grant worked as a mentor in a literacy project designed to serve previously incarcerated youth. He has spent much of his career to date engaging young people through after-school programs and camps that foster success in life. While teaching at Elmwood High School, Grant is currently doing a post-baccalaureate in Guidance, which he hopes to complete in the next couple of years.

Dr. Eleoussa Polyzoi is Professor of Education and Director of Developmental Studies at the University of Winnipeg. She has published extensively in the areas of risk and resilience, leadership, capacity building, and comparative education. Currently, she is involved in a large multidisciplinary project examining respiratory health, housing conditions, and school absenteeism in First Nations communities – a study funded by the Canadian government's Collaborative Health Research Projects (NSERC and CHRP) and conducted by a team of researchers from the Faculties of Education, Medicine, and Engineering. She is also the recipient of the University of Winnipeg's prestigious Erica and Arnold Rogers Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship.

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Remarks for Dr. James J. Gallagher Memorial Service
(January 25, 2014)

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Jim Gallagher has been a central and iconic figure in shaping the thinking of the field of gifted education for over 50 years. From his first edition of Teaching the Gifted Child in the late 1960s to his panel presentation at The National Association of Gifted Children this past November, he has continued to provide important syntheses of understanding about policy, research, and practice in this field. His firm grasp of issues, his Irish wit and humor, and his unswerving commitment and clear-eyed vision of what needs to be done has been an inspiration for all important work in program design and development at local, state, university, and national levels.

As a young teacher working with honors and Advanced Placement students in Toledo, Ohio in the late 1960's, I found his work practical and highly applicable to my classroom. When I met him for the first time in Aspen Colorado in 1974 at the first state plan conference where I represented Ohio, I realized that his ideas and instincts for differentiation resonated with and reinforced those of my own. Among all the luminaries present, his understanding of working with gifted children in the classroom struck me as the most lucid and practical. Later as I continued to work in the field as a state administrator in Illinois, Jim was a helpful compass to consult—was I on the right track, and what policy should be enacted to ensure gifted program continuity? He never failed to provide wise counsel to this novice on such matters. His role of counselor continued throughout my next 25 years of work at university levels. He could always be counted on to provide advice when it was needed.

What shaped Jim's intelligence to be as steadfast to cause and to political action as he was over the arc of his life? He officially retired from the university in 2002 but in no way retired from being a champion for exceptional children. He continued to write and speak with regularity on those issues that he cared about, including sending letters to elected officials as well as arguing positions in the corridors of power in Washington DC. This persistence of belief in equality of opportunity for appropriate education for all students, whether they be autistic or gifted, defined his career and his life. Because of his unique blend of abilities and personality, he was able to make inroads with people and institutions that most others could not. Because of the power of his individual character, he was able to effect positive change in state law and influence federal law as well in the areas of special and gifted education. Because he saw the need for interventions so clearly and the pathways for implementing them as viable, he continued to press the case for policies that improved the lives of exceptional children and adults.

It is often the case that research is "me search", a desire to find out more about phenomena that have affected you and your family over time. It is also the case that finding a career niche has to do with finding an area that defines who we are at a deeper level. Jim's work and life exemplify someone who was fortunate enough to find the optimal match for his talents in the real world, a cause as complex and difficult to undertake as any in the world of politics, and he did it with unbelievable style and aplomb.

One reminiscence will always capture this spirit of Jim Gallagher for me. Both of us had been invited to deliver a keynote address in Brasilia, Brazil for the Iberian gifted organization. He was traveling alone, and I had brought my family-- daughter Ariel and husband Lee. On the night before

his address, our group had been driven out into the desert to have dinner under a large tent. My husband and Jim proceeded to enjoy Irish singing and scotch to match for the next four hours as we waited for dinner to be served, an event that was followed by samba dancing until 4:00 am. when the bus finally wended its way back to the hotel. I was worried that the reputation of gifted education in the United States was about to suffer from the effects of such carousing. However, Jim gave his speech right on schedule at 8:30 am.—flawless in delivery and content and well-received by the assemblage. He was totally unaffected by the late night activities that for most people would have interfered with higher level consciousness. What mattered was his message and his confidence in being able to deliver it.

A second incident during this conference further illustrated Jim's tenacity. The speakers and their families had been invited backstage before the opening session to enjoy conversation and refreshments. Since the conference was a high profile event, we had been ushered into the newest building in this South American capital by what we called "the girls in red", beautiful ushers all dressed alike in striking suits who guided us to our destination and responded to our needs. Because there were no chairs to sit on, Jim decided to rest up against a nearby glass table that looked substantial enough to bear his tilted weight. Unfortunately, the table had no such properties, as it turned out. In the midst of lively conversation, Jim fell to the floor, with glass shattering around him. In what seemed only a nanosecond, the girls in red had swooped in to clear up the mess and bring Jim to his feet. In his next move, Jim slid back into the conversation circle to continue his point as if nothing had happened. The moral? It takes more than a shattered table to dislodge Jim from an important point about gifted education.

Jim Gallagher's unique voice, resplendent in all of its insight and wisdom will continue to reverberate through the future of our field. No one's ideas deserve to be heeded more. He was indeed the embodiment of exceptionality.

Evolution of an Advocate: A Daughter's Portrait

Shelagh A. Gallagher
Engaged Education, Charlotte, NC, USA

An honest man here lies at rest
As e'er God with his image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so informed:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.
Robert Burns, *Epitaph on William Muir*[1]

My father was 87 years old when he died, old enough to have attended numerous funerals and memorial services. After these services he would often say that he would prefer to be remembered for *who he was* rather than for *what he did*. But from my perspective as both child and colleague the two are all but inseparable. Dad did what he did because he was who he was. Any authentic recounting of James Gallagher must include both.

Jim's early life

James John Gallagher was born in 1926 into a family with strong Irish roots, just two generations distant from the family's immigration from Donegal. His parents separated when he was three, and from that point on he was raised in a single parent household—an unusual arrangement in those days, especially in an Irish Catholic family. While nothing could quite make up for the absence of a father, a network of extended family surrounded dad. Part of the network was comprised of his mother's eight brothers and sisters, but the most important person by far was his grandfather, James Walsh, a prominent Pittsburgh businessman whom dad described as an unparalleled example of moral and social responsibility.

James Walsh lost a considerable fortune in the stock market crash of 1929. Despite the resulting dramatic change in lifestyle the most influential lessons in Dad's life at that time were of giving, not losing. He watched as his grandfather sacrificed to pay his employees out of his own pocket rather than have them face unemployment. His watched his mother earn a degree in Special Education to support her family, and

listened to her stories of life in the classroom educating emotionally and physically handicapped students.

Dad was fortunate in his own education. After only a few weeks in school he was skipped from first to third grade. Shortly afterwards he received a scholarship to go to the prestigious Falk Laboratory School. Falk was a private school on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh whose mission was to test innovative teaching methods. His experiences there ignited his love of intriguing questions, interdisciplinary connections, and innovative ideas. He also learned what it felt like to be the poor kid in a rich kid's school, since he was the only student who took two buses to school and two buses home every day.

These are the three of the cornerstones that influenced my father's career. His devoted Irish family communicated a sense of fierce family loyalty, a flair for language, a love of a good joke, and a sensitive spirit. Through his mother's career and his own experience he absorbed an understanding that children and families need support. From his grandfather he learned the importance of personal and social responsibility.

The final cornerstone was his love of games and puzzles. Dad loved solved puzzles of all sorts, and he invited my brothers and me into this passion. We spent hours over crossword puzzles and Sudoku; Christmas was defined by its jigsaw puzzles, assembled to the tune of musical theater soundtracks. And these were serious puzzles: one year we assembled a puzzle called *Red Riding Hood's Hood*. Dad was a born strategist and a shrewd gamesman, which earned him the nickname Swamp Fox. As children we played bridge and backgammon; two years ago we decided our family reunion should be a cribbage tournament. Games, we learned, built our thinking skills, but more importantly, our cohesiveness as a family since four children would not fight as much when gathered around a cribbage board. More strategy from the Swamp Fox.

A life assembling complex puzzles

Dad's love of puzzles and games is indicative of a more general zeal to untangle and demystify. He was masterful at finding the simple center in a complex problem—that is, he was a problem *finder*. He believed problem finding to be among the most important skills a gifted student could acquire:

> We as educators have to change our ways to help in the facilitation of problem finding. The world desperately needs a new generation of problem finders to restate, redefine and emphasize the important rather than the trivial. We do not need elegant but empty solutions to standard problems. The teachers who can educate the problem finders from the world's gifted will be among our greatest contributors. (Gallagher, 1983, p. 1)

Given his family history, it is only natural that the puzzles he selected to pursue as a professional had to do with improving education for children with special needs and their families. Systems were needed to help free these children, whether disabled or gifted, from limitations that prevented the full expression of their potential. Families couldn't accomplish this alone. Some would say it takes a village to raise a child; dad would say it takes infrastructure.

My father cast a wide net when searching for educational problems to solve; his reach extended from special education to gifted education to social policy. He understood that lessons from special education could be applied to gifted education, and that social policy affected education for both groups. He blended these in the book he thought was the most important of his career: *Driving Change in Special Education* (Gallagher, 2006), in which he described the four engines of educational change: legislation, court decisions, administrative decisions, and professional initiatives.

Dad didn't just see *across* educational fields, he saw the relationships among all the layers of the educational system. Despite the time he spent discussing the infrastructure that supports effective education, he never forgot that the entire educational endeavor ultimately boiled down to a

conversation shared between a teacher and her students. His favorite research study was about that conversation, the fine-grained analysis of classroom questioning he reported in the CEC monograph *Productive Thinking of Gifted Children in Classroom Interaction* (Gallagher, Aschner and Jenne, 1965). In this study dad and his colleagues tape-recorded and transcribed 60 of hours of classroom conversations. They coded the teachers' questions and students' responses according to a hierarchy of cognitive complexity using Guilford's Structure of the Intellect Model. They found that children rarely answer a question at a higher cognitive level than demanded in their teacher's questions. They also found that teachers asked very few higher order questions, even in self-contained classrooms of gifted students. The only wistfulness I ever heard dad express about the direction of his career was that he didn't get to return to this line of research. I'm glad, for many reasons, that his final piece of research was conducted in the classroom (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2013).

Dad realized that diverse perspectives had to be engaged when solving a complex problem. In 1973 he held one of the first conferences on culturally diverse gifted students. He invited a dozen experts in gifted education, and also a pediatrician, a parent, the executive producer of the PBS show ZOOM, teachers, the director of Science Service, students, and an administrator from Job Corps. Dad welcomed the introduction of different schools of thought into our field and loved creating spaces where different paradigms intersect. The resulting report from this conference, *Talent Delayed, Talent Denied*, was among the first to take a multidisciplinary view on cultural differences in giftedness (Gallagher & Kinney, 1974). The strong interdisciplinary bent was mostly a function of Dad's personality, but as a strategist and problem solver he also knew that we would never be successful advocating for gifted students without active assistance from professionals in other fields. Moreover, he believed that one of the best ways to make advocates of dissenters is to invite them to sit at the same table and listen carefully to their concerns.

Dad loved being at the edge of something new. The World Council for Gifted Children was a new idea when it started in the 1970s. Dad wasn't a part of early years of the World Council one of the early presidents, serving from 1981 to 1985, and was a constant participant until he retired. He was enthusiastic about the potential growth in our understanding about gifted students that could emerge from cross-cultural exchange among the expanding membership.

In the mid-1970s the idea of a publically funded, residential high school for gifted students was not only new, it was radical. But dad said 'Yes' immediately when Governor Jim Hunt and filmmaker Borden Mace contacted him in the late 1970s and said, "Jim, the state of North Carolina needs a high school just like Bronx Science in New York City. The problem is, to get a critical mass of students together in North Carolina; it will have to be a residential school. And oh, by the way, this school has to be available to all gifted students, so it will have to be a *public* school. Will you help?" It was an immense new puzzle, trying to figure out how to convince the North Carolina state legislature to approve of the concept. It was an uphill struggle that took several years, but ultimately they were successful, and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) opened in 1980. Dad was proud of his efforts to establish, advise, and evaluate NCSSM, and excited by the international movement it spawned (Gallagher, Coleman, & Staples, 1989). He knew those high schools could become intellectual sanctuaries where gifted adolescents could reach for horizons we can't even envision.

That same insight came to play in his early years in Washington when he served as the first director of the Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped. He received a proposal from a group that wanted to add federal dollars to grants from the Carnegie and Ford Foundations to create a TV show that would deliver early childhood education. Imagine, using television to send early childhood education into every home in America, at no cost to parents. And with puppets! Great idea! He signed off right away. He didn't know that the project was going to eventually become *Sesame Street*, but he said to me more than once that, "if I had to fill a wheelbarrow full of pennies and roll it down to Capitol Hill, I was going to fund that project!"

Just like grandfather Walsh… or Yoda

My father had his share of human frailties, but he was a remarkably good man. He did his best to live by his grandfather's values and to pass those values on to my brothers and me, both by instruction and by example. Dad's "golden rules" were simple but far-reaching.

Golden Rule #1: Keep your focus on ideas; not on personalities

Dad would work with just about anyone with whom he had a shared vision. He would often say to me that we were too kind when analyzing each other's ideas and too unkind when analyzing each other as people. He encouraged me to seek out facts and consider all sides when controversy was whirling around any given topic or group. He was fond of saying to me that in a small field like ours its important to be able to disagree while remaining respectful and collegial, because when push comes to shove, we are all pulling in the same boat and we need each other to keep from running aground.

Jim with his role model and grandfather James Walsh

Golden Rule #2: Don't let ego drive your decisions; seek respect instead of fame

Dad was remarkably quiet about many of his accomplishments. When I first started traveling with him he told me, "You may notice that I'm a pretty big fish at these meetings, but don't ever forget, we're in a pretty small pond." Dad was so unassuming that many people didn't know that he was a flying fish, skipping from one pond to another. Many educators of the gifted did not know he transformed of early childhood special education when he outlined the Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act, or that he invented the idea for the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or that he testified at *PARC v. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, a court case that helped carve the way to PL 94-142, now known as the IDEA.

I never knew him to make a decision designed primarily for self-promotion or personal gain, nor was he in the habit of being boastful about his accomplishments. That's not to say he was a saint; he liked recognition, but the recognition he valued most came unbidden from people he respected.

Golden Rule #3: Always give credit where credit is due

Dad was generous in acknowledging contributions made by others; he sometimes even gave credit away. To his mind it was better to see a good idea take hold than it was to get credit for that good idea. A related piece of advice was to always acknowledge someone else's good idea—even if the idea comes from someone you don't particularly like (because it's important to remain focused on ideas, not personalities) and sometimes even if it's an idea you already had (because ego should not drive decisions).

Golden Rule #4: Be trustworthy; act with integrity

You can't be a leader without ruffling some feathers, but I never knew my father to make a decision out of vindictiveness or cronyism, and he would be surprised and wounded when he heard he had been interpreted that way. Injustice and inhumanity, at any level, made his blood boil. He would discuss with me the way power can be abused in the various leadership roles we hold. Throughout his career he kept his vision centered what was fair, what good for the field, and what was good for children. While he was in Washington he and his deputy, Ed Martin, were actually known as 'the Men in the White Hats' because of their great integrity.

That integrity played a little-known but pivotal role in the history of gifted education. In 1970, while he was in Washington Dad was given direct instruction from a higher up to go to Congress and testify *against* including language for gifted and talented in the first reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**.** This person asked dad specifically because everyone knew that Congressional aids had learned to follow the advice of the Men in the White Hats. If Jim Gallagher said it wasn't necessary, it wasn't necessary. Dad knew the language and understood that it would fund a study assessing the state of the nation in gifted education. He didn't know what would come out of the resulting report, but he knew what would happen without it—nothing. So instead of being pragmatic or political, and instead of saving his skin, he followed his conscious and refused to testify.

It's hard to imagine where we would be as a field today if there had been no Marland Report, no first federal definition of giftedness, no office of Gifted and Talented, and no National/State Leadership Training Institute (N/SLTI), but consider this: eighteen states and regions in the US created the infrastructure for their state gifted program at the first N/SLTI summer workshop (Plantec, and Hospodar, 1973). Based on this alone I think it's safe to say that we would be a much smaller and more fragile field without Marland. It's a telling lesson that all the planning and policy in the world will not make a bit of difference if you don't have an individual with the strength to stand up for his convictions in the right place at the right time.

Values for gifted students

Cultivating values among gifted students was a constant, quiet, theme in Dad's work. Dad ran a well-received workshop at the first N/SLTI summer institute in 1972 titled *Teaching Values to the Gifted and Talented* (Plantec, and Hospodar, 1973). While gathering his collected works, I found a little known research project called *Ethics and Moral Judgment in Children: A Pilot Investigation* (Gallagher, 1966). It was a report of an ethics curriculum designed for the youth studies program of the Unitarian church. I also found a grant application for a follow up study that was either never submitted or never funded. Dad used a scholar-practitioner framework to produce curriculum materials focused on developing responsible leaders in the *Leadership Unit* (Gallagher, et al., 1982). Mary Ruth Coleman found an un-submitted grant proposal for an investigation of how children develop empathy. Evidently for my father developing intellectual abilities of gifted students was necessary but not sufficient for their full growth: a complete education for gifted students would also attend to cultivating a sense of social responsibility and ethical leadership.

Unceasing commitment to field and family

From the day he "retired" until the day of his death, Dad went to his office at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute four or five days a week. Now, as then, he was enormously productive. The job of cleaning out his office has fallen to Mary Ruth Coleman and me. Together we've been on something like an archeological dig. We've found speeches going back to the 1960s, Congressional testimony, original writings based on the questioning study, and the entire series of According to Jim essays. We have assembled our own piles of articles, books and chapters he wrote in special education, gifted education, early childhood education and social policy. Even though dad died in mid-January and he will have three publications in 2014. Dad never forgot that "the battle once won is not always won" and that constant advocacy within and outside of the field was crucial to our success.

Cleaning out his office has brought back memories of days and weeks when he traveled. At one point he traveled so often my parents decided he stopped bringing gifts home for us because were getting a bit too eager for new books or toys. I do have memories of missing him.

Yet there's no doubt that he was devoted to us. Knowing how hard he worked, how much he wrote, and how frequently he traveled, it's amazing to me when we were young he would frequently leave work and head straight to the hospital to sit with one of my brothers, afflicted with crippling asthma and hospitalized nearly 100 times before he was 10 years old. As we grew older Dad found time to play cribbage, attend high school plays, basketball games, and fencing matches, and time to take each of his grandchildren for a special Christmastime weekend in New York. In 64 years he missed my mother's birthday once. I have no idea how he did it, but I know he was at least as devoted to his family as he was to his work, and loved nothing more than having us all together.

I would also be remiss if I didn't make another point. People have told me that dad's passing marks the "end of an era" in education. I agree, but in a different way. My father and mother were married for 64 years and they were both committed to our family and to his career. My mother, an intellectual in her own right, made the sacrifices common among women of her generation, so dad

could do his good work. His accomplishments are also hers, the result of her contributions as a willing helpmate, gracious hostess, able proofreader, and skillful parent. All marriages that stand the test of time have their ups and downs but at the end of 64 years my parents were genuine friends who loved to dance together and held hands at the movies.

An endless agenda

Dad and I used to have pajama talks. We were always the first to rise, so we would have an hour or two to ourselves. We would have breakfast together and over toast and juice we would solve all the problems facing gifted education—or most of them, anyway. One morning during a recent visit I suggested that perhaps he should do a book of his favorite articles but he said, "No, I want to keep the field moving forward." And he could have; his body was failing his insight was still keen. We had three projects sketched out before our spoons hit the bottom of our cereal bowls.

Dad wasn't finished, but he left anyway. He had spent the morning at the office completing the final edits of the 14th edition of *Educating Exceptional Children* (Gallagher and Coleman, 2014), and the afternoon reading a mystery. He and my mother had planned an evening out and he was changing for dinner when he simply fell over on his bed. He died instantly.

One of the projects dad had just completed was a speech in honor of his mentor, Sam Kirk. His conclusion reads: "…the most any of us could ask of life is that when our brief time here is over we could say that our tenure here has made the life of people better than if we hadn't been here. … we [honor] the fact that there are thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of children and parents around the world who may never know the name of Sam Kirk, but who have benefited by what he accomplished here" (Gallagher, np, 2014). I think the same could be said of James Gallagher.

It's hard to complain about losing a man who lived a long life, had a full career, a loving family, and a painless death. I am grateful that he did not have to experience the indignities of a slow decline, or the frustrating incapacities of a stroke. But I miss his bad puns. I miss his presence at every one of my conference presentations, even though he invariably me asked the hardest questions. I miss his resonant voice, which was compelling whether he was discussing policy or reading *Wind in the Willows* to me at bedtime. I miss my moral compass. I miss his fierce loyalty to me, to us, and to all children on the fringes of education.

Dad's passing invites a comment about the completion of his sonata, but that's not quite fitting. Dad wasn't as interested in his own sonata as he was in unleashing the songs of children, rising in a chorus of enlightenment and wonder.

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About the Author

Dr. Shelagh A. Gallagher received her Ph.D. in Special Education, with an emphasis in gifted education, at the University of North Carolina. Today she works as an independent consultant in gifted education, conducting workshops nationwide on a number of topics. Prior to her current job, she served for 10 years as Associate Professor in UNC Charlotte's Department of Special Education and Child Development. While there, Dr. Gallagher directed two Javits grants: Project Insights and Project P-BLISS (Problem-Based Learning in the Social Sciences). She also worked for a year at the College of William and Mary, where she was project manager of the Javits grant that produced the respected William and Mary science units. For three years Shelagh worked as Director of Research and Assessment at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). Shelagh has served two terms on the NAGC Board of Directors, has twice won NAGC Curriculum Division awards for exemplary curriculum and once won the NAGC Article of the Year award. She and her father co-authored *Teaching the Gifted Child*.

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A Tribute to Dr. Edna McMillan

Dorothy A. Sisk

If you attended World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) conferences in San Francisco, Jerusalem, Hamburg, Sydney, Toronto, Hong Kong, Istanbul, New Orleans, Vancouver, Adelaide, and Prague, you would have encountered Dr. Edna McMillan, who Leslie Graves described as "lively and mischievous." I would add that Edna was "highly organized and motivated" to make a difference for gifted students throughout the world. She served as a delegate from Canada and member of the Executive Committee of the World Council for many years, and received the organization's Distinguished Service Award in Prague in 2011, from Taisir Subhi Yamin (now Past President), in honour of her lifetime service.

Our dear friend and colleague died in her home in Stoney Creek, Canada on December 14, 2012. One of her last tasks for gifted education was to nominate a scholar to be featured in an issue of *Gifted International* focusing on Creativity Through Life. Edna would have been a splendid candidate for this honour herself, but instead – unbeknownst to him – she lobbied vigorously for another of our colleagues, Ken McCluskey (who has been profoundly influenced by her work). This exemplifies Edna's willingness to labour behind the scenes, rather than to seek the limelight.

Edna was born in Ontario, Canada in 1937 and she received an Ed.S. degree from the University of South Florida in Gifted Education Studies and a Ed.D. from the University of Georgia in Gifted Education. Her dissertation focused on a study of gifted and non-gifted pupil-teacher interaction. She worked as a consultant for the gifted in Canada, co-authored a

book with Janice Leroux, *Differentiation: Gifted Children in the Canadian Classroom*, and wrote numerous articles on gifted education. As well, Edna served as a consultant to the Istanbul School for Gifted in Turkey, organized a pilot study of gifted adolescents from Canada in Orlando, Florida (in collaboration with Epcot and Sid Parnes), and, as a driving force behind the events, ensured the success of WCGTC conferences in Istanbul and Toronto.

Edna loved to travel and participated in four People-to-People conferences, two to China, one to Russia, and another to Hungary, assisting me in working with over 300 teachers. Her unflagging energy and sense of humour on those international trips was laudable, whether it was buoying enthusiasm as we waited 24 hours in the airport lobby for a connecting flight from Moscow to Siberia or dealing with a zealous border patrol in Hungary.

Maurice Sendak commented on the death of his friends, saying, "I cry a lot because I miss people. They die and I can't stop them. They leave me, and I love them more." For our dear friend and colleague, Edna, "We miss you and love you more."

Gifted Workers Hitting the Target

**Noks Nauta; Sieuwke Ronner**

Book Review by Sandra K. Linke

This book presents eleven case studies of gifted adults, each trying to find his or her own way after losing direction. Often a trigger from the environment was needed for them to start their individual voyages of discovery. Each case study has a unique title (i.e., "I think my manager is stupid!"; "I'll do it myself"; "I spy with my little eye"; "I don't belong"; "Is this what I really want?"; "I know better"; "Pain everywhere, what now?"; "My way or the highway"; "Everybody is against me"; "That's just the way I am"; and "I can't choose".)

The main goal of this book is to help recognize the abilities and competencies of the gifted and talented workers, even when they are hidden. An emphasis is placed on acknowledging individuals'; in so doing, creativity and talent can then grow and flourish.

In each case study, the authors start with analyzing the present situation. They discuss the subject's actual behaviour and the way the people around him or her respond. They look at the cognitive facts (i.e., the intellectual reasoning), the emotions, and the motivations of the gifted and talented workers. They indicate when and how the expertise of professionals might be used to stimulate people who find themselves in such a situation.

At the end of each case study, the authors outline their own perspectives regarding the cases, and provide several practical tips. The sequence of chapters is not arbitrary. For example, the case studies provided in Chapters Eight through Eleven deal with people who are not only gifted and talented but may also have mental disorders such as the following: a personality disorder that is discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine; an autism spectrum disorder that is examined in Chapter Ten, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder that is dealt with in Chapter Eleven.

The authors ask the gifted and talented workers two questions: If you are smart and want your life to mean something, why don't things work the way you want them to? Why don't other people understand you and why do your colleagues irritate you?
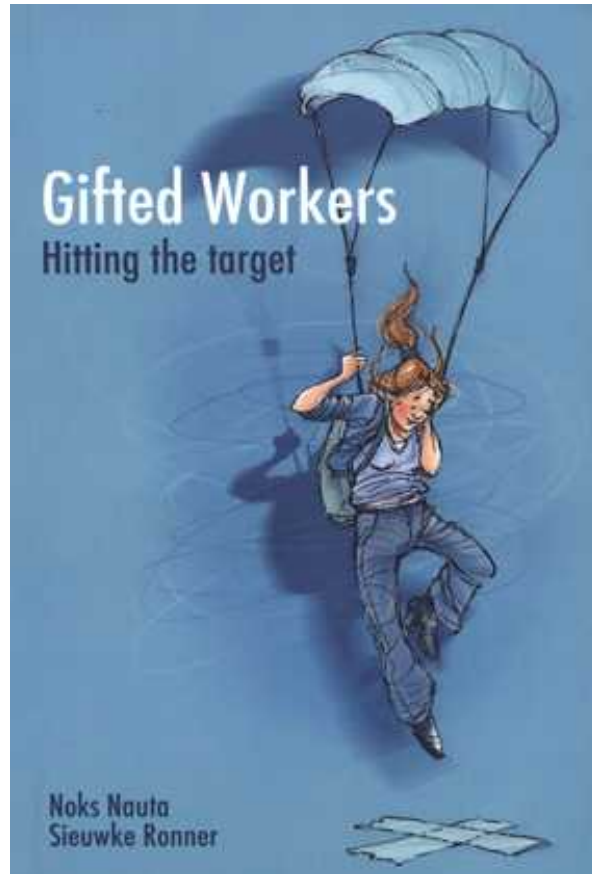
Nauta and Ronner (2013) concluded their book by saying that living and working with giftedness is not always easy, either for the gifted themselves or for the people around them. Potentially, gifted people are original, creative, full of vitality, passionate, and constructive employees. They are highly intelligent, autonomous, highly sensitive, creation-directed, and passionate and curious. They lead a many-faceted emotional life; they are able to deal with complex matters, and they are very valuable, both in their jobs and in society. However, not all gifted people succeed in making their competences and talents visible. The gifted and talented workers might lose track and get trapped in their own pitfalls. A potentially powerfully-creative personality without clear direction may best be compared to an unguided missile. They may be like someone who cannot be coached or someone who cannot collaborate or communicate. Indeed, there are times where the highly creative person may be perceived as an antisocial and elusive person.

In general, there are six categories of basic emotions including: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. "Gifted and talented workers show many nuances in this range of feelings, but sometimes lose touch with their own feelings and emotions because of the situation in which they find themselves or where their thoughts lead them. Or, they may start fantasizing about what others think of them or what disasters could happen. Their feelings are negative, causing them to lose their inspiration, willpower and passion" (p. 67).

Nauta and Ronner (2013) listed three different groups of ego positions:
1. The Parent Position (i.e., this is the ego position in which the individual feels, thinks, and acts like his or her parents. This position is subdivided into: the controlling (or critical) parent who sets standards and limitations; and the nurturing parent who is nurturing and protects);
2. The Adult Position (i.e., the adult is the ego position that collects and investigates information. This information is stored and used to calculate probabilities. It is directed at the reality of the now); and
3. The Child Position (i.e., this is the structured whole of all behaviour, feelings, and convictions based on the individual's own history. This ego position is subdivided into: the free child who is spontaneous, creative (positive), and immature (negative); and the adapted child who is accommodating to the outside world, cooperative (positive), and compliant/ resistant (negative).

These positions form the structure of our personality. "We are in one of these three ego positions every moment of the day. "We can change ego positions and that is why we act as a child at one moment and as a parent or adult at another moment" (p. 81). All people may act based on these three ego positions. Gifted and talented adults don't just have the adult position available. They also have the parent and child options. Gifted and talented children can also behave based on their adult or their parent position. "It is desirable that there is a balance among parent, adult, and child positions; otherwise there will be negative consequences" (p. 81).

The authors have identified the life patterns and particular challenges faced by gifted and talented workers and highlight the best-practice processes that promote health and well-being at work. Nauta and Ronner (2013) tried to help their clients to get along better with others in general, and peers at their workplace, in particular. However, I am not in favour of the employed strategy that encourages gifted and talented workers to make a compromise to be accepted by their colleagues, and consequently, feel socially adjusted at the workplace.

Nauta and Ronner (2013) have introduced the Core Quality Model (see Figure 1). It is based on four approaches: core qualities (characteristics); problems (excessive characteristics); challenges (i.e., points to be worked on, 'positive opposite' of problems); and allergies (irritations).

According to Nauta and Ronner (2013), many characteristics (core qualities) become problems when they grew excessive. "A person with the characteristic 'helpfulness' can have the problem 'meddlesomeness'. The challenge for this person is to let go in certain cases. The distortion of the challenge 'letting go' is called the allergy. In this case, indifference is the allergy of the helpful person" (p. 46).
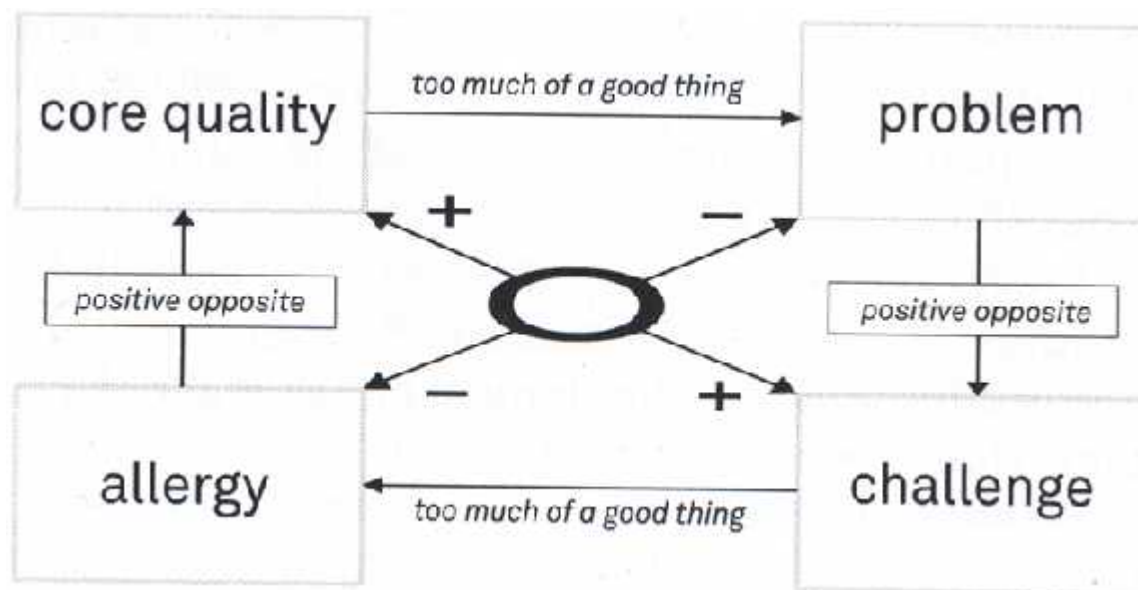

Figure 1: Core Quality Model

The Core Quality Model is easy to use in our practices because of its simplicity. Unpleasant characteristics can be stated clearly, but not in a confrontational way. Putting them in the framework of 'too much of a good thing' makes the 'good' or 'well meant' characteristic visible. Next, the challenge shows the employee's development. Mutual irritations can almost always be named as allergies.

The authors offer useful tools that may help gifted and talented workers to employ their abilities and competencies efficiently. Employers, occupational and insurance physicians, psychologists, career coaches, human resource managers, and others who come into contact with gifted and talented employees, can also benefit from this book.

At the end of the book, the authors provide a summary chapter, which outlines some themes that emerge frequently among gifted and talented workers. These summaries serve as a review of the cases presented. In addition, the authors provide a valuable resource list of literature and websites that were used or consulted for this book.

The suggested recommendations and suggestions encourage the gifted and talented workers to ask a number of questions, including:
- What is happening here?; What am I doing?; Why do I react this way?; Who am I?; What do I really want?; What drives me in my work and my life?; What is really important for me?;
- How do I reconnect with my own feelings and recognize what really moves me?;
- Which obstructive thoughts do I have regarding myself and my environment?;
- How do I recognize my inspiration and drive?
- How do I regain those if I fall back into my negative patterns?; and
- How do I regain the connection with my environment?

The process developed and offered by the authors helped their clients to realize their own roles and to be aware of the following: their talents and their effects on their environment; their motivation and passion; their specific traps which are closely connected to being gifted; their other ways to deal with their talents and passions; their other ways to explain their talents to their environment; and their work environment that can do justice to their talents. The gifted need a work environment with the freedom to 'explore' and where they can unleash their creativity. These are important conditions for making their gifts visible.

Reference:

Nauta, N.; and Ronner, S. (2013). *Gifted workers hitting the target*. The Netherlands: Shaker Media.
ISBN: 978-90-489-0097-8

Note:

This book (Paperback or e-book) can be ordered directly at the publisher's site:
http://www.shaker-media.eu/nl/content/bookshop/index.asp?ISBN=978-90-489-0097-8&ID=2
or on Amazon (don't let you being put off by the sign 'temporarily out of stock': Amazon will order it immediately with Shaker).

Advances in Creativity and Giftedness

Families, Education, and Giftedness

Case Studies in the Construction of High Achievement

**Laura Mazzoli Smith; Jim Campbell**

University of Warwick, UK

Book Review by Sandra K. Linke

What is it like to be young, gifted, and working class in contemporary England? How do working class family values support high educational achievement? What do researchers and policy makers have to learn about giftedness from working class families? These provocative questions are explored in this ground-breaking book. Most studies of giftedness focus on the characteristics of individuals, and draw upon psychological frameworks to understand them. Participants in most gifted education programs are recruited disproportionately from the higher social classes. Sceptical of the concept of giftedness, Mazzoli Smith and Campbell (2012) question conventional methodologies, using a narrative approach to understand how four families of working class origins, each with a gifted child, construct their values in relation to education and social class. They explore the influence of their family histories, cultural values, and life styles upon educational engagement and achievement.

The authors show that gifted education policies are poorly matched to the values of these families. They assert that much research into giftedness has been flawed by social and cultural discrimination. Mazzoli Smith and Campbell propose an agenda for change in research paradigms in the giftedness field, which should be characterized by interdisciplinarity and more culturally-relative conceptions of giftedness.

This book is the third volume in *Advances in Creativity and Giftedness* series. This book provides a history of the use/misuse of monikers and terminology largely derived from research in psychology and argues that "giftedness" is a culturally dependent term. Four case studies of working class families in the U.K. are constructed using a thick narrative inquiry approach which shed light into understanding giftedness within a sociological/historical conceptual framework. In doing so, the
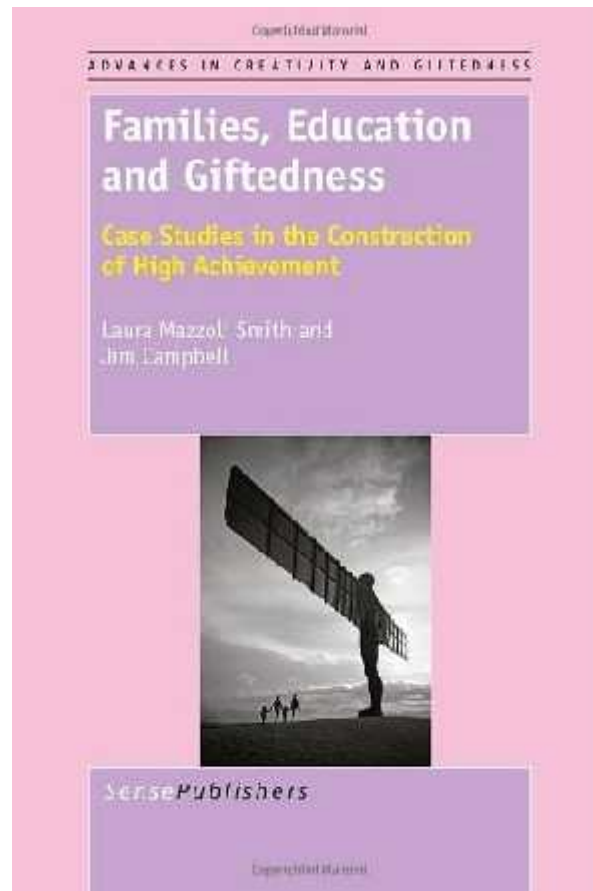
authors move beyond the limitations imposed by traditional psychological studies which view giftedness as an innate construct as opposed to a socially-constructed construct.

The book also addresses "historical/post-colonial biases in the traditional treatment of the construct of "giftedness" and proposes a paradigm shift for the field based on the findings of the case studies and their theoretical analysis based on a very diverse canon of literature" (p. xiii).

The purpose of this book is threefold:

1. To report some empirical evidence on four families of working class origin with children identified as gifted;
2. To connect the evidence to theories and methodologies on giftedness; and
3. To contribute to an approach to understanding giftedness and gifted education that is largely sociological/ historical in its concepts and methodologies, with the latter of these drawing heavily upon narrative enquiry.

The book is in three sections, including:

Section One, Theoretical Perspectives:

The first three chapters investigate the theorizing about giftedness, and about the nature of families, and explore a rationale for the methodology the authors adopted. White (2006) produced a penetrating examination of the lives and beliefs of the men responsible for shaping the field of research on intelligence, on intelligence testing, and on its influence on schooling in England at the start of the twentieth century. White's work (2006) is important because of its long view from the Reformation to contemporary policy, and because it assumed giftedness as a socially constructed concept. Francis Galton, having first posited innate, general intelligence in 1865, is often said to be the founder of the field. In chapter one, the authors review the literature pertinent to the conceptions of intelligence and giftedness. The lack of an agreed definition of giftedness continues to dominate the field; however, Sternberg (2004) says that there was consensus around the following areas:

Giftedness involves more than just IQ:
- it has non-cognitive components (e.g., motivation);
- the environment is crucial to realize potential;
- there are multiple forms therefore, one kind of assessment/provision is too narrow; and
- measures of giftedness need to be evaluated.

The authors have showed how research on giftedness ran with a series of fundamental ambiguities at its core. "Whilst it focused on tightening definitions and identification criteria, it simultaneously aimed to achieve social equity through the incorporation of newer multi-variant, flexible models of giftedness" (p. 20). It was not surprising, therefore, to find "that conceptions of giftedness were ambivalent and problematic outside the research community, because this value-uncertainty was unresolved within it" (p. 20).

Much educational research established that students' family contexts influenced their educational outcomes. Work particularly focused on social class is mediating these outcomes. It was demonstrated that there was a disparity between the achievement-oriented values of the school, including language use, directed to the future, allied to what was more likely to be middle-class values, and the more collectivist, family, and peer-group oriented values of working class students, which tended to be less future-oriented.

In chapter three, the authors explore the methodological assumptions of a broadly constructivist perspective, and, more narrowly, a narrative approach, in the examination of giftedness. Because our approach is unusual in this field, we have attempted to articulate its theoretical epistemological and ontological foundations."Structural concepts such as gestalt, coherence system, and structuring image are helpful in narrative analysis as long as they are not taken to imply that thoughts are well systematized in the mind" (p. 54).

Section Two, The Case Studies:

The next four chapters report the empirical evidence, as case studies. These narratives flow from the group interviews conducted with the families.

- the narratives that families constructed about their family histories;
- their educational and family value systems;
- the meanings they attached to social class;
- how they understood giftedness; and
- their experience of the English national gifted education program.

Section Three, Interpretations and Conclusion:

The opening chapter attempts to interpret the family narratives and make some comparisons among them. In the next chapter, the authors interpret the narratives in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapters One and Two. The final chapter proposes the case for a substantial revisionism in the concepts and methodologies, drawing attention to the value of cultural relativism and interdisciplinary for research on giftedness.

Interpreting the Families' Narratives

In chapter eight, we discuss the narratives of our families through our four broad questions, derived from the research reviewed in Chapters One and Two. These questions shape the analysis and begin to place the discussion in the wider contextual and theoretical frameworks of our research, although in this chapter, we are primarily discussing the case studies in relation to each other. The meaning our analysis has for wider theoretical and policy debates will then be considered in Chapter Nine.

Implications for Policy and Theory

In Chapter Nine, we connect our families' narratives to two dimensions in the literature reviewed in Chapters One and Two: conceptions of giftedness in research and in policy represented in the English National Program of Gifted and Talented Education; and theorizing about families, social class, and education. It has been difficult to treat these dimensions discretely, because practically and logically they overlapped in the narratives, so we have integrated them in the discussion that follows.

Towards Cultural Relativism and Interdisciplinarity in Researching Giftedness

The research reported in this book was small in scale but relatively rich in depth, attempting to capture constructions of giftedness as told in the narratives of four families. This meant that the evidence collected looks very different from that conventionally reported in research into giftedness, because its methodological orientation was interdisciplinary, drawing on ideas and approaches in sociology, social history, anthropology, and biographical/narrative analysis, rather than psychology. As authors argued in the previous chapter, this led them to problematize a number of areas in theory and policy on giftedness, primarily because they were studying giftedness in families of working class origins.

Reference:

Smith, M. L.; and Campbell, J. (2012). *Families, education and giftedness: Case studies in the construction of high achievement*. The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

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Lost Prizes - ICIE Seminars (July 16-19, 2014)

Kari McCluskey

University of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Lost Prizes International (LPI) and the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) are pleased to announce the 2nd Annual **Lost Prizes-ICIE Seminars**. This event will take place July 16-19, 2014 at the University of Winnipeg. Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education courses will be offered prior to and following the seminars. These conference-connected courses will include *Expanding Gifted Education, Gifted Education in the Inner City, Leadership for Inclusive Education, Programming for Aboriginal Students*, and *Unengaged to Engaged Students.*

This year's program will feature the following keynote presentations:

An Aboriginal Approach to Leadership through Consultation/ Collaboration with Students, Families, Elders, and Community Partners

Fred Hines

This session focuses on the importance of consultation and collaboration in providing a safe, caring school environment where cultural values and beliefs are respected and celebrated in the daily curriculum. This requires ensuring that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching and learning opportunities and that staff employ appropriate and effective pedagogy that honours student diversity. It is important to understand and respond appropriately to the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts impacting the school, the district, and the community. Successful collaboration within such a framework fosters leadership that nurtures and sustains a healthy school culture, that encourages parental engagement to support high expectations and achievement, and that provides opportunities to promote a respectful learning environment.

Fred Hines received his B.A. and B.Ed. degrees from Saint Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, and his M.Ed. from the University of New England in Australia. He began his teaching career with Frontier School Division in northern Manitoba, and spent 18 years in the province as a teacher, resource teacher, director of Aboriginal programs, and school administrator. He has also served as a program coordinator, Aboriginal consultant, and school administrator in northern Alberta. Currently, Fred is the Principal of amiskwaciy Academy, a grade 9-12 Alternative Aboriginal Cultural School located in the heart of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Culture, Poverty, and Illusion of Objectivity in Schools

Kevin Lamoureux

Everything done in education comes from a perspective. Embedded into the policies, curriculum, activities, expectations, and assessments are cultural assumptions and biases that often go unrecognized. While it is certainly true that having school perspectives is not necessarily a bad thing, in evermore culturally diverse schools these perspectives may be unconsciously diminishing the talents and vibrancy of others. This session will explore the role of culture and perspective in schools,

with a particular focus on the experience of poverty and how all students can be empowered to create change.

Kevin Lamoureux is an instructor at the University of Winnipeg, well-known public speaker, and co-host of the popular podcast, the Frank and Kevin Show: In Colour (a free, sometimes funny resource on topics of Indigenous education and politics). He has authored or co-authored several books and professional journal articles, and given presentations in Canada, the Unites States, Australia, Thailand, and parts of Europe. As a member of the Faculty of Education's ACCESS community at UW, he works directly with pre-service teachers who are preparing for careers in the inner city.

Creating Creative, Cooperative Environments Creatively and Cooperatively

Ken McCluskey

Researchers often consider how to develop creative environments through "person" (the characteristics and problem-solving styles of the people involved), "process" (the operations they perform), and "product" (the resultant outcomes). However, in education, in business, and indeed in all areas of human endeavour, the problem-solving environment is equally important. And there are tangible things that can be done to help establish an energizing, stimulating climate. The focus here is on nurturing creativity in schools, post-secondary institutions, and the workplace by setting a positive tone which builds trust and openness, challenge and motivation, autonomy, dynamism, playfulness and humour, and idea support.

Dr. Ken McCluskey, Dean and Professor of Education at the University of Winnipeg, is known internationally for his work in mentoring, ADHD, gifted education, and at-risk children and youth (where his Lost Prizes and related projects serve as models world-wide for those interested in identifying and developing the talents of marginalized young people). He has received major program development, creativity, and publication awards from the Canadian Council for Exceptional Children, the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, and Reclaiming Youth International.

Leadership Development for a Multicultural Society

Dorothy A. Sisk

We live in a world of massive institutional failure, a world that presents leaders with phenomenal challenges that call for creative leadership. Fourteen years into the 21st century, the world is a very different place and global populations are growing increasingly diverse, dynamic, and interdependent. Leadership training is sorely needed if individuals are to collaborate and to operate effectively within their own country and across borders and cultures. Schools need to become *Centers of Leadership Development* and provide the necessary supply of honesty, equity, justice, inspiration, optimism, humanitas, and human connectedness. Through exploring leadership as an evolving construct and examining traits of effective leaders and leadership program commonalities, participants will build awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses and evaluate their potential as leaders.

Dr. Dorothy Sisk specializes in creative problem solving and leadership development in the areas of education, business, and industry. She is the former Director of the Office of Gifted and

Talented, U.S. Department of Education. She currently holds an endowed chair in education at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. She is Founder and President of the American Creativity Association and has served as Executive Administrator for the World Council of Gifted and Talented Children and Editor of Gifted International.

"If We Worked For Her:" Creative, Critical, and Loving Relationships in Expansive Systems

Deborah Schnitzer

Taking her inspiration from *A Room of One's Own* and Virginia Woolf's acknowledgment of the "great gifts" taken from men and woman who were "thwarted and hindered" by the limiting systems of their time, Deborah explores, by way of contrast, arts-based and experiential principles of inquiry and response which can encourage the recovery of and respect for integrated, collaborative, and cooperative forms of engagement. Educational structures which open joyfully and imaginatively toward holistic, inclusive, multidimensional, and expansive approaches honour the integrity and diversity of the learning mind, heart, and body each participant has the right to bring to learning communities in formation. In so doing, and through ongoing revision, these structures work on behalf of the complex world's teachers and students, in their dynamic and shifting roles, embody.

Dr. Deborah Schnitzer, a National 3M Teaching Fellow, was a Professor in English at the University of Winnipeg (retiring in 2013), founding member of the university's Experiential Learning Initiatives Network, and the founding director of the Institute for Literacy and Transformative Learning at UW's Global College. Her critical and creative work includes the award-winning collection, The Madwoman in the Academy: 43 Women Boldly Take on the Ivory Tower, as well as An Unexpected Break in the Weather, which won the 2010 Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction.

Educational Leadership for Creativity and Innovation in a World of Change

Donald J. Treffinger

Education today, like almost every aspect of our lives, is characterized by rapid and accelerating change, which has an impact on educators, students, and parents. In this session, Don identifies four key messages that are essential in dealing effectively and creatively with the challenges of change. These involve clarity about our role and purposes, clarity about definitions, being alert to personal characteristics (with an emphasis on strengths and talents), and being deliberate and explicit about process as well as content.

Dr. Donald Treffinger, President of the Center for Creative Learning, Inc., in Sarasota, Florida, is an internationally known researcher, writer, teacher, and presenter in the areas of gifted and talented education, creativity, and Creative Problem Solving. He earned his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Cornell University, and in June, 2009 received an honourary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Winnipeg. Don has authored or co-authored more than 350 professional articles and more than 60 books and monographs, including Creative Problem Solving: An Introduction and Creative Approaches to Problem Solving.

For more information please contact **Kari McCluskey**, Coordinator Lost Prizes, at:
e-Mail: ka.mccluskey@uwinnipeg.ca.

Submission Guidelines

Manuscripts submitted to the **IJTDC** should contain original research, theory or accounts of practice. Submission of a manuscript to the **IJTDC** represents a certification on the part of the author(s) that it is an original work, and that neither this manuscript nor a version of it has been published previously nor is being considered for publication elsewhere. If accepted by this journal, it is not to be published elsewhere without permission from the **IJTDC**. However, conference papers included as part of conference proceedings may be considered for submission, if such papers are revised in accordance with the format accepted by this journal, updated if need be, and full acknowledgement given in regard to the conference or convention in which the paper was originally presented.

Electronic submission

Authors should send the final, revised version of their articles in electronic form. Submit the final version to the journal's editorial office.

All submitted papers are assessed by a blind refereeing process and will be reviewed by at least two independent referees. Therefore, avoid clues in the text which might identify you as the author. Authors will receive constructive feedback on the outcome of this process. Please note that the process will take two to three months in duration.

Manuscripts should be written in accordance with the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (**6**th Edition). For example, the following should be adhered to:

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Include title of paper, name(s) of author(s), affiliation, mailing address (include postal codes, if applicable also e-Mail address and fax-number) and a running headline. The title page will be removed by the Editor-in-Chief prior to the refereeing process to allow for a masked review.

Abstract

Should consist of a maximum 200 words on a separate page. The abstract must, if the result of empirical research, briefly outline theoretical basis, research question(s) (in one sentence if possible), methodology and instrumentation, sample(s) and pertinent characteristics (e.g., number, type, gender, and age) as well as the main findings of the study (if applicable include statistical significance levels). Also, include conclusion and the implications or applications.

An abstract for a review or a theoretical article should describe in no more than 150 words the topic (in one sentence), the purpose, thesis or organising structure and the scope of the article. It should outline the sources used (e.g., personal observation and/or published literature) and the conclusions.

Length

A paper submitted should not exceed 7000 words including abstract, keywords, references, and illustrations.

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Manuscript

Papers must be word processed, and printed or photocopied with a clear print, double-spaced and with margins of at least 4 cm (approximately 1.5 inches) on all four sides. Use one side of the page only.

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Are an aid to interpretation and not an end in themselves. If reporting statistics, include sufficient information to help the reader corroborate the analyses conducted (cf APA-manual).

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If submitting a qualitative study, be sure to include a discussion on the stringency observed whilst obtaining and analysing the data (e.g., biases, analysis model, transcription keys, validation of results and so on). Include sufficient data to help the reader, as far as possible, to corroborate the analyses conducted.

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