GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS QUARTERLY

10201 YUMA COURT
P.O. BOX 1586
MANASSAS, VA 20108
703-369-5017

"Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." Martin Luther King, Jr.
"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18.

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There is a wonderful song from the musical ***The King and I*** (Rodgers and Hammerstein, 1951) that Anna sings to her new pupils and their mothers:

Getting to Know You

[Spoken] It's a very ancient saying,
But a true and honest thought,
That if you become a teacher,
By your pupils you'll be taught.

[Singing] As a teacher I've been learning –
You'll forgive me if I boast –
And I've now become an expert,
On the subject I like most.

[Spoken] Getting to know you.

[Singing] Getting to know you,
Getting to know all about you.
Getting to like you,
Getting to hope you like me. . . .

At the beginning of the 2013-14 school year, I wish all of you success in getting to know your gifted students by first identifying their key learning characteristics in order to improve their academic and social-emotional development. Introductory texts on gifted education usually contrast these characteristics with those of the average student. I suggest that teachers of the gifted review and study them as a prelude for the new school year to know more about the type of student they will encounter. Years ago (1988, 1994), I designed an assessment scale that helps to identify some of the characteristics associated with giftedness, and that teachers can use to become more familiar with their pupils. Here are a few of the 46 characteristics: • Independent Learning – Engages in Successful Independent Learning Activities, • Self-motivated/Dedicated – Needs Little Direction from Teachers or Parents to Engage in Learning and Completing Different Tasks, • Time-on-Task/Concentration – Devotes Extraordinary Amounts of Time to Working on a Particular Task, • Questioning Attitude Towards Learning, • Produces Outstanding Creative Products in the Humanities, Art and Science. What would you include in a list of the key characteristics of giftedness?

Articles in the Fall 2013 issue of ***GEPQ***:

●Professor Donna Ford discusses two models of prejudice developed separately by Gordon Allport and Robert Merton, and how they can be used to reduce prejudice against gifted minority students. This article was originally published in the January 2013 Issue of ***Gifted Child Today***. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.

●Dr. Stephen Schroeder-Davis presents his third article in ***GEPQ*** on problems and issues of educating the gifted. His discussion focuses on how the serious problems created by the education reform movement can be reduced or eliminated for gifted students.

●Professors Stephen Schroth and Jason Helfer describe many excellent resources available for teaching gifted students about the visual and performing arts and music that are available from museums, symphony orchestras, and other arts organizations.

●Eugene and Diana Avergon demonstrate the role of imagination in the lives and creative works of several visual artists. This is a fascinating article written by two dedicated artists and art educators.

●Dr. Michael E. Walters tackles the life and work of one of the geniuses of Russian literature, Anton Chekhov. Walters' numerous biographical studies have uncovered important characteristics of highly gifted individuals.

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

Gifted Under-Representation and Prejudice: Learning from Allport and Merton

Donna Y. Ford, PhD
Professor
Peabody College of Education
Vanderbilt University

The Status of Gifted Under-Representation – Again

Gifted education classrooms and programs – enrichment, compacting, independent study, mentorships, shadowing, academic competitions, and much more – are challenging, engaging, and rigorous when educators have substantive preparation. Unfortunately, Black and Hispanic students seldom experience these challenging and rigorous opportunities. Decades of research reveal that under-representation for Black and Hispanic students is assiduous and ubiquitous, with too little progress being demonstrated or evident for these two groups.

Opinions, paradigms, and theories, sometimes accompanied by research, exist. It cannot be denied that under-referral by teachers (including counselors, psychologists, and administrators) has played a meaningful role in under-representation (see summary by Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Tests and other instruments have been criticized and share the blame. Policies and procedures have been questioned or interrogated to determine if they have a disparate impact. At some point, all of these factors have been investigated under the auspices of The Office for Civil Rights (Ford, 2011; Ford & Trotman, 2000).

It is worth noting and troubling that while teaching preparation and professional development training, alternative (less biased and more fair) measures, policies and procedures have been implemented in some schools, changes in gifted education demographics have been less than impressive. For decades, under-representation nationally has hovered at an average of 50% for Blacks and 40% for Hispanics (Ford et al., 2008). Given the increasing racial diversity of our nation and schools, to accept this magnitude and persistence of under-representation is unconscionable. Decades of under-representation begs the question – What really underlies poor referrals, and the ongoing use of biased tests and measures, policies and procedures, especially when evidence refutes their efficacy and fairness? Elsewhere, I have lamented over the potency of deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010) and associated low and negative expectations as meaningful barriers to change and equity. In this paper, I do not review this argument and supporting work but, instead, reinforce and build upon it. I offer a complementary, related, plausible, and viable explanation that has been the elephant in the room – intentional and unintentional prejudice; both are described next.

What is Prejudice? A Few Definitions

The term 'prejudice' refers to preconceived judgments toward people or a person because of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socio-economic status, gender, age, disability, and other socio-demographic characteristics that are grounded in stereotypes that are often negative, but can be positive as well. Both types of stereotypes have negative consequences (e.g., the model minority image attributed to Asians is one example of a positive stereotype). Stereotypes are unreasonable attitudes that are unusually resistant to rational thinking, even in the face of contradictory examples and data.

Webster's Dictionary defines prejudices in two major ways: (1) injury or damage resulting from some judgment or action of another in disregard of one's rights, that is *especially* detrimental to one's legal rights or claims; and (2) preconceived judgment or opinion**,** such as an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge, and an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics.
(see http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prejudice).

The term 'aversive racism' describes the subtle racial behaviors of a racial group that rationalizes their aversion to a particular group based on majority group's rules and stereotypes (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). Further, Anderson (2010), Dovidio and Gaertner (2004), and Pearson, Dovidio, and Gaertner (2009) theorize that prejudice can be explicit or implicit; its manifestation is dictated by a multitude of forces, too many to describe herein.

Essentially, prejudice means to pre-judge, and thinking is inflexible, irrational, and unfounded (even in face of counter examples and evidence). Victims are basically guilty until proven innocent and/or guilty by association.

This article focuses on one type of prejudice – racial prejudice or racism – defined as the belief that races exist, that physical characteristics determine cultural traits, and that racial characteristics make some groups or individuals of the said group superior (Blackwell et al., 2003). According to the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination:

> *the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.* (Cited in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism#cite_note-20)

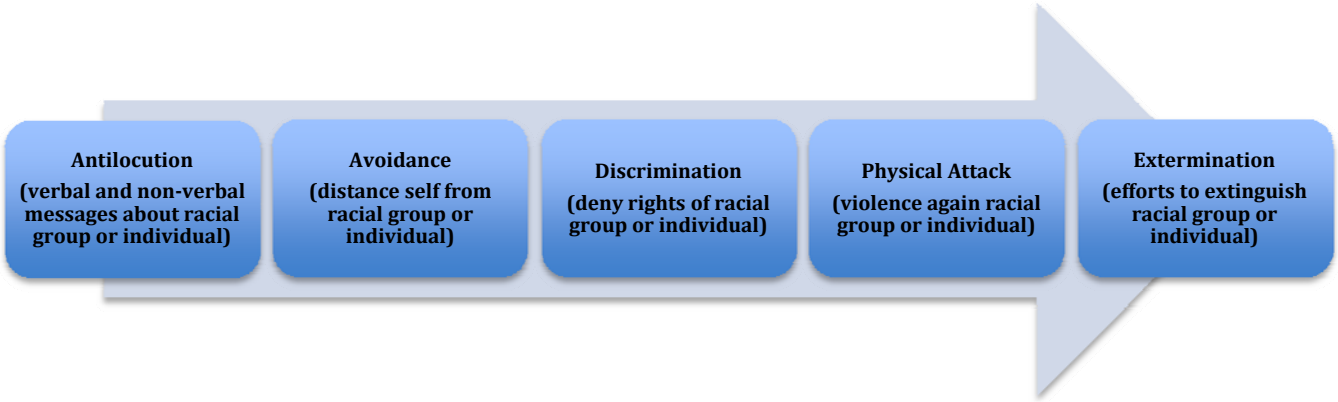
By separating people into racial hierarchies, people are able to justify unequal treatment of others due to the outgroup's *perceived* inferior genetic and cultural differences. According to Blackwell et al. (2003) and Gould (1996), Darwin's evolutionary studies, and Aristotle's idea of 'natural slaves' influenced past and contemporary scientific racism. This concept focuses on socially constructed, subjective hierarchies and how some racial groups, notably those in power, are placed at the top. Racism involves the belief in racial differences, which act as a justification for discriminating against members of other racial groups.

Even though, the concept of race is heavily debated and contested. Yet, racism and other forms of prejudice affect a person's behavior, thoughts, and feelings – and many factors and outcomes. In education, this includes expectations, relationships, grading practices, gifted referrals, and special education referrals, to name but a few. When considering the various definitions just presented, it is important to note that racism occurs at both the individual and institutional levels (Feagin, 2006), and can be unintentional, as is apparent in the works of Allport and Merton, described next.

Degrees of Prejudice: Learning from Gordon Allport

Allport (1954) defined prejudice as a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience. He asserted that prejudice is a result of generalizations and over-simplifications made about an entire group of people (or members) based on incomplete or incorrect information. He described five degrees of prejudice (Figure 1):

Figure 1. Allport's Theory of Prejudice: Five Degrees from Mildest to Most Severe.



1. Antilocution is the mildest degree of prejudice. It consists of negative verbal and non-verbal messages to and/or about a racial group or member. Examples include racial slurs, name calling, racial jokes, racist signs and symbols, hate speech, and threats.
2. Avoidance is a form of prejudice where one seeks to distance self from racial group or members. It is acting upon one's beliefs (e.g., stereotypes). Avoidance or social exclusion is the desire to circumvent contact and interactions with a different racial group or member. Common examples are White flight -- moving to suburbs, and intentionally not living in culturally different communities. When caregivers deliberately refuse to place their children in schools, classrooms, and programs that have racially different students (and adults), this is also avoidance. An important caveat is that avoidance may not be discriminatory. For example, if a caregiver does not want his/her child to be in a gifted class with Hispanic, Black, Asian, or Native American students, he/she can transfer the child to another school, enroll in private school, or homeschool. On an individual basis, this may not be discriminatory, but on a larger scale (e.g., re-zoning communities along racial lines), it may

be discriminatory, given school desegregation rulings (i.e., Brown vs. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 1954; Civil Rights Act of 1964).

3. Discrimination is also acting upon beliefs and is illegal because the action denies an individual or group rights and opportunities to which they are legally entitled. In gifted education, the majority of allegations and investigations of racial discrimination (e.g., under-referral, criteria, instruments, policies, procedures) involve Black students' under-representation (Ford, 2011; Ford & Trotman, 2000). Two anti-discrimination laws are particularly germane to education. Title IX is a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972, Public Law No. 92-318, 86 Stat. 235). It states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..." Further, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241) outlawed discrimination against racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities and women. This Act ended racial segregation in schools, the workplace, and facilities that serve the general public.
4. Physical Attacks, the fourth prejudice, consists of violence. It is also illegal.
5. Extermination is the highest degree of prejudice in Allport's theory. Clearly illegal, it is large scale and is the intentional act of eliminating a racial group. Examples include murder, sterilization, and genocide.

As stated earlier, prejudice exists at the individual and institutional levels. The above examples can refer to an individual (e.g., caregiver and avoidance example above), but is also applicable to schools whose instruments, criteria, policies and procedures pose barriers and hinder access to gifted programs for racial groups and individuals. A final issue to consider is unintentional and intentional prejudice and discrimination.

Intentional and Unintentional Prejudice and Discrimination: Learning from Robert Merton

Scenario 1: Unintentional Car Accident. Imagine just purchasing a new car and someone rear-ends you. The driver apologizes profusely, stating that he/she did not mean to run into you. Your car sustains significant damage, items are damaged, you are injured, you miss several weeks of work, and you must get long-term therapy. Do you feel better that the driver is 'sorry'? Do you care that the driver did not mean to hit you? Does it matter that your car's resale value is now compromised or that it may never drive like new? Does it matter that one of unsalvageable items was a gift for a loved one? Does it matter that you may be in therapy for the rest of your life?

Scenario 2: Unintentional Prejudice. Imagine you are a Hispanic student who has been identified as gifted. You have just moved to a new district, it is the first day of school, and you have just taken a seat in your AP English class. The teacher begins to take attendance. When calling your name, she looks squarely at you and asks sympathetically, "Are you sure you want to be in this class? Grades rely heavily on speaking and writing English well." The other students chuckle or laugh outright. Humiliated, you state, "I was born in the U.S." In the awkward silence, which seems to last forever, she apologizes. "Oh, I am sorry. Very sorry. I thought you were an ELL student." You get up to leave, heading for the office to withdraw from the class. She apologizes again. Do you feel better that the teacher is 'sorry'? Do you care that the she did not mean to embarrass you? Does it matter that she assumed you did not know English or speak English well? Does it matter that she assumed you were a foreigner? Does it matter that students laughed, and makings friends with them might be more challenging had you stayed? Does it matter that English is your favorite subject and you might not get to take AP English if she is the only teacher? Does it matter that you may face such assumptions for the rest of your life?

Despite the differences in the scenarios, they have in common unintentionality and an apology. The driver and teacher meant no harm. Nonetheless, there is damage. If the driver meant to hit you, there is still damage. If the driver did not mean to hit you, there is damage. If the teacher meant to prejudge your language skills, there is damage. If she did not, there is still damage.

For some individuals, the pain, so to speak, may decrease because they believe the person was not intentionally prejudiced. For others, intent does not matter. This is where Merton's (1957) belief-behavior typology may be informative. His work describes the unanticipated consequences of social actions. According to Merton, unanticipated consequences are actions that have both intended and unintended consequences. People are aware of the intended consequences, but the unintended consequences are more difficult to recognize.

In the 2x2 typology (prejudice/non-prejudice x discriminator/non-discriminator) (Figure 2), prejudice is an attitude or belief, and discrimination is the action or behavior. Not surprisingly, Merton illustrates how some prejudiced people do discriminate ("active bigot") and some non-prejudiced people do not discriminate ("all weather liberal").

Figure 2: Merton Typology of Prejudice and Discrimination.

	Discriminator	Non-Discriminator
Prejudice	Active Bigot	Timid Bigot
Non-Prejudice	Fair Weather Liberal	All Weather Liberal

However, the next two types are less obvious. Some people are prejudiced but do not discriminate ("timid bigot"). An administrator who believes that Blacks are not as intelligent as Whites may still work to decrease or eliminate under-representation in the district's gifted program. A major reason for doing so is to prevent charges of and investigations for alleged discrimination (e.g., from the Office for Civil Rights). A teacher may believe that students who are not proficient in English should not participate in gifted education may still refer them for screening because his principal will reprimand him for not doing so.

Lastly, according to the typology, some people are not prejudiced yet discriminate ("fair weather liberal"). For example, prior to 1954, there were educators who believed schools should be desegregated. However, some hid those beliefs, and refused to enroll Black students for fear of threats, White flight, being rejected by friends and family members, and other consequences. In contemporary times, this can manifest itself in educators (e.g., teachers, administrators, board members) neither challenging colleagues nor changing instruments, policies, procedures, and so on that contribute to the under-representation of Blacks and Hispanics in gifted education. Bonilla-Silva's (2003) book titled *Racism without Racists* pretty much sums up this last type – how one can discriminate without being racist. In the last two types, social pressures and fear of retribution of some kind are mitigating factors that, despite belief, guide behaviors/actions. In the next section, I offer a few suggestions for change.

Moving Forward: Recommendations for Change and Progress

The less we know about others, the more we make up.
The more we know about others, the less we make up. (Ford, 2011)

Changing long-held beliefs and attitudes is difficult but not impossible. Change comes with self-reflection and opportunities to challenge to faulty assumptions and stereotypes, as noted in the extensive work of Fisher (2005). Just as important, it cannot be denied that prejudice and discrimination are commonly occurring issues between different racial groups. Cultural clashes are an inevitable reality (see Oberg, 1954, 1960), particularly when prejudice is operating. Education, training, and interaction about and between groups matter.

The Contact Hypothesis, also known as Intergroup Contact Theory, is one of the most effective methods for improving relations among groups that are in conflict. The premise of Allport's intergroup contact theory is that, under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. When individuals have the opportunity to communicate with others, they are able to understand and appreciate different perspectives and behaviors. As a result of this newfound appreciation and understanding, individual prejudices decrease or are eliminated. More specifically, Allport proposed that properly managed contact between the groups has much promise for reducing racial problems, which increases positive interactions. However, for this to occur, four criteria must be present: (a) *Equal Status* – both groups are given an equal status relationship; (b) *Common Goals* – both groups work on a problem/task and share this as a common or subordinate goal; (c) *Acquaintance Potential* – group members have an opportunity to get to know each other as friends, rather than as actors playing out social roles or as representatives of their social groups; and (d) *Support of Authorities, Laws and Customs* -- both groups acknowledge some authority and then define social norms that support the contact and interactions between group members (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_hypothesis).

A number of studies support Allport's hypothesis. For example, Rothbart and John (1985) found contact hypothesis to be an effective technique for reducing prejudice and stereotyping when three criteria are met: (a) the behavior of minority group members is not consistent with their stereotype; (b) the minority members are perceived as typical or representative of their cultural group; and (c) contact between group members occurs often and in several social contexts.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of over 500 studies involving 250,000 participants in 38 nations to study if and how intergroup contact reduces prejudice. They concluded that intergroup contact reduces prejudice: (a) by enhancing information about and understanding of the outgroup; (b) reducing anxiety and related feelings about contact with the other group; and (c) increasing compassion, empathy, and perspective taking. Dovidio, Eller, and Hewstone (2011) reported that even *extended*

indirect forms of intergroup contact effectively reduces prejudice. Finally, Crisp and Turner (2009) found that by *imagining* positive interactions, people reduce prejudice. While not addressed specifically, I hope that individuals in the aforementioned studies were not fair weather liberals (non-prejudiced yet discriminate) described by Merton (1957), but instead were all weather liberals (non-prejudice/non-discriminator).

The above findings speak to the vital importance of teachers creating classroom environments and learning opportunities that increase contact and positive relationships between students from different racial and cultural groups. Direct and indirect techniques, such as grouping practices, lectures and discussions, and multicultural literature and materials can be implemented. Ensuring that students are placed in groups where they must interact and depend on each other is one example. Teachers must be strategic, which includes facilitating and monitoring interactions for positive comments and relationships, addressing negative and positive stereotypes, comments and behaviors. Holding small group discussions about prejudice and discrimination are also important, and should be conducted with the support of professionals trained in multicultural communication, multicultural counseling, and other relevant disciplines. Multicultural curriculum and literature can also facilitate healthy intergroup contact when students read about and are exposed to materials (books, movies, etc.) that promote positive images of culturally different groups and individuals. Doing also helps to counter media images and messages. In *Multicultural Gifted Education* (Ford, 2011) and *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students* (Ford, 2010), I share curriculum, literature, strategies and resources for counselors and teachers. To repeat, the more we know about others, the less we make up.

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Teaching as a Subversive Activity: Promoting Individual Thinking in the Era of Homogenization, "Standards," and "Proficiency"

Stephen Schroeder-Davis Elk River Public Schools, Minnesota

> Imagine a small group of randomly chosen people stranded on a desert island. Not only would they have just a small subset of the knowledge necessary to re-create modern civilization – assuming Gilligan's professor wasn't included – but only a tiny fraction of the required skills could be done by each person. Much like the economic concept of the division of labor, even if we each have two or three skills, to perform all of them adeptly, and also pass them along to our descendants, is a difficult proposition. The maintenance and creation of cultural knowledge are much more easily done with large groups of people; *each person can specialize and be responsible for a smaller area of knowledge* [emphasis added] (Arbesman, 2012, p. 58).

Said slightly differently, groups that lack rich, diverse intellectual input from a large enough number of heterogeneously skilled individuals are in danger of cultural stagnation, if not outright extinction.

The situation above can be considered analogous to what standards, mass testing, and the homogenization of curriculum are doing to our students. According to the National Center on Education Statistics (n.d.), 49.8 million children were enrolled in the American school system during the fall of 2012, a system that could promote a robust profusion of expertise and innovation were students allowed to pursue (or even discover) their passions. But since the Federal Government has decreed that all students are to reach "proficiency" in a uniform set of subjects, the 49.8 million students instead are destined to function as considerably fewer than 49.8 million individuals, as the system has reduced their opportunity for development of idiosyncratic expertise and innovation by many orders of magnitude. According to Bryan Caplan (cited in Arbesman, 2012),

> The more populous periods of human history—most obviously the last few centuries—clearly produced more scientific, technological and cultural innovations than earlier, less populous periods. More populous countries today produce many more scientific, technological and cultural innovations than less populous countries. (p. 58)

Requiring all students to learn the same basic body of knowledge for the majority of their years in school is analogous to reducing the number of students attending school, and therefore reducing the number of scientific, technological, and cultural innovations they could generate. Worse, this same demand that all students know primarily the same information, at the same time, to the same degree of mastery, simultaneously reduces many students' passion for learning, as it discourages – if not outright disallows – individual discovery, exploration, and development of each learner's unique interests and abilities.

It's Worse for Gifted Students

In the first installment of this series (Schroeder-Davis, 2012), I cited Richard Hofstadter's (1963) distinction between intelligence and the intellect: "Intelligence works within the framework of limited but clearly stated goals . . . . [while the intellect] examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes, criticizes, imagines" (p. 25). Hofstadter went on to observe:

> In our education, for example, it has never been doubted that the development and selection of intelligence is a goal of central importance; but the extent to which education should foster intellect has been a matter of the most heated controversy, and the opponents of intellect in most spheres of public education have exercised preponderant power. (p. 25)

The "opponents of intellect" continue to exercise preponderant power, as students' opportunity to examine, ponder, wonder, theorize, criticize, and imagine is all but lost amid the avalanche of standards and standardized tests required of them and their teachers.

My critique of the generally low-level thinking demanded by the majority of mass produced, grade-level standards and tests appeared in the Spring 2013 issue of *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*, and I am but one of many critics of the current American homogenizing and metricizing of learning and schools. I googled the phrase "critics of standardized tests" on June 8th, 2013, and was rewarded with 4,700,000 hits. Some of the most incisive and prolific critiques of our template system for stamping out interchangeable, uniform learners include Diane Ravitch (e.g., see her blog at http://dianeravitch.net/?s=standardized+testing, her YouTube acceptance of the 2012 Kohl Education Prize at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CC9fFOsdSI, and her more scholar-

ly work, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education,* 2010), Alfie Kohn (e.g., see his 2000 article, *Standardized Tests and Their Victims*), James Popham (e.g., see his 2001, *The Truth about Testing: An Educator's Call to Action*), and Gerald Bracey (see his 2003, *On the Death of Childhood and the Destruction of Public Schools: The Folly of Today's Education Policies and Practices*).

More recently, the Education Commissioner of Minnesota, Brenda Cassellius, wrote an editorial in the Friday, April 5 *Minneapolis Star Tribune* entitled, "It's Time for a New Testing Regimen: What We've been Doing in Minnesota Serves Neither the Students nor our Workforce Needs," a caption that is clearly critical of the present way of doing educational business.

All these critics were considering the harm the standardization and testing movement have done to students in general, but the fact is the standardization movement harms gifted students disproportionately in at least two significant ways:

1. The tests, aimed at measuring "mass proficiency," necessarily turn the considerable majority of teachers' attention to students struggling to *attain* proficiency and away from students who are *beyond* proficiency (Fordham Foundation, 2008, 2011).
2. The absence of opportunities for exploring personal interests and engaging in intellectual play stifles gifted students' abilities to self-discover, make creative cognitive connections, and develop passions in and across topics and subject areas. Innovation and love of learning necessarily suffer.

Are They Still Cheetahs?

In 1996, Stephanie Tolan (2000-2007) wrote an article entitled, *Is It a Cheetah**?*** in which she compares a cheetah's natural ability to run at 70 mph with gifted children's abilities to (among other things) think deeply and with extreme facility. At one point in her article, Tolan departed from metaphorical language and wrote, "Schools are to extraordinarily intelligent children what zoos are to cheetahs" (Tolan, 2000-2007, para. 25**).** Tolan's point becomes more poignant when intellectual over-excitability is considered in conjunction with the typical school's grade level curriculum and expectations.

The concept of over-excitabilities is derived from Dabrowski's (1964) theory of positive disintegration. While there are actually five identified over-excitabilities (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009), I will deal only with the intellectual domain, as that is most applicable to the subject at hand. According to Bailey (2010), intellectual over-excitability is characterized by an intensified activity of the mind, manifested in persistence in asking probing questions; avidity for knowledge; keen observation and analytical abilities; capacity for intense concentration, theoretical thinking, and preoccupation with theoretical problems; and reverence for logic.

For intellectuals with a virtual biological need to exercise the capacities enumerated above, the lock step, straight jacketed, non-differentiated focus on mass level proficiency in all content areas inhibits their ability to exercise their intellect as significantly as a cage inhibits a cheetah's speed. To a certain extent, the loss of intellectual power can be measured, as evidenced in the two earlier cited Fordham (2008, 2011) studies.

There is a more significant loss that cannot be measured, however, and that is the number of students who will never get to exercise or even discover their passions while in the K-12 system, who may never discover their true gift(s) due to the lack of exposure and opportunity that are the inevitable concomitants of current educational policies. I titled this installment of the series "Teaching as a Subversive Activity" because teachers may in fact need to become subversive in order to conform to current policies while simultaneously promoting the opposite of what is demanded of them, as neither teachers nor administrators can afford the proper response to injurious laws such as No Child Left Behind: massive civil disobedience on behalf of their students and profession.

The Element

The "element" is the term Sir Ken Robinson (2009) used "to describe the place where the things we love to do and the things we are good at come together" (p. xiii). In his introduction, Robinson states, "This book is a hymn to the breathtaking diversity of human talent and passion and to our extraordinary potential for growth and development" (pp. xiii–xiv). Robinson further stated:

> The element has two main features, and there are two conditions for being in it. The features are *aptitude* and *passion*. The conditions are *attitude* and *opportunity*. The sequence goes something like this: I get it; I love it; I want it; Where is it? (p. 22)

I can't quote the entire book here, so I will refer to Sir Robinson just once more while recommending the book to everyone reading *GEPQ*. Referring to educational policy makers, Robinson (2009) stated:

> They seem to believe that if they feed our children a nationally prescribed menu of reading, writing and arithmetic, we'll be more competitive with the world and more prepared for the future.
> What is catastrophically wrong with this mode of thinking is that it severely underestimates human capacity. (pp. 15-16)

If we want students to become intellectuals, creative producers, and more importantly, healthy, well-adjusted individuals, they deserve every opportunity to find their "element." The rigid requirements imposed on schools is analogous to and as dangerous as a rigid diet would be to a large percentage of the population, even if it were dictated by experts and endorsed by legislators. Just as diabetics, persons with lactose or wheat intolerance, and others with unique dietary needs would suffer under a universally-imposed diet regimen, so too will our gifted learners suffer under our universally-imposed standards and testing requirements, which for them leads to a cognitive starvation diet. Optimal development is precluded by the assumption that what is good for some is good for all.

Recommendations

I included one set of recommendations in the second part of this series in the Spring 2013 *GEPQ*, and I would like to revisit Marion Brady's (2009) suggestions as a point of departure for a few more of my own. Brady (2009) offered several suggestions for improving schools:

> 1. Stop fixating on the American economy. Trying to shape kids to fit the needs of business and industry rather than the other way around is immoral.
> 2. Stop massive, standardized testing. For a fraction of the cost of high-stakes subject-matter tests, every kid's strengths and weaknesses can be identified using inexpensive inventories of interests, abilities, and learning styles.
> 3. Abandon the assumption that spending the day "covering the material" in an at random mix of five or six subjects educates well. Only one course of study is absolutely essential. Societal cohesion and effective functioning require participation in a broad conversation about values, beliefs, and patterns of action, their origins, and their probable and possible future consequences. The young need to engage in that conversation, and a single, comprehensive, systematically integrated course of study could prepare them for it. It should be the only required course. (para. 14-17)

While I agree with Brady's condemnation of business and industry driving educational reform, I will concentrate on his last two suggestions, as they are foundational to my recommendations.

Brady's second recommendation almost certainly will not be adopted in the foreseeable future, and may indeed go too far – as for example, teachers in my district have found several standardized tests to be very helpful assessments. However, drastically reducing the number of mandated standardized tests and offering a battery of learning style, occupational, and alternative tests would be of great benefit to students. I am partial to the assessments Robert Sternberg (2012) has created and continues to refine as part of a series of projects organized around the idea of utilizing nontraditional assessments to make college admissions more inclusive and equitable. I have excerpted several prompts from Sternberg's (2012, p. 7) alternative assessments to demonstrate how they could be useful in helping students discover their learning strengths while simultaneously requiring them to think beyond the usual convergent, multiple-choice answers:

> 1. History's great events often turn on small moments. For example, what if Rosa Parks had given up her seat on that bus? What if Pope John Paul I had not died after a month in office in 1978? What if Gore had beaten Bush in Florida and won the 2000 U.S. Presidential election? Using your knowledge of American or world history, choose a defining moment and imagine an alternate historical scenario if that key event had played out differently.
> 2. Create a short story using one of the following topics:
> a. The End of MTV
> b. Confessions of a Middle School Bully
> c. The Professor Disappeared
> d. The Mysterious Lab
> 3. Engineers and scientists like astronomer Edwin Powell Hubble discover new solutions to contemporary issues. ''Equipped with his five senses,'' Hubble said, ''man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science.'' Using your knowledge of scientific principles, identify ''an adventure'' in science you would like to study and tell us how you would design an investigation to address it. What solution do you hope to find and why? (Creative & Wisdom)

Mental challenges such as these allow students to gravitate toward their preferred learning style(s), even in the absence of a battery of learning style inventories. In fact, I would argue that well designed, robust, differentiated curricula might make such inventories unnecessary, but that can be debated elsewhere. The three items excerpted from Sternberg's work could easily be the focus of an entire unit in a history, creative writing, and science course, respectively. This brings me to Brady's third point. Brady (2009) stated,

> Societal cohesion and effective functioning require participation in a broad conversation about values, beliefs, and patterns of action, their origins, and their probable and possible future consequences. The young need to engage in that conversation, and a single, comprehensive, systematically integrated course of study could prepare them for it. It should be the only required course. (para. 17)

Whether Brady's assertion could be operationalized within one course or several is open to exploration, but the essential idea, that content is less important than context and process, should be beyond debate, as there is simply too much dynamic content being discovered or created hourly to allow it to be the central focus of tests and standards.

When learning must be quantified, there are several ways to do so that allow students to be in their "element," if *process* rather than *content* is focal. Norman Webb's "Depth of Knowledge" [DOK] (Wisconsin Center of Educational Research, n.d.) was created as a way to align standards with assessments and provides one example of a robust way to examine how students engage with content (i.e., emphasize process over content). Note the chart below, showing the top two levels of DOK, is independent of content, can be applied to any standard, and therefore is transdisciplinary. Content here is a means to an end (thinking) rather than an end in itself (memorizing). DOK also can be used effectively without the regimentation of creativity-inhibiting rubrics and accommodates, in fact encourages, heuristic rather than algorithmic thinking, as the "evidence" cited below would typically change according to varied circumstances.

Level of Complexity (measures a student's Depth of Knowledge)	**Key Verbs That May Clue Level**		**Evidence of Depth of Knowledge**
Level 3 **Strategic Thinking** Requires reasoning, developing a plan or a sequence of steps, some complexity Bloom *Analyze* "Breaking information into parts to explore understanding and relationship." *Evaluate* "Checks/Critiques – makes judgments based on criteria and standards."	Appraise Assess Cite evidence Check Compare Compile Conclude Contrast Critique Decide Defend Describe Develop Differentiate Distinguish	Examine Explain how Formulate Hypothesize Identify Infer Interpret Investigate Judge Justify Reorganize Solve Support	• Solve non-routine problems • Interpret information from a complex graph • Explain phenomena in terms of concepts • Support ideas with details and examples • Develop a scientific model for a complex situation • Formulate conclusions from experimental data • Compile information from multiple sources to address a specific topic • Develop a logical argument • Identify and then justify a solution • Identify the author's purpose and explain how it affects the interpretation of a reading selection
Level 4 **Extended Thinking** Requires an investigation, time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem. Most on-demand assessments will not include Level 4 activities. Bloom *Synthesize* "Putting together elements and parts to form a whole *Evaluate* Making value judgments about the method."	Appraise Connect Create Critique Design Judge Justify Prove Report Synthesize		• Design and conduct an experiment that requires specifying a problem; report results/solutions • Synthesize ideas into new concepts • Critique experimental designs • Design a mathematical model to inform and solve a practical or abstract situation. • Connect common themes across texts from different cultures • Synthesize information from multiple sources

Summary

This three-part series began with an article in the Fall 2012 *GEPQ* entitled "Why Don't Our High Schools Graduate More Intellectuals?" and continued in the Spring 2013 issue with an article simply entitled, "Intellectualism." In both articles, I decried the direction teachers and students are being forced to take as a result of misguided, injurious dictates from federal and state governing

bodies. This final installment further reflects my belief that the best teachers, who continue engaging and challenging (gifted) students, must do so in spite of and often in contradiction to the nation's vast testing requirements and policy makers' notions that standardization is preferable to differentiation. Differentiation, individualization, and student choice increase student engagement and therefore maximizes the possibility that students can discover their passions and expertise (what Sir Kenneth Robinson calls their "element").

In the opening quotation in this article, Arbesman (2012) pointed out that creating and maintaining cultural knowledge is more easily achieved with large groups, because each individual "can specialize and be responsible for a smaller area of knowledge" (p. 58). The take-home messages of my tripartite *GEPQ* series are these: First, educators and their students are enduring a homogenizing, retrograde, and debilitating educational system. The legislative/business complex has effectively taken the almost 50 million U.S. students and reduced their vast potential by treating them as if they all had identical needs, passions, interests, and learning styles. Therefore, this is functionally the same as reducing the number of individuals who can maintain and create knowledge, understanding and innovation. Second, and worse, such a system dehumanizes our children and treats them as if they were cars on a factory assembly line, all needing to look and function the same – exactly the same. A Nation at Risk, indeed.

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Supporting Gifted Children through Collaboration with Museums, Symphony Orchestras, and other Arts Organizations

Stephen T. Schroth & Jason A. Helfer
Knox College

Introduction

Participating in and exposure to the arts can prove to be a vital part of gifted children's development (Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; Treffinger, 1998; Zimmerman, 2004). The arts are an integral part of children's lives and minds, one of the bulwarks of a democratic society, and a means by which independent thinking and diverse experiences are developed (Botstein, 1998; Greene, 2001). Although most acknowledge the importance of the arts for gifted children, pressure to have them achieve on standardized tests, budgetary cutbacks, and a lack of resources have made such programming difficult at many schools. Teachers, parents, and administrators who are advocates for providing gifted children with exposure to the visual arts, music, dance, and theatre often have many questions related to their goals. How can I begin a program during these economically difficult times? What if I do not personally have any knowledge about the arts? Where can I find assistance to improve my current offerings? How can I provide quality arts instruction to a mixed ability classroom? Is it possible to incorporate arts instruction into my daily classroom or is it better to collaborate with a specialist?

Teachers and parents who wish to ensure that gifted children are able to engage in the conversation regarding "strangeness and sameness" that is the arts, are fortunate insofar that a variety of resources exist to assist in the delivery of services (Botstein, 1998, p. 68). A broad variety of cultural institutions, such as art museums, opera companies, symphony orchestras, and dance and theatre groups, endeavor to provide rich and varied materials and programs to gifted children. These materials and programs can assist in efforts to provide gifted children with activities and experiences that will build their skills and talents with the arts. These resources may be used in a variety of ways, including their being used with existing arts services, integrated with other classroom instruction, as the basis for special services for the gifted, or as part of a special school or classroom initiative (Renzulli & Reis, 2003; Schroth, 2007; Taylor, 1986; Tomlinson, 1999; Treffinger et al., 2004). Arts organizations and cultural institutions provide several main types of assistance to interested teachers and parents. These include:

- Lesson plans and curriculum guides for use with K-12 students;
- Professional development and training for teachers and parents;
- Field trips and presentations from professional staff;
- Online resources, including access to collections;
- Special school settings for the exceptionally talented; and
- Access to a community of like-minded collaborators.

This article will explore some of the opportunities available through various national and regional arts organizations and cultural institutions. Special focus will be given to sharing resources that can easily be used or modified in the classroom or home. Resources will be provided for the visual arts, music, and dance and theatre.

Visual Arts

Emily is a second grade teacher who has little experience in the visual arts, other than a drawing class she took as an undergraduate. Emily has noticed that many of children in her gifted screening classroom are very excited about art, and are very engaged when visual representations are incorporated into lessons and other activities. Because of recent budget cutbacks at her school, however, Emily has few resources to assist her with such integration. As the school is located in an isolated rural area, there are no groups or organizations to which she can turn. Before planning a language arts and social studies unit on work, Emily consults Bridget, an arts specialist who serves Emily's school as well as several others.

Bridget explains that many art museums and other organizations have long had education and other outreach organizations that provide resources for the parents and teachers of gifted children. Bridget supplies Emily with a list of some of the better resources available online, listed below in Table 1, as well as a brief description of some of the resources available.

Table 1: ***Visual Arts Resources Available Online***

Organization	Key Resources	Web Site
Art Institute of Chicago	Lesson Plans; Access to Collection; Teacher Programs	http://www.artic.edu/aic/
The J. Paul Getty Museum	Open Studio Lessons from Artists; Access to Collection; Games and Videos; K-12 Lesson Guides	http://www.getty.edu/museum/
Metropolitan Museum of Art	Collection Database; Timelines; Videos and Vocational Presentations	http://www.metmuseum.org/
Minneapolis Institute of Arts/Walker Art Center	Art Finder; Art Collector; Access to Collection; Lesson Plans and Presentations	http://www.artsconnected.org/
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)	Summer Institutes; Games; Database of Lesson Plans; *Red Studio*, for HS students	http://www.moma.org/

Emily uses these resources to assemble a collection of images that she downloads from various web sites. For the unit on work, Emily incorporates images of men and women working at different tasks to increase her students' understanding of the content covered. Emily also employs timelines and online lesson plans to increase students' repertoire of artistic terms, and helps them to place various works in time. Finally, Emily plans and implements a culminating activity where she creates a web page of student work that is based upon similar themes to the works they viewed during the unit. Resources such as these can enrich and empower gifted children's experiences (Clark & Zimmerman, 1988; Schroth & Helfer, 2011). Teachers and parents can use the visual arts resources made easily accessible to transform art instruction or to integrate the resources into existing lessons (Tomlinson, 1999; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009).

Music

Alejandro is a fourth grade teacher at an urban school. He is a member of a team consisting of three fourth grade teachers. All the teachers in Alejandro's grade level meet daily to plan. One day, the team leader Sondra, mentions that all fourth grade students will be attending a student production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. In order to prepare students for this experience Sondra hands each teacher materials prepared by the opera company.

While at home that evening, Alejandro looks through the materials. As he reads through the materials, he realizes that the majority of preparation activities assume the classroom teacher as the central figure in introducing and preparing the children for their experience. Alejandro becomes worried because he has little knowledge about or interest in opera. Since Alejandro's school does not have a full time music teacher and the school's music teacher spends less than 30 minutes with his class each week, he becomes deeply concerned.

The next morning Alejandro finds Sondra and wonders what he can do considering his lack of knowledge or interest in opera. Sondra mentions that she also does not have much experience teaching music but that the curricular materials are structured in such a way that the preparation can be tied into work in language arts, social studies and science. Further all the lessons are aligned with state standards. The plot summary and excerpts of music are such that the teachers need only make sure the children have read and understood the plot and the instructions in the teacher's guide she received from the Lyric Opera of Chicago. It provides the teacher with all the information necessary in order to explain and give examples of different operatic forms.

During the common planning time that day, Alejandro asks about the culminating project suggested in the curricular materials. Maria mentions that this project while about an opera is, like much of the curricular materials, approached through different subject

matters that they teach each day. Thus, students can think about the opera and respond to it in a variety of ways such as: student created movies, comic books, scene, costume, and lighting designs, and the like. Maria also mentions that the opera is willing to host professional development prior to the initiation of the unit to assist teachers.

Most opera companies and symphony orchestras focus outreach in two ways. First, these organizations provide curricular materials to schools in order to prepare students and teachers for a live performance. In many cases, the live performances take place on the "home stage" of the organizations. Second, these institutions may construct and make available on-line materials that serve as a general introduction to the art form. The Metropolitan Opera, for instance, has numerous curricular materials for various operas. The materials can be downloaded for free and the musical examples are also available on the website.

As indicated in the case above, most of the materials constructed for teachers attempt to connect the musical materials with extension activities that are aligned with state standards in content areas like science and language arts. This is a relatively new means of approaching music education for students attending a performance. In previous attempts at this preparation, the music teacher was responsible for the preparation. This move away from "music teacher only" preparation is positive insofar as the way that the art form is presented to children will have many more common anchor points within the traditional school disciplines than if music alone was the preferred approach. So too, since instructional time in music is limited and in order for children to have the best opportunity to make sense of the opera or symphony, many musical organizations approach programming for concert attendance through the understanding that any instructional time will take place through the classroom teacher and, in order for this to occur, the lessons must be aligned with standards in content areas that are valued in the schools.

Listed in Table 2 are examples of websites from the education departments of opera companies and symphony orchestras.

Table 2: Opera Company and Symphony Orchestra Resources Available Online

Organization	Key Resources	Web Site
The Metropolitan Opera	Curricular guides; backstage tour	http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/about/education/
The Lyric Opera of Chicago	Program information for K-8 and high school; curricular materials	http://www.lyricopera.org/education/index.aspx
Washington National Opera	School programs (create your own opera)	http://www.kennedy-center.org/wno/
New York Philharmonic	KidZone (online application teaching children about music); school programs	http://nyphil.org/education/
San Francisco Symphony	*Keeping Score* website; podcasts; lesson plans;	http://www.sfsymphony.org/
Chicago Symphony Orchestra	Orchestra explorers; school programs	http://cso.org/Institute/default.aspx

Dance and Theatre

As a first-year fourth grade teacher, Michael is surprised to be placed in charge of the dance and theatre program his principal, Mrs. Wyman, wants to begin at Cherry Elementary School. With no background in dance or theatre, Michael asks Mrs. Hare, the gifted education specialist at Cherry, for assistance. Together, Michael and Mrs. Hare compile resources indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Dance and Theatre Resources Available Online

Organization	Key Resources	Web Site
Dick Blick Art Materials	Lesson plans; video lesson plans; searchable database	http://www.dickblick.com/
Great Books Foundation	Anthologies; videos; curricular materials for K-12	http://www.greatbooks.org/index.php?id=32
Guthrie Theater	Play guides; one-act plays; video lessons	http://www.guthrietheater.org/
Joffrey Ballet	Dance clubs; workshops; after school programs; residency programs	http://www.joffrey.org/
KET	Dance arts toolkit; lesson plans; idea file; videos	http://www.ket.org/artstoolkit/dance/

Michael assembles all of the materials he can from these resources and examines them with an eye on how he can best use these in conjunction with other program needs of Cherry Elementary School.

Not having much background in dance or theatre, Michael decided to use a story from the Junior Great Books, with which his students are familiar, and turn it into a play with some movement culled from dance lesson plans he obtained. In addition, Michael worked with Mrs. Schwartz, Cherry Elementary School's art teacher, to create backdrops and sets for the play. After working with his students for several weeks, the production of *Kaddo's Wall*, a West African folktale, premiered at Cherry Elementary School's open house to great acclaim. To assist him for the next school year, Michael was able to sign up for a summer workshop with a local dance company that would provide him additional perspectives of preparing dance and theatre instruction for gifted children. For children with exceptional talents in the arts, parents and teachers should consider schools and programs such as those listed in Table 4 that provide opportunities for such youth.

Table 4: Special Schools Devoted to the Arts

Organization	Key Resources	Web Site
Berklee College of Music	Undergraduate, masters, and online programs; summer sessions for high school students;	http://www.berklee.edu/
Cranbrook	Classes for students enrolled in PreK through graduate study; art museum; teacher resources	http://www.cranbrook.edu/
Curtis Institute	Classes and diplomas/degrees for high school, college, and graduate students; Curricular Materials for K-12; Summer programs	http://www.curtis.edu/
The Juilliard School	Dance, drama, and music resources; diplomas/degrees for high school and college students; outreach and summer programs	http://www.juilliard.edu/

Peabody Institute	Conservatory program offering services to Pre-K through doctoral students; after school programs; residency programs	http://www.peabody.jhu.edu/

Conclusion

Teachers such as Emily, Alejandro, and Michael are not alone. Recent movements in educational policy have resulted in a reduction in instructional time in the arts. Thankfully, arts organizations have taken this reality and constructed materials allowing children of all ages to learn about music and art, and, in the best circumstances, either travel to or receive a visit from these organizations. National and regional museums, orchestras, companies, and theatres make available tremendous resources to assist gifted children. Parents and teachers who utilize these resources may have occasion to seek a fuller experience for exceptionally talented children. The matching of children to services should be a continual adjustment so that each child receives the level of assistance he or she needs to develop his or her talents and skills.

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Regarding the Role of Imagination in the Works of Some Well Known Artists

Eugene Avergon Diana Avergon

Art by Choice Publications

Imagination is well ensconced in the visual arts. It can be described as:

a. The formation of a mental image of something that is neither perceived as real nor present to the senses.

b. The mental image so formed.

c. The ability or tendency to form such images. http://www.thefreedictionary.com/imagination

A characteristic associated with young gifted artists is imagination. When a child's scribble is given a name, imaginative thinking occurs – scribbles begin to grow into recognizable objects. Most artistically gifted children are drawing by age two.

Gifted children who draw make clearly recognizable shapes before three years of age. Attention to detail, volume and depth show up in their works, resulting in very realistic looking and accurately precise images. Interestingly, in middle childhood and adolescent years, artistically gifted children often include scenes and characters drawn from imagination – super heroes and sci-fi beings are seen (Winner, 1996, pp. 74-78).

What do we know of the imaginative presence in the works of well known artists? How did they begin? Students are encouraged to seek out and discover creative people with whom they feel a connection – artists whose imagery attracts them.

How do we create? When an artist begins working, does she use a real model or a photo and then strive to draw, paint, or sculpt it, or does she change that real model or photo following a mental image of what she sees with her inner eye? Does she synthesize past experiences and feelings, and inherently overlay them on her present observation or idea? Does her hand sometimes begin to paint without a preconceived idea of what will be created? In art making, these intellectual and automatic processes occur – sometimes simultaneously. Imagination is at play.

Young gifted artist Wang Yani experienced this. Born in 1975 in Gongcheng, a small town in southern China, she began painting in her father's studio when she was two. At three, Wang Yani was painting animals, inspired by a visit to the zoo. Her monkeys were done in imaginative scenes – dancing, riding on the backs of cranes, teasing and climbing. Sitting quietly and focusing, Yani discovered where the brush would take her. She said, " 'the most wonderful thing about painting is being left alone with your own imagination' " (Cotter, 2008, p. 110).

" 'Yani spent many hours a day in her father's art studio painting alongside her father...(she made four thousand paintings in three years), and she painted far in advance of her years' " (Winner, 1996, p. 83).

Those gifted students who find themselves driven by imagination, be it in drawing, painting or three-dimensional work, might discover kindred spirits in reading the biographies of some well known artists, particularly those known for their imaginative powers. Marisol Escobar and Peter Max are two such visual artists.

Marisol Escobar is noted for her innovative combinations of artistic techniques – painting, drawing, casting, stenciling, and the use of manmade objects – sometimes many of these techniques all used on a single piece. She is world-famous for her three-dimensional portraits, employing usage of block bodies with pigments and bare wood, print transfers, and the incorporation of costumes and accessories. Her media is all used in the service of creating unparalleled representations of famous people.

How did Marisol (professionally known by a single name) develop her imaginative prowess? Born in Paris in 1930, Marisol's Venezuelan parents gave her a name which means *sea* and *sun.* Her teenage years were formed by attending painting classes in Los Angeles and at École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. From there she went on to New York to study at the Art Students' League and Hans Hofmann's School of Painting, Hofmann being a master teacher of European Modern Art. These influences along with the vibrant Abstract Expressionism of the 1950's, the nascent Pop Art movement of the time, and the growing interest in Folk Art were germane. Works done by contemporary and well known artists were prevalent and dynamic – Louise Bourgeois (organic sculpture), Joseph Cornell (boxes), Louise Nevelson (constructivist wood assemblages), Richard Stanciewiz (junk sculpture), Marcel Duchamp (Dadaism), and Robert Rauschenberg (paintings with objects). These were "the art scene" and were observed by and taken in by Marisol.

What conceptual forces did Marisol use to synthesize these movements and these artists in her own mind? How did this result in her putting together a highly imaginative and unified body of work? Marisol's choice of unusual and fanciful materials to build with and an inventive interpretation of her subjects (often famous people) stand strongly evident.

In 1963 ***Life Magazine*** commissioned a portrait of John Wayne – by that time an American icon of the movies. Marisol's whimsical portrait sculpture shows him as larger than life, but almost two-dimensional, as was his image on the screen. Wayne's horse was cut from plywood sheets. The addition of stacked boxes, added cutouts, a ten gallon hat and a deadpan face appear on two sides of a cubic head. A smiling publicity photograph is glued on the front.

Wayne's right hand is on the gun at his side and yet another right hand is raising his gun, showing what a fast draw he is. Painted colors of yellow, white and blue with a vibrant red horse stand out boldly. "Wayne was a mass-culture symbol of Americana, and his portrait looks like a cross between a merry go 'round figure and a weather vane. It has the cheerful innocence and instant appeal of folk art, with Marisol's sophisticated wit" (Grove, 1991, p. 50).

In the decade following the 1960's Marisol created a sculptural piece called *The Party*. Fifteen free standing figures are seen clothed, with real accessories and costumes. Each face is Marisol's own self portrait – a sort of time piece in which her various personas appear simultaneously, engaging us, the viewers. This major piece was acquired by the Toledo Museum of Art.

As a major three-dimensional artist, Marisol is widely acclaimed for her unique portrayal of world leaders – African Bishop Desmond Tutu, Franco, de Gaulle, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson were among them. Artists also were her subjects – portraits of Picasso, de Kooning and Georgia O'Keefe were some of them. "She has become a mature artist with a uniquely expressive and imaginative approach to portraiture and to sculpture itself...Her portraits present not only a person but also a point of view" (Grove, 1991, p. 40). Perhaps they are a sharing of her insightful and imaginative grasp of the person, expressed in her unique manner for us to view.

To celebrate the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Peter Max created 44 paintings – the *Barack Obama Portraits*. Having done portraits of the last five presidents, the *CBS Early Show* asked Max to paint the 2009 President Elect Barack Obama.

Peter Max's life is one of painting prodigiously – his themes include American icons and world famous individuals, resulting in exhibits of his work in museums and galleries across the globe. Max's work has been an inspiration for many generations.

What influences helped Peter Max (b. 1937) to develop his powerfully imaginative imagery? When he was only one, Max's parents left Germany for Shanghai. This culturally diverse city offered young Peter many fascinations – a Buddhist monastery across the street, adjacent to a Sikh temple. Street life presented origami masters, who flew their paper creations in the breeze. Holidays showcased dragon puppets, fireworks, streamers and banners.

At three, Peter was left alone one day to play in a room used for storage. With crayons in hand, he found some steamer trunks in the corner. Young Max proceeded to color the trunks. His mother is said to have picked him up and laughed and cried when she made the discovery (Riley II, 2002, p. 14). Of that experience, Max said, " 'From that day forward I always wanted to do something with color to get attention ' " (Riley II, 2002, p. 14).

In downtown Shanghai, Peter found a peddler with a stack of American comic books – he persuaded his father to buy them all. By age six, Shanghai introduced Peter to influences that were uniquely American. These art forms went on to become his passions – comic books, movies and jazz.

When Peter's family moved to Israel, he audited astronomy courses at the Technion, a science university in Haifa. He said, " 'At first I couldn't comprehend space, but I thought about it all the time, dreaming, imagining, letting my mind soar. Somehow, in my mind, I could perceive these distances. It was not like looking out the window or at the sea or over a mountain, but somehow perceiving space viscerally, comprehending in some fantastic way vistas so immense they could never be seen with the eyes' " (Riley II, 2002, p. 17). Peter Max's work often refers to celestial objects.

At 16, Max moved to Brooklyn, later studying at New York's *The Art Students' League*. America propelled him into the 1960's and the expansiveness, energy and euphoria of the times. From that period he said, " 'To this day, I never have to think of a subject. I just pick up the brush and the subjects emerge' " (Riley II, 2002, p. 23). Max worked through different styles, but he never stopped painting.

Synthesizing his observations, experiences, and feelings, Max has gone on to be recognized as a world renowned painter. To look at his work is to encounter bold color and vivid imagination at play. Major works include his 1960's posters which gave him a widespread association with the youth movement of the time. *The World of Peter Max* exhibit opened in San Francisco in 1970 and consequently traveled to 46 other museums in the US. The United States Postal Service commissioned Max to create a 10 cent stamp in honor of the 1974 World's Fair. His *Book of Paintings and Collages* was created in 1976 in celebration of the United States' Bicentennial. Along with Lee Iacocca, Max was a major force in the campaign to restore the *Statue of Liberty* in 1981. His *Statue of Liberty* paintings have been ongoing. Peter Max continues to work globally into the 21st Century. He has become an iconic New York City artist.

His wonder, enthusiasm and energy, which came to him early in his youth, have served him through his devotion to their development. His dynamic art is the embodiment of powerful mental imagery. Of his own paintings Peter Max said, " ' There is such a thing as a creative reservoir within: the more you work, the more you have access to it ' " (Riley II, 2002, p. 230).

By reading the stories and biographies of widely acclaimed artists, gifted children might consider questions about their own art. What has influenced me? Is it emerging in my work? Are elements of imaginative thinking evident? Which artists am I drawn to? Why? Pondering these personal inquiries can point towards validating and reinforcing that imaginative genie in each of us.

Images of artists' works can be viewed at:

Google Search images for marisol the party
Google Search images for marisol john wayne
Google Search images for marisol escobar sculpture
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/marisol.html

Google Search images for peter max statue of liberty
Google Search images for peter max presidential portraits
Google Search images for peter max posters
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/max_peter.html

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Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) and the Definition of Giftedness

Michael E. Walters
Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

"During the cholera epidemic of 1892, he was responsible for setting up treatment facilities over a wide range of territory near his home in Melikhovo, and he spent months on the road ensuring that the facilities were in place and functioning." Introduction about Chekhov, p. 2. From ***The Plays of Anton Chekhov*** (1997) by Paul Schmidt, Translator.

One of the persistent controversies in the gifted education field is the definition of giftedness. The writers and editor of *Gifted Education Press Quarterly* have constantly examined the significance of individual sensibility as a basis for defining giftedness. This essay will show how the life and works of Anton Chekhov represent what is meant by gifted sensibility.

Chekhov was born in Taganrog, a port city in Southern Russia. His grandfather was a serf who worked for landed gentry, while his father ran away to Moscow to avoid going to debtors' prison. He received a scholarship from the local city council to attend medical school. While a medical student, he wrote humorous short stories to help support his family, i.e., his mother, father and siblings. He became not only one of the most popular Russian writers of that period, but he presently has a similar status as being a creative genius in Russian literature compared to Dickens in English literature. Chekhov described his profession as medicine but that his mistress was literature. He was also a profound social activist in such areas as the treatment of epidemics, education and protests

against religious intolerance. His short story, ***Rothchild's Fiddle*** (1894), tells how a Russian Orthodox man who was once bigoted changes his animus near the end of his life, and gives his precious violin to a Jewish musician.

In 1890 Chekhov travelled thousands of miles across Siberia to a penal colony on Sakhalin Island. He did this despite being afflicted with tuberculosis. There was no continuous train service in that area which meant that he also travelled in an open coach and sleigh through wild terrain and incredibly cold sub-zero weather, followed by a steamship that he took to this island. He wrote a detailed report about the prisoners' conditions which resulted in reforms. His dedication, stamina and commitment under dire circumstances are traits of the gifted sensibility.

One of the most famous short stories that Chekhov wrote was ***The Lady with the Dog*** (1899) which describes a love affair between two married people. It takes place in Yalta, a beautiful city in the Crimea area of Russia. Chekhov's plays created an entirely new format for theater and acting. He collaborated with the Moscow Art Theater, and his wife was one of the actresses in his plays. The director was Constantin Stanislavski who developed a methodology for teaching acting that would influence the American theater and cinema. Among Chekhov's greatest plays were ***The Cherry Orchard*** (1904), ***Three Sisters*** (1901), ***Uncle Vanya*** (1899), and ***The Seagull*** (1896). He has been labeled, a realist. However, his realism was a blend of scientist observations and lyrical descriptions. All of his stories and plays deal with compassion for social and psychological struggles.

From the 1860s to the early 1900s, Russian authors such as Tolstoy and Gorky exemplified gifted sensibility. As an individual with unusual creative energy and drive, Chekhov also exemplifies giftedness at a high level of achievement. Neither poverty, nor disease or politics held him back. It is now time for educators and gifted students to become companions to Anton Chekhov and his friends.

Recommended Reading

Bartlett, Rosamond (Editor) (2004). **Anton Chekhov: A Life in Letters**. New York: Penguin Classics. Rosamond Bartlett & Anthony Phillips, Translators.

Chekhov, Anton (2003). **Ward No. 6 and Other Stories**. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics. David Plante, Editor and Constance Garnett, Translator.

Pritchard, V. S. (2012). **Chekhov: A Biography**. New York: Bloomsbury Reader.

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