GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS QUARTERLY

During these tough economic times, gifted child advocacy should be a top priority for all supporters of this field. School board members, teachers and administrators need to be convinced about the importance of continued funding. "Out of sight, out of mind" is an appropriate guiding idea that advocates should follow in their attempts to maintain an effective presence among individuals responsible for designing and approving school budgets. In an effort to help gifted child advocates to obtain more information to strengthen their work, I have published the entire Spring 2010 issue of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children Journal with the permission of Joan Smutny, Editor. This complimentary issue is available at the following Gifted Education Press link, http://bit.ly/cTmFKW. Examples of the 27 articles are **Advocacy** by Elaine Wiener, **The Critical Need for Advocacy for Gifted Education: Using Evidence from Brain Research** by Barbara Clark, **An Example of How to Advocate for Children of Color in the Gifted Community** by Jenna Lin, **Heroic Advocacy for Gifted Students** by Maurice Fisher and Michael Walters, and **University School–An Advocacy System for Gifted Education** by Patricia Hollingsworth, Gina Lewis and Debra Price.

Joan's book is an excellent resource: **Stand Up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home** (2000). In addition, these **GEPQ** links are for articles on gifted child advocacy that she has written: • **Stand up for Gifted Children: Advocacy in the School and Home**. http://bit.ly/9uRlgr • **Advocacy for Gifted Students: Progress Through Understanding**. http://bit.ly/bwRAFz • **Nurturing the Inner Strengths of Highly Intuitive and Sensitive Gifted Children**. http://bit.ly/bajUL1.

One recommendation for improving the integrity of gifted education programs in this era of limited resources is: **Heroes of Giftedness (2009, Gifted Education Press)**. The study of great minds in science, technology and the arts has taught the authors a great deal about identifying and educating gifted children. Parents and teachers can use information from their own study of Heroes of Giftedness to become stronger advocates for gifted education and learn more about gifted traits.

The articles in this issue address many important topics in the gifted field. Dr. Donna Ford (Vanderbilt University) and Dr. Michelle Trotman Scott (University of West Georgia) discuss nine theories concerning the underachievement of African American students. Each theory is concisely summarized in a manner that can be used by educators to evaluate their own teaching methods and attitudes. Several articles by Professor Ford have previously appeared in **GEPQ**. Professor Scott's research interests include the achievement gap, special education over-representation, gifted education under-representation, creating culturally responsive classrooms, and increasing family involvement. Next is an interesting interview with Dr. Margie Kitano by Dr. Teresa Rowlison (Southwest Regional Education Center) and Dr. Michael F. Shaughnessy (Eastern New Mexico University). Rowlison is Program Director for the Southwest Regional Education Center, and provides professional development and technical assistance to small rural districts in New Mexico. Her research interests include girls and women who are gifted. Shaughnessy is well-known in the education field for his incisive interviews that have appeared in EdNews.org. Professor Kitano exemplifies the work of an outstanding practitioner in the gifted field, particularly in the early childhood and minority achievement areas. She is currently Director, the Center for Teaching Critical Thinking and Creativity at San Diego State University. The third article by Jill Olthouse is an excellent examination of the similarities and differences between two rigorous high schools for gifted students. She is completing her doctorate in gifted education at The University of Toledo, and will be an assistant professor at West Virginia University in the fall. Her interests include literacy and composition studies, educational technology, and qualitative research in gifted education. Dr. Michael Walters concludes with an essay on George Santayana's book which discusses three great poets – Lucretius, Dante and Goethe.

Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D. Publisher

Under-Representation of African American Students in Gifted Education: Nine Theories and Frameworks for Information, Understanding, and Change

Donna Y. Ford, Ph.D.   Peabody College of Education   Vanderbilt University

Michelle Trotman Scott, Ph.D.   College of Education   University of West Georgia

An old adage goes "time flies when you are having fun." Time flies, as well, when you are working hard. The first author has spent almost two decades lamenting professionally (and longer personally) the poor presence of African American students in gifted education. The second author has also devoted a great deal of her time bemoaning this very issue. In our collective efforts and scholarship – studies, articles, presentations – and teaching and advising, we focus on finding equitable and defensible ways to increase the representation of African American students among those identified and served as gifted. Time has passed, but we are as passionate as when we wrote our first article, made our first presentation, and taught our first class on the topic. At the same time, we are sad and perplexed that little progress is evident nationally. As we have noted elsewhere, in 2006, Black students represented 17.13% of the public school population, but only 9.15% of those in gifted education – a 47% discrepancy. This percent is significant in and of itself, but takes on new meaning when translated into actual numbers. Specifically, these unidentified students equate to over 250,000 Black students who are not participating in gifted education. This is not a trivial number of students. Each one will be hard-pressed to become an achiever and to have his/her dreams fulfilled, because they are not placed in classes designed to meet their needs.

Admittedly, several scholars have tendered theories and conceptual paradigms or frameworks that shed light on one or more vital aspects of under-representation. Collectively, these works have much to offer educators seeking to decrease and/or eliminate under-representation. The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of what we believe to be among the most promising works for guiding educators – teachers, administrators, decisions makers – in their efforts to effect meaningful change, to correct inequities, and to be advocates for this group of Black students. Due to space limitations, we cannot possibly describe the theories and framework in depth; instead, we present an overview and place the responsibility on educators to delve into the frameworks and theories. The table presents the theories and frameworks, and a sample of authors whose works we use. This list of authors is by no means comprehensive.

Theory or Conceptual Framework/Model	Sample of Scholars
Deficit Thinking	Richard Valencia
Voluntary and Involuntary Minority Groups	John Ogbu
Paradox of Underachievement	Donna Ford[1]; Rosa Mickelson
Acting White	Signithia Fordham, John Ogbu, Donna Ford, Roland Fryer
Racial Identity Theory	William Cross Jr., Janet Helms, Thomas Parham
Stereotype Threat	Claude Steele, Joshua Aronson
Afro-Centric Cultural Styles	A. Wade Boykin
Multicultural Curriculum	James Banks, Donna Ford, Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter
Culturally Responsive Education	Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Barbara Shade, Jacqueline Irvine, Donna Ford, Michelle Foster

Deficit Thinking Theory

We begin the discussion with deficit thinking because of our belief that such thinking rests at the heart of under-representation (and underachievement and the achievement gap). Deficit thinking is the major reason under-representation exists, persists, and is so extensive. Educational deficit thinking is a form of blaming the victim that views the alleged deficiencies of poor and minority group students and their families as predominantly responsible for these students' school problems and academic failure, while frequently holding structural inequality blameless (Valencia, 1997) and takes a myriad of forms, all of which have in common low expectations. Deficit thinking strongly affects decisions, behaviors, and policies – definitions, theories, models, identification criteria and measures, placement, and services. When deficit thinking exists, educators perceive Black students to be genetically disadvantaged and/or

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[1] Ford (1996; submitted) refers to this as the 'attitude-achievement paradox.'

culturally disadvantaged; they believe them to be less capable than other students. Like all thinking, deficit thinking influences behaviors. At the classroom level, this can be seen in less challenge and rigor in the curriculum for Black students, which a significant factor in the even larger issue of the achievement gap (e.g., Barton & Coley, 2009). In gifted education, deficit thinking can take the form of teachers not referring Black students for gifted education screening, identification, and placement (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Every study on teacher referral has found that Black students are under-referred (see Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008a).

Voluntary and Involuntary Minority Groups Theory

Like John Ogbu, we have been asked countless times to explain why Blacks, on average, perform lower than White and Asian students in schools and on tests. This is certainly a legitimate question. An even more intriguing question is why Asian students, on average, outperform not just Black students, but also White students. Ogbu's (1972) theory on voluntary and involuntary minority groups is informative. According to the theory, all minority groups have a different history, culture, and experience in the U.S. Thus, it should come as no surprise that they have different outcomes. In general, voluntary minorities have in common the experience of immigrating to the U.S., viewing the U.S. as *the* land of opportunity and believing in the American Dream. Thus, there is optimism, hopefulness, and a belief that their lives (educationally and financially) will improve and/or be better than in their homeland. They are often willing to assimilate, to give up much of their culture, in order to achieve/advance. When faced with discrimination, it is likely to be viewed as a temporary setback that can be overcome, particularly with assimilation and effort (hard work).

Involuntary minorities are not immigrants. Slaves, for example, did not choose to come to this nation. They were not seeking the proverbial American Dream. They were not seeking to assimilate. Consequently, they and many of their descendants may exude what Ogbu refers to as secondary attitudes of resistance whereby there is anger, resentment, and resistance to some American values, customs, and behaviors. There is, instead, a desire to retain African and African American culture even as they co-exist in the U.S.

This important, complex theory can be simplified by comparing voluntary and involuntary minorities to participants at a workshop (or meeting or class, etc.). Those who *choose* to attend the workshop come there with different attitudes, expectations, and behaviors than those who are *forced* to attend because (a) it is mandatory and/or (b) there is a penalty for not attending. Those who want to attend the workshop are often more optimistic, open-minded, and pleased. They are attentive, take notes, ask relevant questions, and believe the speaker is informative or has some information that will be useful, etc. However, participants who are involuntary often have more complaints (not all legitimate), pay little attention, and show disrespect to the presenter (e.g., read newspaper, grade papers, talk to colleagues, ask angry/challenging/undermining/hostile questions, or even leave during the session).

Paradox of Underachievement

Rosa Mickelson's (1990) work on the paradox of underachievement concerns the extent to which Black students show congruence in the academic beliefs and behaviors. According to the paradox, Black students who profess to believe in the American Dream may demonstrate behaviors that show otherwise. For example, they will state or agree that doing well in school will increase their chances of going to college and getting a job. However, their study habits and school attendance might be poor. School and academics may not be a high priority. Mickelson distinguished between abstract and concrete ideas, which seem to be unique among Black students. She found that the Black high school students she studied did have dreams and goals, and believed in the American Dream (abstract values), but their belief in the American Dream was qualified (concrete values). One illustration is a Black student who says: *"I think that if I work hard in school and get good grades, then I can go to college and get a job. But I also know that because I am Black, I (and other Blacks) have to work harder than Whites to get into the college (or get the job, or get equal pay, etc.)"*. They see a stronger glass ceiling, one that is less easy to break – like Plexiglas or even bulletproof glass (Ford, 2010). Much data bear this out – Blacks face more discrimination in school, college, and the workforce, they are under-represented in many professions (including teaching), and are more likely to be both under-employed and unemployed, even when they have the same (or higher) academic credentials as Whites. These realities can and do compromise the motivation of Black students. When less motivated, they are not likely to be viewed by educators as hard workers, high achievers, and/or gifted. This hinders referral to gifted education and their retention if placed.

Acting White (Negative peer pressures)

It is our belief that an anti-achievement ethic among students, especially secondary students, is rampant. Gifted students and high-achieving students are very likely to be victims of teasing/taunts and threats. With Black students, as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Fordham (1988) reported, charges of 'acting White' abound. Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008b) found that most gifted and high-achieving Black students had been accused of acting White. Acting White is primarily associated with being intelligent, getting good grades, speaking mainstream English, and having White friends. When accused, many gifted and/or high-achieving African American students begin to sacrifice their high performance and enrollment in gifted education to reduce and/or eliminate negative peer pressures. This forced choice contributes to under-representation.

Racial Identity Theory

It is has been our experience that most educators believe that self-esteem and self-concept affect students' performance; those with positive self-images or self-perceptions are more likely to do well in school than those who have negative perceptions of themselves. When one is African American, it is crucial that racial identity be considered within the notion of self-perception as much as self-concept and self-esteem. William Cross Jr.'s research and subsequent theory of Black racial identity can help all educators better understand African American students in the context of racial identity, salience, and/or pride. In the most recent version of the theory, there are three identity exemplars (pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization) comprised of eight identity types (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Specifically, pre-encounter includes three identity types (assimilation, stereotypes/miseducation, and self-hatred). While each identity type has unique features, they share a sense of low racial salience or racelessness and, instead, a strong 'American' identity. Movement from the pre-encounter exemplar to the immersion-emersion exemplar occurs with encounters – specifically, racial assaults and insults. Encounters can be direct or indirect, subtle or blatant, and a major event or series of smaller events. Encounters can be verbal (insults, negative comments, backhanded compliments), visuals (negative, stereotypical images, pictures, posters), or behaviors. Immersion-emersion is the height of Black anger or rage, and includes two identity types (intense Black involvement or White hatred). The internalization exemplar (the most positive and healthy identity) includes three identity types (nationalist, biculturalist, and multiculturalist). All have in common a commitment to social justice and equity, along with a strong, positive racial identity. The nationalist identity is high Black racial salience, the bicultural has high racial salience and commitment to another identity, while the multiculturalist has multiple identities and commitments.

Stereotype Threat Theory

High stakes testing is a reality in gifted education. Few students are labeled and placed without at least one test. In some states and districts, only one test is used; in others, several pieces of information are collected, but test scores frequently trump any and all other potentially corroborating information. Test anxiety is a reality for some Black students, including those identified as gifted. For Black students in particular, Steele's (1999) early and on-going research on 'stereotype threat' is instructive. Stereotype threat is a type of confirmation bias. A typical example of stereotype threat manifests when a categorical group is told or shown that their group's performance is worse than another group before giving them a test; the test results are often lower than for control groups after such information. This race-related form of test anxiety cannot be ignored in explanations regarding why many Black students may have depressed scores on intelligence tests. These lowered scores decrease their chances of being identified as gifted. When tests and measures are used that contain less bias, more Black students will achieve higher scores. Professional organizations have principles and guidelines in place to increase equity in the testing and assessment processes (see Whiting & Ford, 2006). In addition, to decrease test anxiety and stereotype threat, Black students will need formal assistance in test taking skills, time management skills, and organizational skills, along with reading, writing, and vocabulary skills (Ford, 2004; Ford, submitted).

Afro-Centric Cultural Styles Model

The level and type of instruction students receive play a vital role in understanding what they are taught. Boykin's (1994) early and ongoing research and model has important implications for making teaching styles and learning styles more compatible. Boykin's model includes spirituality, harmony, affect, movement, verve, expressive individualism, oral tradition, communalism, and social time perspective. Ford and Kea (2009) use Boykin's model under the notion of 'culturally responsive instruction,' meaning that instructional styles are modified to respond to how many Black students learn (and/or prefer to learn). When Black students' learning styles are unaddressed, misunderstood, and unappreciated, their performance and grades often suffer; hence, they are less likely to be viewed as gifted. When instruction is colorblind or culture blind (Ford & Kea), Black students may even be misperceived as having learning disabilities or other special education needs. For example, verve (high levels of energy) can be misinterpreted as hyperactive; communalism may be misinterpreted as lacking independence; affect may be misconstrued as too sensitive and emotional. Independently or in combination, misunderstandings about these cultural styles can contribute to underachievement, under-referral, and mismatches between learning styles and teaching styles. If underachievement results, these students will not be referred to gifted education or may be removed from such classes.

Multicultural Curriculum Model

Every teacher knows that students learn when the material is personally meaningful and viewed as relevant by students. In a fairly recent study of culturally different students, the majority (88%) of whom had passing grades but dropped out of school, lack of relevance in the curriculum ranked as one primary reason (Bridgeland et al., 2006). While students may not take the most drastic and telling step of physically dropping out, some drop out psychologically. Banks' (2006, 2008) model consists of four levels of how to infuse multicultural content into the curriculum – contributions level, additive level, transformation level, and social action level. These levels range from being somewhat culturally assaultive and reactive (contributions and additive) to being culturally responsive and proactive (transformation and social action (Ford, submitted).

<u>**Culturally Responsive Education Framework**</u>

Several features of culturally responsive education have been presented above. A culturally responsive education is student centered, which means that it cannot be culture blind. Ford's model (e.g., Ford & Harris, 1999), relying upon the works of Gay (2000, 2002), Ladson-Billings (2009), and Shade, Kelly and Oberg (1997), and others, includes five components: (1) philosophy (about working with and teaching African American students); (2) learning environment (creating an environment that is family and community oriented; that values diversity and differences); (3) curriculum (multicultural); (4) instruction (matches teaching and learning styles), and (5) assessment (equitable, fair, biased reduced). The goal of culturally responsive education is to be comprehensive at understanding and addressing the needs of African American students; this framework is proactive and inclusive – it is a form of differentiation that does not rely on 'business as usual' or 'one size fits all" ideologies and practices. Instead, educators who are culturally responsive make intentional, concerted efforts to ensure that *all* students feel a sense of membership, ownership, worth, and empowerment in their classrooms.

Summary and Final Comments

There is no magic bullet for reversing the persistent and pervasive under-representation of African American students in gifted education. Educators must not deny that many past and current practices have been ineffective. However, we have many theories and conceptual frameworks from which to make change for those 250,000 Black students who are under-identified and under-served. The probability that these students' needs are being met in the general education setting is low; hence, the existence of and need for gifted programs (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). It is our belief that the above theories and frameworks are relevant in every school district and classroom. No time is better than today to become more assertive and proactive for these current and future African American students who are indeed gifted but for whom traditional practices have proven to be unhelpful. A mind is, indeed, a terrible thing to waste (United Negro College Fund) and erase (Ford, 1996).

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Donna Y. Ford's email address: donna.ford@Vanderbilt.Edu
Michelle Trotman Scott's email address: frazier.consulting@hotmail.com

An Interview with Dr. Margie Kitano   San Diego State University

Interviewers: Teresa Rowlison, Ph.D.   Southwest Regional Education Center

Michael F. Shaughnessy, Ph.D.   Eastern New Mexico University

On July 29, 2009, during the New Mexico Association for the Gifted (NMAG) Summer Institute on Gifted Education in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Dr. Shaughnessy and I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Margie Kitano. Our questions and a summary of her responses are provided below:

Dr. Kitano, could you begin by telling us a bit about your background and experiences? I began my professional career as an assistant professor in special education at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces, where I organized the Preschool for the Gifted. In 1988, I moved to San Diego to serve as associate dean for faculty development and research. There I collaborated with San Diego Unified School District's gifted and talented education program on the professional development of teachers who work with gifted students.

What motivated you to go into gifted education? Parents whose gifted children demonstrated special needs that were not being met in the general education classroom. My focus on culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students was inspired by my work on a federal grant to investigate obstacles and supporting factors experienced throughout the lifespan by gifted women from diverse backgrounds. Interviews with 60 women and family members revealed incidences of racism and sexism as well as a range of positive coping strategies.

What characteristics do you have that have helped you to achieve success in this field? I believe that the main characteristic was my interest in the success that teachers were having and how they approached their work. I do emphasize the importance of not making assumptions, but going out, seeing, and learning what other teachers are doing. Creating partnerships is also crucial. To establish such relationships, I have volunteered in the public schools to provide supporting professional development on Saturdays. I now coordinate the professional development program offered by the district and which leads to district certification in gifted and talented. My colleagues and I prepare undergraduate tutors for a program that supports highly gifted low income students, primarily English learners, in reading comprehension. A local Foundation, the Human Development Foundation, operates this program. Making these kinds of contacts creates long term partnerships.

You developed a preschool for the gifted. What were some of the challenges in that regard? Transition to public schools with different criteria for gifted programs leading to some of the gifted preschoolers not receiving services in the public schools. Unfortunately, typically these same children would have benefited greatly from continued service. I have worked with the parents and observed them working with their children to help identify strategies for parents to use at home when their children did not qualify for gifted services in the public schools.

How did you identify students for this preschool? Initially, children had to qualify in two out of four assessments in the gifted range, then it was changed to one out of four assessments in the gifted range. The four assessments included the areas of achievement, creativity, intellect, and problem solving.

What were some concerns parents face in terms of their preschool gifted kids? Some parents were concerned about their children who were not yet reading, some needed information about what was developmentally appropriate, and some had too high expectations because the children sounded so mature and could read.

What were some of the signs that most parents discussed? And, questions that they ask? The signs that most parents discussed were advanced vocabulary and sentence usage, maturity, and ability to take care of younger siblings. There were differences regarding cultural backgrounds and different familial expectations. The gifted preschool welcomed children who were twice exceptional (e.g., gifted children with physical or behavioral issues).

How did you measure growth and development at the preschool level? The teachers used the BRIGANCE® test of basic skills pre and post (Brigance Publishing, n.d.). After the first year of the gifted preschool, post testing was done using the same assessments that were used for eligibility, but after that the BRIGANCE® was used. The focus was on basic skills. However, looking back, I believe that I would have liked to have used a measure of self-efficacy. I was amazed by the children and, "Their feelings of confidence to change the world." One example was how the children realized that there was no wheelchair accessibility throughout the building, and that the water fountain was not accessible, so they wrote a letter to the Associate Dean to have the issue addressed.

Have you done any long-term studies about these students you worked with? No, the closest was a retrospective study on gifted women of color.

What was the process for establishing the National Gifted Education Standards? I have been on the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Association for the Gifted (TAG) board, and had done some of the work previously, so TAG asked me to participate in the process.

How do you recommend that gifted education teachers and administrators use the National Gifted Standards? The standards were developed for the purpose of accrediting university teacher preparation programs. Because of the limited number of university teacher preparation programs specifically in gifted education, districts should use the standards to identify teachers who meet the standards to teach gifted education. The standards should also be used for professional development and evaluating gifted education teacher performance and student outcomes. Measuring gifted student outcomes is critical to justifying gifted services.

What are some of the issues in terms of teacher training? Gifted education teachers can self-assess based on the standards and set up their own professional development. Teachers can develop learning communities where they come together to discuss readings on specific gifted topics with a facilitator where the teachers have control over the topics in a non-threatening environment.

Let's talk about developing gifted potential. Is it a matter of enrichment, or long term goals, or both? They are not mutually exclusive. We need to be in the business of developing gifted potential over the long term beginning as early as preschool. At the preschool level we do not typically identify. However, if we provide high level, high standard, preschool experiences prior to testing, then we may be able to identify more gifted students.

What do you see on the horizon for gifted education? Diminishing resources have eroded school districts' ability to maintain and expand gifted programs in many states. There are fewer self-contained programs for gifted and talented students, such that many remain in the general education classroom setting. It is essential that we provide general education teachers with the knowledge and tools to appropriately differentiate services for gifted students. Del Siegle, President of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC; 2008), has been working to include the needs of gifted students in legislation and policy related to teacher quality. The inclusion of gifted in the higher education opportunity act (HEOA) last summer was a huge accomplishment (U. S. Department of Education, 2009). The field of gifted education needs to be a partner in closing the achievement gap.

What do you think needs to be done to raise the awareness and acceptance of gifted education? We can help in the general education classroom to differentiate instruction and work together to increase student achievement for all students.

What are you currently working on, researching, etc? I am still working with project "Open Gate" for low income, highly gifted students, supporting professional development for gifted education teachers, and moving the professional development online. I am also currently involved in planning a center on critical and creative thinking, working with experienced teachers, to apply evidence-based strategies in these areas for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Interviewers' Comments: It was exciting to be able to listen to Dr. Kitano's thoughts in response to the questions. She is truly on the cutting edge in the field of gifted education. Her stance on gifted educators participating in closing the achievement gap is critical, and may be the key to the survival of gifted education in our nation.

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Teresa Rowlison's email address: trowlison@swrecnm.org

Michael F. Shaughnessy's email address: Michael.shaughnessy@enmu.edu

<div align="center">

Inside Specialized High Schools for the Gifted: A Comparison of Two Major Studies

Jill Olthouse   The University of Toledo

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(Acknowledgement: The author would like to thank Dr. Laurence Coleman for his help with this article.)

<div align="center">**Inside Public High Schools for the Gifted: A Comparison of Two Major Studies**</div>

Public specialized high schools for the gifted are relatively rare places where public monies are devoted to developing exceptional talent in artistic and academic domains. An outsider perspective on these schools can only provide limited information: labels, test scores, and college admissions standards. It cannot answer questions such as "What are the ordinary, day to day events in the lives of students attending specialized high schools?" (Coleman, 1997) and "What is the social context of specialized high schools, and how does social context affect students' achievement and self perceptions?" Social context includes the company the students keep, the competition at the school and how students react to it, the personal attention they receive from teachers and staff, the time they spend in the specialized environment, the course content, and the program objectives (Coleman, 1995).

Two book-length studies of specialized high schools have been published within the last ten years. A review of the literature found that, apart from a chapter devoted to the inner workings of a middle school magnet school (Metz, 1986), these are the only two in-depth studies focusing on an insider's perspective of life in public specialized high schools for the gifted.

In general, the similarities between the two programs stem from the actions, motivations, and needs of the selected student body. Differences between the programs are more likely to stem from geographic, cultural, and governmental influences. From these two studies, qualities of successful specialized programs for high school students are determined.

Public Specialized High Schools

Differing types of publicly sponsored schools for students of high academic ability and achievement are described by overlapping terminologies. "Magnet schools" in common usage can refer to any school that has a specialized focus (even if admissions are lottery based) or caters to talented students. While in the early 1970s there were programs in a handful of districts, today, by the best estimates, almost all urban districts and many suburban districts have magnet schools (Plucker, Cobb, & Quaglia, 1996). "State academies" are residential schools funded with state, rather than district, monies that bring together gifted students for their last two or three years of high school (Green, 1993). In 1980 North Carolina opened the first state-supported residential high school, and now there are 18 residential schools for gifted high school students in 16 states (Stamps, 2006). "Exam schools" refers to prestigious magnet schools in cities like New York City and Boston, where the admissions standards, unlike those at state academies, are heavily based on the results of a single standardized test. "Specialized high schools" refers to high schools with a specialized focus (usually math and science), regardless of whether they are publicly funded or have specific admission standards. Nationally, at least 95 public high schools have a special focus on math, science, and technology ("Math and Science Academies," 2007). The National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science, and Technology (NCSSSMST) includes 80 member schools, and with dozens more opening around the country (Hayden, 2004).

Two Schools, Two Research Approaches

Stuyvesant High School, the subject of Alec Klein's *A Class Apart: Prodigies, Pressure, and Passion Inside One of America's Best High Schools* (2008) is the most eminent and sought after of a number of specialized public high schools in New York City. Began as a boys' vocational school in 1904, Stuyvesant gradually started to focus on math and science education in 1917 (Hayden, 2004) and is now an exam school for the gifted that emphasizes achievement in math and science. The school is operated by the New York City Public school district; admission is only to residents of New York City. About 3% of those who take the test are admitted (Klein, 2008).

Klein, a reporter and Stuyvesant alumnus, had open access to the school; though he got parents' permission before he interviewed their children, he did not grant anyone confidentiality, nor did he ask adults' permission before he included them in his book.

The "Greenhouse Institute" (GI) is the moniker that Laurence Coleman chose for the state academy he lived at and researched for a year. GI is sponsored and operated by the government of a Midwestern state. The school pulls the most talented sophomores from around the state to spend their junior and senior years of high school in its residential setting. Students apply for admission with packets of SAT scores, high school transcripts, teacher recommendations, and essays. The school is housed on a college campus. Its administrative structure is divided into three departments: Outreach, Academic Life, and Residential Life.

Writing his "Nurturing Talent in High School: Life in the Fast Lane" from the perspective of a qualitative researcher, Coleman guarded the confidentiality of the students, faculty, and staff. While "A Class Apart" reads like a narrative focusing on the daily lives of a few school personalities, "Life in the Fast Lane" draws a series of generalities as it develops a grounded theory of students' lives in this unique environment. While Coleman avoids generalizing his findings to other schools, Klein makes didactic recommendations for school reform based on his experiences at Stuyvesant.

Similarities between the Schools

The first similarity between Stuyvesant and GI is that students choose and are chosen to attend. This simple difference between selective high schools and other public high schools creates important differences in the culture of the school. Most of the students have the desire and the aptitude to excel academically, and the schools are structured to capitalize on these students' strengths. Thus, the students, and the school at large, develop an identity closely tied to academic achievement.

The young people entering these high schools are often transitioning from heterogeneous classes at other schools. They often must struggle academically for the first time, and this results in affronts to their academic self-concept, a phenomenon termed the "big fish-little pond hypothesis" (Marsh & Craven, 2002).

At both schools, they are united by a common purpose: college preparation. College preparation does not mean preparing to enter college; it means preparing to enter the *right* college, generally an Ivy or a respected liberal arts school. Preparing for high tier colleges permeates life at specialized high schools by shaping the challenging curricula and by motivating students' involvements in numerous extracurricular activities. College presence is evident at Stuyvesant in the form of mentorships between students and college professors and during college night where college reps come to court them. College presence for GI students is the location of the high school, which is housed on a college campus; the collegiate schedule of blocked classes; and dormitory life.

Students at specialized schools drive the pace of their classes and have a great deal of responsibility for their own learning. In the classroom, activities are discussion oriented and project based to promote critical thinking. Teachers may ask students to provide analysis without first presenting background information, assuming they have gleaned it from their assigned readings or prior knowledge. In math and science classes, teachers may skip certain steps of the equation, matching pace with students' understanding.

To meet the demands of attending a specialized high school requires more than intellectual effort. It's a physical push, with many students getting only a few hours of sleep a night. Successful students develop a strong sense of self-discipline, and prioritize their academics above "just hanging out." Similarly, those at GI prioritize academics over friendships and sleep. Students at both schools have hours of homework each day. Some at Stuyvesant even welcome homework during vacations, refusing to sign a student-circulated petitions requesting a reprieve during the holidays (Klein, 2008).

Perhaps because social time is at a premium, students blend it with their intellectual activities. Students chat and watch TV while working on "busywork," or work that requires mainly statements of facts. On the weekends in their dorms, GI students describe spontaneous discussions about deep philosophical issues. Academics and socialization are also combined in the form of extracurricular activities at both schools. At Stuyvesant, which has over 200 clubs and 30 student publications, a math teacher says, "The greatness of the school is what happens after 3:00" (Klein, 2008, p. 8). One of the school's most prominent shared rituals is not a homecoming game, but a competition in which each class writes, assembles, and performs its own musical production.

At both specialized schools, students in a collegiate atmosphere and with a collegiate workload also tend to demand certain freedoms associated with college students. They balk at restrictions, and engage in both sanctioned and unsanctioned resistance against school policy. Students at these schools are generally well behaved when compared to students from traditional high schools; both schools have high attendance and graduation rates, and physical fights are rare or non-existent. Those who have difficulties with the school either leave, work through sanctioned channels to enact change, or express themselves through pranks and other small acts of defiance. Sanctioned resistance includes working through student organizations like student government and "Students for radical change at GI" (Coleman, 2005, p. 31). In "A Class Apart," there are numerous examples of young people questioning and challenging the school administrators. Students at GI and Stuyvesant also engage in unsanctioned resistance. GI students, who live at the school, lock their doors, do not sign out when leaving the dorms, and sneak off to smoke between classes. Some youngsters at both schools do drugs and skip classes.

Differences between the Schools

While Stuyvesant High School is one of a few similar institutions in New York City, the Greenhouse Institute is the only school of its kind in its Midwestern state. Stuyvesant high school is managed by the city government, while the GI is managed by the university and sanctioned by the state government. These differences in setting and governmental context lead to other differences that affect students' experience at their specialized high schools.

One of the major differences in the students' experiences at these two high schools is that students at Stuyvesant live at home and commute to school, but students at GI live away from their families and are continually under the purview of the school administration. Similar to a college program, those at GI are supervised in dorm rooms by adult counselors and senior student RAs. Thus, they rely on school personnel and fellow students in a constant manner that students at Stuyvesant do not. They describe their social relationships at GI as being "thrown together" (Coleman, 2005, p. 96) with students from a variety of backgrounds. United by common pressures of academic and dorm life, they quickly develop friendships with fellow students. Many students at GI experience the feeling of a "home away from home," or a sense of acceptance among their peers. Upon returning home to their families for holiday breaks, some of these students experience a phenomenon similar to the phenomenon that freshman college students feel upon returning home. Their perspective on home has changed as a result of their newfound independence and their social connections at school. In some respects, they feel out of place at home.

Paradoxically, students also understand that GI is not their home. At GI, they are under the purview of an administrative system rather than a personal parental relationship. Though in many ways they live like college students and view themselves as such, they are subject to many regulations that do not apply to college students. They must sign out during specified hours to visit students of the opposite sex. They must sign out to take trips off campus, and they have a curfew. They are not allowed to smoke. They are also required to rack up "wellness credits" towards their graduation requirements. These activities include social events, cultural events,

and physical fitness activities; they are intended to give students a break from their academics, but many students view them as an added source of stress (Coleman, 2005).

The residential nature of GI also leads to differences in parental involvement. Parents at Stuyvesant are in proximity to the school, and can meet and participate in a number of school committees. Parents attend school performances, sporting events, and academic competitions. When policy issues are under consideration, parents are active in calling the school principal and made their concerns known. Parents at Stuyvesant consider themselves investors in the reputation of the school. They give their time and money, and have high expectations for the quality of education their students receive in return. Parents at GI are also involved in their students' education, but because they do not live in proximity to the school, their involvement is more limited.

While parents of Stuyvesant students are more actively involved in the operations of the school than parents of GI students, both groups of parents are active in helping their children gain admission to these specialized schools. Because the admission criteria at the two schools are different, there are different means of preparation. Admission to Stuyvesant is a one-shot exam; to many families who cannot afford private schools, they believe this exam is the key impetus to a trajectory of success that will last them the rest of their lives (Medina, 2002). Many parents prepare their children for these exams by paying for classes at after school academies. In contrast, admission to GI is portfolio based. Students submit work samples, essays, and transcripts in much the same way that they would apply to college.

Perhaps because of this difference in admissions policies, differences in school size (Stuyvesant is much larger than GI), or perhaps because students at Stuyvesant are not "thrown together" in their residential life, there is a difference in diversity at the two schools. At GI, there are clubs geared toward ethnic minorities and there are groups that students perceive as keeping to themselves, but, for the most part, student relationships are integrated. Stuyvesant students are also diverse in the sense that they represent a variety of socioeconomic and cultural groups. Clubs that celebrate religions, ethnicities, and alternative sexual orientation exist, and friendships are certainly made between these groups. However, Stuyvesant suffers from two challenges to true equity in education. These challenges are pronounced underrepresentation and self-segregation. Underrepresentation means that the racial and socioeconomic makeup of Stuyvesant is very different from that of the general New York public school system. For example, in 1995, African American students made up forty percent of the city's public school system, but only 4.8 percent of Stuyvesant students (Klein, 2008, p. 66). Underrepresentation has made Stuyvesant a target of activists, who in May 1997 barged into the school and held a demonstration in the lobby, demanding that the admissions test be suspended. Stuyvesant is also subject to the problem of student self-segregation. At Stuyvesant, racial cliques exist and segregate the physical landscape of the school. One area of the school is the "Asian bar," another is a hangout for Whites, and another for African Americans.

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What Makes a Program Successful?

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GI and Stuyvesant share a mission: to create an atmosphere in which students' academic development is nurtured. Coleman's and Klein's studies point to elements that help or hinder these schools' pursuit of their shared mission.

Unabashedly Prioritize Academics

First, as evident in these two schools, successful programs unabashedly emphasize academics. Academic standards are high and homework is heavy. Class activities emphasize higher-level thinking. Teachers must not only have educational credentials, they must be equal to college professors in their breadth and depth of mastery of their chosen discipline (though they might not necessarily be trained in gifted education). Money is devoted to academics rather than athletics. This includes academic-oriented extracurricular activities, test prep, mentoring programs, college searches, student newspapers, and guest experts. These schools, like the schools in another study of successful schools for high ability learners, use authentic assessment and exhibit curricular connections beyond the school (Buchanen & Woerner, 2002).

Social Development in the Context of Academic Development

This is not to say that successful public high schools for the gifted ignore social development. However, they understand that social development can occur in the context of intellectual development. This is an important element of environments for the gifted that is often overlooked. While students do sacrifice time "just hanging out," this does not mean that they do not develop socially. Both GI and Stuyvesant students practice self-expression through theatre, music, and poetry. They develop their logical thinking skills through math and science. They learn to set priorities and accomplish a great deal in a small amount of time. They talk about morality, philosophy, and politics in their humanities classes. They develop self-discipline. They make friendships with like-minded scholars. They read books that inspire them. In developing their academic talents, they are developing into maturity, self-knowledge, and independence.

Matching Students to the Environment

Successful programs are a result of matching the students to the environment. The school and the students mutually select each other, and both the school and the students can end the relationship if they so choose. Students who want to learn meet teachers who want them to learn the content. Academic learning for both supersedes other activities. While a specialized high school may not be the best placement for all gifted students, both studies suggest that some students thrive in this environment. Students recognize that the ever accelerating pace of learning is a consequence of who the students are and the specialness of the school context.

Redefining the "Balanced Life"

Students in both specialized high schools do not have "balanced" lives according to the traditional understanding of the term. They do not have average schedules or goals, and they do not spend equal amounts of time in work, play, and sleep. Rather, students stretch their physical and mental limits each day, packing in hours of study and extracurricular work. For students intent on become the best in their profession, of making scientific advancements and writing groundbreaking novels, it is appropriate to have narrow interests, to be advanced in development, or to be uninterested in purely social activities (Coleman, 2005, p. 113). While GI tried to enforce the ideal of "a balanced life" with its wellness program, many students found the program to be contrived and intrusive. For them, social development and wellness were linked to the pursuit of academic excellence.

Excellence and Equity Co-exist

Stuyvesant, in spite of its diversity and intellectual attention to issues of race and privilege in its humanities classrooms, still deals with severe underrepresentation and student self-segregation. An example of this is the students' understanding that the most likely ticket for student body president and vice president is a White-Asian pairing, as these are the two majorities at the school. At GI, Coleman believes that the students' common pursuit of academic excellence is one of the factors that lead to an environment where students move past simple categorizations (athletic vs. non-athletic, race, and class) and towards social relationships that truly honor diversity. Other factors include the stress and pressure that bring them together, their parents shared values of education, GI's admission policies that are not solely test based, and the students' sense of being "thrown together" and separated from their home cultures. Both Stuyvesant and GI also refrain from keeping class rank in an effort to decrease competitive pressure.

Summary

An insider perspective on specialized high school programs for the gifted reveals that students' shared characteristics (energy, self-discipline, enthusiasm for learning, and aptitude) interact with an environment designed with an academic focus to create an atmosphere that accelerates academic development. Students face an initial adjustment period in which they may need to adjust their work habits, sleeping habits, and academic self-concept. They quickly become caught up in the bustle of academic and extracurricular activities. They make their voices heard and help to shape their studies and their school. They develop their emerging identity in the context of their affinity to the subject matter. Life at a specialized high school is challenging, fast-paced, and suits many young people quite well.

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Jill Olthouse's email address: Jill_Olthouse@hotmail.com

George Santayana (1863-1952): Nurturer of the Gifted Sensibility

Michael E. Walters, Ed.D.

Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

"The sole advantage in possessing great works of literature lies in what they can help us to become." (George Santayana, **Three Philosophical Poets**, p. 3)

"They scatter less influence, but more seeds." (Ibid, p. 108)

"Goethe is the poet of life; Lucretius the poet of nature; Dante the poet of salvation." (Ibid, p. 158)

Gifted students need to be simultaneously informed, inspired and stimulated. One way to accomplish this is to expose them to excellence in content and form. Recently, Barnes & Noble has reissued a series of books described as *Rediscovers*. One of these rediscovered classics is **Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante and Goethe** (2009, originally published in 1910) by George Santayana. It is a study in poetry, philosophy and culture which represents three different literary periods – the Classical (Rome and Hellenic Greece), Medieval (Italy), and the German Romantics of the early 19th century. These poets also expressed themselves in different linguistic forms: Latin, Italian and German. Yet despite their unique characteristics, they had one major concern: How to fuse philosophy and poetry. April was National Poetry Month. What could be more fitting than a study of three of the most influential poets in world literature?

George Santayana was a multiculturalist in his time. He was born in Spain in 1863. However, he grew up in Boston. His education was so successful at Harvard College that upon graduation he became a colleague of his two famous teachers, Josiah Royce and William James. His lectures attracted a generation of writers from many different backgrounds and sensibilities. Among his students were Gertrude Stein, the feminist writer who influenced Ernest Hemingway; W. E. B. Du Bois, the Black American scholar who wrote **The Souls of Black Folk** (1903) and founded the NAACP; and modern poets such as T. S. Eliot, Conrad Aiken and Wallace Stevens. **Three Philosophical Poets** resulted from course lectures Santayana gave at Harvard on comparative literature. These lectures were also given for a special series at Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin. At 49 years Santayana left his academic profession and went to Europe where he lived for nearly 40 years. His pursuits were traveling, reading and writing.

Gifted students need the psychological imprinting contained in the excellent expository writings of individuals such as Santayana. His writing style is aphoristic, logical and elegant. Many of his aphorisms are mainstays of contemporary thought: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." "Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim."

To describe Lucretius, Dante, Goethe and Santayana as "Dead White Males" is to restrict the potentiality of all gifted individuals. This problem is represented by Aristotle's analogy of the acorn and the oak tree. The sensibility of giftedness is the potentiality that is nourished to become the actuality of the mighty oak tree.

Internet Resources

Free Download of **Three Philosophical Poets** from Google: http://bit.ly/aUdo9s

Biography of George Santayana from the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy**: http://bit.ly/bf3tWD

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