SENG Journal: Exploring the Psychology of Giftedness

Volume 1 | Issue 2

September 2022

Full Issue

SENG Journal

Exploring the Psychology of Giftedness

SENGJ

Volume 1

Issue 2

September 2022

Editor: Tracy L. Cross

About This Journal
SENG Journal: Exploring the Psychology of Giftedness (*SENGJ*) publishes original research on the psychology of giftedness biannually, in March and September. Rigorous quantitative and qualitative methodologies used in studies of the cognitive, social, and emotional realms will enlighten readers about the inner world of a unique population and contribute to our understanding of the development of talent. The journal also publishes reviews of research, theoretical explorations and interviews with thought leaders and experts on the psychology of gifted individuals. Articles have applicability for families, educators, counselors, psychologists, and all those with an interest in giftedness.

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ISSN 2831-5693

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 3-4

About This Issue

Tracy L. Cross, Ph.D.

Welcome to the second issue of volume one of *SENGJ: Exploring the Psychology of Giftedness*. There is an important change in personnel working with the journal. Dr. Jennifer Riedl Cross, who co-edited the first issue of *SENGJ*, has since become the editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly*, the venerable journal of the National Association for Gifted Children. She was instrumental in creating and getting the first issue in press. She was especially important to creating the infrastructure of *SENGJ* by collaborating with the William & Mary Libraries and their Scholarworks open access platform. We wish her the best in her new editorial role.

To begin this issue of *SENGJ*, I wanted the readership to get to know the journal's Advisory Board members. To that end, we have included a brief biography of each of the members. We welcome a new Advisory Board member to the group as well. Dr. Maggie Brown joins us from New Zealand. Dr. Brown is a therapist and consultant for students with gifts and talents. We are pleased to have her on board. The Advisory Board members support *SENGJ* instrumentally by offering advice and guidance on the future direction of the journal, by encouraging authors, reviewing manuscripts, submitting manuscripts as desired. I am confident you will enjoy getting to know more about them.

The next section of this issue of *SENGJ* includes interviews with the two most senior leaders of the Talent Search Programs (Drs. Colm O'Reilly of Dublin City University and Paula Olszewski-Kubilius of Northwestern University). They were invited to share their views, insights, practices, and vision for the future of these types of programs. Having known and worked with these fine leaders in the field, I wanted to share with the *SENGJ* readership their unique and impactful approaches to growing the programs and serving their students. I have found them to be remarkably effective in their professions—examples of a type of leadership that has its basis in values.

This issue of *SENGJ* includes the first installment of an ongoing section of literature reviews on topics important to the psychology of giftedness. In the first review, "Overexcitability Research: Implications for the Theory of Positive Disintegration and the Field of Gifted Education," Dr. Sal Mendaglio offers an important perspective from his many years of research and writing about Kazimierz Dąbrowski's theory. In this article, Sal provides "a descriptive rather than critical review" of the evolution of the research on the topic for the *SENGJ* readership to consider. The second literature review, "Addressing the Well-Being of Young Children," was written by Pauline Dott, Emma Cho, and Dr. Nancy Hertzog. In this piece, the readers are treated to a thoughtful and informed, philosophically consistent analysis of almost 30 articles reporting on young children's mental health and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic among identified gifted children.

The research article, "Exploring Goodness of Fit: Social Cognition Among Students with Gifts and Talents in Ireland and India," is provided by a team of international researchers (Dr. Jennifer Riedl Cross, Anyesha Mishra, Dr. Colm O'Reilly, and Dr. Paromita Roy). The first two work at the Center for Gifted Education at William & Mary; Colm O'Reilly is from the Centre for Talented Youth-Ireland at Dublin City University in Dublin, Ireland, and Paromita Roy is from the Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search, Kolkata, India. I am pleased that the article extends some of my earlier research on the social cognition of students with gifts and talents.

The final section of this issue of *SENGJ* represents the first of an ongoing feature wherein highly experienced psychologists and counselors provide advice for the field based on their training and significant experience working with students with gifts and talents. In this issue, Dr. Tom Greenspon was invited to help generate and respond to questions that could be beneficial to those interested in the psychology of students with gifts and talents. Tom was invited due to his four-decade career in service to these students and his reputation as an expert and leading voice on certain topics, including the topic of gifted students and perfectionism. Tom speaks to this issue and others in a manner helpful to all of us who are interested in supporting the well-being of our students with gifts and talents.

I hope that you will find this issue of *SENGJ: Exploring the Psychology of Giftedness* to be replete with interesting ideas, thoughtful commentary, and important wisdom from distinguished experts on students with gifts and talents.

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Meet the Advisory Board

Edward R. Amend, Psy.D. is a clinical psychologist at The Amend Group, a comprehensive center for psychological, educational, and gifted services in Lexington, Kentucky. Dr. Amend is licensed to practice in both Kentucky and Ohio, where he focuses on social, emotional, and educational needs of gifted, twice-exceptional, and neurodiverse youth, adults, and their families. He has worked in private practice and community mental health settings, and consulted with clinics, hospitals, schools, and other organizations.

Dr. Amend is co-author of two award-winning books: *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*; and *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression, and Other Disorders* (Second Edition). Dr. Amend has authored or co-authored several articles, book chapters, and columns about gifted children. He presents nationally and internationally about gifted children, and his service has included various roles with NAGC, SENG, and *The G WORD* film's Advisory Board.

Maggie Brown, Ph.D. is a psychotherapist, a psychology researcher and a university lecturer. Currently based in New Zealand, she takes a strong multi and cross-cultural approach to both research and clinical practice. Dr. Brown contributes knowledge built over many decades of research and study about intelligence, neurobiology, human development and psychology, all with a focus on adults. Her most recent research project brought together global experts in topics related to gifted adults, and also groups of gifted adults themselves. These studies—conducted over several years—bring to light important new ideas and issues related the psychology and lived experiences of gifted adults. Dr. Brown's clinical psychotherapy work addresses the complex and often misunderstood inner and social worlds of gifted and other neurodiverse adults. Areas of specialty include identity-formation and integration, workplace stress, emotional dysregulation and the causes and impacts of relational trauma.

Chandra B. Floyd, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Gifted Education and the Coordinator for the Gifted Education Endorsement Program at Kennesaw State University (KSU) in Georgia. Her research focuses on equity in gifted education including how gifted education functions in the broader P12 educational enterprise; leadership that advances equitable access to gifted education; and teacher preparation that results in, not only high-caliber instruction, but also robust advocacy for gifted individuals, underrepresented groups, and the field of gifted education at large. A recent graduate of William & Mary, in 2021 she received an award from the NAGC Research & Evaluation Network for her dissertation *Promoting Equity in Gifted Education: Stories from Selected Virginia Gifted Education Leaders.*

In addition to teaching and program coordination, Chandra serves as co-faculty advisor for #BlackTeachersMatter, a KSU student organization that centers the needs and experiences of pre-service and in-service teachers while examining and advancing Black educational issues. Before becoming a professor, she worked in P12 schools for nearly 25 years as an English teacher, a gifted education resource teacher, and a district-level administrator for gifted education. Chandra is a mother and a grandmother, and in her spare time she enjoys reading, writing, painting, and traveling.

Andrea D. Frazier, Ph.D. is a professor with Columbus State University. She earned her doctorate in educational psychology from Ball State University in 2009. Before attending Ball State, she worked at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, a residential school for students gifted/talented in math, science, and technology, for 7 years. Her research interests encompass the educative experience of students of color and girls, with recent work exploring possible selves and academic self-concept in high-ability African American students

and possible selves as a pathway to STEM degree attainment for underrepresented students. She has served as assistant editor and guest editor for the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and she is co-editor of "Special Populations in Gifted Education: Understanding Our Most Able Students from Diverse Backgrounds" with Jaime Castellano. She has published with *Roeper Review*; the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, the *British Journal of Education, Society, and Behavioral Sciences*; the *Journal for Applied Social Psychology*; and the *NALS Journal*. She has also contributed to *The Handbook for Counselors Serving Students with Gifts and Talents: Development, Relationships, School Issues, and Counseling Needs/Interventions* (2nd edition edited by Tracy L. Cross and Jennifer R. Cross, Prufrock Press, 2021), *Social-Emotional Curriculum with Gifted and Talented Students* (edited by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Tracy L. Cross, and F. Richard Olenchak, Prufrock Press, 2009) and *African American Students' Career and College Readiness: The Journey Unraveled* (edited by Jennifer R. Curry and M. Ann Shillingford, Lexington Books, 2015).

Nancy B. Hertzog, Ph.D., University of Washington, USA, is professor and director of Learning Sciences and Human Development and the former Director of the Robinson Center for Young Scholars. In addition to studying the outcomes of Robinson Center alumni, her research focuses on teaching strategies designed to differentiate instruction and challenge children with diverse abilities. From 1995 to 2010, she was on the faculty in the Department of Special Education and directed University Primary School, an early childhood gifted program, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has published three books and several chapters on early childhood gifted education, and numerous articles in gifted education.

Mihyeon Kim, Ph.D. is the Director of the Precollegiate Learner Programs at the Center for Gifted Education, William & Mary. She develops and implements academic services for K-12 students for various student populations, including Saturday, summer, and residential programs. Under her leadership, K-12 programs at the Center for Gifted Education, William & Mary expanded their educational services to international students. Her passion to serve diverse students has given her a staunch commitment to providing educational opportunities to disadvantaged students. She is eager to make a difference in the lives of high-ability students who may not have been given out-of-school educational opportunities.

Christopher Lawrence, Ph.D. serves as an associate professor of counseling and human services at Northern Kentucky University. He studies creativity and self-compassion, exploring the applications of both in academic and clinical settings. Christopher was a recipient of the NKU CARES Award, which recognized individuals who made extraordinary contributions to student, faculty, and staff success during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Outside of the university, Christopher serves as a licensed professional clinical counselor in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, as well as a Certified First Responder Counselor.

Sakhavat Mammadov, Ph.D. Sakhavat Mammadov is Associate Professor of Gifted and Creative Education (GCE) in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia (UGA). He serves as the Coordinator of GCE online programs. Prior to his appointment at UGA, Dr. Mammadov was an Assistant Professor at Valdosta State University (VSU) where he taught research methods, program evaluation, assessment, and gifted education. He received a doctorate in gifted education from William & Mary. Among his primary research interests are social and emotional experiences and well-being of children with gifts and talents, motivation in learning contexts, personality, and creativity. His articles have appeared in *Journal of Personality*, *Learning and Individual Differences*, *Educational Psychology*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal of Creative Behavior*, *Creativity Research Journal*, among others. Dr. Mammadov currently is an associate editor for *Gifted Child Quarterly* and serves on NAGC's Research and Evaluation Network as a program chair.

Kristie L. Spiers Neumeister, Ph.D. is a professor in the Educational Psychology department where she directs the graduate gifted licensure and certificate programs. Her professional interests include perfectionism, twice-exceptionality, and gifted program evaluation. She is a member of the National Association for Gifted Children's Board of Directors and a co-

author of the books *Perfectionism in the Academic Context* and *Gifted Program Evaluation: A Handbook for Administrators and Coordinators.*

Colm O'Reilly Ph.D. is the Director of the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University. CTYI provides fast paced classes for academically talented students aged 6 – 16 years from all over Ireland and overseas. Colm has worked in the area of gifted and talented education for the last 20 years and has written articles and presented papers at numerous conferences around Europe and worldwide. His research interests include working with gifted students in out of school programmes and their academic and social development. He is currently the secretary of the European Council for High Ability and the treasurer for the European Talent Support Network. He serves on the advisory board for the Center for Gifted Education at William & Mary and has just led an EU project to design an online programme for teachers of high ability students in regular classrooms.

Susannah M. Wood, Ph.D. is currently a professor in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Iowa. She is also a faculty partner with the Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talented Development, where she provides professional development opportunities for undergraduate students, graduate students, and practicing educators related to the social and emotional concerns of gifted students. Her research interests encompass preparing school counselors for practice, with a particular focus on serving the gifted population in collaboration with other educators and professionals. Dr Wood's research has been published in such peer-reviewed publications as *Gifted Child Quarterly, Roeper Review, Journal for the Education of the Gifted, Journal of School Counseling, Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, and *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy*. In 2018 she and Dr. Jean Sunde Peterson published *Counseling Gifted Students: A Guide for School Counselors* with Springer Publishing Company.

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 8-15

Interview

A Trailblazer in Innovative Residential Programming for Students with Gifts and Talents: An Interview with Colm O'Reilly

Colm O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Interviewed by Tracy L. Cross, Ph.D.

Colm O'Reilly has been the Director of the Centre for Talented Youth-Ireland (CTYI-I) since 2004. In that time, the program has grown substantially, serving tens of thousands of students with gifts and talents across the country. His approach has been uniquely child-centered and his experiences have much to offer to those who wish to improve the lives of these students. In this interview, Dr. O'Reilly reflects on his years at CTYI-I and how he has built a highly effective and sustainable program.

Dr. Colm O'Reilly

Cross • *If you would, share with the readership what your first position was at CTY.*

O'Reilly •Sure. Originally, and I think that this is very helpful for my latter career, would've been that I went to college in Dublin City University (DCU) and I was just graduating from DCU at the time this program, Centre for Talented Youth, was starting, and they were looking for residential assistants in the first year of the program. I had played a lot of sport in DCU, and that was like, I had kind of run soccer teams and we had played at quite competitive levels. We had upped the game relative to what was happening in DCU at that time. It seemed like a nice, fun summer job to do, even though I had no idea what it entailed or what was happening there. I hadn't even heard the centre had opened.

So I interviewed and I got this position as a residential assistant, and it was such a lovely fit relative to where I was in my life and what I was interested in doing. Here was this amazing program for bright kids to come on campus. But I think that definitely what shaped my whole vision for how I work in the field now is that the social side of it was so emphasized and so important, and that we were there to facilitate the social development of the students as a residential assistant.

I did that for a year and then I was promoted the following year to the senior residential assistant. In the meantime, I did some teacher training and I took a year to do that. I went over to UCD to do that, but I came back in the summer. In the middle of that year, an opportunity came up to do some postgraduate study to evaluate some of the work at the centre, which was obviously part of the funding that they got relative to it. So I applied for that, and having worked on the program and had a positive experience, I subsequently had some teacher trainings, had some education background that I was successful in that application. I literally stayed with the centre from then on. I've worked in all, I think, the positions relative to the program prior to becoming the director of it in 2004.

On the summer program, I worked as academic coordinator, and also in various residential capacities over years, because I'd see students coming back and was very interested to see what they were like the year afterwards at a different level of their social development. That's always been important to me, and that would be why I've always focused on it a lot when I became director. Any time I'd ever give a talk or any time I ever talk to parents or to teachers or to students themselves, I emphasize that the academic and social development are equally important and that one has strong impact on the other, and that we're trying to create the situation that socially, students would feel comfortable here while they're on the program. And I think that's reflected in the evaluations at the end for their reasons for returning.

Particularly at secondary school, 99% would be, "Oh, it's social and my friends are here, and I like the social environment, and I like the space that's been created, where I can be myself with a bunch of people who are similar to me. I have lots in common with them, and I feel comfortable in that environment and making decisions for myself. And that's very different to what I would be used to either at home or at school." That's very positive, so I've always tried to recreate that each year with what we're doing. Also to recruit staff who I think have that vision and mission within them, and that's important to them–as opposed to just coming to get their CV updated. I think that's a positive thing, but we have to see the program have some social impacts, so that they can certainly act as role models for the next generation of students coming.

Cross • *Great. I want to take a step back just a minute. You have not yet even mentioned getting a Ph.D. in that period. If you don't mind, think about that period and describe it? When did you finish? How did that go? Did it inform your practice in any way?*

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/Y9A2-YB38
Address correspondence to Colm O'Reilly, CTY Ireland, Dublin City University, Dublin 9, Ireland
E-mail: colm.oreilly@dcu.ie

O'Reilly • Yeah. Obviously, when you work in a university, to me–look, I'm somebody who is driven relative to my job. I really like it, I'm a good advocate for it. But when you work in universities, most people have Ph.D.s. So in that context, I felt that it's important for my own personal development and also for external validation of your credibility to work in these programs. I really wanted to upskill. Since I work in the university, there would be opportunities to do that. And then obviously, I'd have access to students at CTYI. That made it easier again. I was able to do that while I was doing my job. That introduced me to the literature and to people who'd written in the field, and to what was happening generally in gifted education.

Obviously, it changed over the years, which is good that I subsequently did a Ph.D. because I was able to look at different literature, and there's a much higher level of detail required moving from masters to Ph.D. I got quite interested in people who were writing, like Borland (2003), about rethinking gifted education. And I know Tracy had a chapter, yourself, in that on qualitative research (Cross, 2003) and it was really interesting, mainly because, not that I hadn't heard of qualitative researching; I had, of course, but it actually really gave me a good insight into the questions we should be asking the students relative to their experiences on the program that we probably previously hadn't been doing. We were kind of scratching the surface on that, and that was interesting. I was interested in putting a philosophical critical lens on the field and stuff like that. It gave me a much better understanding.

I think it's really interesting, because it's a nice small field and people know each other, that subsequently, when I was attending conferences or working on projects or doing things, I was able to meet these people and see their vision enacted, and talk to them about their practices. That's really helpful and beneficial to my development. It humanizes it definitely, and then you can talk to them. I really am fascinated by people who are doing stuff that's similar to mine, and how they do it, and trying to see if I can learn from it, if we can replicate it or put it in a similar shape.

I think that around 2010 was a very significant time in that regard, because you spend a lot of time trying to establish a program, trying to make it sustainable, trying to make it workable, trying to get as many students as possible, and trying to make it so that it's self-sufficient so that you can concentrate on other things. Up to 2010 I was focusing on that. It's a lot of work and time driven into doing that, because you're starting from a base of a small number of students and the sustainability of it needs a large number of students. So we really had to get the message out there, and we promoted awareness and we did a lot to make sure we were increasing our numbers. But, probably because we're a small staff—bigger now, thankfully—we probably didn't have time to do as much deep research or research projects to get involved in it.

It was actually in a European context, I was invited to something in Budapest in 2010, which was a celebration of Hungary as a European City of Culture. They wanted each country to talk about their practices in individual countries and areas. I'd presented at conferences before and I'd done stuff of a similar nature before, but it was only actually at this one that I realized we'd become quite a big program. We actually have quite a significant impact. Compared to what a lot of people were doing, we have stuff here that's going to be quite interesting if we could explore it further.

I was really surprised about that, but obviously, as I'm older, I'm more comfortable and confident in my career. So I'm going to have this as a priority in relation to what we're going to do next. Then, very fortuitously, Tracy himself contacted me around this time and said, "What's happening?" The timing of that was perfect, because it was just at the time that I really wanted to open a research agenda. It was really brilliant that you were contacting me, because you were somebody who I admired and was working in the field that I thought we really needed to explore in much more depth. These are the questions we're getting a lot from the parents, a lot more parents than teachers, because teachers are more thinking about curriculum, what's happening in the class. The parents are much more worried about the social-emotional development of their kids.

So this was wonderful, this idea to collaborate with experts in the field, as this was always something that I was very interested in. Obviously, it started on a smaller scale, relative to me using your expertise to come and talk to the parents as a person who has a lot of experience in the field and understands these issues, and has published and written on it. We got such positive and good feedback from it, I really was very interested to explore that further, as to what we collaborate and do together. I think that's been important to my understanding of issues, and also to how I would plan and progress what we're doing. To me, all this research has to have an impact on practice and what we do because that's very important for our sustainability, and for just my own feeling of improving what we're doing all the time in various capacities.

This was very helpful to give me a kind of a barometer to look at in developments of what we should be doing to look at these issues of social-emotional behavior within high-ability students as best we can. And it really took off from there. I got much more interested in what was happening at the National Association for Gifted Children NAGC and the current research trends, and what we could become leaders in, and push practice. Particularly in Europe, where there's very little research in that field. So I really wanted to establish that network and growth for two reasons. One, to obviously work in the university from a publication perspective, but more so for what that meant, and how we could improve what

we did internally in the program. That very much shaped the way I hired people subsequently, and the direction that I wanted the courses and classes to go in.

Cross • *That was very detailed and helpful to understand it. And as your colleague and friend, it's interesting to hear some of the confluence of events in your career.*

O'Reilly • I always think to myself I'm very, very fortunate in my career. A lot of good luck to have a career that I'm really passionate about and that I'm a huge advocate for, and that I can make a difference and have an influence on. Not many people can say they can do that in their job. And I thank the university relative to that because they very much allow me, they don't dictate stuff relative to what I'm going to do. They pretty much allow me to do what I want to do in that context. So that's really useful. But I have very high standards myself in that regard and I definitely think I have a duty and an obligation to these students to provide something that's better than what they would do in other places, and that is going to improve their life and is going to be good for them in the longer term.

I particularly think that's relevant to: One, students who are challenged or who have difficulties, because if you're very well socially adjusted and if you're getting straight A's all the time, you're going to get opportunities related to that... I'm not saying life is easy, but your pathway is easier and your structure is easier and things will probably work out whether you attended this program or not. It'll probably have a very positive impact on you if you do attend, you'll probably make loads of friends and it'll be nice for you, but I think it probably would've worked out. It's the ones who I think are vulnerable, who are challenged, who have difficulties: they need these courses to find their tribes, to find people who are like themselves. And to me, that's the biggest kind of challenge, but one that brings the best rewards. I'm not saying I only started thinking about this in 2010, I think about it all the time, but from 2010, I definitely felt I was more structured and equipped to deal with that.

It also heightened around the time that education in Ireland changed slightly. We were always kind of behind on inclusiveness relative to special needs. Look, that's a kind of a documented historical thing about Irish education. People taken out of classes and not in mainstream and stuff like that if they even were dyslexic. It's terrible kind of experiences, and not that long ago; in the '70s and stuff. So anyway, that was, thankfully, moved around and reshaped in the early '90s, but it was only around 2010, 2012, that I felt the benefit of that when we started getting a lot of reports, psychologists' reports of high-ability students with learning difficulties, mainly, initially at the time with dyslexia and dyspraxia, much more moving laterally to ASD and ADHD and stuff.

And now, I think an interesting thing, and this is something that I have direct experience of as I was reading these reports. Because I actually documented it myself. So these figures are…I'm thinking back to when I got the first one, but I have the actual figures. It's like, say, in 2000, I would've got 10 reports a year and now I get like 15 reports a week. That's not suddenly in the last 20 years, loads of gifted students have ASD or ADHD. It's that we're finally identifying them, and that the Department of Education in Ireland put a lot of money into the psychological testing service, and these services were provided. Now, some have long waiting lists and you're waiting a while. Then people at certain points maybe had more money so they invested in getting private reports done, but whatever happened, we suddenly now have a lot more of those students who have been assessed.

And to me, that's hugely significant because once we have the students, we can't just go and say, "Oh, well, we're just going to cater for them and not think about what the best practice is for them and how we should work with them effectively." That became really something that I was very interested in doing to make that the best experience for those students.

To me, the biggest trend and change in relation to work and high ability students is the number struggling and suffering with mental health issues. Now, that's always been in existence, we've always had students who've had challenges and problems and stuff. But I think now we're having so much more and now we're having so many more students who are coming to us and telling us that they are struggling. I think there's a positive about it in the context that people are more aware of their mental health and more aware of things that can go wrong, and less reluctant to say something. I think in a lot of environments, they were probably reluctant to disclose mental health difficulties or to appear vulnerable or to say they're not okay, but they feel comfortable doing it at CTYI.

Whereas we really started a policy in the last few years of really encouraging people to come to us if they felt they had any mental health difficulties, if they had any struggles, if they were having difficulty, be it on a longer-term challenge or in the short term on that particular day. And that's been hugely challenging, because there's a lot more than we expected, but beneficial because that's a great thing that people are coming and telling us and talking to us about it. So it's putting the structures in place to ensure that we can manage and handle that. That sometimes is difficult, but I'm very confident I have some brilliant people on my team who really invest in that and work very hard so we structure and put in place everything beforehand to try and facilitate that.

We do ask people beforehand to fill out medical forms to tell us if they're having difficulties or if they're seeing somebody during the year, because it helps us. It

doesn't make us want to exclude them in any way, it just helps us to facilitate it when they get there. The problem is that not all of them will disclose. I think up to 50% won't disclose. So what we want to do is tap into that 50% and hopefully get them to come out and come forward and tell us if they're having difficulties and problems, because that helps us to deal with things. But sometimes I do know that's challenging because it can be overwhelming when there's so many of them and we're not properly equipped to deal with everything.

But we're certainly trying to take them one person at a time in relation to that, and to keep people, parents, and anybody who is invested informed of what's happening on a very regular basis while the students are here on campus, rather than it feeling like it's a closed veil of mystery of what we do here. Definitely maybe sometimes with kids who are having a brilliant time and very well adjusted, everything's fine, we imagine they're communicating with their parents, telling them that's fine and that's okay. But if they come and say, "Oh, they haven't called us," we'll just say, "Oh, look, we'll get in touch with them and tell them to call you now."

The ones who have come to us with challenges and things, we are all the time ringing their parents, telling them, "They had a good day today, they went and this is what they did. They did this activity. They talked to three people today. They were very friendly. They were in class. They contributed." I think for their parents, that's such a relief to know that we're on top of that, that we're managing that. I'm not saying we're making a huge difference and we're changing everything, but we're trying to keep an eye on them, we're trying to keep them informed. And we're trying to take each day at a time, so hopefully things will get better. The parents just feel they don't ever get that feedback from school or they don't even get that feedback when their child has gone to a counselor or whatever.

We're really trying to bridge that gap, so that the parents are kept informed, and we do get some good results. That's one of the very good things. At the end that child usually has a great time, usually a positive experience. And the parents will really be very grateful relative to subsequently going, "Thank you so much for helping our child. It was so beyond the level of what we expected, the care and attention to detail that you gave individually to our son or our daughter in the situation. We really are grateful. It helped us to enjoy the time that she was helping our child, because we knew that they were being looked after."

And I think that's a minimum requirement, but I just sometimes despair in some of the other courses about how little people look at that or care about that or inform other people about it, even though they've an obligation to inform people, should these things come up. So I think that's a level of attention to detail, and I'm very fortunate that the staff that I have who work with me are incredibly invested in that too. They need to be, because they have to follow up on it all the time and they have to do things and they have to communicate. But that is essential, and that makes summer programs very busy. Sometimes you just have to work very hard to make sure that's going to happen.

The difficulty, I suppose, is that more and more people are disclosing. As their numbers are increasing, though it's not that gifted students have significantly higher mental health difficulties than any other set of children. But they have the same, probably, maybe marginally less in some instances, but the percentage is still high. So once you have a lot of students, if your target is to get as many as possible to have positive mental health and to come to you with their difficulties, you're just going to have a lot of people coming to you with challenges that they're facing. And that makes your life very, very busy. This group takes up a lot of your time, but I think it's worthwhile because they're the group who are the vulnerable ones and the ones we really want to make a difference for.

Cross • *What do you think about when you hire your staff? You clearly hire a terrific staff, and I also know that you model for them things that you've talked about today. How do you prepare them to do what you have been describing?*

O'Reilly • I think that it probably starts with your full-time staff. I have like 10 full-time staff, which is quite a small number, and four or five of them are administrative staff. I try and, first of all, invest with administrative staff to give them responsibilities related to the program and to kids and to stuff that happens while it goes on, so that they don't feel as though their job is just being in the office all the time and not having interaction with students. The students coming on the program and positively benefiting from it and having a good time is in all our interests, relative to what our jobs are. And if you think of it, your job is just being part of putting new names in a database or photocopying forms or getting lists and schedules ready. Which is an important administrative role of the organization, don't get me wrong.

It's huge because that structure in place allows us to run things smoothly. But I really encourage them not to let that be their only responsibility, that they have some responsibility relative to students, be it at lunchtime, be it while they're coming in and registering them, be it while they're checking out when they're leaving, so they'll have some contact with the students every day so they'll feel more part of things. That's the first thing that I really changed when I started as director. Not that it wasn't in place, but you work in a university where sometimes there are clear demarcations between what an academic should do and what an administrative person should do.

Sometimes it gets less clear, because there's so much administrative work for all academic staff these days, but always what I want is for the team to be invested in what

we're doing in programs, and that they also see the benefit of what other members of the team do at certain points and situations and how the administrative structure is usually important for things to run smoothly. So we want the academic staff to respect that all these things are done for them and made ready for them from the administrative staff. But also we want the administrative staff to see that what the academic staff are doing is making a good difference on the kids relative to what they're doing and that the residential staff are doing an incredible job investing their time all the ways with these students and trying to make their lives better.

So I think it's important that we're always in it as a community and we recognize the essential needs of everybody. In relation to residential staff, I think the key thing is, that I am aware of who they are and what they do. Sometimes I see programs and I can't believe the way they do it. I just don't see how it could work. To me, the working of a good residential program is that I would have direct communication with the residential assistant who would be, say, a second year in college and they might be dealing with that student on a day-to-day basis, who we talk about, who may have a challenge or a problem. Then I see other programs, where that person reports to a senior person who reports to an assistant dean who reports the dean, and then the ninth person who hears about it is myself.

And that's a terrible way to run things or deal with things. To me, you have to have direct communication with the people who are making decisions relative to these students' lives. So therefore, maybe I'm fortunate that I've a smaller staff to do that, but it's essential that I'm in the loop from the first minute that any problem or difficulty arises. I can't understand how it's possible to run something without this type of communication. Like, my full-time residential coordinator is a full-time staff member here. She's also doing a Ph.D. in gifted education, so I really trust her and rely on her and she understands the issues, but she's somebody who directly works for me and then directly works with the kids and directly works with the staff who manage the kids. There shouldn't be too many differences in the chain of command in that regard.

I think that's a huge success, because we can talk to this person, the residential coordinator, and we can plan what we want for the course, and how we think it's going to work, and what we're looking for. And we can hire people; we interview together accordingly from the youngest, most inexperienced person who's doing a summer job. But that's an incredibly responsible role and a hugely significant one and really impacts on how the students enjoy the program, so we can't underestimate that role in any capacity. We have to have them trained up to deal with scenarios and situations as they occur. So, we have to understand what this person's motivations are and how we can work together for the benefit of the program.

We're very fortunate because it's now 2022, and as I said, this started in 1993. Seventy-five percent of our part-time staff are former students. Hugely good for the fact that they can empathize with why people come on the course, they can understand what their challenges might be, having experienced it themselves. And they also are good role models. So you're preaching to the converted relative to what they're doing and how they think. But obviously, we have to tell them to look out for things that can come up relative to this job. I think that the two things that are most important are that they understand that they're looking after kids, and that they're responsible *in loco parentis* to make sure the kids are safe at all times.

There can be a physical session at the start, so they know that they're in the room, they know they're in a place where they're being supervised, they know where their class is. But then, equally, it's a mental thing that they know they're in a mental safe space, they know that they are in an environment where they have to be very observant about who they're talking to, what they're talking about, and to what communication and message they're giving to them. So they have to be close to them and they have to understand that they need to tell us if there's a problem in that child's relationship in some capacity, be it with other students, be it with their parents, be it with themselves and their own mental health.

These are things that need to be communicated to us very quickly and very efficiently. And I do think that we have a number of ways of doing that. The students meet with the residential staff every day. Well, they see them all the time, but they have a direct meeting. There's a direct report post that meeting for our more senior staff. There's a meeting at nighttime after the kids are gone to bed, to see if there were any problems at that point—because we think the next morning's too late. We have morning meetings the next day anyway, but we want to, if there's been a problem at 10:30 at night, which is lights out, we would ring the parent at 10:45 rather than the next morning.

Why would we wait in that capacity? These are things that you just learn from experience, and from talking to people who care and are into it, and going, "Where have we ever had problems before? Oh, overnight? Why don't we just have a staff meeting at night?" Now, that makes it a very long day for them. We understand that. But we're assuring them that it's essential, because of what we're trying to do. We're not at the meeting like, "You can do it yourselves and contact us the next day." We're there. And then if there's something serious, we'll act on it immediately. And I think that's a minimum that you would need to do in running this type of program. It's great to have your senior staff be upskilled on challenges for what mental health problems these students might have, also then the growth of issues related to gender identity and non-binary students.

It's very important to have people who understand these issues. Good thing about a university, and we're a

liberal university and a leader and the people are very keen to represent minority groups in a favorable light, in this field, or areas like autism. It's not as conservative as you think, for Ireland. So universities are good spaces for that. But we want to be even ahead of the university relative to policies in this regard, so we're really going to try to do everything to be leaders in that sphere so that these students can feel safe in the environment that they're coming to, because feedback that we're getting is that they certainly don't feel that way outside of here. This has to be a space we can create for them that they feel comfortable and secure in. And that doesn't have to be just them buying into it. Every other student has to buy into it too and every other staff member.

And we're pretty strict about that. Obviously, people have different opinions, but we can't have people who don't respect where the students are coming from relative to their sexual or gender identity. There's a zero tolerance policy about that. I think everyone gets it, but sometimes people don't, because they haven't thought about it before. But I think you're a smart person, you're working here at a centre for talented youth, you shouldn't need to be reminded about that twice, about what people's pronouns are. You need to get on board with it. You can make a mistake, that's totally fine. I don't mind people making mistakes. People often do, and factors like inexperience, nervousness, all these contribute to people making mistakes. But when it's pointed out to you what the problem is, you should not make that mistake again.

The great thing about research on social and emotional and psychological profile is that this is not homogeneous at all; there's so many differences. It's really nice that we could create this environment where everybody's differences are applauded and actually given credence, and they're given time to articulate and talk about that without fear of anyone ridiculing them. So that, to me, is one of the great legacies of what we're doing. But I do think that I'd have to thank those students a lot for that, that we put a structure in place to facilitate that, but the students are incredibly dedicated to making sure that continues and is managed well. So I really applaud them for that. Maybe it's bright students in general. I think maybe they have difficulties in school and they respect the fact that we're trying to make that not happen here, but they're the real authority on that.

Cross • *I'm thinking in terms of sustainability of the program 20 years from now, 30 years from now. I've learned that you are a person of considerable charm and also very high standards, which sometimes is, I find, a difficult thing to pull off, to have both of those qualities. But in your case, you do, and I believe those are enormous assets in this role, given all the different groups of people you need to have a positive impact on, including from the president of the university to the most recent employee hired for the first job in CTY. They look at you and they listen to you, and they are affected by you.*

During these years, I have seen you give your staff room to grow into their roles, and at the same time have continuity in treatment of your students, which is quite amazing in my opinion. What are your current insights or thinking about when the time comes for you to retire? What is it about you that is essential to being so successful in this job?

O'Reilly • I definitely think that I wouldn't be worried about the future of the organization once I've retired or left the organization. I'm very happy. The team that I have at the moment are very invested and understand the problems and the challenges that the job faces. So I think that's it. The students love the program, and they're always going to want to come back. I say that a lot to the staff, the part-time staff and the younger staff: we're facilitators for what this program is. We all want to be liked, we all want to be popular, particularly as you're younger, you want to be the best RA or you want to be the best teaching assistant, or you want to be the best teacher.

One of the things I say every year, and I recognize that not everybody gets it at that time, but I think it's really worth mentioning, is that what we ultimately want as the best residential assistant or teaching assistant is to develop relationships between the students themselves. We want them to have positive relationships with us, we want them to see us as role models and as people who they can aspire to be in the future and of good standing and who understand them and get them, but the success and the sustainability of the course, is the friendships they make with each other. That's a more important legacy than the friendships and things they make with us. And sometimes that's much harder to understand when you're younger, because you're constantly looking for approval. But actually that's a huge success, if you can go and observe the students from a distance, and they're all chatting to each other and they're having a great time and they know they're safe because you're looking after them, but you don't have to be in the midst of them facilitating it all the time.

And okay, so some people require higher levels of initial intervention to get them to participate—but at a certain point, we have to let go and let them do that. That would be totally how I manage. I think of that in the way I manage all my stuff; at junior level and at senior level. You have to go and tell them, "This is my vision. This is what I think we could try and do." But sometimes you have to let them at it and do it and learn for themselves, and hope that you create an environment where they come to you for feedback and go, "How is this going? How do you feel this is working? How could we improve this?" I'm very fortunate with the staff that I have at the moment. The full-time staff are very good at that.

They're very good at driving forward their own ideas, and I think I give them space to do it. And then they come back to me and I'll give them feedback on how that's going and what's happening, so that's very good. Relative to that, I definitely think, as you get older, I actually got

better at my job because I feel more experienced, I'm more comfortable, even though sometimes when I was younger, I felt like, "I have so much to prove and I really want this program to be so successful." And I'm much more reflective on its success now. I actually do think about these things, about making the success not completely being dependent on me doing it. And that's why you give other people freedom to develop and do things.

But it is interesting in this kind of capacity and relation to the way I navigate relationships in the university. I definitely believe that this gets easier as you get older, because you recognize that some people who you are building a relationship with are at a certain age where they'll have kids who want to attend the program. They're probably going to be eligible to attend and they're interested in it. Therefore, they're a captured audience you can give your vision to. And if their kids are on it, they're miles more invested in it. The last two presidents of the university have had kids on the program. So that's a huge positive, and a side effect of what we're doing, that their kids are going to them, "Wow, this brilliant program, I'm having a great time." They're automatically going to think positively about it, in the same way as you have people that are younger age, I think, going, "I'm a Ph.D. student and I'm starting..." They're people who you recruit for jobs.

The people we get, by the nature of the job, it's fortunate isn't it? The top people are applying, the best Ph.D. students, the best researchers. Hopefully, they make great teachers. I'm not saying all the time they do, but they generally do. They're people who are going to be subsequently hired by the university because they're in demand as the best Ph.D. students, and because now they have this brilliant thing in their CV that they've taught for three weeks at CTYI. It's a great standout and they've experienced the teaching. So those people, you keep in contact with them and you keep relationships with them and you have positive experiences with them because they might be working then, and then you might need them for when they're taking on Ph.D. students themselves, to get your next level of recruitment.

We have programs like Early University Entrance where we need cooperating teachers to give their notes and lectures. Again, it's hugely helpful if they've had kids on the program, if they've been on the program, if they worked on the program previously. It's not like I'm a real networker, it's strategic. I just think these are common things: I'm a friendly, open, extroverted person. I've loads of friends. But I'm very impressed by younger people doing some brilliant things. So of course, I'm going to stay in contact with them. And of course, I'll remember them. And of course, I'll utilize that to further the agenda of what we're doing, but it shouldn't be that difficult because they're already invested in it. They've already had something positive relative to it. I'm very fortunate that a couple of my best friends who would be my own age are in very senior positions as professors in the university.

So they obviously help my agenda relative to CTYI. This program means a lot to the university. It's a different thing. It's huge. And I've been doing it for a while. It's generally, I think, very successful. Therefore, people have admiration relative to that. That's great. So then my own friends, I'll use their positions of influence to help me to get contacts with people who are outside the realm of people who I previously knew. And that would be just the way I always operate. I do it the same with people in other universities. I do it with people I know and with things like that, that I just have this network of people that I'm friendly with. And you just go back to them and ask them, "Oh, look, I'm thinking of doing this. Do you know anyone who might help," in the same way that they do for me.

I always try to help people if they have problems or difficulties. You can help more now because they probably have kids who they want to be on the course. They might have a child who they'd like to work on the course. It's not like you're doing favors, but it's just like, these are usually just find a fit for these people and they're totally suited anyway. So it's all fine. All these things are things that I just see as being collegial and friendly, and I don't find that difficult.

So to me, one of the most important things is that we need to keep a steady pipeline of getting students coming on the course. And that actually is quite an administrative duty and I will try to raise awareness so that will generate interest.

But we need to have a structure in place for assessments to make sure that we're getting enough in, and that's an administrative role. We have to have a system that can cope with 3,000 applications and staff who can do that and have it ready and have the assessment sent out to parents, so that they feel as though, "Well, these people know what they're doing," and they're ready to come the next summer. That, to me, is the first part of sustainability.

I have some staff who've worked with me for a number of years who are upskilling all the time, who are getting Ph.D. qualification, who I'm promoting in various positions. And I'm giving them more responsibility to talk to more senior people in the university who sometimes I would just talk to myself previously, so that they're more used to it. I know they're going to be impressed by them. "Wow, I met X the other day" or, "I met Y. They're fab." And I'm like, "Yeah, I know. I work with them every day." I'm not surprised they say that. I wouldn't tell them to be meeting them if I didn't think that was going to happen. But that gives them a sense of empowerment and then the next time they're building that relationship, they don't need me. They might run by me and go, "I'm going to contact the head of sports, again, to talk about the sports scholarships."

I might facilitate the first meeting, but I don't need to micromanage and sit in on every meeting that they're simply going to have. I expect that their mutual admiration

and respect for what each other's work is and regard for their professionalism will sustain that relationship. And that's fine. I might check in every now and then, and I'd meet them in passing, but I don't feel as though I have to check up in relation to that. I only expect to deal with subsequent things that was like, "We're expanding this now to double it. What do you think?" or, "This is a slight problem with the continuity of that because somebody else has come in and wants to do it." And then I'm like, "Okay, we need to have a little conversation about how we're going to work through that."

But ultimately, empowering people to make decisions for themselves in that capacity and not being, oh, say, for example with yourself, Tracy, it's like, "Oh, Tracy is coming. He can only talk to me." You know what I mean? Because the nature is that Tracy's a professor, so he wouldn't be interested in talking to anyone else. But the sad thing is that some people actually think like that, other people in other organizations. I'm like, I know Tracy would be delighted to chat people on my team, particularly the ones who are interested in gifted education in areas that he knows about, but also even ones who are working in an administrative areas, because you're curious relative to what these people are doing.

And of course, I'm proud of the work they're doing. I think it's a good fit. And in fairness, I would say, at DCU, I do think that senior management in the university is quite good in the context of that if there's ever staff events or staffing, they're not coming just to talk to me. They might chat to me, but they'll talk to the rest of my team too. I'd encourage them to do that, but I don't think it's like I have to facilitate it and make that happen. I think they're interested in what the rest of my team are doing, I think they like chatting to them.

I always say to every staff member at every orientation, no matter whether it's the most junior or the most senior, or I think, is that what I ultimately, ideally want is when they make a decision in any capacity relative to the program, that it would be the same decision that I would make. I'm not saying because my decisions are always right, but it's something that if I subsequently have to stand over it, I can talk to a parent, I can talk to a professor, I can talk to a teacher, and I can say, "But what they did is exactly what I would've done in that situation. That's what we trained them to do, to deal with that situation. I felt they dealt with it very effectively. They dealt with it the way that I would've said." To me, that's a brilliant kind of a message to try and get across.

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Dr. Colm O'Reilly Ph.D. is the Director of the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University. CTYI provides fast-paced classes for academically talented students aged 6-16 years from all over Ireland and overseas. Colm has worked in the area of gifted and talented education for the last 20 years and has written articles and presented papers at numerous conferences around Europe and worldwide. His research interests include working with gifted students in out of school programs and their academic and social development. He is currently the secretary of the European Council for High Ability and the treasurer for the European Talent Support Network. He serves on the advisory board for the Center for Gifted Education at William & Mary and has just led a European Union project to design an online program for teachers of high ability students in regular classrooms.

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 16-22

Interview

Challenging the Status Quo Through Theory, Research, Practice, and Leadership: An Interview with Paula Olszewski-Kubilius

Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Ph.D.
Interviewed by Tracy L. Cross, Ph.D.

Over the past four decades, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius has directed the Northwestern University Center for Talent Development. She has been a leader in research on out-of-school programs, especially those that help typically underrepresented students. Her ideas about talent development, which she wrote about with colleagues Rena Subotnik and Frank Worrell, have had a profound effect on the field of gifted education. In the summer of 2022, she and Tracy L. Cross had a conversation about her experiences and perspectives as a leader in the field.

Dr. Paula Olszewski-Kubilius

Cross • *Please give a little background about yourself, like when did you come to be a part of this program? How did that happen? And just a little bit of description of your earliest days, if you would.*

Olszewski-Kubilius • When I went to Northwestern for my Ph.D., there was no program in gifted. It was not on my mind. I never thought about it. My Ph.D. was in educational psychology, and it was really in the development of young children. I was really interested in their cognitive development, and did my dissertation on fantasy play.

And that was a very personal interest because as a child, I did a lot of fantasy play and it was very soothing and very imaginative. And it was a big part of my childhood that I remember. I was applying for jobs, post-docs and wasn't getting anywhere. It wasn't a good job outlook at the time.

Joyce VanTassel-Baska had come to Northwestern to start the Center for Talent Development. And at that time, it was called the Midwest Talent Search. And so I needed a job and she had gotten a grant from the Fry Foundation to educate teachers in the Midwest on how to identify giftedness among low income and minority students.

So she hired me to work on this grant, and that's how I got introduced to the field. And it just intrigued me immediately, personally because I had always been that nerdy, intellectual girl who found a lot of me in the literature, but also just because of the work with lower income kids, which was really intriguing to me. I have been working at Northwestern in the program for 40 years now.

I'm really self-taught. I was very fortunate to work with Joyce because Joyce was at the peak of her career at that point. She was very well-connected to other people in the field, and she introduced me to people like John Feldhusen and Don Treffinger and Carolyn Callahan and Jim Gallagher.

As a neophyte to the field, I was able to sit with those people. Even Bob Sternberg, she knew and I got to meet. And I had not had that kind of mentoring during my doctoral program. So that was really helpful and cemented my interest in the field.

Cross • *That's really neat. Joyce has had such an incredible impact on the field. It's hard to even imagine trying to get a handle on it. But her connecting people, that was something I've always admired about her, that she does that in a generous way. What were your earliest roles there at CTD?*

Olszewski-Kubilius • So when she started the center, I worked on this grant and then the first year I was there, she ran a summer program and she ran a talent search. I didn't have much to do with the talent search at first. But with the programming, it was a residential program and it was for seventh and eighth graders. It was the first program we ran.

And I was actually helping with the residential part of the program and even staying in the dorms overnight. And that was a very interesting experience, and one I never repeated. But at any rate, I started working with her on the academic programming.

She had already started LetterLinks, which was by mail or correspondence program, which evolved into an online learning program that exists today. And we started the Saturday program, then the weekend program in the fall and all of those programs still exist today.

My first role, and for a long time, was the academic programming. And since Joyce was also interested in research, we did research as well, mostly on the programming and the kids who were in the programs.

Cross • *So you started with the grant. What came next for you?*

Olszewski-Kubilius • I think I was there five years and had just been, at that point, really delving into the field because I had to really catch up with the scholarship

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/7PDN-4540
Address correspondence to Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, 617 Dartmouth Place, Evanston, IL 60208. E-mail: p-olszewski-kubilius@northwestern.edu

in the field and started doing some research and was learning more about the existing literature. I was still really involved in the logistics of all the programming, hiring the teachers and getting the rooms and all that kind of stuff, which I knew then I wanted to not do on a continual basis. It's very difficult.

But at any rate, so Joyce got recruited to William & Mary. And I was just getting married in the summer of '87 and she was leaving then. And so I was tapped by the dean to take over on an interim basis as director. And so I did. And after about six months, he said to me, "You're doing well." That was Dean Wiley. "You're doing well at this and I can see you're really interested in it, so we're going to make you the director."

And I was pretty much director since then with a short hiatus when I had my two children, when I stepped away from the directorship to just do research, and then stepped back in when they were a little older.

Cross • *That's always been an amazing part of your story. I've appreciated that you did that, were able to do that. It is such an important thing to be able to do. And were there a couple of folks in that period or those periods who stepped in, or what happened as leadership goes?*

Olszewski-Kubilius • Yeah. The center was growing and Benjamin Bloom had come. He had retired from University of Chicago and the dean recruited him to be at Northwestern. And he was only there for a couple of years, but he was influential in the naming of the center. That's why I think along with our dean, David Wiley, it was named Center for Talent Development, which as was odd at the time, an odd name for a center like ours. Over the years, there were various people we hired then to take over the talent search and to do the programming. And I moved to a higher level. So at first, I was an assistant director and then I was an associate director. So I worked right under Joyce.

At that time, there was more connectedness within the Midwest for leaders in gifted education. And so the talent search, which was a replication of what Julian Stanley started at Johns Hopkins, at the Center for Talented Youth, it was really growing. And I think at its peak, we had 30,000 students in the talent search. It's not the case today for a variety of reasons.

Programs continue to grow in terms of number of student participants. But the basic set of summer, weekend and online continued to be the basic set of programs. We extended the programming to younger students and to older students so that eventually, at least with me being as director, we were serving children, preschool through grade 12.

Now we put more of a focus on continuing pathways through various subject areas over time. So we began tweaking what we were doing in response to changes in the scholarship, to what we were learning. A good example, just one example, so we no longer have selective programs for our younger kids. Any child can enroll in our programs that are preschool through grade two.

The reason being is that we've realized i that there's wide variation in children's opportunities in those younger grades. And a lot of kids, particularly minoritized groups of students, don't have as many opportunities to learn in their early environments. And so we want to give them that opportunity rather than restrict it to kids who have those, are lucky enough to have those kinds of environments early in their lives.

So over the years, we've, of course, moved to more online programming. But we've really tried to respond to what we learned about talent development over the years, so what the basics have been there, but they've been changed.

Cross • *It's been, for me, very exciting to see what I guess I would call an evolution, I don't know, maybe it was faster pace, but the great expanse of what all was going on there. Going back in my career at Ball State Univeristy about 30 years ago, I was watching with appreciation as you continued to do the things you're talking about.*

It didn't seem like you were, in any way, resting on your laurels, that you were attacking some of the cultural limitations in our field. And like what you were describing for the younger children, having access to your programs regardless of, or given some of the impediments we know to be important in their lives.

So I always admired that about your program or your leadership really more than anything, was I think it took a kind of wisdom and courage to do that. Because it seemed to me that you could have continued to serve the same group for a long period of time. But by expanding it, it just seemed to meet the needs of many more of the children and their families.

Olszewski-Kubilius • So Joyce seriously started this focus on underrepresented kids.

She herself came from a lower income family, and she would say that it was a lower income family situation. And she was really devoted to the idea that kids needed these opportunities. So that was always a theme for CTD. We were always seeking grants and money to support. students with scholarship money, to support students whose families didn't have the resources to send them, because all our programming was tuition-based.

And so that's always been very prominent in our history. Interestingly enough, I think there's always been criticism, as you know, of gifted programming as just serving advantaged kids. But in my experience, centers like ours and yours have always tried to expand services to kids who've been underrepresented.

And I think over the years, we've learned a lot more about how best to do that and how to serve kids, because there are kids who come to school, as you know, who are really ready to soar. And those kids should be accommodated with faster-paced programming and higher-level content. And there are other kids who have potential that's not obvious in achievement, and how

do we identify those kids? And then what do we do for them? And that's really been a focus of my work and I know of some of your work too. And I think that's for the betterment of the field.

Cross • *Yes. And I do appreciate your giving credit to Joyce because I think she's always been a leader in that way. Not always recognized as such, but I certainly have benefited from it at William & Mary.*

I wanted to ask you about one of the things I've always admired about you, that is your commitment to field-based research. And in my personal experience and assessment, and even when I teach courses on research methodology, it's clearly more complicated to do your research in that manner. It requires the type of wisdom and decision-making that takes place in real-time among other things. Can you talk to me just a little bit about your field-based research?

Olszewski-Kubilius • So it was a deliberate action on my part or strategy. Let's put it that way. So when I took the position at the Center for Talent Development, I realized that a lot of my energy was going to go into doing programs and services for kids and families and educators, because that was what brought in the funds to do other things.

And that was really what a large part of our mission was. But being a scholar, having that, wanting to be that, I decided if I was going to put the energy and work into these programs, I was going to research them so that other people could benefit from what we learned.

And Joyce emphasized this, "If you're going to do this work, combine it with research." So in the initial years I was at the center, a lot of it was looking at the effects of the programs we were running on students, perceptions of themselves, or how their parents viewed them—those kinds of issues..

And then we got into other kinds of work like Project Excite where we were working with young students, primarily African American and Hispanic students who, in the local school system, were underrepresented in high school honors classes, intervening at third grade and really making sure those kids were prepared and had opportunities that would enable them to enter high school performing at a level that was consistent more with their potential.

Then as you know, because you've been involved with this with Project OCCAMS (Online Curriculum Consortium for Accelerating Middle School) where we work with the middle school kids in Ohio to make sure that kids who would not qualify by state criteria as gifted, but were high potential, had the opportunity to do an accelerated language arts class and enter high school already ahead in language arts.

And so that work has been really rewarding because we've seen that some of these interventions can work, and we've passed it on to other educators. In the case of the program in Ohio, what's been really rewarding is that even though we don't have any more funding, as you know, we were funded by Jack Kent Cook Foundation and initially by a Javits Grant, that program has become institutionalized within Columbus public schools, which is rare.

It's rare that a program that's funded by grants gets institutionalized. In other words, people buy in to the extent that they continue it, they find a way to continue it, even though the grant money isn't there. So often as you know, when grant money goes away, programs go away.

And it's very difficult to institutionalize a program. So the other thing I've learned and become interested in is that there's this whole debate, as you know, in education about randomized controlled trials, and as a way to really understand whether something is having an effect on students. It's the only way to control these extraneous variables.

But there's limitations to that because that is not necessarily ecologically valid. Unless we understand how a program that's designed to help students, a specific group of students that exists within an environment, within a system, then we can understand all the necessary components that need to be in place in order for it to be successful.

So as you know, in Columbus, the first few years we were there, we had a very solid, just the best coordinator of programming there. And as a result, that had a huge difference in our success. And as you know, in other places in Ohio, when we didn't have that, we were much less successful.

And now, that that person has left Columbus, it's at a time when the program we started is already institutionalized because she helped do that. So it's no longer needing such an exceptional coordinator in order to survive. So that's one of the things we learned.

I really think for the rest of my career, understanding how you can embed something in a system and all the variables that need to be in place in order for it to be successful is really the heart of educational research in the future.

Schools are systems that have different cultures and lots of components and we're not going to help transfer successful interventions into other schools unless they understand what all needs to be in place.

Cross • *That's such a good example that if you don't really understand the power and influence of a calling, all sorts of conclusions that could be made would become somewhat erroneous. As you're suggesting, clearly, she had a huge impact on what went on there, what was accepted, and what was believed etc. Obviously, Project Excite has been really well-received and is one of those rare programs that people refer to as important, well-done, lasting over time, all sorts of good things. And I always felt like that was a special program for you. How would you describe this project?*

Olszewski-Kubilius • It was. That was so interesting because the teachers in our summer program, we were

recruiting them from Evanston Township High School, which is the local high school around the university.

And they came to us and said, "Even though the City of Evanston and the school population is really majority-minority students, we don't have these students in our most advanced programs," and the Chem Phys Program, which was their most.advanced program. It was an interdisciplinary science program for the best students in the high school.

"And we want them there. And we don't see those kids in your program either. So can we work together?" And everything is a matter of timing. So it was propitious because we had people at the K-8 District and people at the 9-12 District, and a dean at the School of Education who said, "Let's put our heads together and try and tackle this."

And we had a university that said, "We'll give you some money to do this, because it's in our best interest to facilitate the progress of these students." And it was all about tying down relationships. And the university, to its credit, supported financially this program for 15 years. And it became for the center, for my staff our baby, as you said.

And it was because all of us got involved in some level to do parent workshops or to work with individual students or to get resources from the university. All of us got involved. And so it was known by all the staff because the kids came to our programs. And so it was just something that... a program that really tugged at all our hearts. And we worked very hard to make us successful.

And we didn't have a comparison group. We didn't go into it necessarily to do a research study. We went in to do an intervention, to help kids. And I remember when we submitted it for publication, the editors of GCQ said, "While this study doesn't have a comparison group that we would normally want in order to publish it, because the nature of this intervention to promote potential"—which, at that time, was not really going on in the field—"because of the nature of it, it's so important."

"We want to publish it and here's what you need to do to change it to make it better." So it became a very personal kind of thing. We got close to the families and we got to know the kids really well, their kids who... families who write to us and tell us how the kids are and where they've been and so on. So it was a very uplifting experience for me in the center.

Cross • *So I'm going to ask you a question that will be phrased oddly. One of the questions I like to ask people like you who are so accomplished is: have you ever had an idea that you pursued to some degree and it just didn't work out for whatever reasons?*

Could be infinite reasons why it might not have worked out. But we often talk about our victories, and I don't know that I would... I wouldn't call this a failure. I'd just say maybe it was a dead end or when you got there, it was different than you thought or, I don't know, you adapted and turned a different direction or something along those lines.

Olszewski-Kubilius • Let me think. I've had programs like Project Excite before that I tried to do that were less successful, because I didn't know what I was dealing with. I just wasn't ready to really do them. I didn't understand the nature of the problem. So I would say, for example, that I tried programs where we started at middle school and didn't understand that it was too late, especially since our intervention was too modest.

So we weren't that successful. Or I wouldn't call this a mistake necessarily, but I definitely rethought it. As I said, we used to require achievement scores for our young kids programs. And I regret doing that even years ago when everybody did it just because it just doesn't make sense anymore.

I think we weren't creating the pathways into programs that we really wanted to. So I've learned things like there are programs that start, for example, for kids to raise their achievement, to get them into more selective institutions of education at ninth grade.

If you're doing that later in kids' academic careers, you have to work with students who are already showing you higher levels of achievement. If you want to really raise the achievement of kids with potential, but not high achievement, you have to start earlier.

Because those gaps start early. And if you're going to really turn them around, you have to start intervening when kids are young. That's one of the main principles I learned is that depending on when you want to start working with students, you have to be conscious of what kind of student you can really help and improve their achievement, and what level they have to be in order for the intervention to be successful.

Cross • *I think I probably should have framed the question differently. I could have maybe more appropriately said something like, "What has been an example of your personal learning in research as you progressed across your career?" I think what you described is much more an example of that because you and I read a lot of the same stuff.*

I hope that all of us have been engaged in continuous development ourselves in trying to understand and accommodate the students we study and serve. And I think the example you gave is a real good one, that some things aren't that knowable until you try or get involved, and then you learn and you make progress.

Project OCCAMS is a good example that while the pieces of it made a lot of sense to me, the degree of how effective it seems to be surprised me. I thought it would be an incremental improvement over time versus what seems to be a pretty substantial growth in a year or so.

If you imagine that some of the people who might read this interview to be aspiring Ph.D.s or other researchers, what are a couple of things that you have learned or that are happening in the field that you think are really important to the field to make sure that we continue developing in a way that's substantial and important?

Olszewski-Kubilius • I think a couple of things. One is there's more and more research being done with these large datasets. I'm not an expert on this, but I think that's

helpful to the field. There are limitations to that because the way giftedness is defined is often high achievement, which some people may not fit their definition.

But I think that looking into these large databases that the government collects has been helpful to the field. I think doing these interventions with kids to understand what works and what doesn't work is always going to get a good amount of uptake, because I think the field is increasingly interested in how to cultivate talent, not identify talent so much, but cultivate talent.

So I think that's important. The other thing is I would say that... and this is into your area, Tracy, there's been all this research on how gifted kids are different, but the bottom line is there's a huge variation among gifted kids, and they're not that different from non-gifted kids.

And so understanding more, not so much what our difference is, but what it takes psychologically to be a high achiever, and what cultivates that in childhood or in school would be more advantageous to the field, so understanding the importance of psychosocial skills, so instead of how psychologically different gifted individuals are.

Not that there aren't some differences, because I think there are in terms of things like need for cognition, need for intellectual stimulation, but we've wasted, I think, a lot of time and energy on finding small differences that really don't matter much.

Cross • *Yes. Those are all good points. It's one of the things that, over time, I hope that SENGJ becomes a vehicle for spreading the message you just conveyed, that spending so much time, energy, money, and focus on this assumption that they must be dramatically different, or in ways that a lot of people looked at, maybe should give way to, as you said, what are the essential ingredients to help them be successful as students?*

Olszewski-Kubilius • One of the things that's been the most rewarding part of my career has been the collaborations I've had with others. So you and I worked on Project OCCAMS. That's been really fun.

It's benefited from the fact that we have curriculum people, you, as the more psychological-oriented person. It's just benefited from different viewpoints, and I think that's why it was successful. So the collaborations have been really the best part of my career. I would say to young people, "Collaborate with others".

So when Rena, Frank and I got together to write that monograph for the Association for Psychological Science (Subotnik et al., 2011), that brought us together to do a lot of writing. And what I learned from that is that it gets better if you do it with other people, if they review your work and they challenge what you're saying or they edit it, and if you can let go, like being offended that somebody is editing your work.

So it's been really, really rewarding, and especially if you can work with people who have different strengths than you do or different areas of interest that you do and find ways to do work together and write together. That's been wonderful for me, a blessing, really a blessing in my career.

Cross • *I think that time we spent working on that Javits, NRC grant, I don't know how many years ago that's been, probably 20 years ago now, was what you described for me because it was such a great vehicle to get to know the group as individuals so much better and I got to spend time with Joyce.*

That's really been the most time I've ever spent with Joyce. But seeing her more completely as the human being I've gotten to know has just caused me to admire her even more. Some of the ways she kidded Larry [Laurence J. Coleman] and me saying things like "you guys are just a couple of developmentalists" with that wry smile on her face. Because later, she came around and said something along the lines that she really needed to sit down and rethink some of the assumptions she holds about curriculum. She is such a special person.

Olszewski-Kubilius • Tracy, your work with Larry, and your view of giftedness, being gifted at school—I love that model, and you guys, it was because you talked it all out repeatedly and endlessly that you came up with something that you did that was really useful.

Cross • *You and I both been so affected by Joyce, you by other people too. And you have such a nice, big circle of colleagues. I tend to work with one or two people at a time. But it's just what makes it wonderful in my opinion.*

And the thing we're doing with Gifted Child Today about OCCAMS, that's such a nice bringing together of different people who had a big role in the project, including especially Colleen [Boyle, Columbus, OH program coordinator]. So yes, this is one of the reasons I enjoy doing all this. And it is like the old joke that Steve Martin used to say, "I can't believe that I get paid for doing this."

Well, getting to get paid, so to speak, to talk with you and learn more from you, and I've always admired, well, that big group, we worked on that grant for a couple of years from start to finish. And in those days, I was so young to the profession, in some ways to have someone of Joyce's reputation and stature kid me in ways that I really appreciated has stuck with me 20 years later.

Are there other things that you would like to comment on? For example, there are a lot of things happening in our field right now. This is a very interesting time. Not long ago, Duke University decided not to continue with Duke TIP, which I was not aware was being considered.

So when the decision was made, it was rather surprising to me, because the program was so well-received in the South, and it helped a lot of families and thousands of kids over the years. The Talent Search program in Colorado, that has been around a long time, is also making a similar decision to shut down.

Also we know that the numbers of students in prominent programs in different places compared to the way they used to be, are down while certain others are up. What's your general take on where we are in 2022 relative to our efforts to provide services to high ability kids?

Olszewski-Kubilius • I think it's iffy. On the one hand, we have the field embracing talent development, which

is about time, because it's actually been around for a long time.

But the field is now coming to a realization that that's the framework that they need to work with. We really need to focus more on developing talent, especially for children who have been left out of these programs.

And I'm so glad to see it because I think, if we really do that well, it will help solidify gifted education within schools and districts. Because if you're contributing to the solution of the achievement gap problems that all schools are facing, then they're not going to want to cut you when budgets get tough.

That's a good thing, and that could lead to more embeddedness of gifted education within schools. On the other hand, you have a lot of what I consider not nuanced information about testing that's out there that people are using to get rid of tests. There's no doubt that testing has been used in inappropriate ways, right?

But they have a place, they have a place within gifted education and they need to be used judiciously. And so I hope the field can address this more and help schools and districts use assessments judiciously and in appropriate ways.

I don't know what's going to happen, whether that's going to be continuing and we're going to see more and more colleges and universities say, "We don't care about SAT or a ACT scores," or if there's going to be a reckoning where we figure out how they can be used or whattests can be used.

On the other hand, I think the pandemic has taken a toll on gifted centers. A lot of these gifted centers that are providing outside-of-school programming were dependent on serving kids. They're often tuition-based, and they were hit hard by the pandemic because they couldn't do that.

And there are other problems from the pandemic, which include teacher burnout and parents just letting their kids play and not be 'in school' in the summer.

So I think they're struggling and I think it depends on the commitments of the universities in which many of them are housed. And I think that's up in the air. And that worries me because it's actually these outside-of-school programs which, at least at this point, have done a better job of providing opportunities for children typically left out in school opportunities than schools have.

And we know from the talent development research, the kids benefit and need both. It's often only times in these summer programs that kids are with their intellectual peers. So we have competing forces for sure. And we're definitely not in a high point for gifted education, but we're in a period of a lot of change and turmoil and not necessarily just gifted, but education in general.

So I don't know where we'll be. And I feel like I'm just going to continue to fight and support and challenge what are, I think, incorrect assumptions about these kids.

Cross • *And it's really hard to anticipate all the changes that will happen, but hopefully many of them will be in the right direction for the right reasons. Your comments about the testing, I feel similarly that when used properly, I think the tests are... Daniel Patrick Monahan is such a good example of a test being used in a way that not only changed the young boy's life, but changed the world.*

A single example that helped him get out of poverty and go on and get a world class education and go... I think he was a professor at Harvard for a while and a Congressperson, just such an impressive person. And the wisdom of a teacher and a test was the catapult for him. So as you're saying, being more sophisticated, maybe that's the key to this.

I want to mention a couple things kind of as fun. One of the things that I very much enjoyed is we've had opportunities say with NAGC to, in my case, follow you as president of NAGC at a time when you had, what's the right word, startled the world by being so proactively forthcoming and erudite about talent development at a time that people were in various stages of having interest in or understanding it.

And so in my opinion, you're speaking to it and writing about it at that time changed our world. And practically speaking, when I became president, there was resistance to even having a task force pursuing talent development. It was just an idea whose time was coming, and you (Rena and Frank) were the catalyst for that.

Olszewski-Kubilius • I stood on the shoulders of giants like Joyce and Carolyn Callahan and Don Treffinger and others who were saying similar things. Like I said, timing is everything. Right? If a field's not ready to receive a particular concept, it's not ready. So all I did was say it loudly and publicly. But also, I think the timing was right. But even then, Tracy, it's taken years, right? At least 10 years.

Cross • *At least 10 years. And it was funny because as incoming president and as president, there were individual people who you and I both know, like and admire who were discouraging of me nudging that along.*

Olszewski-Kubilius • Right. And that was the first time I really encountered, particularly from the parent groups, but also other educators, really intense feedback. Let's put it that way.

Cross • *Certainly, you, Frank and Rena have really added to the literature on talent development in such a significant way that it has helped people like me who write an occasional piece on the topic. And in our case, we're situating it in school because that happens to be my particular passion.*

I would argue that schools should aspire to helping all students reach their potential, including those who have extraordinary capacity to change the world, too. And to me, that's so honorable and difficult to argue against. Plus there are various techniques and things that we found to be beneficial that we fly under the flag of gifted education that have a place in that larger goal of maximizing potential of all students.

Olszewski-Kubilius • Before I go, I want to say one last thing. So one of the things that's been so fun for me has been the work we've done to find out how talent develops in other fields. I've always been like you, focused on academics and school.

But for example, to talk about dance or acting or the culinary field or sport. So now, I read more articles about talent development in sport. I read one on judo the other day.

I don't even know what judo really is, but these niche talents, like drum corps, working with some folks in Germany who are interested in these niche areas, its very interesting, and it's especially interesting to learn that some of these areas, these domains are much more deliberate about talent development, especially in the area of psychological and social skills than we are in academics, because they recognize how important that is to high achievement.

Anyway, so that's been really fun for me to learn about. I'm very interested now in different fields. I've read articles on medical students and stuff like that.

Cross • *Thank you, Paula, for sharing your professional history with us. It is greatly appreciated.*

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Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Ph.D. is the director of the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University and a professor in the School of Education and Social Policy. She has worked to create program models to meet the need of diverse gifted learners including online learning programs, summer, and weekend programs. She has written and published extensively about talent development for under-served gifted students. Her recent work includes *The Handbook of High Performance: Developing Potential into Domain-Specific Talent* with Rena Subotnik and Frank Worrell, and *Unlocking Potential: Identifying and Serving Gifted Students from Low-Income Households*, with Tamra Stambaugh.

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 23-32

Literature Review

Overexcitability Research: Implications for the Theory of Positive Disintegration and the Field of Gifted Education

Sal Mendaglio

Abstract

Of the many concepts that comprise Dąbrowski's theory of positive disintegration, it is his concept of overexcitability that has gained prominence in the field of gifted education. It is likely that the concept resonates among parents and educators of youth who are gifted because it is perceived as descriptive of gifted children's behaviors. Interest in overexcitability has extended to researchers who became interested in exploring the relationship between overexcitability and giftedness. The steady growth of empirical studies since the 1980s was due to the availability of questionnaires to assess overexcitability. The original open-ended Overexcitability Questionnaire facilitated seminal research conducted largely by the group of scholars who pioneered research on the topic. However, it was the availability of the Likert-type Overexcitability Questionnaire II that led to a significant increase in the number of research publications. This article provides a descriptive review of research literature from the early days of the introduction of Dąbrowski's theory to the field of gifted education to present day. The article concludes with implications of the review for the theory of positive disintegration and the field of gifted education.

Keywords: *theory of positive disintegration • overexcitability • Overexcitability Questionnaire • Overexcitability Questionnaire II • descriptive review*

It is difficult to conceive that anyone—parent, educator, psychologist, or researcher—interested in giftedness/gifted education could not be aware of the word "overexcitability". What has facilitated the popularity of the word in our field? A major force has been the research conducted investigating this concept's relationship to giftedness. Research on overexcitability was sparked by a small group of a few interconnected American scholars including Michael Piechowski, Linda Silverman, Nancy Miller, and Frank Falk whom I dub the "pioneering group". Their work (e.g., Lysy & Piechowski, 1983; Miller & Silverman, 1987; Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985; Piechowski et al., 1985) inspired interest in overexcitability in stakeholders in the field of gifted education, including researchers. Though they began their work almost 40 years ago, they continue to contribute to elucidating overexcitability (e.g., Silverman, 1993; Probst & Piechowski, 2012; Piechowski, 2014; Piechowski & Wells, 2021; Wells & Falk, 2021). Their efforts are responsible for the concept of the acceptance of overexcitability and the theory of positive disintegration (Dąbrowski, 1970) in gifted education. Current popularity of the concept and the theory is the result of a transition from brief references to them in gifted education publications (e.g., Van Tassel-Baska, et al., 1988; Clark, 1992) to detailed descriptions (e.g., Colangelo & Davis, 1991; Hébert, 2011; Cross & Cross, 2012), special issues of journals (Ackerman & Moyle, 2009) to book-length treatment of the topics (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008; Tillier, 2018). A notable feature of theoretical literature mentioned above is the growing sophistication of the treatment of overexcitability. In time, authors, not part of the pioneering group, began to discuss overexcitability within its proper context, Dąbrowski's theory, not simply describe overexcitability. I believe that the dissemination of theoretical publications, as their treatment became more comprehensive, piqued interest among researchers who were not members of the initial interest group.

As will be documented later in this article, research on overexcitability that began in the 1980s continues into the early 2020s, attesting to researchers' continuing interest in the concept. Review of early and recent publications suggests that newer research continues in a similar vein as the pioneering works, with occasional signs of pursuing novel questions related to giftedness. In this article, I trace the evolution of research in this area and produce a descriptive, rather than a critical, review. The purpose of the article is to propose potential implications of research in overexcitability for both the theory from which overexcitability is derived and for the field of gifted education.

Why Overexcitability?

Kazimierz Dąbrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist, proposed a theory of personality, which he termed the theory of positive disintegration (e.g., 1967, 1970), which is unique among such theories due to its revolutionary perspective on psychopathology (Aronson, 1964). In contrast to the view held by his contemporaries (see Jahoda, 1958) as well as the current mental health establishment (see, DSM5, American Psychiatric Associ-

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/16cy-5b24
Address correspondence to Dr. Salvatore Mendaglio, Werklund School of Education, 2750 University Way NW, Calgary, AB, Canada
E-mail: mendagli@ucalgary.ca

ation, 2013), experience of what traditionally are labelled "symptoms" (e.g., anxiety, depression) is deemed necessary for personality development (Dąbrowski, 1972). Those familiar with the theory know that personality itself was recast as denoting exemplary human functioning, not simply a psychological construct possessed by all individuals. While the role of psychopathology in Dąbrowskian personality formation is at the heart of the theory of positive disintegration, attention to the theory has been limited almost exclusively to one of its many concepts: overexcitability. To be sure, overexcitability, when present in its full complement of five forms—psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, emotional—creates psychological disharmony that lays the foundation for the development of personality. However, when viewed in the context of the full theory of positive disintegration, with its multitude of concepts (see Dąbrowski, 1973), a question arises: Of the numerous concepts that comprise Dąbrowski's theory, why is overexcitability the one concept of choice for practitioners and researchers?

The preponderance of focus on Dąbrowski's overexcitability by stakeholders in gifted education is most likely due to its conceptual accessibility. Of the numerous unique concepts inherent in the theory, such as positive disintegration, dynamisms, and multilevelness, overexcitability is, relatively speaking, readily incorporated into parents' and practitioners' conceptions of giftedness. Overexcitability, as defined by Dąbrowski (1970) in its five forms, contains some descriptors that are commonly attributed to children who are gifted; for example, boundless energy (psychomotor), sensor/physical sensitivity (sensual), asking probing questions (intellectual), imaginary friends (imaginational) and emotional intensity (emotional). Even though representations of overexcitability are not necessarily accurate reflections of Dąbrowski's conception (e.g., see Dąbrowski, 1996), they are attractive because they have been interpreted as explaining social and emotional experiences of gifted youth. For example, otherwise inexplicable intense emotional experiences and outbursts witnessed by parents and teachers could be explained by emotional overexcitability. Emotional overreactions, that affect gifted children's social relations, could be attributed to that overexcitability. Gradually, Dąbrowski's theory became a force in gifted education used to explain social and emotional needs of gifted youth.

Relative ease of understanding might explain parents' and practitioners' attraction to the concept of overexcitability. However, it does not fully explain the growing body of research on overexcitability since the 1980s (Mendaglio, 2022). It seems reasonable to assume that instruments to assess concepts make research possible. To date the only Dąbrowskian concept for which an instrument has been developed is overexcitability. The Overexcitability Questionnaire (OEQ, Lysy & Piechowski, 1983), was developed soon after Dąbrowski's theory was first introduced to gifted education (Piechowski, 1979). Silverman (2008) describes how the OEQ came to be:

> Michael Piechowski began the systematic consideration of expressions of overexcitability by examining 433 instances of OE [overexcitability] found in the autobiographical material of six subjects in Dąbrowski's study of levels of development (Piechowski)...One of the subjects was a historical case study: Antoine de Saint-Exupery. From this material, he developed an open-ended instrument consisting of 46 items that tapped the different OEs. This was the original Overexcitability Questionnaire (OEQ). (Term added, Italics in original, p. 161)

The OEQ (for a detailed description see Piechowski & Wells, 2021; Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006) sparked research investigating the relationship between overexcitability and gifted persons. As noted earlier, the earliest studies were conducted by the pioneering group (Piechowski, Silverman, Miller and Falk). With the publications of their work and their presentations at conferences, most notably those organized by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), interest spread among practitioners and researchers in the field of gifted education. Mendaglio and Tillier (2006), in their review of research on overexcitability and giftedness, document the research contributions made by the pioneering group using the OEQ. The initial studies investigated whether the profile of overexcitability among gifted was greater than among nongifted, specifically whether gifted participants manifested all forms compared to nongifted. These early studies administered the OEQ to adult samples. Taken as a group, studies by Silverman and Ellsworth (1981), Piechowski and Cunningham (1985), Lysy and Piechowski (1983) and Miller et al. (1994) found varying levels of support for the hypothesis. The greatest support was found when the participants were practicing artists (Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985).

While the pioneering group focused on adults, other researchers began to focus on gifted youth. Gallagher (1986) and Tucker and Hafenstein (1997) investigated overexcitability with samples of gifted students. Gallagher found that gifted students scored higher than nongifted on intellectual, imaginational, and emotional overexcitability. Tucker and Hafenstein, in their qualitative study, reported that all five gifted children manifested the five forms. Meanwhile, Ackerman (1997) investigated the possible use of the OEQ as a means of identification of giftedness in adolescents, as an alternative to intelligence tests. She reported that psychomotor was the one form that discriminated between gifted and nongifted adolescents.

While the OEQ made empirical research possible, its administration and scoring restricted research productivity and methods. Participants were required to write their

responses to numerous questions. Researchers needed either to have their OEQ data scored by the pioneering group or to attend workshops to learn the procedure. Unlike today where technology can make such situations practical to manage (e.g., through webinars and digital video meetings) the state of communications in the 1980s and 1990s required personal contact to accomplish learning tasks that we now take for granted. The nature of the OEQ and the state of technology affected research by limiting the number of researchers who would embark on overexcitability studies and, for those who did conduct such research, there was a limitation on sample size. Except for the study by Ackerman (1997), which had a sample size of 97, samples during the 1980s and 1990s were quite small. Moreover, the administration and scoring of the OEQ affected research methods. Some of the early studies used the data of a previous study as a control/comparison group rather than including one in their research design (e.g., Silverman & Ellsworth, 1981; Miller et al., 1994).

All of that changed with the construction of a new overexcitability questionnaire by the pioneering group. Bouchet and Falk (2001) describe its development, while noting its advantages:

> The current study uses a newly developed self-rating questionnaire, the Overexcitability Questionnaire II (OEQ II; Falk, Lind, Miller, Piechowski, & Silverman, 1999). The self-rating questionnaire allows for larger samples and more rigorous and objective testing of hypotheses. It also provides greater efficiency in coding. In general, subjects find it easier to respond to a self-rating questionnaire than to write responses to open-ended questions.
>
> The development of the self-rating questionnaire began by examining the more than 300 open ended OE questionnaires from several studies. (p. 263)

The OEQ II is a Likert-type questionnaire with items designed to assess the five forms of overexcitability (see Bouchet & Falk for a detailed description). As noted earlier, the original OEQ required participants to provide written responses to numerous questions and trained raters to evaluate them with respect to presence and depth of overexcitability. The new questionnaire requires participants to rate items using a five-point scale. Researchers readily use the instructions provided to score the items and "do the math". Uncertainty regarding the degree to which the questionnaire accurately reflects Dąbrowskian overexcitability notwithstanding, clearly the OEQ II is far more attractive to both participants and researchers. The OEQ II is often touted as a revision of the original. Other than that, the item pool was derived from OEQ data, there is no similarity between the two questionnaires. Revision or novel, the OEQ II changed forever the landscape of research on overexcitability. As a Likert-type questionnaire, with its ease of administration and scoring, the OEQ II has spawned new waves of research on overexcitability.

Overexcitability Research Using the OEQ II

In this section I describe a sample of quantitative studies investigating overexcitability and giftedness published in academic journals during the past 20 years. The sample represents publications found by searching two databases: Education Research Complete and *APA PsycInfo*. I chose these databases because they span the domains in which articles of interest tend to be archived: education and psychology. The search terms used were: overexcitability/overexcitabilities and gifted; Dąbrowski and gifted.

I present this sample of research studies using the following categories: overexcitability and gifted/talented; other variables, and Five Factor Model of personality.

A note on terms used referring to overexcitability is in order. To this point I have used "overexcitability", singular, and "forms" of it, as Dąbrowski tended to use. In descriptions of the studies below, I use "overexcitabilities" and the abbreviations OE and OEs, which is what researchers typically use.

Overexcitability and Gifted and Talented

Studies in this category report research methods and findings that are like the early studies. Comparative studies reported strong support for the association of overexcitability with giftedness, particularly when the samples were creatively gifted adults. Like Ackerman (1997) one study examined the possibility of using the OEQ II for identification of giftedness. The one qualitative study is unique, not only because of the methodology but because its focus is the experience of gifted adults. While there is similarity of the studies with the original ones, the obvious difference is, of course, sample size.

Not surprisingly, the first researcher to use the OEQ II was Frank Falk. Bouchet and Falk (2001) were interested in whether there would be differences in overexcitability as measured by the new questionnaire among participants depending on the type of previous educational program they attended: gifted education, Advanced Placement, or standard education. The authors also hypothesized that females would score higher on sensual and emotional overexcitabilities; males, higher on psychomotor and intellectual. Their sample consisted of 562 undergraduate students who completed the OEQ II. Participants who had attended gifted education programs scored significantly higher on imaginational and intellectual. Regarding gender differences, females scored higher on emotional and sensual; males scored higher on intellectual, imaginational, and psychomotor.

Piirto et al. (2008) examined potential differences on overexcitability between gifted and talented high school students in America and South Korea. The OEQ II was

used to assess overexcitability. The American sample of 227 that consisted of 88 males and 139 females was recruited in Ohio. The South Korean sample of 341 that consisted of 117 males and 224 females were recruited in Seoul. The authors reported that Korean males and females scored higher in psychomotor OE and that U.S. males and females scored higher in imaginational OE, while no differences were found in intellectual, emotional, or sensual overexcitability.

Wirthwein and Rost (2011) investigated the possibility of using overexcitability to identify gifted and talented individuals. Scores on the OEQ II administered to 96 intellectually gifted and talented adults were compared to a sample of 91 adults of average intelligence and adult high achievers. In addition, the scores of 123 high achievers were compared to those of 97 average achievers. The authors reported that the gifted sample scores were significantly higher on intellectual overexcitability. High achievers scored significantly higher than average achievers on intellectual and sensual overexcitability. However, the authors concluded that group differences were too small to support using only overexcitability for identification of giftedness.

Szymanski and Wrenn (2019) explored the lived experience of successful, intense, gifted adults, to understand how overexcitability influences life experiences. The authors were also interested in what supports helped or could have helped navigate the process of growing up. Using purposive sampling seven gifted adults were invited to share their experiences. A questionnaire adapted from the OEQ II was used as a screening tool. Prospective participants completed the questionnaire and responded to other questions to determine if they would be identified as intellectually gifted. The study sample consisted of five participants who were identified as being gifted and possessing overexcitability. Hyperawareness, isolation and seeking peers were themes extracted by the authors. The authors reported that participants each noted the importance of developing positive stress coping methods such as exercise, meditation, therapy and self-acceptance. However, years of participants' experimenting with illegal drugs and suffering extreme depression and anxiety preceded the development of the positive alternatives to handling their intensity.

Martowska et al. (2020) explored whether there were any differences in overexcitability between artistically talented individuals and a control group. The artistically talented group consisted of 40 professional actors, 20 women and 20 men, ages 22 to 58, recruited from theaters in two cities in Poland. The control group consisted of 30 individuals, 16 women and 14 men, ages 22-52 recruited from a university. Criterion for the control group membership was a lack of involvement in any arts form, as an amateur, professional or student. The authors reported that the actor group scored higher than the control group on sensual, imaginational, emotional, and psychomotor but not intellectual.

Martowska and Romanowicz (2020) explored overexcitability profiles of musically talented university students compared to a control group. Both groups consisted of an equal number of participants: 106 students, 75 females and 26 males, 18-30 years of age. Musically talented participants were enrolled in two music-focused universities in Poland, which specialize in both vocal and instrumental music. The control group attended other Polish universities and were not involved in any musical activities, amateur or professional, nor were they enrolled in courses in those areas. Results indicated that female music students scored significantly higher in sensual, imaginational, and intellectual OEs compared to the female students in the control group. Male music students scored significantly higher in sensual and emotional OEs and lower in psychomotor OE compared to male students in the control group. Regarding group differences, the authors reported the musical talented group had more than twice the number of individuals with elevated emotional and sensual scores than the control group.

OE and Other Variables

Studies in this category investigate a range of variables, which taken as a group, represent social and emotional aspects of giftedness. Using comparative studies, some findings cast light on the darker side of high levels of overexcitability, namely, a threat to subjective well-being.

Harrison and Van Haneghan (2011) examined the contention that the experiences of fear of the unknown, death anxiety, and insomnia are prevalent among some gifted individuals. Their study investigated the relationship of those variables with overexcitability. Participants included 73 gifted and 143 typical middle and high school adolescents who completed a death anxiety questionnaire, a fear of the unknown scale, an insomnia scale, and the OEQ II. Gifted adolescents reported higher levels of fear of the unknown and insomnia than regular students. They also scored higher on intellectual, imaginational, psychomotor, and sensual overexcitability. The high school gifted students scored higher on emotional as well. Higher levels of overexcitability in gifted students were associated with higher anxiety and insomnia.

Mofield and Parker Peters (2015) explored the relationship between healthy and unhealthy perfectionism and overexcitability in gifted adolescents. Participants of the study were 130 identified gifted students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Perfectionism was assessed using the Goals and Work Habits Survey; overexcitability by the OEQ II. Findings revealed a significant relationship, especially between emotional overexcitability and dimensions of perfectionism. High emotional, high intellectual overexcitabilities, and low imaginational overexcitability were also predictor variables for dimensions of healthy perfectionism.

Perrone-McGovern et al. (2015) explored interrelationships among emotional overexcitability, perfectionism, emotion regu-lation, and subjective well-being. Participants were 191 adults who responded to surveys administered via online methodology. The sample consisted of 49 males and 142 females ages 18 to 65. Participants completed the OEQ II, Almost Perfect Scale-Revised, Satisfaction With Life Scale, and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. The authors reported participants in the present study with higher emotional overexcitability had lower degrees of emotion regulation overall, whereas individuals reporting higher levels of adaptive perfectionism (perfectionism related to striving toward personal goals and achievement) had higher levels of emotion regulation. Furthermore, strivers and those who used cognitive reappraisal strategies for emotion regulation were linked to higher subjective well-being for participants in this study.

Thomson and Jaque (2016), in a cross-sectional study, investigated the psychological profile of three talented groups using five self-report instruments. Talented participants included 84 dancers, 62 opera singers, and 49 athletes. Self-report instruments included the Beck Anxiety Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory-II, Internalized Shame Scale, Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings, and the OEQ II. Compared to athletes, dancers and opera singers scored significantly higher on all forms of overexcitability, fantasy proneness, shame, and anxiety. There were no group differences for depression. Further, emotional, and imaginational overexcitability significantly predicted shame, anxiety, and depression. The authors concluded that the performing artists' elevated scores for shame and anxiety raises concern about their psychological well-being.

Beduna and Perrone-McGovern (2016) studied the relationship between emotional and intellectual overexcitability, emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. The sample consisted of 144 undergraduate college students, ages 18-25. As expected, the OEQ II was used to assess overexcitability, while the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to assess emotional intelligence and the Satisfaction With Life Scale was used to assess subjective well-being. The authors hypothesized that greater emotional and intellectual overexcitability relate to higher emotional intelligence, that higher emotional intelligence relates to higher subjective well-being, and that emotional intelligence is a mediator between the overexcitabilities and subjective well-being. Results indicated that greater emotional and intellectual overexcitability were significantly and positively related to higher emotional intelligence and that higher emotional intelligence was significantly positively related to higher subjective well-being. The mediational role of emotional intelligence between emotional and intellectual overexcitability and subjective well-being was also supported.

De Bondt and Van Petegem (2017) explored the potential interrelationships between overexcitability and students' learning patterns from the perspective of Dąbrowski's theory of positive disintegration. This study was part of a large-scale research project that investigated the influence of students' learning patterns on their transition from secondary school to higher education programs in Flanders. Learning patterns were defined in terms of surface-level and deep-level processing of information. The surface pattern of learning, also termed undirected, is characterized by memorization and reproduction of knowledge and motivated by external requirements to meet course criteria. On the other hand, the objective of deep learning, also termed meaning-directed, is to understand, which is characterized by construction of meaning and connecting current information with prior knowledge, critical thinking and formulating conclusions. Participants were 516 students, 318 females and 198 males, in the second year of their higher education program. Overexcitability was assessed by the OEQ II, learning patterns by the Learning and Motivation Questionnaire (LEMO). The LEMO is composed of the Inventory of Learning Styles-Short Version (ILS-SV), and an abbreviated version of the Academic Self- Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). The ILS-SV assesses cognitive processing and metacognitive regulating strategies. SRQ-A assesses study motivation by differentiating between being motivated to study because of love of learning and motivated to study because of duty. The AMS measures the extent of experienced motivation. As hypothesized, intellectual overexcitability is a strong indicator of meaning-directed learning. Contrary to what was hypothesized, emotional, imaginational, and psychomotor overexcitability were not indicative of deep learning. Emotional overexcitability is instead related to surface learning, as it is the only explanatory factor for surface learning in both gender groups and even indicative of undirected learning for the male group. According to the results, imaginational overexcitability explains the undirected learning pattern, applicable to both groups. In addition, imaginational overexcitability was negatively related to the meaning-directed pattern for the females. The authors concluded that the five forms of overexcitability affect learning patterns.

He et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the contribution of overexcitability to creativity. The authors based their study on the Dąbrowskian perspective that the forms of overexcitability are important psychological attributes of creativity. Participants were 1055 students, half females, and half males, in grades 7 to 11 in Hong Kong. The OEQ II was used; creativity was assessed by the Test for Creative Thinking-Drawing Production (TCT-DP). Results indicated that imaginational OE was most significant predictor of creativity, followed by intellectual, emotional, sensual, and psychomotor. Furthermore, the

OEQII manifested significant discriminating power in the identification of highly creative individuals. The authors concluded that the findings provided empirical support to the Dąbrowskian perspective regarding the predictive role of OEs to creativity.

Al-Hroub and Krayem's (2020) study had two purposes: to investigate the relationship between forms of overexcitability and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) subtypes; and, to explore gender differences in the overexcitability profiles among gifted adolescent students. Participants were 265 students composed of 91 girls and 174 boys from grades 9 to 11 attending a gifted education school. They were administered the Jordanian versions of the OEQII and the Conners ADHD/DSM-V Scales—Adolescent scale. Results indicated significant positive correlations between psychomotor OE and hyperactive-impulsive ADHD and between imaginational OE and ADHD subtypes. There was also a small significant negative correlation between intellectual OE and inattentive ADHD scores. Regarding gender, significant differences were found boys scored higher on psychomotor; girls scored higher on emotional, sensual, and imaginational forms. In contrast, there was no significant gender difference found regarding intellectual overexcitability.

Fung and Chung (2021) examined the associations between overexcitabilities and playfulness of Chinese kindergarten children in Hong Kong, considering household play opportunities. Participants were 107 children and their parents. Parents completed the Chinese versions of the OEQ II, Children's Playfulness Scale, and Child's Play questionnaire. The Playfulness Scale assesses child's behaviors during play activity consisting of five subscales: physical activity, cognitive spontaneity, social spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor. The Child's Play items asked parents to assess household play opportunities for child's play, such as availability of toys. Results, controlling for child age, gender, household play choices, and household play opportunities, indicated that children's imaginational overexcitability was significantly predictive of their cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor. Children's psychomotor overexcitability was associated with their physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, and manifest joy, whereas their intellectual overexcitability was a significant predictor of social spontaneity and cognitive spontaneity. The authors concluded that their findings demonstrated the relation-ships between overexcitability and playfulness among Chinese children.

Overexcitability and Five Factor Model (FFM) of Personality.

Studies in this category are interesting because they represent an expansion of interest in overexcitability specifically and Dąbrowski's theory, beyond the confines of gifted education. What is particularly interesting is the proposal by some researchers to replace overexcitability entirely with the openness to experience factor of the FFM, though others reject the idea.

Miller and Speirs Neumeister (2012) investigated whether the variables of intellectual overexcitability, openness to experience, and self-oriented perfectionism work together to predict creativity in a high ability population. Participants were 323 undergraduate students in the honors college of a university composed of 85 males and 230 females ranging in age from 18 to 23 years. Unlike other studies, intellectual overexcitability was assessed by the Ksiazak Adult Giftedness Scale designed to measure that form of overexcitability in adults. The scale is described as follows:

> This scale, developed by Ksiazak (2010), measures the presence of intellectual overexcitabilities in adults. This 23-item non-timed scale instructs participants to indicate their level of agreement with statements about typical experiences, attitudes, and behaviors (i.e., "It is important for me to be able to have intellectually stimulating discussions" and "I am a curious person"), using a 7-point Likert scale. An intellectual overexcitability score is provided, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intellectual OE. Scores can range from 23 to 161. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .87 for this scale. (p. 89)

Perfectionism was assessed by the Hewitt and Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. Openness to experience was measured by the Big Five inventory and creativity was assessed using the Scale of Creativity Attributes and Behaviors. Using creativity as the outcome variable, multiple regression analysis indicated that intellectual overexcitability and openness to experience are positive predictors of creativity, while self-oriented perfectionism is a negative predictor. Additional regression analyses incorporating creativity subscales provided further understanding of the relationship between different components of creativity and the predictor variables. The authors concluded that their findings support a multidimensional conceptualization of creativity in high ability young adults.

Limont et al. (2014) examined the relationship between overexcitability, the Five Factor Model (FFM) personality model and giftedness. The sample for the study was 270 secondary school students, ages 14 to 18, consisting of 132 intellectually gifted adolescents and 103 regular students who served as controls. To confirm the gifted-control assignment, Polish versions of the Raven's Progressive Matrices were administered. Participants completed the NEO-FFI and the OEQ II. Regarding overexcitability and FFM, the authors hypothesized that the gifted would score higher on intellectual, imaginational and emotional overexcitability than controls, and that the gifted would score higher than the controls on openness to experience and lower on neuroticism. An additional hypothesis was that giftedness would moderate patterns of correspondence between the

types of over-excitability and personality traits. Results indicated support for the hypothesize difference between groups on overexcitability and openness. Gifted scored higher than controls on intellectual OE, imaginational OE, and openness and lower on neuroticism than the controls, with one exception: no group differences were found on emotional overexcitability. Further, analysis showed that giftedness moderated the relation of OEs with openness and extraversion. The relations between sensual OE and openness as well as between psychomotor OE and extraversion were stronger in the gifted than in controls.

Vuyk et al. (2016) investigated the possibility that openness to experience, a factor in the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The authors hypothesized that the six facets of openness represent constructs that are similar, if not identical, to the five forms of overexcitability. The authors hypothesized that the openness facets and their assumed corresponding OEs represent the same latent constructs. Strong correlations were expected in the following pairings: fantasy and imaginational, aesthetic and sensual, feelings and emo-tional, actions and psychomotor, ideas and intellectual, with the last facet, values, dealt with separately. There were 461 participants composed of two samples. One sample, 149 creative adolescents and adults. The adolescent sample consisted of high school students attending gifted programs and university students attending creative programs (e.g., fine arts, creative writing). The adult sample consisted of 312 adults drawn from the general population via the internet, with the promise of payment for participation. Participants completed the NEO Personality Inventory-3 and the OEQ II. Results indicated that openness to experience and OEs appear to represent the same construct. Except for values, all other pairings of openness facets and the five forms of overexcitability were supported statistically. The authors concluded that openness to experience should replace overexcitability in gifted education. Vuyk and Krieshok and Kerr provide reasons for this recommendation. Among them is that openness to experience is part of a model, FFM which has significant research support, while overexcitability, part of the theory of positive disintegration (TPD), has insufficient empirical support.

De Bondt et al. (2021) investigated interrelationships between overexcit-ability and the Big Five personality traits of neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness. Participants included 516 students consisting of 318 females and 198 males. They completed three measures: the Dutch versions of OEQ II, the NEO-FFI, and a nonverbal test of intelligence. Results indicated that overexcitability is weakly related to the three personality traits examined except for a moderate association with openness for female participants. The authors concluded that there was no clear support for the conceptual equivalence of, or interchangeability between, overexcitability and openness, despite the moderate relationship for females. Moreover, they stated that the results of their study do not support the assertion made by Vuyk et al. (2016) that openness should replace overexcitability.

Commentary on the Sample of Studies

Recent studies bear similarities to earlier ones in that they provide partial support for the association of overexcitability and giftedness. Like the early studies, the strongest support is found among practicing artists. There is also some support for the association of overexcitability and other variables, for example, perfectionism and ADHD. Support is found relating overexcitability with healthy or adaptive perfectionism, and as expected psychomotor is associated with ADHD hyperactive type. However, what I found most interesting among the sample are the studies investigating gifted and talented individuals' psychological well-being as well as those including the FFM model. Regarding psychological well-being, Szymanski and Wrenn (2019), exploring the experience of gifted adults, reported themes of isolation, extreme depression, and illegal drug use. Thomson and Jaque, (2016) noted that performing artists demonstrated feelings of shame and anxiety compared to controls. Harrison and Van Haneghan's (2011) findings draw attention to the emotional experience of gifted students—higher overexcitability is associated with some negative emotions: greater fear of the unknown and anxiety than controls.

Regarding overexcitability and FFM dimensions, some studies simply include openness to experience as another variable. For example, in Miller et al.'s (2012) study, openness to experience combined with intellectual overexcitability predicted creativity. Other studies explored overexcitability with other FFM factors. In a study by Limont et al (2014) gifted scored higher than controls on intellectual OE, imaginational OE, and openness but lower on neuroticism than the controls. While the above studies are notable by their focus on FFM, it is Vuyk et al.'s (2016) study that is most provocative. Based on their results, they concluded that facets of openness to experience correspond to the five forms of overexcitability. Their recommendation is what makes this study most interesting: openness should replace overexcitability, and that the field of gifted education should abandon it and Dąbrowski's theory.

Commentary on Characteristics of the Publications of the Studies

My comments include treatment of Dąbrowski's theory, location of data collection, and publication type. Recent studies are more likely to provide in-depth treatment of the theory of positive disintegration than earlier ones. De Bondt et al. (2021) is an excellent example of the discussion of overexcitability in the context of Dąbrowski's theory. In their introduction of the study, the authors

describe fundamental concepts of the theory of positive disintegration including personality development, levels of development, and dynamisms. Descriptions of data collection indicate that study locales have moved from the US to various parts of world, including Europe and Asia. Finally, the type of journal in which the publications appear evidence a movement beyond traditional journals in gifted education to mainstream APA journals such as Intelligence.

Implications

What can be gleaned from the sample of studies which have used the OEQ II during the past 20 years? I suggest that there are implications for both the theory of positive disintegration and for the field of gifted education.

Theory of positive disintegration

The OEQ II has contributed significantly to the dissemination of the theory, not only to the application of overexcitability. Even though overexcitability is the specific research focus, there are signs that researchers are becoming more knowledgeable about the entire theory as indicated by the introductions to their studies. There is increased discussion of the major components of the theory and explication of how overexcitability is enmeshed in them. The locations of data collection and the type of journal in which the studies appear are more evidence of the spreading of the theory of positive disintegration. Studies are implemented increasingly in countries other than America. Studies have begun to appear more frequently in psychology journals.

Field of Gifted Education

Stakeholders in the field of gifted education are drawn to Dąbrowski's theory because of its emphasis on emotions (Mendaglio, 2008; Tillier, 2018). Recent articles continue to voice the theory's applicability to gifted children's emotions (e.g., Sisk, 2021). Many articles in the sample address the social and emotional domains of giftedness. In their own way, researchers using the OEQ II are directly maintaining focus on aspects of giftedness beyond academic achievement and productivity. The contribution of the overexcitability research community is appreciated in present day given the trends in gifted education. Among some influential scholars in the field, emphasis has moved dramatically towards achievement and eminence. While these aspirations are important, the current trend privileges prodigious achievement and excellence over the experience of gifted persons. Recent research using the OEQ II makes an important contribution—keeping us focused on the psychology of giftedness.

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Author Information

Salvatore "Sal" Mendaglio, Ph.D. is professor emeritus, University of Calgary, and a licensed psychologist. Sal continues to pursue both his interests in Dąbrowski's theory of positive disintegration and counseling practice focused on gifted individuals. His most recent book is *Development, Disposition and Dynamisms: Essays in honor of Kazimierz Dąbrowski*, which will be soon followed by his book on reflections on Dąbrowski's theory of personality. Sal is also planning a book on his approach to counseling gifted individuals in which he applies his psychology of giftedness.

Literature Review

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 33-43

Addressing the Well-Being of Young Children

Pauline C. Dott
Emma H. Cho, MBA, M.Ed.
Nancy B. Hertzog, Ph.D.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted young learners' daily routines, learning environments, and home life stability, severely impacting their well-being. Children's issues with mental health, such as anxiety, stress, and depression, significantly impact their ability and interest to achieve in school settings. Additionally, the pandemic affected parents, caregivers, and educators, which had repercussions on their children and students. The authors conducted a literature review, identifying 26 articles that reported on young children's mental health and well-being with a particular interest in the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and identified gifted children. This review illuminated some main themes: young children have mental health issues; parents, caregivers, and the environment impact the well-being of young children; mental health services are not readily available to support families and their young children; COVID-19 adversely impacted students, caregivers, and teachers; and strategies exist to better understand and support young children, their families, caregivers, and teachers. Therefore, it is essential to understand the impacts on young children's mental health and how to best support them during these unprecedented times.

Keywords: *early childhood • well-being • COVID-19 • literature review • mental health*

It is almost all too common to hear about the mental health problems of adolescents and the negative impacts that bullying, isolation, and peer relationships have on the well-being of middle and high school students. However, it is less common to acknowledge and address the well-being of our young students, whose lives have been disrupted since the worldwide pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted young learners' daily routines, learning environments, and home life stability, impacting their mental health. In particular, young children are facing anxiety and depression at alarming rates. "From mid-March 2020 to October 2020, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveillance data indicated that the proportion of ED [Emergency Department] visits by children for mental health conditions increased by 24% among children aged 5-11" (Hoffman & Duffy, 2021, p.1485). Children's issues with mental health significantly impact their ability and interests to achieve. The pandemic has also shed light on the systemic inequities affecting students of color, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and students from families where English is not their first language. Iruka et al. (2021) published a report highlighting black families' experiences during the pandemic, from financial distress and educational disruptions to mental and physical health issues. Berasategi Sancho et al. (2021) showed how the pandemic impacted students with disabilities through increased negative emotions and unhealthy habits. Consequently, it is crucial to understand how new realities in classrooms and at home impact young learners' well-being in their daily life.

In this review of the literature, we searched for perspectives on how the well-being of all young children (ages 3-8), inclusive of those with disabilities and those who may be identified as gifted, was impacted by COVID-19. The literature review focuses on the following three questions: 1) What does the research say about young children's mental health and well-being, 2) How has COVID-19 impacted the well-being of young children, and 3) How can parents, caregivers, and teachers, support their young learners' mental health needs in and out of the classroom?

Methods

This literature review included peer-reviewed articles from the last ten years written in English that focused on young children (up to age 8) in the United States and addressed COVID- 19, mental health, and issues of young children's well-being. This literature review was conducted using the following databases: ERIC, Scopus, Education Research Complete, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Education Source, and Wiley in the University of Washington Library system.

We did multiple searches to focus on different aspects of young children's mental health and well-being. We first applied a broad set of terms to identify potential references, such as "mental health" and "young

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/em5m-8e19
Address correspondence to Pauline C. Dott, College of Education, University of Washington 2012 Skagit Lane, Miller Hall, BOX 353600, Seattle, WA 98195-3600

children." Then, we narrowed down some of our searches with articles referring to COVID-19 (See Table 1). Finally, we conducted searches that explicitly aimed at young children who may have been identified as gifted. However, when we looked at the articles, only three papers had the overlapping subjects of young children, well-being, COVID-19, and identified gifted (Hong et al., 2021; Minkos & Gelbar, 2021; Papadopoulos, 2021) (see Table 2). As the COVID-19 pandemic is a current event, we searched for relevant articles through worldwide organizations' websites such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (see Table 3). From each search, we read the individual abstracts of the unique articles that resulted. We excluded articles in which the abstract did not correspond to the correct age range or was not from the United States (see Table 4).

We read 26 articles encompassing empirical studies, literature reviews, editorials, and opinion pieces. We used their references to find additional studies and articles that would supplement our searches within our inclusion criteria (see Table 4). Among those 26 articles, nine focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young children's, their caregivers', and teachers' mental health and well-being, and five discussed how to support young children during and since the pandemic. In addition, six articles focused on the mental health of young learners, three looked at their mental health in relation to their parents' and caregivers' mental health, and one focused on teachers' mental health.

Findings

From the many articles we reviewed, we clarified specific terms used and identified salient themes that we will discuss. First, we report on the literature on mental health for young learners and specifically those who may be considered advanced academically. Several themes emerged from the literature: young children have mental health issues; parents, caregivers, and the environment impact the well-being of young children; and mental health services are not readily available to support families and their young children. We also share strategies from the literature to better understand and support young children, their caregivers, families, and teachers post COVID-19.

Definition of Terms

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) defines mental health and emotional well-being as: "being happy and confident and not anxious or depressed...the ability to be autonomous, problem-solve, manage emotions, experience empathy, be resilient and attentive (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2013 pp. 5)" (O'Connor et al., 2018, p. 413). The World Health Organization defines Mental Health as "the ability to manage thoughts and emotions, the ability to build social relationships, the aptitude to learn and the subsequent consequences of failure to do so" (O'Connor et al., 2018, p. 413). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) defines mental health as including "children's mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being. It affects how children think, feel, and act. It also plays a role in how children handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices" (para. 1). We include all three of these definitions to give the reader the broader perspective of how mental health issues are discussed in the literature, with a particular focus on the inclusion of well-being (how a child feels socially and emotionally) as a component of mental health.

Mental Health and Young Learners

Based on the literature over the past ten years, mental health has been a growing concern for children and their caregivers at home and school. The 2016 National Survey

Table 1: Search Terms and Identified Articles

Search Terms	Date of Search (2022)	No. of References	No. of Included References	No. of Unique References
* "Mental health" **and** *"young children" **and** *"support" and "COVID" **and** "United States"	January 24th	7	1	1
"COVID" **and** "early childhood" **and** "mental health" and *"United States"	January 26th	2,011	3	3
*"mental health "**and** *"early childhood" **and** "support strategies" and *"United States" **NOT** "adolescent."	February 9th	11	1	-
*"mental health" **and** *"early childhood" **and** "school support" and *"United States" **NOT** "adolescent"	February 9th	16	1	-
"mental health" **and** "early childhood" **and** "interventions" and "United States" **NOT** "adolescent"	February 9th	82	2	1
Total				7

*changed search fields to be subjects

Table 2: Search Terms and Identified Articles

Search Terms	Date of Search (2022)	No. of References	No. of Included References	No. of Unique References
"quality early child mental health" **and** "gifted children" **and** "Social and emotional" **and** "parenting and family" **and** "in the United States"	January 18th	281	2	1
"quality early child mental health" **and** "gifted children" **and** "Social and emotional" **and** "parenting and family" **and** "psychosocial" **and** "in the United States"	January 18th	97	1	1
"high quality mental health young children" **and** "gifted young children" **and** "social and emotional well- being" **and** "COVID-19" **and** " in the United States" **NOT** "secondary High school" **NOT** "adolescent"	January 26th	28	1	1
Total				3

of Children's Health reported that 17.4% of children aged 2–8 years had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder (Cree et al., 2018). Mental health issues can have negative consequences on children's lives, and if they are not addressed, they can persist into adulthood (Cree et al., 2018). Cree et al. (2018) also found a correlation between children diagnosed with mental, behavioral, or developmental disorders and their families' income. They noticed that children living in poverty had higher rates of diagnosis of mental health disorders and were also less likely to receive continuous care.

Mental Health Related to Children Labeled Gifted

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) convened two different task forces (2002 and 2016) to examine the social and emotional issues of identified gifted students. Findings from researchers were conflicting. Some researchers and educators found that young children identified as gifted had different social and emotional characteristics from non- identified students (Ferguson, 2015; Hébert, 2020; Pfeiffer, 2018; Silverman, 2021). On the other hand, other studies indicated no social and emotional differences between gifted children and their unidentified peers (Cross & Cross, 2015; Neihart et al., 2016; Papadopoulos, 2021; Wood & Peterson, 2018). Hébert (2020) reported that the findings of educators, psychologists, and researchers from the NAGC were not conclusive as to whether gifted children had distinguished social and emotional characteristics from those not labeled gifted. Although anxiety and depression present at similar rates in young children, some researchers identified characteristics like sensitivity, perfectionism, interest in morality, and social justice that impact students' social and emotional development as more evident in some children who have been labeled gifted (Peterson, 2018). Thus, it is essential to have a school environment where young children can develop their identities, have autonomy in their learning opportunities, and grow their social and emotional competencies without adults misunderstanding or inferring that they might have mental health issues. Children identified as gifted, like all children, have a social need for positive peer relationships. However, the label may hinder the perceived acceptance by their peers, cause frustration, affect children's healthy interactions, and may impact emotional and social challenges (Mammadov, 2021).

Asynchronous development may differ among children (Hertzog, 2021; Silverman, 2021; Wiley, 2020). Specifically, some young children may be significantly advanced in one area and show more typical age development in other areas. This disparity may cause frustration for children, difficulties with peer relationships, and additional anxieties in developing their social and emotional competencies (Cross, 2021). Parents, caregivers, and teachers may support children's growth in all domains by understanding that children's strength profiles may be varied across domains. Understanding and formulating age-appropriate expectations for all young children is essential (Hertzog, 2021). However, Hébert (2020) notes that the child's asynchrony may cause an "inevitable mismatch with the environments designed to fit their age peers" (Hébert, 2020, p. 60), which may add additional challenges for the child. A mismatch in a learning environment may be due to a lack of challenge in the curriculum or instruction, a particular teaching style that is not responsive to a child's culture or identity, or simply an instructional approach that discourages autonomy and inquiry. Although not the main focus of this literature review, instructional approaches that optimized learning for advanced young learners may have also been interrupted and adapted due to the pandemic, thus causing additional stress on the child's social and emotional well-being.

There is a lack of research on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the mental health and well-being of young children identified as gifted. We assume two reasons why few studies have been conducted on the

Table 3: Non-Peer-Reviewed Articles

Search Terms	No. of References
National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness	1
CDC	3
UNICEF	1
Save the Children	1
WHO	1
Total	7

Table 4: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
English	Adolescents
Last 10 Years	Young Adults
Children up to 8 years old	Special Education
United States	Children over the age of 8
	Children were having other forms of illness or disability

well-being of young children identified as gifted during the pandemic. First, young children three to eight are often not yet identified as gifted in school settings. Also, "the lack of a federal mandate for gifted education in the United States leaves states to create their policies and definitions and determine whether services for gifted students will be funded or given priority" (Stambaugh & Wood, 2018, p. 85). Therefore, there may be many school districts where children are not yet identified or placed in gifted programs. During the pandemic, all children were impacted, so we can assume that children with advanced academic abilities were also affected. Students present various social-emotional needs with schools reopening, and it is essential to consider practices to meet the needs of the varied student populations (Minkos & Gelbar, 2021).

Availability of Mental Health Services

Five articles reviewed mentioned a lack of services for young children, especially for families from low socio-economic status and/or marginalized communities. Professionals acknowledged that struggling children cannot learn effectively if those emotional and physical needs are not met, so it is crucial to break down these barriers to access (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Several reasons in the literature for the lack of services included barriers to access, understanding and communications with families and caregivers, and a shortage of trained professionals.

Many caregivers, parents, and teachers do not have sufficient understanding and available resources to support the mental health needs of young children. In addition, mental health services are not a traditional part of pediatric care; therefore, some parents do not seek help when they should as they do not have the appropriate tools to do so. Moreover, even when families have primary care, they might experience challenges connecting to mental health-related services (Cree et al., 2018). Furthermore, a reported "workforce shortage of pediatric mental health professionals" (Hoffman & Duffy, 2021, p. 1485) could be an additional barrier to accessing services. There is also a lack of availability of providers in the families' preferred language or appointments after school and work hours that accommodate parents and children (Walter et al., 2019). Finally, even when some parents knew that their child needed help for mental health reasons "the parent's knowledge of their child was not enough to justify an appointment without a referral from a doctor or from the emergency room" (Walter et al., 2019, p. 186). As a result, many children are not receiving the support they need.

The Impact of COVID-19

Many factors contribute to the well-being of children. First, they need a supportive and caring environment where they feel valued and physically and emotionally safe (Darling- Hammond et al., 2020). Within that environment, students should get a sense of predictability and continuity in their routines and receive social-emotional learning to foster skills such as interpersonal awareness and conflict resolution (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Additionally, adults in children's lives can significantly impact their mental health and well-being as poor mental health in caregivers has been shown to be correlated to children's poor mental health (Wolicki et al., 2021).

As research grows around the impacts of COVID-19 on children's lives and mental health, it is clear that young children's well-being and learning were affected by the pandemic. A study from Save the Children (2020) found that "nearly half (49 percent) of interviewed children in the United States said they were worried, while just over one third (34 percent) reported feeling scared, and one quarter (27 percent) felt anxious" (Save the Children, 2020, para. 7). Children are worried about themselves or their loved ones contracting COVID-19, which leads to anxiety. Overall, the pandemic may worsen existing mental health problems for some students and lead to more cases because of the public health crisis, social isolation from school closure and mandates, and an economic recession (Golberstein et al., 2020). Additionally, children receiving mental health services might have seen those services halted because of the pandemic (Hoffman & Duffy, 2021).

Routines and Change

Routines and predictability of students' schedules are essential to their well-being and maintaining positive attitudes. Unfortunately, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shaken this aspect of the children's lives, among other

things, through school closures, online school, illness, parent job loss, and more. For instance, as Barnett et al. (2021) commented:

> Due to COVID-19, children and staff have experienced even more varying levels of social isolation, stress, anxiety, and trauma. Understanding these stressors and their impacts is particularly significant since many young learners have not yet internalized or experienced typical classroom routines, which could be considered prerequisites to effective teaching and learning. (p. 117)

Moreover, teachers have difficulty adjusting to new daily routines and teaching students through new mediums. During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools closed for some time and transitioned to online and hybrid learning. "Nearly all of the 55 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade in the US are affected by these closures" (Golberstein et al., 2020, p. 819). This remarkable change had many consequences on children due to the disruption to their lives and their families. This interruption of school routines may have led to fewer enjoyable and physical activities (Danese & Smith, 2020). Research shows that routines at home and school are essential to the well-being of children, especially the younger ones (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Consequently, the pandemic's abrupt disruption of those routines harmed children's mental health.

Impact on Adults - Parents and Caregivers

Parents also saw increases in depression and anxiety (Feinberg et al., 2021). Caregivers were experiencing cumulative stressors due to the pandemic, which impacted their mental health and their children's (Brown et al., 2020). There was a significant deterioration of parents and children's mental and behavioral health during the first months of the pandemic due to new anxiety and stress, which in some cases amplified pre-existing risks of depression (Feinberg et al., 2021).

With lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, some children were exposed to stressful home environments such as family violence, substance use disorders, child abuse, neglect, food insecurity, or increased economic strains (Danese & Smith, 2020; Samji et al., 2021). In their study, Brown et al. (2020) found that "emotional and social support a parent receives is significantly associated with lower perceptions of stress and risk of child abuse potential" (p. 11). Therefore, actively supporting families during and after the pandemic might be crucial to children's well-being. On the other hand, some might argue that while schools are a positive environment for most children, those who were affected by bullying or intense academic pressure may have fared better during the lockdowns (Danese & Smith, 2020).

As the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequities in our society, mental health services access was no exception (Iruka et al., 2021). Unfortunately, some populations had little to no access to mental health services, and some were more prone to mental health issues because of the pandemic. For example, Falicov et al. (2020) reported "that COVID-19-related fear and associated anxiety and depressive symptoms were higher for women, Hispanic, Asian, and immigrant individuals and also families with small children" (p. 866). Also, parents of immigrants struggled with a lack of resources and support, language and communication barriers, and developmental concerns about their children amid COVID-19 (Hong et al., 2021). Others who received services had to endure disruptions due to the pandemic (Golberstein et al., 2020).

Teachers Affected by COVID-19

The pandemic also impacted teachers as their whole profession was turned upside down in weeks, if not days. They had to learn how to teach virtually and continue to support their students' learning and well-being while trying to take care of themselves and their own families. Jelińska and Paradowski (2021) found that "53.2% of the teachers estimated that the pandemic situation had affected teachers and students equally, whereas 33.1% found students to be in a worse situation than the teachers" (p. 3).

The literature also revealed that teachers' mental health was related to the classroom climate and students' well-being as struggling adults cannot appropriately support children (Doucet et al., 2020; Himmelstein, 2021). Literature addressed how teachers' depressive symptoms can be negatively associated with the quality of the classroom learning environment, such as lower classroom organization and instructional support (Sandilos et al., 2015). Especially in the context of young learners, "early childhood teachers, regardless of their mental health status, may be investing a great deal of energy into dimensions associated with emotional support" (Sandilos et al., 2015, p. 1122) which can have a great impact on their students. The pandemic has only exacerbated teachers' vulnerabilities to stress, anxiety, and depression, emphasizing the need to help "educators heal from the stresses of working during COVID" (Himmelstein, 2021, p. 2).

Strategies for Support

The literature review highlighted strategies and recommendations to support children and caregivers. "The WHO identifies the need for a holistic approach to the well-being of young people as MH [Mental Health] problems can have a negative effect on all areas of development." (O'Connor et al., 2018, p. 413). Therefore, one systemic intervention that would benefit all parties involved would be integrating mental health services in schools. Thus, better collaboration and communication would be possible between providers, schools, and caregivers. Furthermore, cooperation with developmental

and behavioral health services in public assistance programs could provide opportunities to connect and give access to services to more families living in poverty (Cree et al., 2018). Therefore, funding school-based mental health centers would allow care in the spaces students spend most of their days. This integration would better support children by offering more information about mental health services and prevention and ensuring early screening and diagnosis for children with mental health issues. Cree et al. (2018) argued that "Early identification and treatment of MBDDs [Mental Behavioral Developmental Disorders] could positively impact a child's functioning and reduce the need for costly interventions over time" (p. 1377). Consequently, school staff should receive training to recognize signs of pediatric mental health problems (Hoffman & Duffy, 2021).

School-based programs can positively impact children's well-being, and multiple approaches can be promising (O'Connor et al., 2018). Two types of interventions can be implemented within those programs: universal and targeted. O'Connor et al. (2018) defined them as:

> Universal interventions are those that target general population groups; for example, in schools this may be the whole school or all within an age range. Targeted interventions are designed to be delivered to specific groups or individuals who have been identified to need specific support or treatment due to an existing illness, vulnerability, or risk factor. (p. 414)

Overall, the main idea to keep in mind is that "for a whole-school approach to be engaged, the school must commit to creating a health-promoting environment, with all staff supporting the initiative and ensuring that MH [Mental Health] and social and emotional well-being is placed throughout the school's curriculum" (O'Connor et al., 2018, p. 413).

Some strategies can also be implemented in the classrooms and schools on a smaller scale and still be beneficial. For instance, educators can create environments to help students develop their self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and relationship skills in schools, classrooms, and libraries. They can do so by having a calm-down space, creating predictable routines, providing a wide variety of multicultural books that affirm all students' identities, and engaging in respectful conversations with children (Himmelstein, 2021). For example, in collaboration with 58 other organizations, the World Health Organization and UNICEF published a children's book called *My Hero is You: How Kids can Fight COVID-19!* (WHO, September 2021). This book is meant to help children stay hope-ful during the pandemic. The book is available in 142 languages.

Barnett et al. (2021) noted that "young learners are especially susceptible to such shifts in schedule, and thus schools will need to make a concerted effort to engage families by providing clear guidance on how to prepare children to cope with the changes" (p. 116). Moreover, there needs to be support for adults and school staff because struggling adults cannot help struggling students. Therefore, emotional support is essential for students and early childhood educators. Individual and family resilience can be promoted through "coping skills, mood management, family relationship quality and access to social support" (Feinberg et al., 2021).

Teachers generally know their students and how they were doing emotionally before school closure. Therefore, teachers' input is crucial to appropriately support their students academically, socially, and emotionally, which means educators' voices should be empowered and valued in the conversations about policies and practices (Doucet et al., 2020). In addition, teachers have both direct and indirect effects on students in the classroom. For instance, teachers' interactions influence students' social behavior and inclusion (Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021). However, during COVID-19, it was challenging for teachers to support their learners because communications and interactions were not the same as before the pandemic (Reimers et al., 2020). For example, "Facial expressions are used to help communicate feelings and provide reassurance, so being around masked faces can add to feelings of uncertainty" (CDC, 2022b, para. 4). Therefore, some adjustments were needed to support young children in new learning spaces. For instance, Darling-Hammond (2020) mentioned that differentiated teaching and support enhance children's confidence and motivation. Thus, creating a classroom climate of positive interaction and productive relationships culturally and academically during and post-pandemic is critical for young children's healthy growth in all domains.

Because teachers' well-being may impact their students, it is essential to support their mental health. Therefore, instituting a recurring system of mental health support for school staff can go a long way to minimize stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout for teachers and improve the classroom environment and children's well-being (Himmelstein, 2021; Sandilos et al., 2015).

Home Support During the Pandemic

Parents and families are influential in supporting children's social and emotional well-being by creating home environments with positive relationships and warm interactions. Healthy relationships between parents and children enhance psychological well-being (Kroesbergen et al., 2016). Unfortunately, recent research demonstrated that 7.2% of children in the U.S. had at least one caregiver with poor mental health (Wolicki et al., 2021). The pandemic revealed how vital a student's home and school partnership is to support young children isolated from their peers during times of crisis. Parents' interaction styles and the quality of their relationships are crucial components of children's well-being.

UNICEF (2020) suggested six ways parents could support their children through the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) having conversations about staying healthy and empathizing with children, 2) helping children have a routine schedule with structure and predictableness, 3) helping children express their emotions, including sadness and struggle, 4) having daily check- ins about misunderstandings and misconceptions of COVID-19, 5) creating family time and keeping their technology time, and 6) managing parents' behaviors and emotions to continue to provide a sense of safety and security to their children.

Outside of Home Support

As schools and early childhood centers transition back to in-person learning, there are a few steps parents and teachers can take to support their children. First, teachers and parents should open communication about what happens in and out of the classroom to build strong relationships (CDC, 2022b; National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, 2021). Teachers should try to meet parents before children start school and give them updates throughout the day. If possible, teachers should provide parents with an idea of what the routines at school would look like so they can prepare their children and mirror them at home for continuity. Finally, caregivers and teachers need to support their young learners to return to school and have a stable and predictable day-to-day life by allowing young children to use their daily routine in family conversations and experiences at home.

Additionally, having socio-emotional learning embedded in school activities can benefit all parties (Himmelstein, 2021). For example, parents should remain calm and reassure their children when they transition to drop-off (CDC, 2022b). Caregivers should remember to take care of their mental health and contact health care and mental health care professionals if they have any concerns. Above all, the most crucial concept to remember is to "make sure their child has a daily, predictable routine, with regular times for healthy meals, naps, and night sleep at home. Having a rested body and knowing what to expect at home helps children cope" (CDC, 2022b, para. 9).

Additional Resources for Support

The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute from the University of North Carolina offers a multitude of evidence-based resources for caregivers and educators to help support their children during and post-pandemic. The Institute provides a wide range of resources, from supporting children with autism and other special needs to blended learning strategies. In addition, they consistently update their website as more research becomes available to continue their commitment to supporting children and their families during these unprecedented times (UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, n.d.).

Another resource for early childhood educators is the Pyramid Model which addresses explicit teaching of social skills and emotional regulation to support all young children, specifically children with disabilities in the classroom. It also offers support for caregivers outside of schools (The Pyramid Model Consortium, n.d.).

Additional authors have suggested some tips for early childhood educators and caregivers to support their children in developing self-regulation skills (Pahigiannis et al., 2019). Buka et al. (2022) argued for more pediatric mental health services that focus not only on the child but on the family as a whole. They offered intervention approaches in primary care settings and home settings and ideas for policy change to support all families' well-being.

Discussion

Children live and grow within a system of interconnected spaces that impact their well- being. As Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggests, children live within an ecological system made of multiple systems that impact children's lives, development, and learning. Children are impacted by their environment, including their families, schools, friends, neighborhood, place of worship, community, and more broadly, society, culture, and media. Consequently, it is not unfathomable that the pandemic impacted young children as every aspect of their ecological system was disrupted in one way or another. For example, schools were closed, and parents may have lost employment or switched to working from home. Families also lost access to grandparents or other older caregivers. These changes impacted multiple parts of children's ecological systems, disrupting their daily lives, and impacting their sense of happiness and well-being. Also, every child has their own system they grow up in, which will impact their development process. Therefore, more individualized support and strategies that are responsive to the needs of each child are necessary to fully help them (Farmer et al., 2021).

In more recent work, Bronfenbrenner highlights the importance of bi-directional interactions between children and adults in their lives in his Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Therefore, emotional and instructional support are essential to the optimal growth of children, which means that if one actor in the interactions is struggling with poor mental health, it might impact the child's emotional development (Wasik & Coleman, 2019). It reinforces the idea that teachers' and caregivers' well-being is as important as children's for their healthy development.

For educators, it is important to understand individual and familial circumstances surrounding the process of coming back to school and developing new and perhaps

unfamiliar routines impacting how children learn. Support for all parties involved will be essential to keep children, teachers, and caregivers healthy. Many resources outline strategies for collaboration between caregivers and early childhood staff for a smoother return to school environments. The literature predominantly argues that schools must be at the forefront of mental health services for students and teachers. With that in mind, it is essential to prioritize the little resources and funds that schools allocate towards mental health services and support for their students and their workforce. Especially in the wake of the pandemic, these prioritizations will be crucial. Conversations with students about mental health and well-being should be an integral part of every child's instructional day.

Implications and Conclusions

Future studies need to be conducted to understand the potentially long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on children's, caregivers', and teachers' mental health. The continuation of the pandemic may necessitate new routines to be established for young children at school and at home to navigate these unprecedented times. Young children's mental health and well-being are essential aspects of their learning journey that need to be acknowledged and supported accordingly. Even at a young age, children can experience stress, anxiety, and depression. As we continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains some unknowns for the future and potential lasting impacts on children's mental health and well-being. Therefore, it will be important to follow children and their families and screen for disruptions in parent and child well-being (Feinberg et al., 2021). Dudovitz et al. (2021) offer a research agenda identifying the most critical areas of research that need to be conducted to further understand the pandemic's impact on children and adults. Their recommendations focus on equity, strength-based and anti- racist methodologies that also involve the community (Dudovitz et al., 2021). With the rise in the use of technology in many different domains, possibilities for future research on how technology has impacted access to mental health services, especially for younger children, may be pursued.

Additionally, researchers could look at how technology has disrupted learning environments while also bringing new opportunities to early childhood classrooms.

This literature review addressed and acknowledged the impacts of the recent pandemic on young children and their caregivers in educational contexts. Young children's mental health and well-being are an integral part of their learning journey and development that needs to be understood by educators, families, and those in the community who work with children. Young children are susceptible to mental health issues, and as highlighted by the literature, COVID-19 has increased their vulnerability. Although we do not have research to show that young children identified as gifted were any more vulnerable than others, it is possible that some young children with more advanced understandings of the dangers of the pandemic or with more sensitivities to the losses they may have suffered could be more at risk of developing social or emotional problems. We offered some strategies found in the literature to potentially support children, parents, and teachers in their daily endeavors to maintain their wellness and well-being. We urge educators to prioritize support for mental health services for their students and themselves.

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Author Information

Pauline C. Dott is a Ph.D. student in Learning Sciences and Human Development at the University of Washington. She received her Bachelor of Science in Applied Learning and Development with a focus on Bilingual Elementary Education from the University of Texas at Austin and her Master's in Education from the University of Washington. She is a multilingual learner and professional. Pauline's research focuses on the intersection between Bilingual Education and Gifted Education. She recently finalized a study to understand the role of bilingual elementary teachers in identifying bilingual gifted students. Pauline hopes to continue pursuing research in the multi/bilingual field.

Emma H. Cho, MBA, M.Ed., is a Ph.D. student in Learning Science and Human Development at the University of Washington, Seattle. She studied gifted education at Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, and worked as an educator and researcher in gifted education, including KEDI and kindergarten. Her research focuses on students' well-being, nurturing giftedness, culturally responsive learning, creativity, education policy, and the learning process in interdisciplinary research. Previously, she served as the president and leader of several student committees, a diverse and passionate group of people, including the Graduate Association in Education at Korea University and the MBA Student Association.

Nancy B. Hertzog, Ph.D., University of Washington, USA, is professor and director of Learning Sciences and Human Development and the former Director of the Robinson Center for Young Scholars. In addition to studying the outcomes of Robinson Center alumni, her research focuses on teaching strategies designed to differentiate instruction and challenge children with diverse abilities. From 1995 to 2010, she was on the faculty in the Department of Special Education and directed University Primary School, an early childhood gifted program, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has published three books and several chapters on early childhood gifted education, and numerous articles in gifted education.

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 44-57

Article

Exploring Goodness of Fit: Social Cognition Among Students with Gifts and Talents in Ireland and India

Jennifer R. Cross, Ph.D.
Anyesha Mishra
Colm O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Paromita Roy, Ph.D.

Abstract

Utilizing previous research focusing on the Stigma of Giftedness Paradigm (SGP), this study explains social cognitive beliefs with the help of self-efficacy among students with gifts and talents (SWGT) in Ireland and India. The study considers the concept of person-environment fit with respect to how the SWGT feel they are being seen by others and how they react to their environment, where their self-efficacy plays a role. Irish and Indian students (N = 430) were matched by age (15-17) and gender. Data were collected using the Social Cognitive Beliefs scale as an indicator of person-environment fit, and the Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy. Statistically significant differences were found in social cognition among the two groups with SWGT from Ireland (both males and females) scoring higher, suggesting a poorer fit with peers among them. However, the younger (15 and 16 years old) Indian SWGT had lower scores in peer-related social cognition than all Irish SWGT indicating a better fit with peers. Further, a hierarchical linear regression revealed self-regulated learning as a positive contributor and enlisting parental and community support as a negative contributor to explain social cognition beliefs among both Irish and Indian SWGT. Interestingly, while resisting peer pressure was a positive contributor to fit for the Irish SWGT, it was a negative contributor for the Indian SWGT. Variations in results observed among the SWGT of the two countries are discussed with respect to cultural differences. The study not only contributes to an argument for SWGT to learn in environments where they are surrounded by intellectual peers with similar seriousness and abilities, but also draws attention to both fit in the environment and students' confidence in their abilities by bringing in a cross-cultural perspective.

Keywords: *social cognition • self-efficacy • cross-cultural • person-environment fit*

The perception of social experiences among students with gifts and talents (SWGT), especially during their adolescent years, is considered important in their psychosocial development and academic achievement. These students are often perceived to be socioemotionally and cognitively different from their peers (Gallagher, 1990; Schectman & Silektor, 2012; Tezcan, 2012). As a response to the stigma of giftedness (Coleman, 1985; Coleman & Cross, 1988; T. Cross et al., 1993) SWGT from different parts of the world apply social coping strategies in order to manage their recognition among peers and social situations (J. Cross et al., 2019; Foust & Booker, 2007; Striley, 2014). Due to this stigma, SWGT often feel the need to choose between their achievement and social acceptance (Jung et al., 2012), what Gross (1989) called "the forced-choice dilemma" (p. 189). Jung et al. (2012) also found that vertical allocentric (valuing of inequality and interdependence) and vertical idiocentric (valuing of inequality and independence) orientations among Australian secondary students were strong predictors of motivation for academic success. Further, this motivation for academic success and the need for peer acceptance were found to be predictors of forced choice dilemma. However, no relationship was found among cultural orientations and need for peer acceptance. The present study was motivated by such evidence to explore how SWGT from different cultural orientations perceive their fit in their own environment. We attempt to address the existing gap in the literature by explaining social cognitive beliefs with the help of self-efficacy among two countries with varied cultures, Ireland and India.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/KFQY-WC02
Address correspondence to Anyesha Mishra, Doctoral Student, Gifted Education Administration William & Mary School of Education, VA. E-mail: amishra04@wm.edu

Social Cognition

In general, adolescents are often concerned about and compare themselves with others in terms of physical attractiveness, grades, and relationship status (Fujita, 2008), which influence and are influenced by their self-efficacy and social cognitive beliefs. Social cognition is defined as "cognition in which people perceive, think about, interpret, categorize, and judge their own social behaviors and those of others" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020). Social cognitive theory

(Bandura, 1977) suggests that behavioral changes occur when there is a personal sense of control, and human beings with higher perceived self-efficacy can master challenging situations with the help of adaptive action (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). This is important among SWGT, because self-efficacy can have an influence on how they prepare for action in their environment. Self-related cognitions and social cognitive beliefs are major ingredients in the motivation and achievement process. Additionally, significant correlations between adjustment and self-efficacy have been found among SWGT (Turki & Al-Qaisy, 2012) and enhancement of self-efficacy can be inferred to promote their psychological well-being from a study that found self-efficacy acts as a mediator while studying the effects of adjustment problems on psychological distress (Chan, 2006). Additionally, high self-esteem has been associated with academic achievement (Marsh et al., 1999) and self-esteem has been seen to be influenced by high ability (Humphrey et al., 2004).

Burney (2008), while applying social cognitive theory to gifted education, claimed that the social environment is a major part of the learning context and, though SWGT often have a high level of confidence in their abilities to perform, it is important for them to see that learning is a combination of academic capability and effort. In fact, attitudes of students towards school and a sense of connectedness towards school are associated to both self-esteem and academic self-efficacy (Booth & Gerard, 2012). In other words, the environment of the SWGT and how they perceive it may depend on their social cognition and self-efficacy, which can further determine their academic achievement (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Perception of Person-Environment Fit

Students' perception of school climate, encompassing culture, infrastructure, resources, values, and social networks (Thapa et al., 2013), have been found to influence their academic, social and behavioral performances (Gage et al., 2016). In fact, gifted achievers and underachievers have also shown differences in their attitudes and perception toward school and teachers (Cakir, 2014). This implies the importance of social interactions and their perception of that environment in the development of SWGT, which may be understood through person-environment fit theory (Hunt, 1975). This theory states that "behavior, motivation, and mental health are influenced by the fit between the characteristics individuals bring to their social environments and the characteristics of these social environments" (p. 478, Eccles et al., 1993). A positive person-environment fit has been found to be associated with higher academic achievement (Harms et al., 2006). Additionally, Eccles and Midgley's (1989) model of stage-environment fit (drawing ideas from person-environment fit theory) specifically focuses on the influence of experiences and transitions in school on the development of adolescents. According to this theory, educational environments that do not support the needs of students based on their developmental stage may result in motivational and behavioral declines among adolescents (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Specific assessments of matching motivational orientation to the learning environments have confirmed academic success based on performance in school settings (Harackiewicz et al., 2002). Studies have also found relationships among academic performance/success, motivational beliefs, personality development and interests with the classroom or learning environment of the adolescents (e.g., Harackiewicz et al., 2002; Harms et al., 2006; Wang, 2012), and perceptions of school by the adolescents have been seen to be significant predictors of academic and psychological competence (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Lack of environmental fit has been seen to produce deterioration in academic achievement (Gronna, 1999) and lower self-esteem (Richardson, 2000).

Ritchotte et al. (2014) stated that fit has been often found to be difficult to operationalize, as characteristics of the individual and the environment may not share proportionate opportunities. But this operationalization can be achieved when the fit is defined with respect to the degree of incongruity between person and environment (Jansen & Kristoff-Brown, 2006). With respect to SWGT, the level of mismatch between them and their environments has been suggested to increase with the level of giftedness (Jackson & Peterson, 2003; Versteynen, 2001) and underachievement can occur if there is a discrepancy between the needs of the individual and the demands of the environment (Ritchotte et al., 2014). Furthermore, the person-environment fit (the external congruence) helps in determining whether the behaviors among SWGT can be recognized by others as superior, the kind of feedback that will be generated, and the possibility of future opportunities for the display of gifted behavior (Jeltova & Grigorenko, 2005). Literature supports the importance of challenging cognitive environments for the SWGT (Rogers, 2007), but there is limited evidence on the importance of their social environment (Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al. 2019) and their interaction with the environment to understand the fit. While fit may be observed or measured externally (objective fit, Ritchotte et al., 2014), it is also psychological (subjective fit, Ritchotte et al., 2014).

While Lee et al. (2012) did not find students to perceive their giftedness as a negative factor affecting their peer relationships, they found that SWGT rated their academic self-concept more positively than their social self-concept. Also, SWGT with academic strength in the verbal domain were found to be more likely to face difficulties with peer relationships. However, the study did not explore the person-environment fit of the

students. Other studies using and understanding the conceptual framework of person-environment fit among SWGT often focus on adjustment and academic success. For example, Chang et al. (2021) studied parental psychological control and autonomy granting among Chinese American SWGT and found that adolescents with strong parenting-acculturation (adaptation to the new country) reported higher social acceptance and self-esteem. Additionally, considering SWGT perceptions of their environment, they are less likely to engage and be productive when they do not feel supported (French et al., 2011; Rubenstein et al., 2012). The purpose of the present study is to examine SWGT perceptions of fit with their environment, operationalized as their social cognition.

Fit in the Gifted Context

Challenges to person-environment fit are evident in the stigma of giftedness paradigm (Coleman & Cross, 1988). When SWGT must manage information about their giftedness to have normal social interactions, there will be tension that their peers do not experience. In their study of social cognition among SWGT, Cross et al. (1993) found the majority of students perceived differences from peers that affected their social behaviors. A perception of similarity between SWGT and their peers was associated with a stronger desire of SWGT to be integrated with their peers (Cross et al., 1995). In other words, those who believed others viewed them as similar to peers perceived a better fit in their environment. The forced-choice dilemma (Gross, 1989) describes SWGT's belief that they must choose between social and academic goals, as they could not be successful in both arenas.

SWGT who are, by definition, highly intellectually capable, will have goals for achievement based in part on their cultural orientation toward individualism (Di Giunta et al., 2013). Previous research indicates some SWGT feel frustrated with peers' different attitudes toward learning and the need to wait for them to "catch up" (Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al., 2018; J. Cross et al., 2019). These studies were based primarily in Western, individualist societies.

Role of Culture

Culture has been seen to impact social cognition (Vogeley & Roepstroff, 2009) and self-efficacy (Oettingen & Zosuls, 2006). In the case of SWGT, particularly, attitudes toward competition in their environment may play an important role in how they perceive "their own social behaviors and those of others" (APA, 2022). Triandis (1995) described societal preferences for autonomy and independence (individualism) or harmony and interdependence (collectivism) as critically important in individual development. Western societies, such as American and European, tend to value individualism, promoting individual self-interest and competition (Hofstede et al., 2010). Eastern societies, Asian in particular, tend to have a stronger group orientation, emphasizing cohesion and harmony. These society-level preferences have important implications for SWGT, whose subjective fit with their environment will be perceived through a cultural lens.

In the present study, differences in social cognition among SWGT from a Western nation (Ireland) and an Asian nation (India) will be explored, shedding light on the person-environment fit in these two different cultures. In an analysis of countries' tendencies toward individualism–a self-orientation emphasizing individual effort and competition–Ireland rated a 70 (on a 100-point scale) and India rated a 48 (Hofstede et al., 2010). Indian culture tends more toward collectivism, with a group orientation, emphasizing relationships and cooperation. How the academic and social experiences of SWGT are processed may differ based on the cultural norms in the country where one has developed (Chen & French, 2008). One's perceptions of the goodness of fit in one's environment (their subjective fit) will be associated with one's perceptions of their abilities, both social and academic.

The Present Study

Considering the existing literature and the paucity of research in this area, the present study aims to explain social cognitive beliefs with the help of self-efficacy in two countries with varied cultures. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Are there differences in social cognition between Irish and Indian SWGT?
2. Does self-efficacy explain social cognition over and above demographics?
3. If so, does the variance explained differ between Irish and Indian SWGT?

The study attempts to explain the person-environment fit with the help of the perceptions of SWGT of their social environment, that is, how they feel they are being seen by others and how they react to their environment, along with their self-efficacy.

Method

Participants were students 15-17 years old who scored at the 95th percentile or higher on standardized achievement tests (N = 430; 50.2% female). The sample was matched on age and gender for Irish and Indian students. In each program, the sample was 50.2% female, with the same number of 15- (n = 16), 16- (n = 126), and 17-year-olds (n = 73). The Irish students (n = 215) were participants in the 2015 summer program at the Centre for Talented Youth, Ireland (CTYI) at Dublin City University. To be admitted to CTYI programs, students take an out-of-level test designed for college admission.

Eligibility is determined by an age-corrected score in the 95th percentile. Students from India (n = 215) were from West Bengal, where they were attending the 2017 and 2018 programs conducted by the Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS) and Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) programs. To be eligible, students scored in the top 1% on national board examinations (INSPIRE) or through aptitude testing and interviews.

Instruments

Social Cognitive Beliefs

Social cognition was measured by the Social Cognitive Beliefs (SCB) scale, which was adapted from Cross et al. (1995). The SCB was developed from interviews with many SWGT who expressed their beliefs about how they were seen by others (SCB_SEE) and their perceptions of themselves in relation to peers (SCB_PEER; Cross et al., 1993, 1995). Some of these interviews were described in Coleman and Cross (1988). Figure 1 presents the SCB instrument.

The original Cross et al. (1995) items were analyzed individually, whereas this adaptation combines them to assess students' general social cognition as SWGT. The responses to the original scale were dichotomous (agree or disagree). Likert-type response options allowed for a more nuanced indicator of beliefs. The SCB_SEE items (Cronbach's α = .71) are measured on a different scale (1 = Exactly the same as to 5 = Totally different from) from the SCB_PEER (Cronbach's α = .57) items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Therefore, these two dimensions are not analyzed in combination. The four items of the SCB_PEER dimension were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis with Maximum Likelihood extraction and Direct Oblimin rotation in both the CTYI and JBNSTS samples. One factor was extracted in each sample, with an eigenvalue of 1.76, explaining 44.04% of the variance in the CTYI data and an eigenvalue of 1.44, explaining 36.08% of the variance in the JBNSTS data. Although Cronbach's α values below .70 are commonly considered unacceptable as a measure of reliability, Taber (2018) argues there are limitations to this heuristic, including the potential inefficiency introduced by the redundancy required to reach that criterion. A unidimensional factor is an indicator of validity, which Taber claims is equally important in assessing instrument quality. Future uses of the SCB could include additional items that reflect the unique cognitions of SWGT in relation to their peers, including reworded SCB_SEE items on the same disagree-agree scale. However, this analysis indicates the current instrument is a valid unidimensional tool for assessing SWGT's cognitions about themselves in relation to their peers and a proxy for their person-environment fit, with lower scores indicating a better perceived fit.

Figure 1: Social Cognitive Beliefs Instrument

a. *Social Cognitive Belief: Seen by others (SCB_SEE)*

	exactly the same as	mostly the same as	somewhat the same as, somewhat different from	mostly different from	totally different from
01. Students in my school see me as being _____ other students.	1	2	3	4	5
02. Teachers in my school see me as being_____ other students.	1	2	3	4	5

b. *Social Cognitive Belief: Perception in relation to peers (SCB_PEER)*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree, somewhat disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
03. I find that I get bored quicker with "small talk" than do other students.	1	2	3	4	5
04. I prefer to work independently on school projects.	1	2	3	4	5
05. I am more serious about learning than other students.	1	2	3	4	5
06. The other students in my class get in the way of my learning.	1	2	3	4	5

Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1989) Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy (MSPSE) is a 57-item instrument that assesses belief in one's capabilities in a variety of areas. Three items were dropped to make the scale age appropriate. The MSPSE includes nine domains that access direct personal agency, proxy, and collective agency (Bandura, 2001): Enlisting Social Resources, Academic Achievement, Self-Regulated Learning, Leisure-Time Skills and Extracurricular Activities, Self-Regulatory Efficacy (to resist peer pressure for high-risk behaviors), Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations, Social Self-Efficacy, Self-Assertive Efficacy, and Enlisting Parental and Community Support. The stem for each item is "How well can you…". Sample items for each domain are in Table 1. Response options for the MSPSE items were 1 = Not Well at All, 3= Not Too Well, 5 = Pretty Well, and 7 = Very Well. Response options 2, 4, and 6 were left blank according to administration instructions. The MSPSE exhibited strong reliability, with Cronbach's α = .92 for CTYI and .89 for JBNSTS. Subscale reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

Procedure: Students in both countries received a battery of tests that included the instruments used in the present analysis. They were administered in a paper-pencil format during a 1-hour group testing session.

Analysis: All analyses were conducted with SPSS version 27 for Mac. To determine differences in social cognition between CTYI and JBNSTS SWGT, independent-samples t-tests were conducted, with SCB_SEE and SCB_PEER as dependent variables. Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze differences by program and gender. Hierarchical linear regression was used to explain the variance in SCB_PEER, the dependent variable, by hierarchically entering first gender and age, then self-efficacy subscales as the independent variables.

Results

There were statistically significant differences in social cognition between the two programs. Table 2 presents social cognition and self-efficacy scores by gender and program. SCB_SEE and SCB_PEER differed between CTYI and JBNSTS SWGT, $t(428) = 3.54$, $p < .001$, $d = .34$; $t(428) = 8.07$, $p < .001$, $d = .78$, respectively. In both dimensions, CTYI scores were higher than JBNSTS, suggesting a poorer fit with their peers among the Irish students. ANOVA identified further differences by gender, $F(3, 426) = 5.85$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Post-hoc analysis with Tukey's correction found JBNSTS males perceiving others see them as more similar to other students than did CTYI males or females from both programs. Peer-related social cognition, SCB_PEER, was higher among both CTYI males and females than JBNSTS males and females, $F(3, 426) = 23.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. The Indian students had more positive peer-related beliefs than the Irish students, suggesting a better fit in their social environment. Post-hoc analysis with Tukey's correction of SCB_PEER scores by age and program (see Table 3) found younger (15 and 16 years old) JBNSTS students had lower scores than all CTYI students, but 17-year-old JBNSTS

Table 1: Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy Sample Items and Reliability

		Reliability		
		Cronbach's α		
Self-Efficacy Domain	Number of items	CTYI	JBNSTS	Sample Item
				"How well can you…"
Academic Achievement	9	.70	.64	…learn algebra/reading and writing language skills?
Self-Regulated Learning	11	.86	.81	…plan your school work?
Social Self-Efficacy	4	.78	.70	…make and keep friends of the opposite sex?
Resisting Peer Pressure	6	.71	.71	…resist peer pressure to do things in school that can get you into trouble?
Enlisting Social Resources	4	.63	.54	…get teachers/another student/etc. to help you when you get stuck on schoolwork?
Assertive	4	.82	.56	…stand up for yourself when you feel you are being treated unfairly?
Meeting Others' Expectations	4	.77	.72	…live up to what your parents/teachers/peers/yourself expect of you?
Enlisting Parental and Community Support	4	.79	.65	…get your parent(s)/brothers and sisters/etc. to help you with a problem?
Leisure-Time Skill and Extracurricular Activities	8	.76	.68	…learn sports/dance/music skills?

Table 2: Social Cognitive Beliefs and Self-Efficacy Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

	CTYI				JBNSTS					CTYI		JBNSTS		
	Female *n*=108		Male *n*=107		Female *n*=108		Male *n*=107		ANOVA	Total *n*=215		Total *n*=215		*t*-test
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Social Cognitive Beliefs Range 1-5														
SCB_SEE	3.23[a]	0.84	3.15[a]	0.90	3.01	0.93[a,b]	2.75[b]	0.94	$F(3, 426) = 5.85$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$	**3.19**	.87	**2.88**	.94	$t(428) = 3.54$, $p < .001$, $d = .34$
SCB_PEER	3.66[a]	0.68	3.46[a]	0.78	3.01[b]	0.70	3.01[b]	0.67	$F(3, 426) = 23.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$	**3.56**	.74	**3.01**	.68	$t(428) = 8.07$, $p < .001$, $d = .78$
Self-Efficacy Subscales Range 1-7														
Academic Achievement	5.74[a]	0.79	5.68[a]	0.75	5.30[b]	0.73	5.14[b]	0.70	$F(3, 417) = 16.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$	**5.71**	0.77	**5.22**	0.72	$t(419) = 6.73$, $p < .001$, $d = .66$
Self-Regulated Learning	4.57[b,c]	1.07	4.43[c]	1.06	5.17[a]	0.84	4.79[b]	0.87	$F(3, 417) = 11.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$	**4.50**	1.06	**4.98**	0.87	$t(419) = -5.12$, $p < .001$, $d = .50$
Social Self-Efficacy	4.96[b]	1.10	5.17[a,b]	1.03	5.44[a]	1.13	5.15[a,b]	1.15	$F(3, 417) = 3.30$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$	**5.07**	1.07	**5.29**	1.15	$t(419) = -2.09$, $p = .04$, $d = -.20$
Resisting Peer Pressure	6.11[a,b]	0.92	6.38[a]	0.78	5.98[b,c]	0.79	5.75[c]	1.20	$F(3, 417) = 8.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$	**6.24**	0.86	**5.87**	1.02	$t(419) = 4.07$, $p < .001$, $d = .40$
Enlisting Social Resources	4.10[c]	1.15	4.49[b]	1.06	5.00[a]	1.08	4.77[a,b]	1.05	$F(3, 417) = 13.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$	**4.30**	1.12	**4.88**	1.07	$t(419) = -5.50$, $p < .001$, $d = -.54$
Assertive	4.62	1.30	5.42	1.05	5.10	1.15	4.89	0.95		5.02	1.24	4.99	1.06	$t(419) = 0.22$, $p = .83$, $d = .02$
Meeting Others' Expectations	4.55	1.26	5.05	1.12	4.87	1.12	4.90	0.98		4.80	1.21	4.89	1.05	$t(419) = -0.80$, $p = .42$, $d = -.08$
Enlisting Parental and Community Support	4.20[b]	1.33	4.18[b]	1.38	4.94[a]	1.35	4.64[a,b]	1.24	$F(3, 417) = 8.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$	**4.19**	1.35	**4.79**	1.30	$t(419) = -4.66$, $p < .001$, $d = -.46$
Leisure-Time Skill and Extracurricular Activities	4.38[a]	1.19	4.42[a]	0.98	4.09[a,b]	1.08	3.90[b]	1.01	$F(3, 417) = 5.72$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$	**4.40**	1.09	**3.99**	1.04	$t(419) = 3.93$, $p < .001$, $d = .38$

Note: Superscript letters indicate homogeneous subsets; Bolded mean scores differ by program; Post-hoc tests were completed only for significant program comparisons.

students had SCB_PEER scores similar to those of CTYI students, $F(5, 424) = 14.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$.

There were numerous differences among the students in the self-efficacy subscales (see Table 2). In some cases, CTYI students had higher self-efficacy than JBNSTS students (i.e., academic achievement, the ability to resist peer pressure, leisure-time skill and extracurricular activities). In others, JBNSTS students had higher self-efficacy (i.e., self-regulated learning, social self-efficacy, enlisting social resources, enlisting parental and community support). In their self-efficacy for assertiveness and for meeting others' expectations, the programs were not significantly different. Notably, JBNSTS female students had the highest level of confidence in their ability for self-regulated learning and CTYI females had the lowest confidence in their ability to enlist social resources.

To identify how much of social cognition could be explained by demographics and self-efficacy beliefs, a hierarchical regression analysis (see Table 4) was executed for each sample. With the addition of self-efficacy beliefs, the second model offered a significant improvement in the amount of variance explained in both samples: $\Delta R^2 = .20$ for CTYI and $\Delta R^2 = .16$ for JBNSTS. For CTYI students, the model explained 18% of the variance in SCB_PEER, adjusted $R^2 = .18$. Gender and age were not significant, but several self-efficacy subscales were. Positive contributors were self-efficacy for academic achievement ($\beta = .18$), self-regulated learning ($\beta = .30$), and resisting peer pressure ($\beta = .16$). As confidence was stronger in these areas, CTYI students perceived greater differences from peers and were more negative in their appraisal of them. Negative contributors were self-efficacy for enlisting social resources ($\beta = -.19$) and parental and community support ($\beta = -.18$). As they had greater confidence in their ability to enlist these resources, CTYI students perceived their peers and the experience of working with them more positively.

For JBNSTS students, slightly less of the variance in SCB_PEER, 14%, adjusted $R^2 = .14$, was explained by fewer significant contributors. Age was significant in this group, $\beta = .14$. As students were older, they were slightly more likely to have a negative perception of their fit with peers. The strongest contributor to this perception was their self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, $\beta = .32$. As they had higher confidence in their ability to plan and manage their time to succeed in school, they were more likely to perceive their fit with peers as negative. In this group, the ability to resist pressure from peers to engage in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., skipping school, using illicit drugs) was a negative contributor to SCB_PEER, $\beta = -.25$. As students could resist pressure, they were less likely to perceive a negative fit with peers; they were less likely to prefer to work independently or consider themselves more serious learners than peers, for example. Confidence in their ability to enlist the support of family or community members to help with a problem or to participate in their activities was also associated with a better perceived fit with peers, $\beta = -.27$.

Table 3: SCB_PEER Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Age and Program

	CTYI			JBNSTS		
Age	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
15	16	3.56[a]	0.63	16	3.03[b]	0.74
16	126	3.55[a]	0.74	126	2.91[b]	0.69
17	73	3.59[a]	0.76	73	3.17[a,b]	0.63

Note: Superscript letters indicate homogeneous subsets

Given the significance of a person's fit in their environment (e.g., Eccles et al., 1993; Harms et al., 2006), it is important to examine the beliefs of SWGT about others in their environment. Decades of research on the stigma of giftedness (Coleman & Cross, 1988; J. Cross et al., 2019, 2022; Manor-Bullock et al., 1995; Striley, 2014; T. Cross et al., 1991; T. Cross et al., 1993; Swiatek, 1995, 2001; Swiatek & Cross, 2007) indicate its significant impact on SWGT. There is evidence that SWGT believe they are different from peers (J. Cross et al., 2019; Striley, 2014; T. Cross et al., 1993), although some do not perceive great differences (T. Cross et al., 1993). The present study contributes to our understanding of SWGT's social cognition, which is representative of fit in their social environments. Cross-cultural differences have implications for educators, counselors, and others who work with and care for SWGT.

Cultural Differences

Social cognition, including students' perceptions of how others see them, was more positive among JBNSTS students. They were significantly less likely than CTYI students to believe teachers and peers see them as different from other students and to believe they were different in their seriousness about learning and willingness to engage in "small talk." Further research is needed to determine the reasons for these differences. It is possible the JBNSTS students are in an environment that more strongly caters to their intellectual needs. Additionally, due to the higher population in India, JBNSTS students tend to face a greater amount of competition. Academic success may be more accepted or desirable in their environment, leading to a broader peer group with less interest in "small talk" or taking their learning more seriously. It is also possible that the group-oriented nature of the Indian culture discourages the cultivation of negative comparisons with others and rejection of peers in school. In such societies, where group harmony is prioritized, one's preference for individual stimulation (not being bored with "small talk," pursuing learning more seriously) or working independently, would be less important than in more individualistic societies like Ireland (Chen & French, 2008).

Table 4: Hierarchical Linear Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	*ß*	*t*	*p*
	CTYI					
1	(Constant)	3.70	1.38		2.67	.01
	Gender	-0.19	0.10	-0.13	-1.88	.06
	Age	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.11	.92
2	(Constant)	1.46	1.40		1.05	.30
	Gender	-0.10	0.10	-0.07	-0.98	.33
	Age	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.84	.40
	Academic Achievement	**0.17**	**0.07**	**0.18**	**2.40**	**.02**
	Self-Regulated Learning	**0.20**	**0.05**	**0.30**	**3.70**	**< .001**
	Social Self-Efficacy	-0.10	0.06	-0.15	-1.82	.07
	Resisting Peer Pressure	**0.13**	**0.06**	**0.16**	**2.27**	**.02**
	Enlisting Social Resources	**-0.12**	**0.05**	**-0.19**	**-2.42**	**.02**
	Assertive	-0.03	0.05	-0.06	-0.69	.49
	Meeting Others' Expectations	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.30	.77
	Enlisting Parental and Community Support	**-0.10**	**0.04**	**-0.18**	**-2.24**	**.03**
	Leisure-Time Skill and Extracurricular Activities	0.00	0.05	0.01	0.09	.93
	JBNSTS					
1	(Constant)	0.27	1.30		0.21	.83
	Gender	-0.02	0.09	-0.01	-0.17	.87
	Age	**0.17**	**0.08**	**0.15**	**2.13**	**.04**
2	(Constant)	1.35	1.39		0.98	.33
	Gender	-0.02	0.09	-0.01	-0.18	.86
	Age	**0.16**	**0.08**	**0.14**	**2.04**	**.04**
	Academic Achievement	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	-0.07	.95
	Self-Regulated Learning	**0.25**	**0.07**	**0.32**	**3.44**	**< .01**
	Social Self-Efficacy	-0.03	0.04	-0.04	-0.58	.57
	Resisting Peer Pressure	**-0.17**	**0.05**	**-0.25**	**-3.48**	**< .01**
	Enlisting Social Resources	-0.04	0.05	-0.07	-0.88	.38
	Assertive	0.00	0.05	0.00	-0.06	.95
	Meeting Others' Expectations	-0.04	0.05	-0.06	-0.67	.51
	Enlisting Parental and Community Support	**-0.14**	**0.04**	**-0.27**	**-3.25**	**< .01**
	Leisure-Time Skill and Extracurricular Activities	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.18	.86

Note: Dependent Variable SCB_PEER; Significant results highlighted by bolding.

Frustration with peers who were less serious about learning or who could not learn at the same pace was found in numerous studies (e.g., Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al., 2018; J. Cross et al., 2019). CTYI students may experience more of this frustration than the JBNSTS students, depending on their academic environments. JBNSTS students may not feel the same pressures for individual achievement, or they may be discouraged from expressing their frustration due to societal norms. In both programs, it may be that their perceived superiority poses relational threats where peers become jealous or are uncertain of how to interact with SWGT (J. Cross et al., 2019, 2022; Striley, 2014), leading to difficulty in building relationships and a poor fit in their environments.

Self-Efficacy Contributors to Perceptions of Fit

The most significant positive contributor to fit, as indicated by students' social cognition, was self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, which increased by .30 (CTYI) and .32 (JBNSTS) for each unit of increase in negative perceptions of their social environment. Self-regulated learning as measured by the MSPSE represents successful student behaviors, including the ability to complete work in a timely manner without being distracted, meeting goals, being organized, and staying motivated for schoolwork (Bandura, 1989). In both countries, as students were better able to self-regulate for learning, they were more likely than peers to get bored more quickly with "small talk," want to work independently, see themselves as more serious learners, and see peers as getting in the way of their learning. Endorsement of self-regulated learning behaviors was associated with an increased negative fit in their environment.

Self-efficacy for academic achievement was significantly related to fit only among CTYI students, β = .18. As they more strongly believed they can learn different subjects, such as algebra or foreign languages, the CTYI SWGT had increased negative perceptions of fit. This relationship may be a reflection of the greater heterogeneity of the environments CTYI SWGT experience. Whereas the JBNSTS students, at the top 1% of scorers, may have received special attention to their needs in their educational experiences, CTYI students attend schools across the country where little attention is given to their need for differentiation (J. Cross et al., 2014). The differences between them and their classmates may be exacerbated by an environment that does not fulfill their academic needs.

A cultural interpretation of the insignificance of JBNSTS students' achievement self-efficacy to their fit perceptions relates to the more cooperative nature of Indian culture. The more individualistic culture in Ireland (Hofstede et al., 2010) may encourage SWGT to view their nongifted peers as impediments to achievement of their potential–to being able to learn these subjects well. The emphasis on relationships in Indian culture may discourage SWGT from perceiving peers as problematic to their success in learning.

In both CTYI and JBNSTS students, fit was more positive as they felt they could enlist the support of parents or siblings to help them with a problem or get parents or community members to take an interest in their school activities. This was even more true among JBNSTS students; CTYI β = -.18, JBNSTS β = -.27. SWGT who felt they could enlist this support were less likely to prefer working independently or see their peers as an unwelcome distraction.

The ability to get help from teachers, peers, or family members with schoolwork or social problems (Enlisting Social Resources) was only significantly associated with perceptions of fit among CTYI students, β = -.19. When they felt they could get help when they needed it, CTYI SWGT had more positive perceptions of fit in their environment. This relationship was not significant among JBNSTS SWGT. It is notable that for SWGT in both countries, social self-efficacy was not a significant contributor to their perceptions of fit with peers. Their confidence in their ability to make and keep friends, "carry on conversations with others," and to work well in a group would seem to relate to their desire to work independently or to see themselves as more serious than peers. This was not the case, however.

One of the more interesting findings of this study is the opposite relationship of self-efficacy to resisting peer pressure in the two countries. In India, the JBNSTS SWGT had a fairly strong negative association, β = -.25, between their beliefs about being able to resist peer pressure to get into trouble (e.g., skip school, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, take illegal drugs) and their fit in the environment (e.g., wanting to work independently, seeing themselves as more serious than peers, etc.). As they could resist these pressures more effectively, they had more positive perceptions of fit. Among CTYI SWGT, the relationship was the opposite, β = .16. As they could resist peer pressure better, they perceived more negative fit. Perhaps the Irish students perceived efforts to pressure them as distractions from their academic efforts, which they were competitively pursuing, whereas the Indian students may see peer pressure as evidence of having a connection with peers. Or perhaps they experienced less pressure to engage in troubling activities, if their peers were more engaged in academics. A stronger ability to resist pressure from peers would be related to their seriousness about learning and fit with peers because those pressures were not in their immediate environment. If the JBNSTS SWGT were surrounded by more academically focused peers, their fit would remain strong while they were able to resist outside pressure to misbehave. Research indicates that CTYI students are unlikely to be in classes with intellectual peers outside of their time in CTYI programs (J. Cross et al., 2019, 2022). A closer examination of the

social environment for both groups of students could help to explain these opposite relationships.

Another interesting difference between the CTYI and JBNSTS students was the significance of age in explaining SCB_PEER only in the Indian context. Among JBNSTS SWGT, age was a positive contributor to the variance in SCB_PEER, β = .14. Because the two datasets were matched on age, this suggests a real cultural difference. Among the CTYI students, fit perceptions were similar among 15- to 17-year-olds. Among the students in India, older students were more likely to perceive fit in a direction similar to that of their CTYI peers. Differences were found between the younger JBNSTS students and the CTYI students (see Table 3), but the older JBNSTS students had scores similar to the CTYI older and younger students. This suggests that JBNSTS students experience stronger perceptions that they are more serious than peers, prefer to work independently, and peers get in the way of their learning, as they mature. CTYI students perceived this misfit earlier in their school experience.

The differences in variance explained by the model between the two programs, 20% for CTYI and 16% for JBNSTS, suggest cultural variations in the students' subjective fit as measured by their social cognitive beliefs. The model included perceptions of self-efficacy, but there must be many other variables involved to make up the greater than 80% of variance left unexplained. Future studies could include variables associated with their learning environments, such as type of school attended or the differentiation they actually experience. There may also be differences associated with the domain of their giftedness (e.g., verbal or quantitative). The present findings identify self-efficacy as a contributor to fit. Lived experience research (e.g., Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al., 2019) may offer valuable additions to this exploration.

Implications

Although the JBNSTS SWGT had SCB_PEER scores indicating a more positive fit in their environment than their CTYI counterparts, there were similarities that have implications for academic success among both groups. The increased negative fit with higher levels of self-efficacy in self-regulated learning is an indication that how they are being asked to learn and who they are learning with may affect their beliefs about both. The diverse academic experiences and needs among CTYI SWGT scoring at the 95th percentile and above may be contributing to perceptions of poor fit among CTYI students. This is in contrast with a more homogeneous profile among the JBNSTS SWGT, who score in the 99th percentile. The cooperative nature of Indian culture also may lead to more cooperative education goals (Roseth et al., 2008), contributing to positive perceptions of fit with peers among the JBNSTS students. The similarity in fit scores among older JBNSTS students may mean the competition heats up as they approach the end of high school. The students in this sample may represent a more competitive group in the Indian system.

These findings could also contribute to an argu-ment for SWGT to learn in environments where they are surrounded by intellectual peers with similar seriousness and abilities. Out of school programs like CTYI and JBNSTS, advanced classes in school, and even cluster grouping provide opportunities for SWGT to be together. The JBNSTS students may already have this environment as younger students, but attention to their fit as they mature may be significant to their ultimate success. In making a decision about creating environments exclusively for SWGT, it is important to consider potential social impacts, however. J. Cross et al. (2013) found students in a specialized high school for SWGT considered gifted education elitist, even while they benefited both academically and socially from being in such an environment.

Causation cannot be determined by this analysis. It is possible self-efficacy is impacted by social cognition, rather than the other way around. Students who perceive a poor fit with their environment may have reduced efficacy in self-regulated learning, for example. Students who get in the way of their learning, are less serious about learning and the like may make them feel less efficacious in regulating their learning behaviors, rejecting pressure to engage in troubling behaviors, or able to learn in different subject areas. The lesson here is that attention should be paid to both fit in the environment and students' confidence in their abilities.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is the recent development of the SCB instrument. There were two items in one subscale and four in the other. Future versions of the scale should include more items, including the SCB_SEE items altered to be on the same scale as the SCB_PEER items. An additional item ("I see myself as…") from the original scale was not included due to technical problems in the survey administration. The addition of this item would improve reliability and offer a different, meaningful perspective on students' perceptions of fit. Validation on larger samples would be beneficial, including with non-gifted samples. Research on the lived experience of SWGT (Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al., 2019) has implications for an expanded view of their social cognition. Reliabilities on both instruments, the SCB and the MSPSE, were lower for JBNSTS students than CTYI students. This may be due to the instruments' development with primarily Western samples. Further research is needed to better understand psychometric differences in the Indian context. Despite these limitations, the exploration described here furthers our understanding of social cognition among SWGT.

Conclusion

Studies of the lived experience of SWGT have identified the challenges they face in finding a positive person-environment fit (Coleman & Cross, 1988; Coleman et al., 2015; J. Cross et al., 2019). The present study suggests the same challenges may exist in very different cultures around the world, but there are nuanced differences. What has been learned from decades of research on the social experience of SWGT must be put into a cross-cultural perspective to have the most positive impact on environments. The temptation to consider only objective fit—observable indicators of an appropriate environment—may lead to misinterpretations of the goodness of fit. Students' perceptions must be considered. After all, "a person's experience is what the world is to that person" (Coleman & Cross, 2000, p. 211).

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Author Information

Jennifer Riedl Cross, Ph.D. is Director of Research at the William & Mary Center for Gifted Education. She is co-editor, with Tracy L. Cross, of the *Handbook for Counselors Serving Students with Gifts and Talents*, now in its second edition. Her research in the field emphasizes social and psychological aspects of gifted education. She is the current editor for *Gifted Child Quarterly,* and has previously co-edited *SENGJ* with Tracy L. Cross.

Anyesha Mishra is a doctoral student in the Gifted Education Administration program of the Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership department at William & Mary School of Education. With a background in psychology, Anyesha has a special interest in understanding the psychological and social experiences of students with gifts and talents. Her other areas of interest are institutional collaboration in nurturing such students, enhancement of their creative potential, and evaluation of programs for the gifted.

Colm O'Reilly Ph.D. is the Director of the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University. CTYI provides fast paced classes for academically talented students aged 6-16 years from all over Ireland and overseas. Colm has worked in the area of gifted and talented education for the last 20 years and has written articles and presented papers at numerous conferences around Europe and worldwide. He is currently the secretary of the European Council for High Ability and the treasurer for the European Talent Support Network.

Paromita Roy, Ph.D. is a psychologist and presently Deputy Director of Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS), Kolkata. With more than 25 years of experience working with high ability students of science, she is involved in program development for high ability science students and teacher training programs. Her research interests include talent identification and nurture, developing concepts of giftedness, and women and girls in STEM. She has been an international referee for the Asia Pacific Forum for the Science Talented (APFST) and is a recognized mentor of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, for gifted science students in India.

SENG Journal
Vol. 1, No. 2, 58-61

Interview

Counselor's Corner: An Interview with Tom Greenspon

Tom Greenspon, Ph.D.
Interviewed by Tracy L. Cross, Ph.D.

With its dedication to studying the psychology of giftedness, SENGJ will be featuring clinical psychologists or counselors who have worked with individuals with gifts and talents. In this first interview of the series, Tom Greenspon describes his 40-year career and shares profound insights that can only come from such extensive experience.

Dr. Tom Greenspon

It is an honor to participate in this interview by *SENG Journal*, a journal which promises to be a significant addition to our understanding of the needs of advanced learners. What follows are my answers to a series of questions posed by Editor Dr. Tracy Cross.

My interest in psychology began as I entered college; it became a lifelong passion with my acceptance into Yale's honors interdivisional major entitled "Culture and Behavior." C&B's interdisciplinary focus on the social contexts of human psychology set my path. I went on to a Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Illinois, focusing on the experimental study of visual perception and neurophysiology, as part of a general interest in conscious experience, and then did postdoctoral study at the University of Rochester before a 7-year stint as a faculty member at the University of Alabama in Birmingham Medical Center. My wife Barbara and I then moved to Minneapolis for her Family Therapy internship and my sabbatical research; we ended up staying, and ultimately opened a private practice of psychotherapy lasting for 38 years until our retirement in 2016. Along the way, among several professional activities we have initiated or joined together, Barbara and I served as Co-Presidents of the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented in the early '80s. Our interest in this had been sparked by the educational needs of our children, both of whom now have their own Ph.D.s. I am a long-time active member of two international, contemporary psychoanalytic organizations, and I continue to teach couple therapy at the Minnesota Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. Barbara and I first met as activists in the civil rights movement in the early '60s; as part of a continuing commitment to social justice, I currently serve on the Diversity and Equity Committee of the National Association for Gifted Children.

Much like the experience Dr. Ed Amend describes in his interview for this journal (Amend, 2022), students with gifts and talents (SWGT) would typically come to me during my practice years with issues their parents and/or teachers were concerned about: lagging school performance, problems staying on task or staying motivated, heightened fears and anxieties, etc. Many times, these and other issues would turn out to be signs of anxiety disorders or depression. All of these issues might be intensified by bullying at school or, because of the student's heightened sensitivities, by concerns about issues of social injustice or climate change (the Covid pandemic had not yet arrived by the time of my retirement). Many of these issues would have sparked a conflict between student and parents, so that the family environment was tense. Parents might disagree about what the problem was, or even whether or not a problem existed; the resulting turmoil would itself be affecting the student's emotional state. The student referral might result in the parents' decision to enter couple therapy.

The various symptomatic complaints that prompt calls to counselors and therapists do not happen in a vacuum; they are situated in particular social and historical contexts which shape their appearance, and which change over time. While it is essential to provide students (and their families) with techniques for addressing and ameliorating symptoms, I believe that addressing the contextual sources of these symptoms is crucial to sustained improvement of emotional health and wellbeing.

Readers of SENGJ may be aware that the topic of perfectionism has been a long-standing professional, and personal, concern of mine (see, for example, Greenspon, 2021). The psychology of perfectionism is an interesting subject in itself, but it also helps to illustrate a variety of broader topics in human psychology, of relevance to SENG concerns.

Although advanced learners are no more likely to exhibit perfectionism than others as a group, the capacity to do exceptionally well does make perfect performance more enticing, and since as a society we tend to equate giftedness with outstanding accomplishment, the struggle for perfection can sometimes be a struggle to maintain

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25774/Z9J1-AS91
Address correspondence to Dr. Tom Greenspon
E-mail: tsg@greensponassociates.com

one's self-identity as a gifted person. Symptomatically, perfectionistic individuals can appear to be driving themselves, and usually others, crazy with the pressures they put on themselves to constantly reach the highest achievement levels. Alternatively, they may appear to be maddeningly difficult to motivate (for fear of incurring judgement). From extended clinical observation, perfectionism, beyond these observable symptoms, is understood as a serious self esteem issue reflective of anxieties about felt personal shortcomings and social acceptability. It is neither healthy nor adaptive in any way; perfectionistic people can be highly successful, for sure, but research indicates such success is despite, not because of, their perfectionism. The psychological origins of perfectionism lie in the negative personal meanings given to mistakes made. The particular meanings we give to our personal experience are shaped within a web of interpersonal relationships, from which we develop a set of emotional convictions about who we are and how we are regarded by others. These pre-reflective convictions guide our understanding of the world and how we should act. If families are demanding of high performance, for example, or if they seem to acknowledge high achievements but not personal qualities or uncomfortable feelings, or if they are in some turmoil which the child hopes to fix, the motivation for perfect performance and avoidance of mistakes can be singularly intense.

Families themselves exist within a social and cultural web which shapes how they view the goals of life, including child-rearing. In addition to particular neighborhood, religious, or political dictates, US American culture is materialistic, hyper-competitive, and hyper-individualistic. Outstanding achievers become idols, admired for their cultural power and their personal possessions. Personal pressure to perform frequently takes precedence over regard for others. The tide of Western culture runs counter to inner peace and allegiance to the commons, which is why recovery from perfectionism is frequently a life-long undertaking, however earnestly sought.

Because perfectionism is a symptom of underlying anxieties, it frequently entails a pernicious dilemma: outstanding performance can easily be inhibited by fears of failure; hence the aphorism, "The perfect is the enemy of the good." It is not the only emotional issue, however, that can have profound effects on academic performance and educational growth. Perhaps more acutely for SWGT, intense curiosity and the desire for understanding are impeded, or even derailed, by anxieties about how well one is doing, or by the impression that one can never be good enough. This same intensity is also seriously impeded by other worries about family circumstances, environmental issues, school safety, homophobia, racism, antisemitism, Covid and other significant illnesses—the list is long and reflects a real world in which the ability to securely immerse oneself in study becomes especially difficult. Anxieties, fears, necessary attention to life circumstances, or a sense of hopelessness about the world all become foregrounded in one's emotional world, perhaps even more acutely in highly sensitive SWGT, and all constitute powerful distractions from the ability to participate in the learning environment at school. The behavioral technologies which help students maintain focus or improve their organizational skills are vital for performance and self esteem, but these approaches can sometimes feel like pushing back the tide. A more depth-oriented, conjoint exploration of self-negating emotional convictions, and how they make sense given where they have come from, can result in a freeing sense of agency and expanded possibilities. Such a conjoint effort can also help a student feel understood and acceptable as a person, and it might motivate joining with others in efforts to change the circumstances affecting one's life.

In a still broader context, foundational elements of Western modernity, such as individualism and a belief in meritocracy, have left us with the notion that success is a solely personal accomplishment, and lack of success a solely personal failing, as the political philosopher Michael Sandel describes in detail in his book, *The Tyranny of Merit* (Sandel, 2021). Perfectionistic striving is a natural outcome of this worldview. So is the assumption that because certain groups have not risen far on the meritocratic ladder, they are less intelligent than others, and that this is due to motivational and biological differences rather than the social conditions these particular groups have historically endured. Early intelligence tests were produced by psychologists who were primarily White men, whose outlook and the tests they created as a result were limited by the worldview of their culture. As a result, when we think of gifted kids, we have typically thought of them as middle class and White. Only in more recent years has this inherent bias been examined with regard to our understanding of giftedness and its various manifestations. In another interview contained in the first issue of *SENGJ*, (Shutiva, 2022), Dr. Charmaine Shutiva discusses elements of the worldview held in many indigenous cultures regarding the nature of intelligence and how it is exhibited, and she also lays out an approach to advanced learner education that privileges the kind of communal effort and honoring of relations with others, and with the whole of creation, that so-called modernity has left us mostly bereft of. Within such a relational worldview one is aware that the ground for individual success is always prepared by the labor of others—family, teachers, coaches, teammates, coworkers, community labor, etc.—and that lack of success is a communal event eliciting renewed joint effort and support. "Giftedness," which we tend to treat as a kind of object a person can possess or not possess, can be seen instead as situated, that is, as a fluid, dynamic quality that becomes apparent in certain interpersonal or physical circumstances. Our view of it depends entirely on the

nature of the procedures we use to assess it. Expanding our worldview, or what some philosophers refer to as our particular cultural clearing in the midst of myriad others, is possible though admittedly quite difficult. In the face of our impending climate crisis, it seems also to be a necessity.

If I had to choose one topic to be included in counseling and clinical psychology doctoral programs concerning the psychological wellbeing of advanced learners, I would want to impart a phenomenological focus on the capacity for empathic understanding of the lived experience of their future clients. Whatever the diagnosis was, and whatever the presenting issues were, in my clinical experience with advanced learners there was almost always a pervasive sense of not being recognized. I might hear that "my teacher doesn't understand me," or "no one at school really knows me," or "I feel different from everyone," or "I'm alone." The observable symptoms of such experiences might lead to diagnoses of depression or anxiety; effective treatment of such disorders should include addressing the subjective, affective issues of otherness and lack of recognition. Again, the particular meanings given to one's experience will determine the functions of the various symptoms that bring them to therapy, and the conjoint search for these meanings can lead to the feeling of being recognized and understood that liberates and empowers. I would also want to mention that being in the presence of a young person who is noticeably brighter than oneself can be daunting, but that the conjoint search for understanding can feel especially enriching to the mental health professionals who make the effort to engage in it.

If I were giving a final talk to the field of gifted education, it is the value of this sense of personal recognition I would want to emphasize. I would suggest that we do best with our children when our abstract understandings of the nature of educational approaches can be related directly to their lived experience. Personal recognition of students is not simply an acknowledgement of their presence; it is an honest curiosity about what their world is like, and an encouragement of a sense of agency about matters affecting their lives. In the face of climate change, school shootings, the rollback of reproductive rights, and the silencing of educators, students themselves are organizing and speaking out. Can adults have the courage to join the dialogue, and the action?

We are in an age of "don't say gay" laws, book bans, and the cynical manipulation of voters to attack school boards and teachers, all of which prompts me to offer some concluding thoughts for this interview. Although neighborliness and commitment to common goals have been enduring elements of US cultural history, today we are seeing much more open and defiant expression of the negative and dangerous viewpoints which have also been with us since the beginning. The threats of racism, homophobia, anti-semitism, gender and sexuality biases, and violence have always been present in the conscious awareness of the people being targeted. Now, increasingly, our children are not safe. When a Black child, carrying a communal history of slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow into contemporary life, is made to feel like a different species of human and induced to be constantly aware of the suspiciousness, disdain, and potential violence of many in the White world, the resulting racial trauma comes full force into the classroom and cannot help but affect learning. The fact that in some places it has become illegal to talk about any of this in the schoolroom is making it impossible to create any conversation there about how make things better. The accusation that such discussions would be bringing politics into the classroom amounts to what psychoanalysts call projection: every one of the current teaching bans is itself a politically-motivated intervention into the business of the classroom. We do all of our SWGT immense harm in this way, limiting the vital resources advanced learning depends on and making the lived experience of Black, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ students invisible (Greenspon, 2022). As a result, these students are made to feel like outsiders, and classrooms are robbed of the benefits of the experiences of resilience and resourcefulness such students might bring in. Silence in the face of all of this amounts to complicity. It is vital to deal openly with these issues in any therapeutic setting; it is just as vital for educational professionals, and community members who care about education, to do what we can to call out and resist these anti-educational forces of negation and hate.

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Tom Greenspon, Ph.D. is a psychologist, marriage and family therapist, and author, now retired from a 38-year private practice with his wife, Barbara. After a B.A. from Yale, a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Illinois in 1968, and a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Rochester, he joined the faculty of the Medical Center at the University of Alabama in Birmingham until moving to Minneapolis in 1977. Tom is an active member of two international psychoanalytic organizations and their social justice committees. He teaches couple therapy at the Minnesota Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis and has written extensively on the topic of perfectionism.

Tom is a long-time member of the National Association for Gifted Children, currently serving on its Diversity and Equity Committee. Among their joint endeavors, Tom and Barbara were Co-Presidents, 1982-84, of the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented.

ISSN 2831-5693