A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Counseling and Guidance Network has accomplished so much with the efforts of our members! I hope that as I share some of our achievements, you will see opportunities where your talents and expertise would enhance our efforts.

The 63rd Annual Convention and Exhibition is just a few short months away and we have a fabulous program planned. We have 27 concurrent sessions with a Counseling and Guidance focus and be sure to schedule your travel so that you don't miss this year's Super Sunday Session on Career Counseling and the Gifted Student: Making Possibilities Happen. This jam-packed program could not have been possible without the efforts of our many reviewers and the Counseling and Guidance Network's Program Chair, Micah Bruce-Davis.

Also at this year's convention, be on the lookout for the unveiling of the new Counseling and Guidance Network's website. Currently under development, this website will provide resources for our members and those concerned with supporting the affective, social, and psychological well being of gifted and talented children. Our C&G Network's Team of website developers include William Goff (content creator), James Bishop (graphic designer/content editor), and Thomas Greenspon (content editor).

Oh, and did I mention that this fabulous program and the unveiling of the website will take place at Walt Disney World® Resort in Florida? As if these events are not enticing enough, you have the added benefit of central Florida weather and a whole lot of magic.

Communication has been an important initiative these past months. We have had some great discussions within NAGC Community and this newsletter, edited and prepared by James Bishop, is an example of the high quality content that we continue to bring to you. We would love to hear your thoughts on ways you would like for us to communicate with you. Please send your ideas to me at housanda@uncw.edu.

If you still don't see where your talents are needed, please join us at the Counseling and Guidance Network Meeting on November 4 at 9:00 AM in the Sierra 1 meeting room. There we will share our successes, look to the future, and provide opportunities for you to get involved with this wonderfully committed group of people. Remember, everyone is welcome, most especially YOU.

So with that, I give a special thank you to Micah Bruce-Davis, James Bishop, William Goff, and Thomas Greenspon. If you see them this year at NAGC's 63rd Annual Convention, please let them know how much you appreciate their efforts!

See you in Florida,

Angela Housand
Unique Psychosocial Challenges of Being Young, Gifted, & Black

By Joy Lawson-Davis

Nationally, Black gifted students are under-represented in gifted education programs. This under-representation persists due to many factors: the lack of teacher referrals of Black students for gifted services, biased identification protocols, inadequate teacher training in cultural competency, limited parent and family engagement in gifted education and discriminations deeply rooted in the American educational system of injustices and biases that have worked for majority population students and against cultural minority populations for generations.

While much of the focus on equity in gifted education has been built around the need for fair and unbiased identification practices, much less attention has been paid to the psycho-social aspects of what it means to be a student of color who is gifted.
Research and anecdotal stories collected over the past few years has provided a profile of these students that sets them apart from their White intellectual peers. Below are a few challenges that educators need to be aware of as program models are created to match the intellectual, academic and social needs of gifted students of color, including Black gifted students. Awareness of these challenges will help program developers create services that will go a long way to improving the likelihood that Black students served in gifted and advanced learner programs can be retained in programs and be successful in reaching their academic goals and improve their life outcomes.

Challenge One - Isolation Within a Program and Separation From Their Social Peers

Black gifted students who may be participants in a program where they may be the one or two in a particular class or program of their ethnic group or from their community, suffer from low self-esteem and isolation. Having to be a part of a group whose community of origin is so different from your own is a major challenge and can negatively impact a student’s ability to focus on the intellectual nature of the program. Adolescents in particular are always seeking others with whom they share something in common. Placing Black students in settings where they cannot identify with the environment and have little in common with
their peers sets an unreasonable expectation on the student to be comfortable enough to be their best. In many of these settings, students have reported being bullied and taunted by other students who believe that they ‘don’t belong’. Similarly, Black gifted students may feel a sense of separation from their racial peers when set apart from other Black students. This sense of separation has been expressed by students as ‘denying their race’. When students are accused of ‘acting white’, the dilemma they face is a tough one. They express having to navigate living in ‘multiple worlds’. For some Black students this is not a sacrifice they want to make, for others who are more adaptable, they learn to ‘code switch’ and are comfortable in any setting.

**SOLUTION:** As program models are developed, ensure that all staff receive cultural competency training and bring students into programs in ‘cohorts’ or groups with similar backgrounds and cultural experiences. All students need the support of individuals who share their understandings and value their cultural legacies.

**Challenge Two - Overcoming ‘Low Expectations’**

Classroom teachers who do not share the ethnic and cultural background of their students are less likely to have high expectations for them. When Black gifted students are placed in specialized programs and their teachers are not from their cultural group, implicit bias effects their teachers’ perceptions of their ability to be successful. Teacher expectations impact student achievement more than any other factor. Teacher education professionals mirror general education professionals demographically, the majority are White, middle class females. Without substantial training in cultural competency, gifted education classrooms are marked by ‘cultural mismatch’. This phenomenon exists when teachers do not share the culture, and experience of the students they teach. When teachers of the gifted hold low expectations for their gifted learners based on their lack of understanding, value and respect for the culturally different backgrounds of their students, outcomes for students are negatively impacted.

**SOLUTION:** Increase the numbers of teachers of color in Gifted Education positions and develop substantive cultural competency training programs for ALL teachers in gifted and advanced learner classrooms.

Putallaz of Duke TIP, David Lubinski and Camilla Benbow of SMPY, and Harrison Kell of the Educational Testing Service, the world’s largest private nonprofit educational testing and assessment organization.

“Duke TIP was an ideal partner for our most recent study because they have been collecting data since 1980 and they were able to pull comparable samples by age and ability,” SMPY’s Lubinski said. “Replication is so important and it’s not done often enough. I’m excited because this study confirms what we have learned about intellectual giftedness, and this makes our results that much more definitive.”

“Duke TIP is a strong advocate for above-level testing as a diagnostic tool for academically talented students and this study shows how powerful a tool it can be when it comes to identifying individuals who grow up to achieve outstanding accomplishments,” said TIP’s Makel. “If an easier test had been used, or even the same test used a year or two later, we would not have been able to identify these students as being different from many of their peers.”

The full study is available in Psychological Science. A PDF summary of study results is also available.

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**Challenge Three - Proving the Stereotypes Wrong**

Of all demographic groups, Black students suffer the most from negative stereotypes. These stereotypes have led to Black students being disproportionately affected by school policies and practices across the nation. Recent reports about school discipline practices place Black students most at risk for being suspended and expelled from our schools beginning in primary school. These practices are perpetuated by false notions and myths that suggest that most Black students ill-behaved in school, break more rules, are aberrant in school settings and are difficult to ‘manage’. The stereotype of the Black student who is headed for a life of crime has caused our nation to perceive Black students as non-studious, anti-intellectual, more likely to misbehave than to excel in school. The anti-intellectual stereotype has systemically placed more Black students in special education than in gifted education programs. The myth that Black students are not as intelligent as their White peers, persists in many school communities. These myths and stereotypes are a major challenge for Black students to overcome. However, there is anecdotal evidence that high achieving gifted Black students aim to ‘prove the stereotypes wrong’ by demonstrating their capacity to excel despite the circumstances of poverty, low expectations, inadequate resources that surround them.

**SOLUTION:** Mentoring programs that match Black gifted students with individuals from their communities who have been successful across disciplines provide excellent vehicles for having conversations about how one’s ‘zip code’ does not have to predict their life outcome. Focusing on academics and intellectual development have been indicated as important to facing this challenge and helping students overcome.

Understanding these three challenges can help educators relate to and build more effective programs for Black gifted students and others from culturally diverse and low income communities who face similar barriers to the accomplishment of their goals and fulfilling their dreams. It is the responsibility of all gifted education professionals to recognize these challenges, respect the students and their communities, and do their part to tear down walls that serve as barriers the realization of dreams held by gifted students from all racial groups and communities.

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**Lafayette Teacher Receives Mensa's Award for Creative Achievement**

by Tammy L. Lane

Susan McLaughlin-Jones, a science teacher at Lafayette High School in Lexington, Kentucky, has received the 2016 Copper Black Award for Creative Achievement from the Mensa Foundation.

The Mensa Foundation judges were impressed with the teacher’s development of Culturally Engaging Instruction (CEI) – a successful teaching strategy to address pervasive achievement gaps among students from diverse backgrounds. CEI, a model that emerged from McLaughlin-Jones’ 2012 dissertation, uses subtle cultural cues to improve student engagement.

“The CEI framework allows educators to understand why best practices such as nurturing relationships, group learning, and smaller learning communities matter so much in improving student achievement,” McLaughlin-Jones said.

McLaughlin-Jones earned her bachelor’s degree in physics from St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and her master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Kentucky.

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**Counseling & Guidance**

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The Stigma of Giftedness and Coping Strategies

By Tara Nyikos

“I don’t want to be different!”

You may have heard your gifted child say such things as: “Why am I not normal?” Or “I don’t want to be different!” Coleman (1985) describes a stigma of giftedness as having three basic principles: 1) gifted and talented students want normal social interactions, 2) gifted and talented students learn that people treat them differently when they learn of their differentness, and 3) gifted and talented students can influence how others interact with them by manipulating the information others have about them through various coping strategies. If your child does not feel like he or she will fit in with their peers because of their giftedness they may feel this stigma. If faced with this stigma they are likely to try to hide their giftedness from others in an effort to fit in.

This phenomenon is more prevalent in the middle and high school years as children are trying to develop their own sense of identity and are becoming more concerned with how their peers perceive them. Gifted children often perceive being different from peers negatively, as they believe it impacts their social relations in the school environment. The risk for stigmatism varies depending on numerous factors including level of intelligence and nature of giftedness. A study by Dauber and

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Coping Behaviors

Gifted students faced with the stigma of giftedness may behave in the following ways:

- Not admitting a test was easy
- Being noncommittal when asked about accomplishments
- Avoiding answering questions about moral or ethical concerns
- Asking questions they know the answer to
- Not volunteering answers
- Not telling their age if they are accelerated (Coleman, 1985)

Coping Disidentifiers

In an attempt to fit in with their peers gifted students may exhibit cues to others that they are actually more like the acceptable group than the unacceptable group. Some examples are:

- Be seen with people who are not gifted
- Ask silly or crazy questions
- Tell jokes
- Be very pleasant
- Make fun of other gifted kids (Coleman, 1985)
Benbow (1990) showed that mathematically precocious students reported the lowest social status and lowest feelings of importance than verbally precocious students. It was also observed that higher the gifted the less favorable profiles the students had. The study concluded that the “extremely precocious students may be at greater risk for social problems than the modestly gifted students” (p. 13). Those gifted students with an IQ in the range of 125-155 are within the socially optimal intelligence and should have little to no problems socially. However, as suggested in the previous study, those with an IQ of 160+ are at risk for social isolation caused by the absence of a suitable peer group with whom to relate (Gross 1994).

The degree to which a student experiences stigma directly correlates to the level of formal social and emotional program adapted within their school. Schools that provided for social connection and emotional support lead the entire school population to the belief that they were all part of a caring community thus more accepting of individual differences among students. Additionally, schools that celebrate high academic achievement equally with achievements in creative arts and athletics essentially smoothed the social path for gifted learners (Eddles-Hirsch, et al. 2012).

**How You Can Help**

Naturally, the ideal situation would be that your child would not have to endure the stigma of giftedness. However, that is unlikely. They will probably experience it to some degree at some point in their life. It is better to be proactive and prepare your child for such situations rather than let them walk around unprepared. As you know, the social world of children can be quite complicated, intimidating and quite honestly, brutal. The better prepared your child is to face those situations the more confident they will feel in their ability to effectively cope.

Cross (2014) states that by using coping strategies “students are attempting to control the information others have about home in an effort to engage in and maintain normal social interactions” (pg. 37). Using positive coping strategies is completely normal for gifted students. In fact, doing so will help them maintain balance between their social lives and academic endeavors. Parents can support positive coping strategies by
helping their child learn effective peer-relation, friendship-making and conflict resolution strategies.

Additionally, Dr. Steven Pfeiffer (2007), SENG director and Professor in the Psychological Services in Education program at Florida State University, recommends parents do the following:

• Set a good example in the home.
• Make family rules and standards clear and expectations high, but not unreasonable.
• Talk to your child about right and wrong. Discuss the way the social world works and they way people ought to live and interact with one another.
• Look for warning signs. If your child displays any of the following behaviors: doesn’t have a friend; plays too aggressively; is easily upset or quickly becomes angry or bossy; doesn’t share or respect others’ property; doesn’t get along well in a group situations; rarely compromises; shows little empathy for others’ feelings; acts discourteously, you may want to seek help from a professional.

References


Mental-Age vs. Chronological-Age Friendships

Research shows that gifted children are happier in school when grouped with mind-like peers (Eddles-Hirsch et al., 2012). Parents should seek out opportunities for your child to be with other gifted students where they will feel freer to be open about their abilities. Having said that, do not let your child abandon existing social relationships that they value. This is especially true for female gifted students who have long standing friends (Eddles-Hirsch et al., 2012). Quality time with same age peers is also valuable to your child. Finally, encourage your child to participate in non-academic extracurricular activities in order to form relationships outside of
As I coach parents about their gifted children, at some point in our series of conversations, they confess to me, “I’m starting to realize that all of this gifted stuff applies to me too.” They also say, “I don’t want her to grow up feeling the way I did. I don’t want her to think she’s misunderstood and unappreciated.”

With services for gifted children becoming increasingly scarce or even nonexistent, it is not surprising that services for gifted adults are nearly mythical. Many gifted adults are out there trying to self-actualize and integrate trauma on their own. They can not find a doctor, therapist, psychiatrist, or even coach who understands how giftedness applies to adult life. Ever resourceful, they read books, posts, and articles about gifted children and scale them up to apply to the complexity of adult life. Unsurprisingly, many gifted adults are frustrated by the lack of options, not to mention the frightening results that can be had after working with a well-meaning professional with no understanding of giftedness and a penchant for pathologizing intense and sensitive behaviors.

The reality is that giftedness does not end when you turn eighteen. Giftedness is not about what you study in school or how good your grades are. It is about you in your entirety -- from how you relate to others to how you experience the world. Giftedness is a holistic, all-encompassing term...
that we use to describe a person who’s having a deeper and more intense life experience than most.

This is why Paula Prober’s new book, Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth (available now through GHF Press) is as valuable as a sustainably sourced 10 carat diamond. When Paula, a licensed counselor and consultant who specializes in counseling gifted adults and consulting with parents of gifted children, began her blog in 2014, it was an immediate run-away hit. Through her writing, she skillfully managed to walk the line between compassionate and informative with a rare, calm clarity. Almost every week, nearly 2,000 readers enjoy her writings on what it means to be a gifted adult in modern society.

Through her writing, Paula edifies and empathizes with gifted people by comparing their minds to a rainforest. A simple yet brilliant comparison, rainforests have layers and a complicated ecosystem; gifted people also have layers and complicated thought and emotional patterns. Like rainforests, many gifted people have also met more than their fair share of chainsaws, people who would like to cut them down to size.

Fortunately, her wisdom now comes bound in paperback for those of you who like to do your reading in an analog format. Through compelling case studies and personal insights, Paula expands on sensitivity, perfectionism, multi-potentiality, and authenticity. I particularly enjoyed her thoughts on authenticity and what she calls the “no win choice -- authenticity or inclusion.”

In her book, Paula wants to know...

“I wonder if much of your day-to-day motivation stems from your deep desire to live an honest, real, and meaningful life. You may go to great lengths to examine your actions, statements, emotions, and thoughts because you want to speak and live your truth. It really matters. This may be one of many occasions when you are told by others to lighten up or that you think too much. But you feel driven by the need to be authentic.

Each chapter ends with a detailed list of strategies one can use to overcome challenges related to the chapter’s theme. Along with an exhaustive list of additional resources.

A particular favorite of mine,

“Keep searching for yourself. Do as much therapy, reading, writing, obsessing, questioning, crying, analyzing, creating, dancing, exercising, building, snowboarding, and rebelling as you need to do to get to what feels like your soul’s song. Then sing it. No matter what anyone tells you, sing out. The Universe will thank you.”
Despite the diversity in how gifted characteristics are expressed, I find the depth and drive of a gifted person to connect with authenticity is our most unifying feature. It is something we can all bond over. That seems to be the overarching impetus for the book itself. By understanding our rainforest minds, we lift ourselves up and make ourselves free to connect with ourselves and one another with the depth and authenticity we crave as gifted adults.

A Message From the Program Committee Chair

The Counseling and Guidance Network is looking forward to seeing you at Disney World in Orlando. We are excited to offer a program with leading professionals presenting innovative practices to develop the whole child. Expert practitioners and researchers will provide methods and resources to address issues such as underachievement, perfectionism, twice-exceptionality, and anxiety. Sessions also focus on a variety of students including, Black and Hispanic students, Indian American students, gifted females, students who are learning English-as-a-Foreign-language, and students experiencing poverty. You will also have the opportunity to discover ways to help students develop emotional courage, build community, develop positive self-concept, and deal with negative life experiences.

I’d like to highlight the Signature Series and the Super Sunday session dedicated to the affective, social, and psychological needs of gifted students.

On Friday at 2:30 pm, the experts in It Takes a Village: Partnerships to Support the Whole Gifted Child will share their experiences creating powerful partnerships to support gifted children’s cognitive, affective, social, and physical development.

In the session, Parent and Teacher Advocacy for Twice Exceptional Black and Hispanic Students at 9:15 am on Saturday, you will have the opportunity to explore how parent and teacher advocacy is needed to influence local school and district-wide collaboration to support twice exceptional learners who are Black and Hispanic.

On Saturday at 1:15 pm and 2:30 pm, scholar-practitioners in Gifted Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students: The Future Awaits will share how future sexual-minority youth may achieve more through expanded, innovative options such as GLTBQ studies and off-site internships.

Come to our Super Sunday session with David K. Duys, Carol Klose Smith, and Sussanah Wood from the University of Iowa in Career Counseling and the Gifted Student: Making Possibilities Happen at 8:00 am as they present an overview of the career needs of gifted students. Learn how Social Cognitive Career Theory can be applied to support the needs of gifted young adults and discover strategies to support gifted individuals career development.

See you in Orlando where we will Imagine the Possibilities & Make it Happen #NAGC16.

Micah Bruce-Davis