

The color of giftedness: A policy genealogy implicating educators past, present, and future

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Abstract:

This article offers a critical rereading of gifted education in the United States using a genealogical framework as defined by postcolonial theory. Using genealogy is appropriate because it sets the education profession within a family research tradition, implies the close connection between past and present, and enables us to systematically trace the evolution of exclusionary practices. The purpose of this article is to (a) demonstrate the utility of using historical research to undergird justice work in education, (b) show how gifted education policies and practices in the United States operate under a global context of whiteness and colonization, and (c) foster dialogue around ways educators can begin to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions and work toward establishing more equitable schooling processes and outcomes.

Keywords: giftedness | gifted education | postcolonial theory | racism in education

Article:

This research endeavor was conceived in crisis of conscience—the progeny of critical inquiry whose agonizing birth required persistence, frankness, and nerve, yet contemptible of exceptional tribute or acknowledgment. What began as general curiosity about the history of my field (gifted education) exposed startling discoveries of racism and pseudo-science. Starting in 1987, I began questioning the disparity between Black and White when it came to owning giftedness and I faced the dreadful apprehension that perhaps I was a part of the problem, rather than a creator of solutions. After decades of serving the gifted and talented, I dared myself to consider alternative explanations, definitions, and interpretations to long-held and taken-for-granted beliefs and systems.

This article offers a critical rereading of gifted education in the United States using a genealogical framework as defined by postcolonial theory. Using genealogy is appropriate because it sets the education profession within a family research tradition, implies the close connection between past and present, and enables us to systematically trace the evolution of exclusionary practices. “Without a historical lens, researchers run the risk of presenting

educational issues as temporal phenomena that result from a chronologically isolated moment and an idiosyncratic place, rather than the latest incarnation of a much larger and more involved legacy” (Horsford & D’Amico, 2015, p. 864).

The purpose of this article is three-fold: (a) to demonstrate the utility of using historical research to undergird justice work in education,; (b) to show how gifted education policies and practices in the United States operate under a global context of Whiteness and colonization, and (c) to foster dialogue around ways educators can begin to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions and work toward establishing more equitable schooling processes and outcomes. I agree with Horsford and D’Amico (2015) that it takes an active refusal of ignorance, an openness to historical research, and the courage to question problematic truths to uncover new ways to understand the present and work toward a nobler future.

METHODOLOGY

Following Marshall and Rossman (2011) and Rizvi and Lingard (2010), I begin with a description of my positionality because what I study, and how I approach research endeavors, is heavily influenced by my training and lived experiences as an educator.

I have been an educator for over 20 years and have used a constructivist model of learning throughout my career (both K–12 and higher education). That is, I embrace the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (among others) who posit that teaching and learning are relational; people construct knowledge/make meaning of phenomena together. This epistemology of learning translates to my scholarship. That is, my work is embedded in constructionism, the belief that “without the human mind, the objects of this world have no meaning. Explanations about humanity and nature are constructed within and amongst human beings as they creatively interact with the world and with each other” (Mansfield, 2011, p. 145). Following that, my theoretical perspective is heavily rooted in interpretivism, which means that often, one of the purposes of my research is to “understand and explain phenomena” (Mansfield, 2011, p. 147).

Further, it is important to know that, as an educator, I have been committed to critical self-reflection (especially while serving as a teacher and administrator of gifted programs) and worked to interrogate (and ameliorate) the color and class divide in gifted education (Mansfield, 2015). This critical stance translates into my scholarship, as well. For example, although I choose to approach my research from an interpretive stance to explore and describe phenomena, I often take a critical approach to my work, utilizing feminist theory (Mansfield, Welton, & Grogan, 2014), critical race theory (Mansfield & Thachik, 2016), and post-colonial theory (Mansfield, 2008), to name a few. Similar to Jürgen Habermas, who developed what he called a critical hermeneutics (Crotty, 1998), I have found it very useful to blend both critical and interpretive theoretical perspectives, meaning critical theory *informs* my interpretations.

It is important to note that some scholars may quibble about whether it is appropriate for critical theory to inform interpretivism, because there are differences between the purposes of these approaches (whether to understand or to challenge). However, because both theoretical perspectives take constructionism as their theory of knowledge, I agree with Crotty (1998) that these theoretical perspectives can co-exist comfortably together. Moreover, methodologies that

flow from both interpretivism and critical inquiry (e.g., ethnography and action research) often use similar data collection tools such as observation, interview, and document analysis (Crotty, 1998). Thus, similar to Brewer (2014) and Fischer (2003), I approach this historical project both interpretively and critically.

Historical Research

One purpose of conducting historical research is to reveal, “the motion and forces at work in our social reality” (Blount, 2008, p. 21) drawing attention to the implications of the past on the present and, possibly, the future (Hirsch & Stewart, 2005). Although “historical self-awareness” (p. 17) is essential to understanding and improving educational policy and practice in the immediate present and foreseeable future, most educational scholars and practitioners fail to recognize and capitalize on the productive nature of historical understanding as we work toward crafting a more just and prosperous future (Blount, 2008).

An additional purpose of historical research is to explore the ways subjects and objects are constituted in historical context and how “these objects and subjects [i.e., giftedness and students]—in the sense that we know them now—did not exist before they were constructed through textual and other practices” and inherited culturally (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 871). Coloma (2011) refers to a “self-reflexive historiography” that requires individual scholars, as well as fields of study, to question taken-for-granted truths and consider possible complicity. According to Coloma, we must “place our empirical, interpretive, and pedagogical practices in question in order to mark and evaluate what we have enabled and foreclosed as well as what the effects of our inclusions and exclusions have been” (p. 185). Coloma continues,

A sign of a healthy and thriving field is its ability to remain open to new questions and critiques and to be interrogative of its past and present, its accomplishments and desires, its limits and resistance, in order to imagine and move toward a future knowing that it does not know what it will become. (p. 210)

Likewise, historical research holds potential to uncover the ways power relations and practices are historically constituted (Blount, 2008; Peräkylä, 2005), thereby revealing the history behind why we do what we do. Importantly, there is productive power in conducting historical research, as it shows how we might become change makers and justice workers that lead the field toward more democratic and inclusive practices (Blount, 2008; Coloma, 2011; Peräkylä, 2005).

In short, historical understanding can motivate social justice work by making clear larger patterns of cumulative privilege and oppression along status lines. This understanding may stir persons to social justice work as they recognize that current conditions of oppression have grown from unique prior circumstances and human actions. As such, our current circumstances are open to question; they certainly are not part of an inevitable, predetermined path toward continued oppression. Historical insight, then, contributes to the sense of agency that any social justice work requires. (Blount, 2008, pp. 19)

Historical research has been heavily influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault—especially deconstruction and poststructuralist thought. Taken together, their thinking resulted in

a rejection of historicism, or what they perceived as the tendency of historians to commit so steadfastly to finding an overall pattern in history that they neglected to report anything that did not fit into a neat and tidy storyline (Foucault, 1972; Nietzsche, 1887). Meanwhile, other academics accuse Foucault of being historically naïve or anti-historical (Crotty, 1998; Fischer, 2003). For example, Milner (1991, via Crotty, 1998) described postmodernist historians, such as Foucault, as those who “inhabit a never ending theoretical present” (p. 199). I subscribe unreservedly to neither argument, and, instead, have come to understand historical research, and the assumptions we make, as a respectful contemplation of many ideas, some not without conflict. Thus, although the present historical undertaking claims to be a type of genealogical project, it is not necessarily a Foucauldian or Nietzsche-centered project. Thus, it is important to share some of Nietzsche's and Foucault's earlier ideas to show how this project is informed by, but also diverges from, both Nietzsche and Foucault. Thereafter, I share an overview of recent interpretations by contemporary scholars of what is referred to as critical policy genealogy.

Nietzsche's genealogy

In Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (1887), he writes that it is impossible to accurately discover the exact moment when and where morality (both the word and our understanding of it) came into being. Similarly, Nietzsche argued that historical research cannot be used to find the exact time and place that the first human (as we know humans to be) were born. Rather, we can trace our human ancestry as a continuous evolutionary process. Thus, rather than view historical work as searching for that one, true, original beginning, he views doing history as tracing an evolutionary process. That is, words, understandings, and being do not have an origin—rather, they have a genealogy. For Nietzsche, origins are a process, not an event.

Nietzsche further argues that this evolutionary process is accidental, comprising fate and chance, rather than human (or divine) motivation or plan. Although for Nietzsche, the evolutionary process is haphazard, he does acknowledge that behind every word (including meaning and practice) is the will to power over others. He stated, “The right of masters to confer names goes so far that we might venture to regard the origin of language itself as a manifestation of power on the part of rulers” (1887, p. 20). Nietzsche argued that it is the job of historians to look beneath language and discover the power behind the ways words and meanings evolve over time. In addition, he advised historians to approach their work as far removed from preconceived meanings, rules, and mores as possible. Although Nietzsche claimed he was amoral, he cautioned that taking this stance can result in an unhelpful nihilism. That, coupled with his claim that interpretation is not a neutral act, are points that scholars taking an interpretive and/or critical perspective can agree.

Foucault's archaeology and genealogy

Foucault's earlier works, which present archaeology as an alternative to historical methodology (Foucault, 1970, 1972), differ from his later works on genealogy (Foucault, 1990, 1995).

Foucault's earlier work (1972) stresses that his archaeology is not an interpretive discipline; that is, it does not seek to reawaken and reinterpret the forgotten or the unseen. Rather, Foucault views discourse as similar to a physical artifact. Namely, discourse is something that can be

found and examined as if it were a “monument” (p. 139). Moreover, similar to Nietzsche's genealogy, Foucault's archaeology does not seek origins or what he calls “the calendar of formulations” (p. 167); but, rather, the rules for discursive practices that allowed this particular discourse (or artifact) to exist. Foucault points out that anything that has ever existed has existed before. Thus, with no origin, there cannot be a subject (author, speaker) whom to attribute any word, concept, or idea.

This is far different from interpretivism, which seeks to examine the meaning, intent, and effects or implications of discourse. In other words, rather than view discourse only in terms of its existence and the conditions of occurrence and change, interpretivists treat discourse as more than an object and that which is negotiated between human beings; that which conveys meaning, that which most likely involves human agency and/or intent, and something that certainly has consequences. Critical theorists would add that although human beings have agency, their choices are often constrained by historical realities such as racism (Atwood & López, 2014) and sexism (Mansfield et al., 2014). However, both Foucault and interpretivists can agree on at least two points: (a) Discourse does not have any inherent meaning in and of itself (positivism) and (b) meaning is constructed, not discovered. In addition, Foucault's claim concerning absence of origins (My mother used to say, “There is nothing new under the sun”)¹ led him to believe that history can only be studied and presented as abundant but not necessarily synchronized micro-histories (Foucault, 1972). This envisioning of history being explored and retold as a type of individual bounded case or micro-history is a Foucauldian contribution that has been adopted by education scholars who take an historical (Brewer, Gasko, & Miller, 2011) and critical (Brewer, 2014) approach to their policy research.

Foucault's later works (1995) moved away somewhat from his firm rejection of the human subject as author and/or conveyer of discourse. Rather, his emphasis was on the human body and how power, discourse, and knowledge intersected and enabled the monitoring and controlling of the self (e.g., body, identity, character, personality). It was during this period that Foucault began to call his historical method *genealogy*. For him, genealogy was a new way of studying discourse wherein he could assert a more critical perspective. Namely, that modern discourse is not closer to Truth than historical discourse; rather, all discourse is created by mechanisms of power; which in turn, produce bodies of knowledge.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1995) takes the modern prison as a model to explain how observation, surveillance, discipline, measurement, and normalizing judgement, are technologies of power that distribute human beings within a hierarchical organization, resulting in punishments and rewards. Foucault points out that the modern prison is not the only system that uses technologies of power. Rather, other societies, such as the military, hospitals, and schools, use similar strategies of control because they serve similar purposes. For example, depending on the specific organization under discussion, some sort of specialist first determines a host of arbitrary standards against which affiliates are judged. Then, affiliates (troops, patients, students) are observed by professionals to determine whether they are skilled/unskilled, healthy/unhealthy or normal/abnormal, then classified and ranked according to how far they are from the norm. Thereafter, the experts work to correct whatever nonconformity, abnormality, and/or anomaly they find in particular cases. In the case of students in schools, the individual student becomes

¹ A colloquium derived from the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament of The Bible.

the subject of knowledge, and power justifies the claims that human science makes about that knowledge; thus, conclusions about the individual under consideration is justified. Foucault maintains that one of his purposes in genealogical research is to give voice to those trapped within the duplicity of the power–knowledge–discourse connection.

Critical policy genealogy

Relatively recent descriptions of critical policy genealogy are informed by the theorists discussed thus far, but sometimes coupled with more current researchers' particular interpretations, applications, and procedures. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that there is no specific formula for carrying out education policy research. Rather, the appropriate theoretical and methodological approach depends on a combination of factors: the type of policy under consideration; where, when, and by whom the policy was produced; the positionality of the researcher; and the purposes of the research. Foucault (1994) would agree with Rizvi and Lingard's aforementioned assumption about his work:

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area. ... I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator. ... I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers. (pp. 523–524)

Indeed, Olssen, Codd, and O'Neill (2004) go so far as to assert that genealogy is “justified as a method in terms of the fruitfulness of its specific applications” (p. 48). For example, this approach helps us understand policy discourse and its effects on everyday practice in schools. Moreover, findings can be used to make “things better in educational practice, contributing to progressive social change” (p. 50). Undeniably, “critical social research is interested not only in what is going on and why, but is also concerned with doing something about it” (Taylor, 1997, p. 24)

Critical policy genealogists (Olssen et al., 2004) include interpretation of texts as one component of genealogy's purposes. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) describe their research as a “textual and discourse approach: the critical analysis of actual policy texts, including analyzing and documenting the discourses within which texts are located” (p. 53). A focus on interpretation brings with it the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and power performs a major role in that process (Brewer, 2014). Similarly, although Gale (2001) distinguished between different types of historical and critical policy research, he points out that policy genealogy is distinct due to its focus on social actors' engagement with policy.

In each unique context, policy language and artifacts (e.g., academic philosophies, curricular documents, Constitutional clauses) are understood as potential carriers of meaning, open to unique readings by legislators, administrators, reformers, and concerned stakeholders. The readings of the different actors, themselves, in turn come to reembody the policies with new meaning. Often, these new meanings are then infused into ongoing policy discussions. (Brewer et al., 2011, p. 12)

In addition to acknowledging the importance of meaning making and social construction of knowledge, there is a common understanding that the purposes of critical policy genealogy is to trace the emergence and decent of phenomena, rather than search for origins (Olssen et al., 2004; Pillow, 2003). Olssen et al. (2004) described emergence as tracing “the movement of arising ... the leap from wings to center stage” (p. 48). Critical policy genealogists also trace the linkages between power, knowledge, truth, ontology, subjectivity, and practice (Olssen et al., 2004; Pillow, 2003; Taylor, 1997). Relatedly, there is a strong interest in considering who the winners and losers are and whose interests the policy serves or, in other words, who gets what (Fischer, 2003; Gale, 2001; Pillow, 2003; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010)

Within these linkages between power and discourse is a sensitivity to how practices are normalized. For example, Olssen et al. (2004) describe genealogy as a means to “document how culture attempts to normalize individuals through increasingly rationalized means, by constituting normality, turning them into meaningful subjects and docile objects” (p. 48). Walton (2010) agrees, adding to the mix the importance of “repetition and legitimization” (p. 137) to producing patterns of behavior in institutional practices and procedures and means of knowledge transmission and dissemination to name a few. Pillow (2003) adds that genealogy pays particular attention to “unmasking and questioning what seems innate or natural” (p. 149), and, further, that “genealogical analysis is suspicious of truth claims based upon assumed rationality and disputes understandings of subjects as singular, easily identifiable” (p. 150). Moreover, critical policy genealogy is interested in the role policy plays in representing, reproducing, regulating, and restraining certain bodies.

Bodies represent and are represented. Whether rendered invisible, portrayed romantically, described with statistics, fear, repulsion or pity, policies are about and for bodies. Our body is inescapable and cannot be lost in a chain of reference. ... Bodies are sites and centres of struggles between different power formations. Bodies bear the marks of these struggles and are also marked differently—processes and constructs of gender, race and class impact which bodies are marked and how they are marked. (Pillow, 2003, p. 148)

Walton (2010) would agree, adding that professionalization of policy players legitimize knowledge claims and subsequent ability to manage bodies. Hence, regulatory practices appear rational and necessary and provide the conditions for labeling particular groups as either problems or champions.

Discourse analysis enables the uncovering of these knowledge claims, regulatory practices, and the labeling of people. Importantly, genealogy makes possible an analysis of discourse relative to social arrangements with a particular focus on power and bodies (Olssen et al., 2004). Thus,

Discourse theory can be used to explore particular policies in their historical context; tracing how policy ‘problems’ are constructed and defined and how particular issues get to be on the policy agenda. It is also useful in highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways—reflecting how economic, social, political and cultural contexts shape both the content and language of policy documents. (Taylor, 1997, p. 28)

So, although Foucault (1972) was mostly interested in the procedures by which discourse comes to be accepted and revised, I am concerned most with the purposes and material effects of discourse. Whereas Foucault emphasized that studying discourse does not include the meaning of words and what they designate, I believe that discourse is a matter of words, and that words express beliefs and justify actions. There is a materiality to language. It is political. Language helps determine how one is treated and who gets what. Consequently, I agree with Foucault's (1972) assertions that those in power have the authority to define and label, and that “authorities of delimitation” (p. 41) must be considered when studying discourse.

Data Sources

Data sources comprised archived materials from the American Psychological Association (APA), American Sociological Association, American Philosophical Society Library, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Research Archives, George Mason University, Rockefeller Archives Center, and Truman State University Archives. Additional primary and secondary sources included biographical and autobiographical materials written by or about Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingworth (considered the father and mother, respectively, of gifted education in the United States). Findings from the previously archived materials are juxtaposed with more recent discourse in the public sphere, such as educator web sites and parent blogs, to show the extensive connection between political ideology and systems of knowledge, as well as the importance of binary opposition in categorizing people to retain the status quo. Also, examples of how these discourses have shifted over time will be discussed.

Postcolonial Framework

Adding critical theory to the genealogical toolbox (Foucault, 1994) demands that researchers interrogate issues of power and privilege. Moreover, taking a critical approach to a genealogical project calls on researchers to look at the implications of discourse/consequences of policy as part of analyses. Thus, using critical theory as a lens to view data assists researchers in determining whether a discourse/policy/practice is just or unjust, fair or unfair. Considering the ends problematizes the means.

The critical theory that informs my interpretations is postcolonial theory, as I believe it more closely matches the purposes of this project than other options. For example, according to Loomba (1998), the purposes of postcolonial scholarship is to make known the roots of modern knowledge, to question received truths, and begin the process of unlearning. Iain Chambers (1999) refers to this process as revealing the “historical disposition of truth” (p. 37) and asks us to perform *intellectual surgery* by reexamining our taken-for-granted judgments and definitions within ourselves and affiliated institutions. In addition, Kwok Pui-lan (2005) implores scholars, whether descendants of colonizer or colonized, to conduct an “archaeological excavation” (p. 3) of one's mind to uncover layers of colonialist patterns and thinking.

In his book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi (1961) illustrates the importance of power and binary opposition to maintain colonialist control in French colonies in Africa. For example, he states that those in power are quick to stress characteristics such as skin color, language, religion, and lifestyle that separate them from the subaltern, rather than noticing and celebrating

that which might show agreement and contribute to compatibility (e.g., concepts of family and kinship, character traits such as honesty and loyalty, values similar to the Golden Rule). Moreover, Memmi contends that the colonizer justifies rejecting likeness to the colonized by stressing natives' lack of intelligence, progress, and backward living while underscoring the cultural and technical superiority of those in power. Finally, because the colonizer is so preoccupied with difference, and the desire to know and understand the colonized is thwarted precipitously, those in power feel it is only natural to deny the colonized *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (freedom, equality, brotherhood).

Although the “residual effects” of colonialism vary in different parts of the world, one can understand the word as “shorthand” for conveying a “structure of inequity ... articulated alongside other economic, social, cultural and historical factors” (Loomba, 1998, p. 19) with race and the resultant disparity in lifestyle and economic opportunity the most salient factors (Fanon, 1961). Moreover, Fanon points to the important role of education in maintaining postcolonial-capitalist societies, stating, “wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see ... a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries ... necessary for the smooth operation of business” (p. 42).

For the purposes of this article, the focus is on the following key, interrelated postcolonial concepts important to the discussion of gifted education in the United States: (a) the extensive connection between political ideology and systems of knowledge; (b) the importance of binary opposition in generalizing, labeling, and categorizing the privileged and vulnerable; and (c) the role education plays in perpetuating the colonial project. Similar to Nietzsche's (1887) purposes, my aim is not to do away with giftedness; rather, my hope is that conducting a genealogy of gifted education and interpreting it critically will help us grasp the implications of the past, acknowledge continued struggles, and create something different for the future.

TROUBLING THE POLICY PAST

Although conceptions of giftedness have existed for centuries of recorded Western history, beginning with Plato, the major focus of this article is limited to what is commonly referred to as the *Progressive Era* (early 20th century) when the field of educational psychology became “professionalized and assumed the mantle of ‘science’” (Church, 1971, p. 390).

One cannot study the history of gifted education without confronting the legacy of former Stanford professor, APA president, and vicar of IQ testing and gifted education in America, Lewis Terman. An excavation for verity uncovered signed artifacts from eugenics organizations, as well as first-person accounts of this notorious man (Black, 2003; Chapman, 1988; Green 2000; Leslie, 2000; Lindstrom, Hardert, & Johnson, 1995). Most damning are Terman's own words, which support the conjecture that his work was framed by deep prejudice that carefully scaffolded his pseudoscience that is still influential today. Terman believed that “Spanish-Indian, Mexican, and Negro” children were “uneducable beyond the merest rudiments of training,” destined as the “world's hewers of wood and drawers of water,” incapable of becoming “intelligent voters” (Terman, 1916, pp. 91–92).

Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come. ... Children of this group should be segregated in special classes and be given instruction which is concrete and practical. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers. ... There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should not reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding. (pp. 91–92)

In addition, Leta Stetter Hollingworth, considered by many to be the mother of gifted education in the United States (Silverman, n.d.), popularized eugenics to generations of prospective classroom teachers to the point of integrating eugenic content into teacher education courses (Selden, 1999). Hollingworth began her career as a schoolteacher in Nebraska before eventually earning advanced degrees at Teachers College, Columbia University where, thereafter, she worked as a professor of educational psychology. Like Terman, Hollingworth devoted most of her attention to the study of the gifted and talented. Although Hollingworth differed from Terman in that she worked to dispel the belief in biological determinism associated with testing gaps between men and women, both purported that the low numbers among certain racial and ethnic groups in gifted and talented (GT) programs was evidence that children of non-White, non-middle/upper-class descent are less intelligent by nature (McClymer, Knoles, & Pulda, 2001). It is important to note, however, that Hollingworth writes in a manner much less forceful than Terman and is quick to agree with the notion that we just do not know all there is to know about giftedness or intelligence. For example, in her 1926 book, *Gifted Children; Their Nature and Nurture*, Hollingsworth admits, “So few data have been gathered to show the proportion of gifted children in relation to race, that it is perhaps scarcely worthwhile to discuss the topic except to say that we are ignorant of the facts” (pp. 68–69). Hollingworth maintains that sampling efforts are constrained because groups of peoples have emigrated to the United States over the centuries under very different conditions and very different purposes; thus, we can never generalize research findings on groups (Italians, for example) with the mother country. Hollingworth explains that we can, however, come to very confident conclusions on the limited research that does exist in this country:

Several surveys have been made to test the mentality of Negro children. These surveys unexceptionally show a low average of intellect among children having Negro blood. Comparatively few of these children are found within the range which includes the best one percent of White children. It is, however, possible by prolonged search to find an occasional Negro or mulatto child testing about 130 IQ. ... These tests have been made by various psychologists, in widely separated sections of the country. Their combined and consistent result must be considered more than a mere suggestion that Negro children furnish fewer gifted individuals than white children do, in the United States. (pp. 69–70)

In addition to discussing race as a stand-alone construct, Hollingworth examines issues of language by comparing the rate of gifted identification between people of Italian, Swedish, and Jewish parentage and, in doing so, concludes that intelligence is not only native, but greater in Nordic and non-Catholic populations:

American children of Italian parentage show a low average of intelligence. The selection of Italians received in this country has yielded very few gifted children. This inferiority is

not referable to “language difficulty,” for children of Swedish and Jewish parentage, under the same handicap of foreign language, show a much higher average in the tests. (Hollingworth, 1926, p. 71)

Moreover, Hollingworth's work also examines issues of socioeconomic status and giftedness, noting that distinguished people are usually born in urban areas from “well-educated, well-to-do families” with professional fathers (p. 53) and “found in schools located in good residential sections” (p. 56):

More recent and much wider investigation carried out by Terman has served only to confirm these findings. In a sample of a thousand gifted children there have occurred a few whose fathers are semi-skilled or unskilled manual laborers; so that the contribution of families at these economic levels is not absolutely nil. However, it is extremely meager; and the professional classes, who include not over two per cent of the total population, furnish over fifty per cent of the children testing in the highest one percent. (pp. 53–54)

Hollingworth does question the presence of gifted children in the poorer, unprofessional classes, but not in a way that one might expect. Rather, that poor, gifted children exist at all is cited as evidence that environmental hypotheses concerning giftedness must be altogether false:

There is no longer any doubt that in cities and towns gifted children are usually found in good environmental circumstances. Their parents have been able to attain and to maintain comfortable or luxurious modes of living in the great majority of cases. However, a few of the very gifted are born into homes where the father is an unskilled or semi-skilled manual laborer, and are reared without “advantages.” These cases teach us that the gifted are not absolutely confined to any one set of environmental conditions. ... They also inform us that the intellectual gifts revealed by test are not due to superior environments, but are merely selected by them. If superior environment were the cause of high scores in tests, no child living from birth in squalor could score high. (pp. 57–58)

It is beyond the scope of this article to review all the major players, but to truly understand the historic grounding of IQ testing and gifted education in America, it is imperative to describe the major tenets of the eugenics organizations to which Terman, Hollingworth, and their associates belonged and how these ideas fit within the context of the current discussion. Likewise, it is important to pause to consider a few questions before proceeding: Considering the generation in which they lived, should one interpret Terman and others' work with a measure of munificence in that their writings merely seem biased, compared to today's enlightened sensibilities? Was this just the way things were back then (Mansfield, 2007)? Or did their contemporaries resist their ideas and/or conduct research that documented alternative explanations concerning race and class and their relationship to intelligence and school achievement? The following section gets at the heart of these questions.

Eugenicists and Their Critics

Eugenics proponents believed that poverty, crime, and immorality were *evidence* of poor genetics. The most prominent believers successfully lobbied for negative eugenics policies including restrictive immigration, antimiscegenation statutes, and the forced sterilization of the so-called “unfit,” including people of color and poverty. They also advocated the dismantling of welfare, orphanages, and medical care. Undoubtedly, the success of such entitlements promoted reduction in infant mortality rates and countered eugenicists’ aims to eradicate unfit populations, thus securing the stability of a master race. In addition, eugenics associates travailed to obtain so-called positive eugenics policies, including education privileges and tax preferences for the eugenically vigorous. They considered intelligence to be the most valuable human quality and worked to construct what they referred to as an *aristogenic caste system* whereby born leaders would be identified early and cultivated for their rightful roles in society. The most rewarding jobs would go to the brightest citizens; the average and marginally educable would be made productive workers who submitted to the governance of the elite. Central to their utopian vision was a society perpetuating White middle- and upper-class power that represented the new meritocracy that was justified to judge others in the name of progress.

According to Chapman (1988) and Tyack (1974), immigration in the United States tripled during the 1919–1920 school year. Schools were overcrowded and difficult to manage. That, coupled with Terman's eugenics ideology, fueled the testing and tracking craze of the 1920s. Interestingly, fellow psychologists actually questioned the validity and reliability of the tests, as well as Terman's claim to the degree of hereditary influence on intelligence. Some academics also challenged the norms of the Stanford-Binet as biased against people who were not from White, middle- or upper-class backgrounds. Terman was also criticized for his rhetoric on the infallibility of IQ tests and the impact of test scores in determining the fate of an individual student's entire life course (Chapman, 1988).

According to Walter Lippmann (1922), one major eugenics critic, popular outlets such as the daily news and monthly magazines touted Terman's claims. As some had predicted, the media picked up the story, presented it to the public as scientific evidence, and the average citizen on the street believed the quackery (Black, 2003; Chapman, 1988; Selden, 1999). Terman's quest for mental and moral measurement and subsequent societal controls became common practice. Terman's promotion of tests as measures of hereditary capacity was used to classify and track students resulting in road blocks to opportunity for vulnerable populations, as well as pipelines of privilege for the praiseworthy (Chapman, 1988; Leslie, 2000; Valencia, 1997).

After IQ testing and tracking were solidly in place in American schools, Terman turned his devotion to finding, studying, and nurturing the gifted. Meanwhile, some psychologists had recanted their earlier nativist beliefs and disassociated themselves from eugenics organizations, most notably Carl Brigham and Henry Goddard in 1928 and 1929, respectively (Black, 2003; Leslie, 2000). Though most geneticists viewed eugenics as a vulgar and unproductive field of research, Nazi Germany utilized United States eugenics science for their experiments and solutions beginning in the 1930s (Black, 2003; Leslie, 2000). After WWII, much of the American eugenics movement went underground, but the forced sterilization, marriage, and immigration laws put into place by eugenicists continued well into the 1970s (Black, 2003; Leslie, 2000). Ironically, during the Nuremberg *crimes against humanity* trials, the defense built

their argument on California statutes, as well as the opinion of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, concerning the civility and legality of exterminating the unfit (Black, 2003).

In 1939, Hollingworth's contributions to the field of educational psychology were cut short when she died of cancer at the age of 53. A decade later, controversies over eugenicists' beliefs and political activities continued. In 1949, California eugenicists renamed their organization American Society of Human Genetics and continued their work, albeit more surreptitiously (Black, 2003). Meanwhile, Terman was at the center of a network of school administrators and educational psychologists, aided by his graduate students, responsible for promoting social opportunity for the gifted, who conveniently came primarily from White, privileged backgrounds (Chapman, 1988).

According to Chapman (1988), Terman frequently thumbed his nose at anthropologists; claiming that his genetically based findings debunked their commonly held environment hypothesis for learning and behavior. Terman's strong personality didn't irk only anthropologists and some editors. His muscular stance came to the fore in his relationship with his students, as well. In his 1995 edited oral account, Kimball Young, 35th president of the APA and former doctoral student of Terman, remembers being exasperated with Terman's so-called "facts" derived from his studies used to confirm the "racist doctrine" (p. 16) always foremost in his mind. Young, as cited in Lindstrom et al. (1995), adds that he quickly realized that it was "hazardous" (p. 85) to express his contrary opinions so he kept his mouth shut. He believed if he did not "play it cool" he would not successfully defend his dissertation or go on to graduate.

Finally, abundant sources (Ackerman, 1995; Kreuter, 1962; Lippmann, 1922; Raftery, 1988; Selden, 1999) indicate that there was resistance great and small concerning native intelligence and the use of IQ testing as societal sorters (in the military and in schools). In fact, Binet and Simon (1916) cautioned against using the IQ test as a sorting instrument, noting that scoring differences between children, in research conducted in France, seemed to be based more on poverty, rather than any other factor. Binet and Simon expressed discomfort that this fledgling tool might be used contrary to their original intention: as a means to determine areas in need of remediation in students who were performing behind their peers (Binet & Simon, 1916; Plucker, 2013; Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). Criticism hailed from many sources, including scholars, journalists, educator-practitioners, and military leadership (Ackerman, 1995; Kreuter, 1962; Lippmann, 1922; Raftery, 1988; Selden, 1999) The science behind the push to use IQ scores as a sorting mechanism was called into question due to the cultural bias of the tests and the research literature that showed evidence of the influence of environment on personality, learning, achievement, and adult lifestyle, as well as the fear that tracking would lead to undemocratic school practices (Ackerman, 1995; Kreuter, 1962; Lippmann, 1922; Raftery, 1988; Selden, 1999). According to Church (1971), educational psychologists such as Terman purposefully snubbed important research findings to advance their political agenda:

In the period in which they worked, eschewing the social dimension of education could not have been anything but deliberate, for the social dimension was a central element in the educational thinking all around them. John Dewey is a convenient standard against which to hold the psychologists; Dewey was an educator—indeed, a psychologist. (p. 392)

Thus, the argument that “this was just the way things were back then” (Mansfield, 2007, p. 1) is unsubstantiated.

PROBING THE POLICY PRESENT

In addition to historicizing gifted education in the United States, it is important to investigate the continued discourse in the present and relatively recent past. Although the prior section juxtaposed ideas from the Progressive Era, this section limits its focus to the discourse of professional organizations that aim to serve gifted students and their families, as well as popular discourse that aims to reach a similar audience.

Gifted or Privileged?

In an article in a popular magazine, titled “Growing up gifted: Identifying and educating gifted & talented kids” (Jain, 2007), an elementary school principal and two university professors were interviewed concerning the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs. On the one hand, a school administrator related that the disparity among various schools essentially made perfect sense due to the pockets of intelligence or “clusters of gifted families” (p. 7) found throughout the city. This argument was countered by Dr. Richard Olenchak, University of Houston, who retorted, “I would not think that Austin would have more or less GT students than any other place. ... I am so very weary of society priggishly equating talent with financial wealth” (p. 7).

On the web page of National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) one finds a plethora of articles written for parents and educators of the gifted. In an article I first downloaded in the mid-1990s (still available at the same url address), is an explanation about the innateness of giftedness:

If intelligence were something you could see, touch, and weigh, it would be something like a can of paint. The genius would have a gallon, the person who has severe retardation, only half a pint. The rest of us would have varying amounts between these extremes, with the majority possessing about two quarts. (NAGC, n.d.-a)²

Jain (2007) also notes that the gifted need a “radically different” (p. 8) education than the nongifted. Gifted children actually “demand more” from their parents and teachers: more attention, more freedom, and more ingenuity. She urged parents to advocate for unique educational opportunities that motivate and enrich their gifted children, because they are so vastly different from the average child. This sentiment is echoed by Davidson (2004):

Parents need to realize that precocious children are by definition exceptional, and raising any exceptional child is a challenge. The child will demand much of the parent's time and

² Since the publication of Mansfield (2015), during which this article was under review, the cited article has been removed from the NAGC web site. However, I was still able to find it on ERIC as of March 2, 2016: Identifier: ED321481, Publication Date: 1990-00-00, Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children Reston VA.

attention. Raising exceptional children can be expensive, particularly when schools don't meet their needs. (p. 62)

The NAGC web site reflects this, warning parents that understanding giftedness will demand “investment of time, money, and energy” (NAGC, n.d.-a). However, there is no discussion on what a parent should do if they are raising a gifted child while relying on limited financial and other resources. This omission seems to presume that the gifted only come from families who have the time, money, and energy to meet the demands of raising an exceptional child. Since my last stint as a gifted-program administrator was in Texas, I checked the web site of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) to see how their conceptions of giftedness may have changed over time, and found that TAGT forwarded similar assumptions. First, according to TAGT, indicators of giftedness include:

1. Demonstrates a great appetite for books and reading;
2. Consistently organizes, sorts, classifies, and groups things;
3. Fantasizes often;
4. Has more energy and less need for sleep than peers;
5. Loves puzzles, mazes, building blocks, and challenging toys, and;
6. Shows sensitivity toward the feelings of others. (TAGT, n.d.)

Second, the TAGT discussion excludes how to tell if a child is actually fantasizing beyond behavioral norms, instead referring constituents to a plethora of expensive books, puzzles, and challenging toys to be purchased and deployed as evidence of giftedness. No low-cost or cost-free alternatives are offered. Again, the correlation of giftedness and privilege is assumed, but never problematized. Indeed, the very idea that such information is available on the Internet, yet of limited distribution in conventional media, speaks to the *digital divide* facing most impoverished families.

Finally, a recent article by Gail Robinson (n. d.), probes the question of giftedness and privilege further, noting that the relatively wealthy spend a healthy sum of money on tutoring programs that prepare children for gifted testing. Robinson remarks,

The entire gifted industry has come under fire as a bastion of elitism and privileged helicopter mothers gone wild. The makeup of gifted programs only fuels such charges. While 8 percent of White students and 13 percent of Asian students were in public school gifted programs in 2006, only 3.6 percent of Blacks and 4.2 percent of Hispanics were. ... In affluent Montgomery County, MD, about 60 percent of white and Asian students qualified for gifted programs. ... Some areas are like Lake Woebegone, where all children are above average.

Debate is not limited to the discourse around the role of affluence and opportunity in shaping giftedness, as the following section will show.

Defining and Identifying the Gifted

The NAGC acknowledges, “There is, as yet, no universally agreed upon answer” defining what is giftedness or who is gifted (NAGC, n.d.-c). Conceptions of giftedness are “fluid concepts and may look different in different contexts and cultures” (para. 1). Moreover, definitions fall along a continuum from traditional to progressive and coincide with how one goes about identifying gifted students:

Although interpretations of the word “gifted” seem limitless, there are a handful of foundational definitions that may be categorized from conservative (related to demonstrated high IQ) to liberal (a broadened conception that includes multiple criteria that might not be measured through an IQ test). (NAGC, n.d.-c)³

For example, the federal government definition of giftedness is relatively broad, encompassing a variety of capabilities:

The term gifted and talented student means children and youths who give evidence of higher performance *capability* in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities *not ordinarily provided* by the schools in order to develop such capabilities fully. (NAGC, n.d.-c, emphasis added)

On the other hand, the researcher Gagné (1985, through NAGC, n.d.-c) designates giftedness as “untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities” that distinguish children as part of the “top 10%” of their peers. Rather than take a stand at a point somewhere on the continuum, the NAGC states:

NAGC does not subscribe to any one theory of the nature of human abilities or their origins. We assert that there are children who demonstrate high performance, or who have the potential to do so, and that we have a responsibility to provide optimal educational experiences for talents to flourish in as many children as possible, for the benefit of the individual and the community. (NAGC, n.d.-c)

In addition to difficulties defining giftedness, disputes continue concerning the best way to identify gifted students. For example, Robinson (n.d.) remarks,

Controversy also stems from the process by which school districts determine giftedness. Many rely entirely or in part on an IQ test, but experts caution that many tests for giftedness have serious limitations. At best, they provide a snapshot—a rather fuzzy snapshot at that—of the child on the day of the test. Most tests do not measure artistic or social abilities and may give short shrift to a child with extraordinary math abilities, but ordinary talents in other areas.

And when districts do use alternative assessments such as classroom observations and grades, their inherent subjectivity is prone to garner criticism. For example, a student who exhibits

³ Since the publication of Mansfield (2015), during which this article was under review, this paragraph has been removed from the web page. However, I was able to find the original language at: The Gifted Child. (n.d.). “The gifted child in school.” Retrieved March 2, 2016 from <http://thegiftedchild.weebly.com/what-is-giftedness.html>.

behavior problems or who is not fluent in English may not be considered gifted irrespective of their intelligence, creativity, or other characteristics.

On the NAGC web site, one finds conflicting information defining giftedness and means to go about identifying the gifted. For example, an article written by Callahan (1997)⁴ states that “experts” are not sure which theory of intelligence is “most viable” but explains there are “general understandings about intelligence that provide useful guidance in interpreting the meaning of information you are given about your child's intelligence.” The article further states that IQ scores are usually good predictors of school performance, but not always. For example, some people with high IQs do not succeed due to learning disabilities or lack of motivation. On the other hand, some students do exceptionally well in school and in life despite testing within the average spectrum. Callahan claims that no matter the effectiveness of the teacher and stimulating the environment, one cannot change normal people into gifted persons. Rather, according to Callahan, only the child who scores high on an IQ test is likely to need programmatic adjustments that offer more complex, abstract, and in-depth activities, along with opportunities to test out of curriculum mastered early. Indeed, if this does not happen, gifted students will lose their potential.

Although the article authored by Callahan (1997) placed special emphasis on the IQ test, official guidelines of the NAGC (n.d.-b) appear to take a more comprehensive approach to the identification process:

Individual tests are not infallible predictors of giftedness, intelligence, or ability. That is why identification for giftedness and/or a particular gifted program should be multifaceted ... multiple measures and valid indicators from multiple sources must be used to assess and serve gifted students. Information should be gathered from multiple sources (caregivers/families, teachers, students, and others with significant knowledge of the students), in different ways (e.g., observations, performances, products, portfolios, interviews), and in different contexts (e.g., in-school and out-of-school settings).

Although this extended quote paints a picture of holistic assessment that may capture a diverse group of students exhibiting a variety of traits, a third article (NAGC, n.d.-a) available on the NAGC web site states, “Until some scientific breakthrough is developed, we will rely on the IQ score to approximate how mentally gifted a person may be.”⁵ The writer goes further, cautioning the reader about the “trickiness” of semantics and warns parents to “challenge those who cry ‘elitism’ and explain the true meaning of the term,” that “in fact, gifted children are elite” as anyone else in our society who does something “important” (NAGC, n.d.-a).

DISCUSSION

⁴ Since the publication of Mansfield (2015), during which this article was under review, this article (formerly free and open to the public) has been placed behind a firewall. However, it is accessible to organization members via online magazine, *Parenting for High Potential*.

⁵ Since the publication of Mansfield (2015), during which this article was under review, the cited article has been removed from the NAGC web site. However, I was still able to find it on ERIC as of March 2, 2016: Identifier: ED321481, Publication Date: 1990-00-00, Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children Reston VA.

This genealogical project shows that the histories of measuring intelligence and gifted education are, at best, troubling. Further, Terman, the father of gifted education and IQ testing in the United States, was not simply a neutral inheritor of an ordinary prejudice. Rather, he was one of the chief architects of a racist utopian project whereby the so-called heritably elite would govern the genetically inferior. Terman used his privileged position to bully his students to defer to his dogma, convince politicians to adopt eugenics legislation, and to exploit the public at large by selling the legitimacy of his pseudoscience. The political implications of such a philosophy included the denial of resources for students from whom the *gifted* label was withheld. The political arguments of who gets what clearly favored those whom pseudo scientists deceptively categorized as superior.

Hollingworth, the mother of gifted education in America, clearly interpreted research on intelligence and giftedness to fit her eugenics' views. Hollingworth claimed the presence of gifted children in lower-class families was evidence that the environment could not play a role in performance on achievement testing, stating: "If superior environment were the cause of high scores in tests, no child living from birth in squalor could score high" (1926, pp. 57–58). Though a prominent scholar, Hollingworth failed to consider alternative explanations. For example, she just as easily could have claimed that inherited genes could not play a role in performance on achievement testing because some elite families had children who were of lower intelligence, and stated something akin to, "If superior genes were the cause of high scores in tests, no child living advantaged from birth could score low." Both of the previous statements are ridiculous at worst, speculative at best. It leaves one questioning Hollingworth's motives when one considers her membership and support of eugenics organizations, coupled with the fact that many geneticists, anthropologists, and even educational psychologists of her time posited that an interplay between both heredity and environment influenced intellectual development and school achievement.

This is not to say that Terman and Hollingworth were the first to coin the word *gifted*, or that eugenics is responsible for the original and singular discourse that normalized the heritability of giftedness and forwarded the race-gifted connection. (They did not pluck their ideas out of nowhere.) Rather, it is possible to imagine that their combination of power, knowledge production, and discourse may have marshaled that leap from "wings to center stage" that Olssen et al. discuss (2004, p. 48). This research is limited to the discourse that was popularized in educator preparation programs long ago. In staying with our genealogical representation, Terman and Hollingworth have their family trees, so to speak. This research uncovered some discourse of and subsequent influence from Terman's mentors (his fathers, so to speak); but I did not reach back to trace the evolution of their ideas further. Even so, as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out, social science research changes the way policymakers think about things, including policy problems and solutions.

It may be convenient and comfortable to think the eugenics movement is dead, but the truth is that the earlier works of Brigham and Goddard (mentors to Terman) and Arthur Jensen are still quoted in popular literature such as the 1994 bestseller, *The Bell Curve*, by Herrnstein and Murray, as evidence of genetic links between the races in terms of intelligence, as well as between cognitive ability and criminal behavior. This, despite the fact that Goddard recanted his

views as early as 1928 and separated himself from Terman and others of his ilk (Black, 2003; Fox, 2012; Leslie, 2000).

Today, although most scientists dispute eugenics theories as counterfeit academia, school policy, and practice, as well as laws and systems, are firmly grounded in and genealogically connected to eugenicists' propaganda (Quigley, 1995). Consequently, I agree with Black's (2003) assessment that the system carved out by so-called experts of the eugenics movement retains its strength and vitality.

For example, according to the faulty thinking of contemporary popular discourse, intelligence in the normal student is static; it is impossible to turn the ordinary into the gifted by delivering a rich learning environment. Yet, intelligence in the exceptional person is fluid; the gifted can lose their potential if not provided the ideal environment. Moreover, gifted learners deserve opportunities to explore their physical world, manipulate a language-rich environment, and experience music and art in a no-pressure environment differing from that found in "drill and practice" regular classrooms (Callahan, 1997). Unfortunately, these same proponents fail to discuss the effect of a high-pressure, drill-and-practice environment on the rest of our nation's children. There is a troubling lack of discussion about what an overwhelming majority of the nation's children deserve.

Neither the NAGC nor TAGT have forwarded an evidence-based characterization of what giftedness entails, nor the best means for determining whether students do, indeed, possess those traits. Moreover, definitions of intelligence remain elusive, as do the methods that should be used to appropriately teach the gifted once they are identified. However, a book recommended by both organizations, *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom* by Susan Winebrenner (1992), calls teachers to trust their observations more than the "evidence of mediocre standardized test scores or poor grades" (p. 139). Whether fortunately or unfortunately, the identification process and programs vary enormously from district to district (Davidson, 2004; Jain, 2007; Johnsen, 2004; Valdés, 2003).

Like Terman (1916), many modern authors call for the separation of the *gifted* from the *normal* population in special fulltime classes. This is justified, they say, because, according to some, these 3–5% of the highest-performing students are not only the most deserving, but this cohort will actually go places or use their talents to benefit the rest of society (Davidson, 2004; Jain, 2007). I noted earlier that an article posted on the NAGC web site (n.d.-a)⁶ that advised parents to school others on the term *elitism*, explaining that gifted children are elite, as are others in society who do important things. This attitude is reminiscent of Memmi's (1961) complaint that the colonizer stresses his superiority while also emphasizing the colonized deficits to justify the unfair distribution of resources.

Others, however, call for a more equitable society where all children will be enriched and challenged in inclusive classrooms (Chapman, 1988; E. Jensen, 2006; Margolin, 1994;

⁶ Since the publication of Mansfield (2015), during which this article was under review, the cited article has been removed from the NAGC web site. However, I was still able to find it on ERIC as of March 2, 2016: Identifier: ED321481, Publication Date: 1990-00-00, Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children Reston VA.

Theoharis, 2007). Authors calling for the end to elitist practices may differ in their basic philosophy or approach to solving the problem (Davidson, 2004; E. Jensen, 2006; Margolin, 1994; Slocumb & Payne, 2000; Theoharis, 2007; Valdés, 2003; Valencia & Suzuki, 2001), but most seem to agree with Davidson's (2004) claim that the majority of GT pullout programs are merely political solutions that have more to do with pacifying parents than changing the status quo. In fact, one cannot blame the ordinary citizen for crying *elitist* or wonder why the majority of children feel left out when it comes to the opportunities offered children who own the *gifted* label. I agree with Margolin (1994) and Davidson (2004) that one does not need to be identified as gifted to benefit from listening to enjoyable guest speakers, visiting museums, conducting experiments, putting on a puppet show, or learning the legends of Greek gods. Nor does one need to own the *gifted* label to necessarily excel at advanced placement courses in high school, go to college, and have a successful career (Callahan, 1997; Mansfield, 2011; Oakes, 2005).

Further, the federal definition of giftedness—“children and youths who give evidence of higher performance capability ... who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to develop such capabilities fully” (NAGC, n.d.-c)—begs important questions such as, “Why are these services or activities not ordinarily provided by schools?” And, “Do not all children have potential and capability? How do we *know* if we are not providing opportunities at schools for them to demonstrate their potential beyond state and local mandated benchmarks and high-stakes testing?”

Moreover, evidence from proverbial *Lake Woebegone* (“where all the kids are above average”) provokes one to ask whether it is probable that 60% of Whites and Asians in some wealthier school districts are gifted. Perhaps, we should be asking whether these particular schools are providing facilities and delivering instruction that most school districts cannot afford; thus, giving even average student's abundant opportunities to develop and demonstrate their capabilities. “In other words, money begets resources, and resources beget opportunities, and opportunity generates the possibility that students' capabilities will be developed to the fullest.” (Mansfield, 2015, p. 11).

It is important to pause for a moment to observe both regularities and ruptures (Brewer, 2014) in the *Lake Woebegone* example. Recalling Foucault's argument that there are patterns and particular regularities that are perceptible in discourses in different cultures or historical periods, but they are never exactly the same across time and space. For example, there is no way that, at the turn of the 20th century, Terman and friends would have entertained the idea that Chinese immigrants would surpass Anglos in terms of percentage of those identified for GT programs (and thus, they would not have normalized or naturalized the notion that Asians had higher IQs or a greater propensity to giftedness when compared to Anglos). However, the “model minority” stereotype that has gone from “wings to center stage” (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 48) during the turn of the 21st century has reified the notion that “culturally,” Asians are superior (if not naturally smarter) than other racial/ethnic groups. The concept of giftedness has evolved to include the *model minority* because, according to Hartlep (2013), Asians fit middle-class norms better than other minority groups.

Does this research aim to prove there is no such thing as giftedness? Or that all educators are racist? No. But, the previous discussion illustrates the continued historical disposition of knowledge, the blatant continuation of scientific racism (whether intentional or not) in discourse concerning intelligence and IQ testing, and assumptions about giftedness that are compounded by deficit thinking relative to minoritized and relatively poor children (Valencia, 1997, 2010). It also demonstrates the continuing importance of binary opposition in the current debate. Even those who claim to look at intelligence and giftedness on a continuum allow for a distinct segregation of two classes of people labeled as *gifted* or *nongifted*. The continued labeling of students by IQ score and the resultant allocation (or withholding) of resources, opportunity, and the distribution of knowledge smacks of continued race and class biases. Consequently, if we take as our foundation Foucault's (1972) claim that intent is not describable, then we are in danger of forgetting that all education policy is political, that the interactions of race and class are real, and that White privilege is afraid to let go of the status quo.

CONCLUSION

Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To practice criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. ... [A]s soon as people begin to no longer be able to think things the way they have been thinking them, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult and entirely possible. (Foucault, 1981, via Faubion, 2000, p. 456)

Without deep reflection on the historical foundations of education in the United States, it seems reasonable to assume that xenophobic thinking passed away with its implicit structures of inequity over the past 2 centuries and that racist ideology no longer holds sway on how we do school in America. However, before accommodating that assumption, I beseech the reader to consider the words of Edwin Black (2003):

The system hewed in stone by the eugenics movement's intelligence warriors has stubbornly remained in place to this day. By the time some scientists saw the folly of their fiction, the politicians, legislators, educators and social workers who had adopted eugenic intelligence notions as firm science had enacted laws, procedures, systems, and policies to enforce their tenets. (p. 85)

Likewise, I ask readers to reflect on the key hypothesis of Margolin (1994), that behind gifted child knowledge, policy, and practice, there is a definite purpose of preserving a “social order, a class, a race, a community, a culture” (p. 3). Indeed, considering the troubling history of IQ testing and research on giftedness, and bearing in mind that no one can agree on the definition of intelligence or exactly how to measure it, it seems reasonable to conclude that the current situation is flawed and needs to change.

Following other postcolonial scholars, educators can act as “defectors from imperial presumption [and] embrace the postcolonial hope” while actively practicing the “counterimperial ecology of love” (Keller, 2004, p. 223). To do just that, educators must actively reject pseudoscience in favor of legitimate research that points to the plasticity of the brain (E. Jensen, 2006) and take

practical steps to create more just educational spaces. For example, opening up advanced placement coursework to all willing and interested students. Actively dismantling educational tracking is just one way to reject explicit and implicit racism and provide more inclusive, democratic schools that promote both excellence and equity for minoritized and privileged students alike (Brooks & Arnold, 2013; Capper & Frattura, 2008; E. Jensen, 2006; Jean-Marie & Mansfield, 2013; Mansfield, 2015; Mansfield et al., 2014; Oakes, 2005; Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009; Theoharis, 2009; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012), while also dismantling the troubling history of *educational genocide* (Knaus & Rogers-Ard, 2012). Following Keller (2004), this article represents just one stage of my excavation, defection, and hopeful embrace.

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