

# The Construct of Giftedness

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In this article, I assert that giftedness is not a fact of nature or something that educators and psychologists have discovered. Instead, it is a socially constructed concept, something recently invented. I review the evolution of this construction and discuss some of the practical implications of the construct's application in education. Last, I speculate about some of the possible ways in which the construct may evolve in the future.

One of the concerns most frequently voiced when the topic of gifted students arises is that the term *gifted* itself is, in one way or another, objectionable. Few, it seems, are very happy with this descriptor because of what it implies about students to whom it is applied and because of what it implies about those to whom it is not. Interestingly, these concerns come not only from critics of gifted education (e.g., Margolin, 1994, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1994, 1996) but also from writers identified with the field, myself included (e.g., Borland, 1989, 1996a). Add to this the complaints that are routinely heard from school teachers and administrators who have had more than their fill of parents' assertions that their children deserve, require, or will fail to thrive without the label "gifted student," and it could well be

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concluded that the term *gifted* is about as popular in the world of education as the term *virus* is in computer circles.

Things could be worse, however, and for a while, early in our history, they were. The provenance of the word *gifted* as applied to highly capable students is a bit uncertain, but its use clearly predates Terman's seminal study (1925–1959). In the *19th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Henry (1920) credited the coining of the term to Guy Whipple, an all-but-forgotten pioneer in this field, who later edited the *23rd National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook* (1924), which, like the 19th, focused on gifted children and their education. But before damning Whipple's memory, those who abominate the word *gifted* should pause to consider the accepted psychological and educational usage that his term supplanted: *supernormal children*. To repeat myself, things could be worse.

This digression into the etymology of the most basic item in our field's lexicon has a purpose, and that is to focus on the construct of giftedness—the topic of this article—not merely as a construct, but as a construction. By that I mean that giftedness, especially in children and adolescents in the schools, is something we as a field have constructed or invented through our writing and talking, not something that we have discovered.

Although it is fashionable in academic circles to regard many things as being, for the most part, socially constructed, this is a valid way to think about some important constructs in psychology and education. To state that a construct is socially constructed is to state that it gains its meaning, even its existence, from people's interactions, especially their discourse. Concepts and constructs that are socially constructed thus acquire their properties and their influence through the give and take of social interaction, not through the slow accretion of empirical facts about a preexisting entity, at least not exclusively.

Although the idea is alarming to some people in the field of gifted education, the notion that giftedness is a social construction has been advanced by writers other than those some consider to be radical critics of the field. For example, in a response to a series of critiques of gifted education published in a special issue of the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, Gallagher (1996), one of the more conservative writers in the field, wrote, "We should admit that 'gifted' is a constructed concept" (p. 235). Yet, despite the fact that, when pressed, many will concede the socially constructed nature of the construct of giftedness, as a field we do not always act as if this were the case and we do not always appreciate the consequences of the ways in which we shape the construct. A bit of elaboration on what is meant by a construct being socially constructed may be useful at this point.

## The Birth of Intelligence and the Birth of Giftedness

The difference between the concepts of brain and intelligence may clarify what I am getting at. The human brain is a physical entity whose existence, most people would agree, predates our species's understanding of its structure and function. What we know about it is the result, in large part, of discoveries that have been made about its physical nature and about such things as biochemical processes that have their locus in this organ. This is not to argue that the concept of *brain* is free of socially constructed meanings, but by and large, the meaning that we collectively ascribe to this concept is the result of increments of empirically verifiable knowledge concerning a physical structure that, in most people's ontology, existed before *Homo sapiens* even gathered its wits sufficiently to be able to think about it. In other words, we have largely discovered, not invented, the brain, although there is still some wiggle room for ontological relativists to argue for a bit of social construction.

Intelligence, however, is a different matter altogether. A good case can and has been made (see, e.g., Gould, 1996) for the assertion that intelligence is an invented concept, something that did not exist before Herbert Spencer introduced the word into the scientific lexicon in the 19th century (Spearman, 1927). And, some would argue, the creation of the construct of intelligence was not inevitable.

McNemar (1964), in his famous American Psychological Association Presidential Address, later published in the *American Psychologist* under the title, "Lost: Our Intelligence? Why?" posed the following hypothetical scenario. Consider a pair of identical twins with identical life experiences who are marooned on a deserted tropical island teeming with flora and fauna. These two individuals are endowed with extremely high cognitive ability, are possessed of absolutely no knowledge of psychological theory despite being well versed in scientific methodology, and have been so involved in their scientific speculation that they have never noticed the existence of individual differences in human ability. To pass the time while marooned and to satisfy their scientific curiosity, they embark on all sorts of investigations, including studies of the problem-solving abilities and processes of various primates on the island, themselves included. Having described this hypothetical situation, McNemar posed the following question: "Will our two supergeniuses, being totally unaware of individual differences, ever hit upon and develop a concept of intelligence?" (p. 882).

McNemar's point, I think, is that intelligence is not a property, at least not solely, of the organism but of the social environment. Until certain social circumstances—especially the rampant use of mental tests and universal compulsory education—highlighted differences in cognitive functioning

and abilities, we did not bother to invent the concept of human intelligence. It is possible, perhaps accurate, therefore, to think of this construct, which is often regarded as if it were a thing with a physical locus (Gould would call this *reification*, a term to which we shall return), as a social construction.

This interpretation is supported by a reading of some of the early seminal works in the field of cognitive psychology. For example, Spearman (1926) complained that Binet "tried to get away too cheaply" (p. 24) on the theoretical side because, although his test worked quite well with respect to its purpose of identifying students in need of special help, it had no theoretical grounding in an underlying psychological construct. In other words, there were intelligence tests but there was no intelligence. Using a primitive form of factor analysis called the *tetrad equation*, Spearman set about to correct this perceived deficiency. He extracted from arrays of test intercorrelations a factor he called *g*, which he identified as that universal thing possessed in varying amounts by all people that is responsible for individual differences in mental test scores and academic performance. This soon came to be regarded as *general intelligence* and was widely thought of as an inherent trait of, or a thing possessed by, all individuals.

This is germane because the birth of giftedness as a scientific construct is twinned with that of intelligence as a scientific construct. That Galton (1869) was the first person to study and quantify both intelligence and what we now call giftedness is hardly a coincidence. It is also not a coincidence that Terman was the progenitor of both the field of gifted education in the United States and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, which, at its birth, was generally accepted as a measure of Spearman's *g*, or general intelligence. Thus, giftedness as a construct with widespread currency can be traced to a specific time and intellectual environment that gave it its particular shape.

The construct has subsequently undergone many revisions, expansions, and redefinitions, but in one fundamental respect, until quite recently, it has changed very little. This particular aspect has to do with the belief, contrary to what I am arguing, that it is a thing, that it is "out there," that it is something that we discover in students. And because it is something in students, then students in whom it is found must be gifted. Thus, this construct has traditionally given rise to a qualitative existential dichotomy in which there are two distinct groups of humans: the gifted and the rest of humanity.

### Reification

This brings us back to the issue of reification, defined as treating abstractions as though they were real entities. Gould (1996) argued that this is what

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Spearman, Burt, and others did with intelligence, and recent critics of gifted education (e.g., Sapon-Shevin, 1994) have made the same argument about giftedness. Although I have been critical of certain aspects of Sapon-Shevin's (1994) book, *Playing Favorites* (Borland, 1996a, 1996b), her points about the reification of giftedness cannot be dismissed out of hand. She wrote,

Recognizing giftedness as a social construct means acknowledging that without school rules and policies, legal and educational practices designed to provide services to gifted students, this category, per se, would not exist. This is not to say that we would not have tremendous variation in the ways in which children present themselves in schools or even in the rates and ways in which they learn, but the characteristic of giftedness, possessed exclusively by an identifiable group of students, only exists within a system that, for a variety of reasons, wishes to measure, select, and sort students in this manner. (pp. 17–18)

Sapon-Shevin was arguing that our response to certain aspects of the nearly infinite human diversity that are manifest in school classrooms has been, in part, to form discrete categories and dichotomies grounded in reification. If there is variation in academic achievement, then it must be because of giftedness, a property possessed by the gifted and lacking in other students. And once we establish the existence of giftedness, we must seek out those students who possess it.

Once this idea took hold—the idea that students fall into two discrete groups, the gifted and the rest—the field of gifted education was set on a course that it has only recently begun to be questioned in a serious manner. The idea that “the gifted” exist in our schools led to lists of characteristics of “the gifted child,” thus defining the construct of giftedness through an accretion of traits, fanciful as some of them turned out to be. As we built and remodeled the construct, our practice and aspects of the education of certain students changed.

## Changes in the Construct and in Educational Practice

### *The Early Years*

In the beginning, in the time of Terman and Hollingworth (e.g., 1929, 1942), gifted students were conceived of as those who deviated considerably in an upward direction on the continuum of general intelligence that was believed to be the latent trait underlying the distribution of scores on

IQ tests. This was seen as a quantitative difference, not a qualitative one; the gifted simply had more, often much more, of what everybody else had. And what they had could be measured validly, it was believed, using objective tests such as the Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scale. Thus, identification became a matter of administering a test, determining a reasonable cut-off point to demarcate the boundary between the gifted and the rest, and rounding up those who exceed the giftedness threshold.

Differentiating the curriculum was an issue that reflected the quantitative nature of the construct in its earliest manifestations. Taking Hollingworth's classes at Teachers College's Speyer School as an example, one sees students grouped into special full-time classes moving at an accelerated pace through a curriculum that contained more material as a result of enrichment units. The construct in its IQ-based quantitative form would seem to justify this kind of differentiation. Because gifted students have higher levels of general intelligence, their ability to learn is much greater than that of other students. Thus, it makes sense to accelerate the pace of their learning and to increase the amount of what they learn. The instructional demands created by the differentiation of the curriculum prescribed for these students justify the administrative decision to separate gifted students from the rest of the student body.

### *Midcentury Expansions of the Construct*

One of the interesting things about this field is that, in tracing its history, one can see distinct changes in the construct of giftedness. One of the most significant of these was given its impetus at the century's midpoint when Guilford (1950) delivered his American Psychological Association Presidential Address, published, as McNemar's was later to be, in the *American Psychologist*. The topic of the address was creativity and its neglect in psychology and education. Guilford urged psychologists and educators to pay attention to this construct, and once he set forth his Structure of Intellect model (e.g., 1956, 1967), a theoretical and empirical framework was available for the addition of a new construct to the field of gifted education and for a profound change in the construct of giftedness itself.

Among those inspired by Guilford's work were Getzels and Jackson. Few, if any, publications have had an impact on the field to equal that of their (1958) *Phi Delta Kappan* article, "The Meaning of Giftedness—An Examination of an Expanding Concept." Although the research on which the article was based was seriously, perhaps fatally, flawed, the authors' major conclusion—that a distinct and previously overlooked group of gifted children had been discovered: children high in creativity but not high

in intelligence—altered the construct of giftedness profoundly. The construct of creativity had an even shakier basis than that of giftedness, but it, too, was widely accepted as a “thing” that people possessed to varying degrees. And possession of large amounts of this thing, it was argued, created a new form of giftedness, giftedness resulting not from high general intelligence but from high creativity.

Thus, people began to talk about “the gifted, talented, and creative” as a special population composed of three subpopulations. Tests, albeit tests of dubious value, were developed to measure this “new” thing, and children became gifted by achieving high scores on these tests. Creativity thus became another trait of “the gifted,” something typically incorporated into definitions, including the most influential definition of giftedness of this generation, Renzulli’s (1978) three-ring definition.

Again, there were curricular implications deriving from the nature of the construct. Earlier in the history of gifted education, curricula focused primarily on academic subjects. This was true in the time of Terman and Hollingworth and also in the post-Sputnik efflorescence of programs for gifted children. But in the third surge in interest in gifted education, the one following and, at least in part, prompted by the Marland Report (1972) and the period most influenced by the creativity movement, a shift took place. The focus switched from academic content to thinking skills of various sorts. This was in part a reaction to “the old content-centered curriculum” of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was routinely anathematized at the time, and in part a necessity prompted by the widespread use of the pull-out format and enrichment as a curricular differentiating strategy, which required teachers of gifted students to steer clear of the core curriculum.

Margolin (1994), in his book *Goodness Personified: The Emergence of Gifted Children*, and in his (1966) *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* article, “A Pedagogy of Privilege,” focused on this phenomenon. He reported going to the shelves of the University of Iowa’s Connie Belin National Center for Gifted Education, examining the 11 most recent general textbooks on teaching gifted students, and finding only about 11% of the books’ pages devoted to teaching basic academic subject matter.

Margolin (1996) used this finding to support his contention that “the gifted-child curriculum was not and never became focused on core academic subjects ... but was instead focused on the phenomena of giftedness itself. ... The goal is to enhance the qualities that define these children and set them apart” (p. 164). Although I would dispute Margolin’s assertion that this has always been the case, I generally agree with his characterization of contemporary curricula for gifted students.

Thus, we can see the curricular implications of the shift in the construct away from a grounding in general intelligence, operationalized more or less

as academic intelligence, to a grounding, in part at least, in another construct, creativity, that is theoretically distinct from intelligence. Instead of teaching students labeled “gifted” more and doing so at an accelerated pace, the emphasis shifted to enhancing the qualities that made the students gifted in the first place, which had themselves undergone considerable change. Giftedness thus became the curricular end, not its means.

This is all somewhat circular. We created the construct of giftedness, and then we modified it by incorporating other constructs, however questionable empirically and logically. We fleshed out the construct by delineating certain traits as characterizing “the gifted child”—usually including such things as creativity, the ability to engage in higher level thinking processes, critical thinking ability, and so forth—and used measures of these things to identify our target population. We then proceeded to teach the students we identified as gifted how to be more creative, how better to engage in higher level thinking, how to hone their critical-thinking abilities—in short, how to be more gifted. And we did this largely undeterred by the fact that many of the tests we used, such as creativity tests, were low in validity and that many of the creativity and higher level thinking schemes, kits, and games represented the worst sort of instructional pabulum.

We thus arrived at a state of affairs in the field of gifted education, created to no small extent by changes in and expansions of the construct of giftedness, that caused some to question the field’s educational legitimacy. One such person, Sawyer (1988), published an article entitled “In Defense of Academic Rigor” in which he excoriated enrichment units based on the study of gnomes and other such trivial fluff. Sawyer’s paper was criticized, perhaps with some justification, as being too strident, but Jeremiads are not supposed to be measured and balanced, and one could argue that a Jeremiad was just what was required at the time.

### *Recent Changes in the Construct*

Paralleling changes in the construct of intelligence—which has, in the hands of some influential theorists and researchers, acquired a multidimensional nature—the construct of giftedness has undergone significant changes in recent times. For example, Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI; e.g., 1983, 1988), which reflects his view that there are seven distinct intelligences of equal importance despite their unequal treatment in school curricula and traditional concepts of giftedness, has spawned programs in which educators attempt to identify giftedness in each of the putative intelligences. Implicit in MI-based programs is a conception of giftedness that holds that giftedness consists of high levels of intelligence



(or, to be more consistent with Gardner's developmental orientation, advanced development) in each of the seven intelligences.

The logical practical consequences of the application of MI theory in gifted education would include the need to use different procedures to identify giftedness in each of the seven intelligences and to develop separate curricula differentiated for each type of giftedness. Whether this kind of undertaking is practicable is a question that arose in response to an earlier definition of giftedness, the widely disseminated United States Office of Education (U.S.O.E.) definition of the early 1970s (Marland, 1972), which anticipated Gardner's MI model by positing six more or less distinct areas in which giftedness could be found.

*Disjunctive and conjunctive conceptions.* This illustrates a distinction between different types of multitrait conceptions of giftedness that I drew in an earlier publication (Borland, 1989), a distinction between disjunctive and conjunctive conceptions of giftedness. The U.S.O.E. and MI conceptions are disjunctive; the operational word used or implied is *or*. One is gifted if one has a high level of this ability or if one has a high level of that ability, and so forth. Disjunctive definitions imply that there are different and distinct forms of giftedness and lead to the logical conclusion that programs must be multifaceted to address these various kinds of giftedness adequately. As I suggest earlier, this poses significant practical difficulties, especially with respect to identification and curricula.

Conjunctive conceptions of giftedness are more tractable than disjunctive ones. These would include such conceptions as that of Renzulli (1978), which is based on the idea that giftedness consists of above-average ability and creativity and task commitment. All three of these qualities must be present to constitute creative-productive (as opposed to "school-house") giftedness, so a single profile, composed of multiple traits, emerges. This convergence makes identification and curriculum development much simpler than it is when disjunctive conceptions are used.

Sternberg's (e.g., 1984, 1986a) theory of giftedness, which is derivative of his triarchic theory of intelligence, is also, arguably, conjunctive. The triarchic theory is composed of three subtheories, a contextual subtheory, an experiential subtheory, and a componential subtheory. Each of these explicates an essential aspect of human intelligence, Sternberg argued, although only one subtheory, the componential, specifies universal components of intelligence; the other two are more (the contextual) or less (the experiential) relative. Interestingly, reduced to its bare bones, Sternberg's conception of giftedness is congruent with Terman's: Giftedness is a matter of high intelligence. What is different, of course, and markedly so, is the conception of intelligence from which the construct of giftedness is derived. Terman's

is, in essence, Spearman's universal  $g$ , whereas Sternberg's is multifaceted and, in no small measure, contextual.

The point I am making is that the formal nature of the construct of giftedness, in this case whether its multiple components converge into a single form of giftedness or diverge into separate forms, has significant practical educational implications.

*National resource and special educational conceptions of giftedness.* So, too, with another distinction I have made (Borland, 1989), the distinction between what I call *national resource* and *special educational* conceptions of giftedness emerges. In the former, giftedness is an adult quality that exists as potential in school-age children, and its development is justified as an investment in the future. That is to say, gifted children, or potentially gifted children, are an undeveloped national resource of considerable potential worth to society.

Special educational conceptions of giftedness, on the other hand, are based more on the notion of students' educational needs that derive from their being exceptional relative to other learners. The focus is not on the future but on the here and now, not on the commonweal but on the right of the individual child to an appropriate education. These two conceptions map, albeit imperfectly, onto Renzulli's (e.g., Renzulli & Reis, 1986) distinction between creative-productive giftedness and schoolhouse giftedness, the former being high-level adult creative productivity and the latter the ability to achieve at a high level in school.

Again, the point has to do with the implications of the constructs of giftedness built on these conceptions. If the national resource model is invoked, the rationale for gifted education is the promotion of the common good, identification is a matter of predicting adult giftedness on the basis of childhood behaviors and traits, and differentiated curriculum serves to develop potential so that adult productivity is realized. On the other hand, if the construct of giftedness is predicated on a special educational conception, the rationale for gifted education is a commitment to meeting individual needs, identification is a matter of recognizing educational needs that derive from exceptional ability, and curriculum differentiation is an attempt to make the child's current curriculum better suited to his or her present needs.

### The Future of the Construct of Giftedness

The heading of this section is more than a bit hubristic, because no one, certainly not I, can predict with any confidence the ways in which the notion of giftedness will be constructed in the future. There are, however, some

concerns and issues being expressed and debated in current educational discourse that suggest some trends that might emerge.

*New Thinking About Assessment*

Under the perhaps self-justifying label of “authentic assessment” can be found a number of ideas and practices that reflect changes in the ways educators are currently thinking about assessment of students’ abilities and achievement. The increasing use, or at least advocacy, of portfolio assessment (e.g., Chittenden, 1991; Wiggins, 1989; Wright & Borland, 1993), observation (e.g., Borland & Wright, 1994; Chittenden, 1991), and dynamic assessment (e.g., Borland & Wright, 1994; Feuerstein, 1980), among other practices, signals a belief that the constructs and abilities underlying certain important aspects of school performance may not be as stable or objectifiable as once thought. In fact, the term *objective* has been desanctified and no longer is universally, and erroneously, used as a synonym for *valid*. The idea that human judgment, as subjective as it might be, may prove to be a more valid means of assessing some constructs of interest to educators than are objective measures is steadily gaining ground. A comparison of the encouraging results of Amabile’s (e.g., 1983) use of consensual assessment as a way of assessing creativity with the disappointing results of objective tests designed for this purpose is an example of why this is the case.

Responding rather belatedly to the fact that qualitative or postpositivist forms of inquiry are now prominently part of the scholarly mainstream, the field of gifted education is beginning to warm to the notion that we need to augment (not abandon) our use of standardized tests in assessing the needs of bright children. I suspect that the notion I advanced in this article—that is, that the manner in which we shape the construct of giftedness affects our practice, including identification procedures—may refer to a reciprocal process. In other words, new thinking about assessment may shape our thinking about the construct. The consequences of the advent of intelligence tests lends credence to this claim, as I attempted to demonstrate in my discussion of Galton, Spearman, Terman, and others.

The postpositivist thinking that underlies today’s more qualitative approaches to assessment and inquiry carries with it a set of axioms or beliefs (see Borland, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), such as the belief that realities are multiple and constructed, that may profoundly affect our thinking about the construct. Renzulli’s notion of giftedness as a state rather than a trait (e.g., Renzulli, 1986), to which I, among others, was initially resistant, suggests a more relativistic trend in thinking about the construct that could lead in some interesting directions were it carried further.

*Gifted Education Without Gifted Programs*

When such senior figures in the field as Treffinger and Feldhusen (1996), long-time advocates for special services for gifted students and among the most prominent writers associated with the post-Marland era of gifted education, describe pull-out enrichment programs as “services that critics of gifted education have often indicated (with justification) as appropriate for all children, not just a small group labeled ‘the gifted’ ” (p. 187), one senses that a sea change in thinking about giftedness is taking place. (Note not just the content of Treffinger and Feldhusen’s statement but also the quotation marks around the term *the gifted*.)

This reflects, I think, wider acceptance of the view that our traditional construction of giftedness in a manner that dichotomizes school-age children into two distinct castes is simplistic, educationally indefensible, and offensive. As I suggested earlier, early in the history of our field, concern for the educational needs of capable students—whose learning opportunities were unfairly compromised by the rigidities of the curricular lock-step—translated into a Manichean educational cosmology inhabited by the gifted and whatever we wanted to call the rest. Our task was seen as one of accurately identifying the “truly gifted” and providing them with special opportunities, which were often correctly characterized as rewards. This had some negative consequences for all concerned. As Pendarvis and Howley (1996) wrote,

to conceive gifted students as the “cognitive elite” leads to the under-education of both those who are unfairly excluded from gifted programs and those who are included in gifted programs that provide extracurricular instruction instead of providing advanced academic work. (p. 220)

I sense a growing realization within this field that the old dichotomy no longer holds, a more prevalent belief that there are no “gifted” and “nongifted” students in the way we have previously used those terms, but rather that there are individual children with individual educational needs. This suggests that we may be moving to a time when, confronted with signs of advanced academic or intellectual development, we may think, not in terms of labeling a student generically gifted and placing him or her in a generic enrichment program, but instead, in terms of assessing and responding directly to his or her specific educational needs. A student who is mathematically precocious, for example, may be given opportunities for acceleration through the mathematics curriculum, and an elementary school student with a gift for creative writing may be tutored by a high

school English teacher or an elementary teacher with experience with the writing process. In other words, changes in the way we conceive of the construct of giftedness may lead to a time when there is more effective gifted education but many fewer gifted programs as we know them today.

### Conclusion

In one of their typically perceptive observations, Pendarvis and Howley (1996) wrote, "As primary constructors of this particular concept [gifted children], gifted educators are in large part responsible for the pedagogical and political implications of their work" (p. 220). I suspect that it is only fairly recently that appreciable numbers of educators in this field have become aware and accepting of this fact. For a long time, I suspect, giftedness was seen not as something we constructed but as something more akin to a preexisting Platonic category. This view made it easier to excuse many of the inequities that were the ironic consequence of our attempts to foster equity for educationally underserved students of high ability, for we could always say that we were simply responding to, not creating, reality. Gifted children exist, their needs are real, and if our best methods for identifying and serving them strike others as unfair in one way or another, well, one cannot reasonably expect us to change human nature or the world. Like Candide, we are merely tending our own little garden.

But if we recognize that giftedness is something of our creation, that it is something that we confer on children, not something we discover in children, then things change significantly. Much more of the responsibility for what happens both in and consequent to gifted programs is ours. If, as the United States Department of Education's NELS88 data (1991) indicated, nearly half of the students in eighth-grade gifted programs come from the upper quartile of the population with respect to socioeconomic status, this becomes something other than a fact of nature. It becomes a situation of our creation, at least in part.

I used to think that our most important task was to discover the true nature of giftedness. As I suggest in this article, I no longer believe that. Now, depending on what day it is, I think that our primary task is either to construct the most educationally rewarding and equitable concept of giftedness we can or to find a way to move beyond the construct altogether to a vision of human development and learning that embraces the indescribable diversity of human consciousness and activity in a way that places limits on no child (or adult). Thinking about our thinking about giftedness may be a good way to start doing either one of those things or meeting whatever other goals we may set for ourselves.

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