

Sex, Gender and GT Kids: What do Teachers Need to Know?

ITAG Conference 2014



**Iowa Room C
Airport Holiday Inn**

**Tues. October 14, 2014
11:00 - 11:50 am**

**Professor Sally R. Beisser, Ph.D.
Drake University**



Purposes

Advance understanding of sex and gender generalizations

- Not applicable or descriptive of all children
- Not applicable or descriptive of all GT children
- Important for advancing the development and nurturance of high ability learners
- Create topics of discussion
- Be a scholar of your child

Definitions

Define sex (n):

1. either the male or female division of a species, especially as differentiated with reference to the reproductive functions.
2. the sum of the structural and functional differences as males and females are distinguished, or the phenomena or behavior dependent on these differences.
3. the instinct or attraction drawing one sex toward another, or its manifestation in life and conduct.

Define gender:

1. refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.
2. To put it another way: "Male" and "Female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories.

What is Giftedness?

“What educators and psychologists recognize as giftedness is really **potential** giftedness which denotes promise rather than fulfillment and probabilities rather than **certainties** about future accomplishments.

-Dr. Harry Passow

What is giftedness?

How high these probabilities are, in any given case, depends much on the match between a child's budding talent and the kinds of **nurturance** provided."

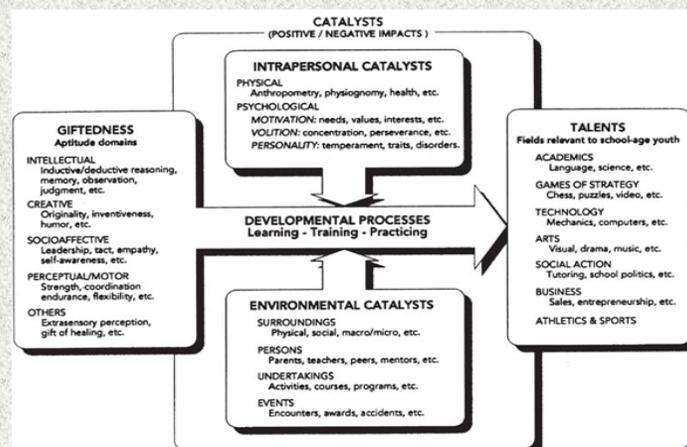


A. Harry Passow (1921-1996)

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/29/us/a-harry-passow-75-dies-studied-gifted-pupils.html>



What is giftedness?



Dr. François Gagné (1985)



Sex and Gender Questions:

- Did you grow up with **brothers** and/or **sisters**?
- Do you teach or parent **girls** and **boys** differently?
- Do **boys** and **girls** behave differently in school?
- Do you think **gender** barriers impact learning?



Facts about Boys in School

(Dr. Gary Davis & Dr. Sylvia Rimm, 2004)

Boys are.....

- More likely to be underachievers in class
- More likely to have learning & behavior problems
- Are 5 times more likely to stutter
- Develop more slowly than girls
- Aren't as strong as girls in verbal skills
- More likely to have ADHD
- More likely to be autistic
- More boys are involved in violence and crime
- Boys need to move, move, move (so do girls!)



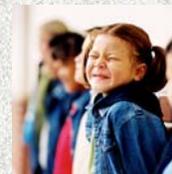
Facts about Girls in School

(Dr. Gary Davis & Dr. Sylvia Rimm, 2004)

Girls are.....

- More likely to be teacher pleasers
- More likely to comply and conform to “rules”
- Choose social play on the playground; Like groups
- Develop faster than boys or brothers
- Advanced verbal skills
- Less likely to get called on despite high verbal skills
- May be content to let the boys take over
- Interested in social harmony
- Responsive to emotions of others

(e.g., drama, gossip, group association, etc)



Are there fundamental differences?

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

- Is it....hormonal or socialized???
- Brains start out as similar in utero
- At 8 weeks there is a “fetal fork in the road”
- Testosterone surge in utero shrinks boy “centers”-i.e., **Communication, Emotion, Reading Body Cues**
- **Baby girls:** Keen eye contact & mutual face gazing
- **Baby boys:** Compelled to investigate environment
- Are differences **hardwired** or **socialized**?



Girls and Boys

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.



- **Girls:** social, verbal, relational skills develop earlier than boys. Easily bossy. Gets her way. Has daddy “wrapped around her little finger”
- **Boys:** wrestling, mock fighting, rough play with cars, trucks, swords, guns, and noisy toys (preferably explosive)
- **Girls:** Take turns 20 times more than boys and their pretend play involves caregiving & nurturing
- **Boys:** Not about relationships...more about social rank, power, defense of territory & physical strength.

The Female Brain

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.



- **Girls** have superior wiring for empathy
- Estrogen surge enhances observation, communication, gut feelings, tending, caring, mastery of social nuances.
- **Girls** are interested in preserving harmonious relationships and to stay connected.
- “Genderlect” matters! (Tannen, 2005)
 - Boys: *My dad is bigger than yours....brag, threaten, ignore. Do not look for connections like girls do.*
 - Women have “rapport” talk....Men have “report” talk.
 - Girls: *Let’s play house....you be the teacher.*



The Male Brain

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.



- **Boys** pummel each other with gusto, wrestle, compete for toys and power.
- Losing is unacceptable even in board games.
- **Boys** are geared for play-fighting, defending, competing...the “victory cry” is everything.
- Bragging rights about burping and farting.
- Settle conflicts then move on.

The Male Brain

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.



- **Boy** days are filled with a physical conquests.
- 1st graders: Physical force + insults = fun.
- Geared for play-fighting, defending, competing...This is observed world wide in boys...not as much in girls.
- **Boys** Like scary movies, haunted houses, “dares”
- Little **boys** are “playing” at things they are required do to in their futures.



The Male Brain

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

- Study of **boys** (1st gr): What other boys said mattered most, what teachers said was second and what **girls** said was a distant third!
- Study in Ireland (Kdg): **Boys** monopolized the tricycles, played ramming games, territorial and possessive. **Girls** unwilling to hit other kids' bikesproviding **girls** "got a turn!"
- **Power matters**: e.g., being first in line
- Quick to establish dominance and hierarchy within group play
- **Know how to succeed**: Alliance with the "alpha boy"



Male or Female?



The Male Brain in Elementary

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

- Squiggling **boys** learn better! (repeat this)
- **Boy's** body movements have meaning...explain things by moving...words get in the way (p. 27)
- **Boys** advanced at mental rotation of objects
- About age 11...dawn of puberty. Testosterone and “androstenedione.”
- Needs to prove himself; fight for his place
- Preoccupied with sexual information



The Male Brain in Middle School

Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

- *Turn off your computer....*parents alarmed
- Millions of little “androgen switches” turn on
- “Sexual preoccupation is like a large screen TV in a sports bar....always turned on.”
- Testosterone + vasopressin = male fight or flight; territorial, sensitive to peer put-downs
- Middle school boys are not trying to be difficult...their brains are not wired up yet for the future.
- Sleepy? Bored? Hide emotions? Tuning out? Posturing? Bluffing? Blind to consequences? Yep.



Middle School Females: Internal and External Barriers

Dr. Barbara Kerr, Ph.D.

External:

Shaping for Femininity -clothing, handling, child rearing, feedback, stereotypical goals

Lack of Resources-employment practices, "career ceiling effect" and mentoring

Sexism and Discrimination -inadequate education, lack of support, constraints

Internal:

Horner Effect-deliberate, unconscious tendency to underachieve in competing with males

Imposter Syndrome-feeling "lucky" rather than skilled when promoted or recognized; Attribute syndrome (Callahan & Eccles research)

*Research Study on boys and girls fixing a bicycle

Cinderella Complex-someone will rescue you...must have a boyfriend or mate to be OK.



Boys



Girls

Surviving Adolescence

Dr. Mary Pipher, Ph.D.

Reviving Ophelia (Mary Pipher, 2005)

Adolescence: "Girls are like saplings in a hurricane."

Adolescence is where girls stop "being" and start "seeming"

Adolescence is when "girls who once stood atop the playground gym equipment in order to rule the world and wished to run for president....now fade into silenced definition of a former self."

Gender in the Classroom

WHAT TEACHERS DO

- Boys answer without being called on, teachers accept it. Girls answer without being called on, teachers give negative response.
- Believe that boys have innate talent and skill in mathematics and sciences.
- Provide a curriculum that represents only one gender, one race, one socioeconomic class, one perspective.

THE MESSAGE STUDENTS GET

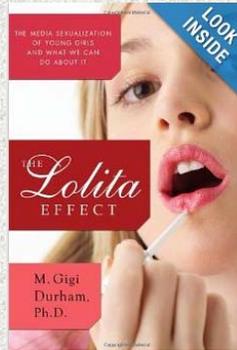
- “Boys should be academically assertive and grab teachers attention; girls should act like ladies and keep quiet” (Myra & Sadker, 1985, as quoted by Reis; p. 72).
- The performance and work of women in STEM fields is inherently lesser than men’s.
- Women have not contributed historically, women cannot contribute to the future. There is no role model or place for girls

Confront Stereotypes



Shirt says “girls are too pretty to do homework.”

Confront Stereotypes

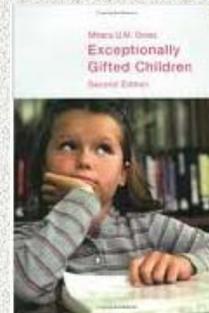


Compelling Book: *The Lolita Effect: Sexualization of Pre-Teen Girls* by M. Gigi Durham, Ph.D.

Gifted Kids Need Challenge!

"The surest way to make it hard for children is to make it easy."

Eleanor Roosevelt, Woman of the Century



Challenge is Good!



The dictionary is the only place where
SUCCESS comes before **WORK!**

Celebrate Academics



Let Them Work Together

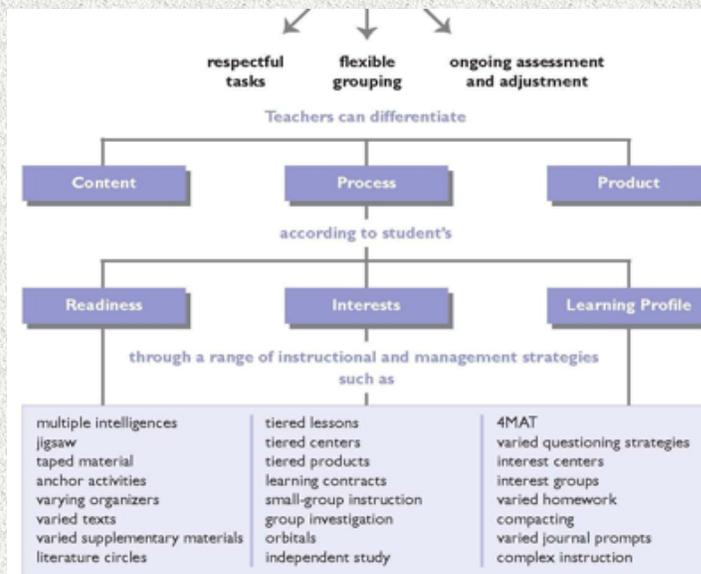
"In performance areas, it is generally accepted that you put high performers together...

Not one country sent a mixed ability team to the Olympics."



Professor Miraca Gross, Ph.D.
Australia

Let Them Work Differently



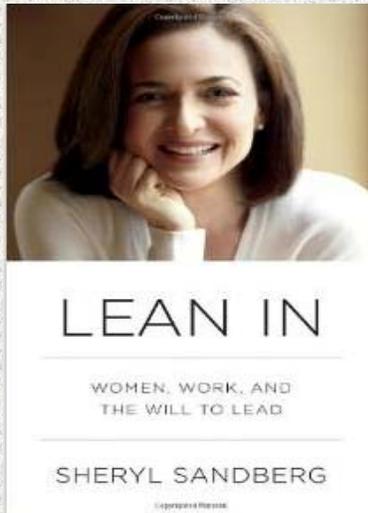
Research on GT students (Chapin, 2013)

- **Early 1990s Concern:** “Mis-education” of girls and women who are overlooked and underserved.
- **Net result:** Gender stereotype of both sexes.
- **Global concern** that females lacked attention especially in developing nations.
- **Late 1990s Concern:** Gender in schools not just an issue for girls. Suspension rate higher (3x) for boys and dropout rate higher. More boys in special education and on medications.

Research on Achievement: NAEP

- **Math Scores:** Gender gap favors males (69%)
- **Reading Scores:** Gender gap favors females.
- **Attendance:** Females in all races have a higher HS graduation rate than males.
- **Monetary Earnings:** Female college graduates earn, on the average, less than men in similar jobs with same degrees.
Graduate degrees: More women are now earning graduate degrees than ever before.

Lean In: Women & Work and The Will to Lead



Despite the fact the women are 50% of US college graduates, men still hold The vast majority of leadership positions in government and industry.

Women's voices are still not heard equally in the decisions that affect our lives.

Women must "sit at the table," seek challenges, take risks, and pursue their goals with gusto.

Research on GT students:

- **Female Science professors** benefit GT girls (Young, Rudman, Buettner & McLean, 2013)
- **Acceleration** is an underutilized strategy influenced largely by attitudes of parents. (Siegle, Wilson & Little, 2013)
- **Interests and cognitive abilities research** help determine college major choices for males and females. Clear implications for career counseling. (Passler & Hell, 2012)

Take Away Messages

- Gap “is” closing in STEM sciences...girls **can** do math and science!
- Don’t “red shirt” smart boys to get “bigger.”
- Teach kids to resist stereotype threats.
- Emphasize **challenge** in learning and life... don’t take the easy way out
- Accept kids as they “are” who don’t display gender role tendencies.
- Model gender balance in your homes.
- Guide adult females toward “dual career” balance
- Seek teachers who have GT training/endorsement

References

The Female Brain (2006) by Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

The Male Brain (2010) by Dr. Louann Brizendine, M.D.

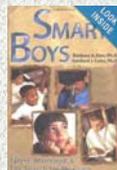
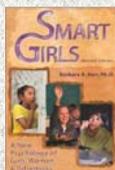
Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget (2005)
by Marianne J. Legato, MD, FACP

Deborah Tannen (2013)

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwFsc7ZTvpl>

Smart Girls-Gifted Women and MORE... Dr. Barbara Kerr,
Ph.D. Univ of Kansas



New ©2014
volume of
Smart Girls



Discussion



- How does this information “inform” your Parenting? Teaching? Relationships?
- How can you help kids overcome “gender barriers” to reach their potential?
- What additional information would you like to talk about?