




## Professor Marcia Gentry Walked the Talk

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### ABSTRACT

Our colleague, Professor Marcia Gentry, left us too soon. Thankfully, her professional legacy lives through her scholarship. Likewise, her impact on family and friends endures through her timeless gentleness of spirit. This essay reviews Professor Gentry's decades-long quest for equity *and* excellence as markers of our field. Toward this end, Marcia proposed that professionals in the highly specialized niche area of gifted education retire the words gifted and giftedness and focus on excellence and talent development. A core value for Marcia was the belief that equitable access to talent development is fundamentally an issue of social justice. In response, I suggest that we consider how to retire these terms from the vantage point of five pivots, ultimately shifting from gifted education to talent discovery and development thereby promoting equity through excellence. The fifth pivot briefly discusses why we must shift from a nearly exclusive educational perspective to one that incorporates psychological components, including developmental and educational psychological principles.

### KEYWORDS

equity; excellence; giftedness; identification; megamodel of talent development; talent development; talent search

*“It is not up to you to finish the task, neither are you free to avoid it.”*—Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Ancestors, n.d.)

Professor Marcia Gentry's exemplary professional and personal attributes, devotion to family and students, superlative research expertise, unparalleled care and compassion for humanity, gentleness of spirit, and unwavering humility regarding her multiple talents, provide an extensive, albeit not comprehensive, description of an outstanding colleague. Pragmatically, Marcia's life and values are summed up in these words: she walked the talk. Walking the talk represents the essence—and elegance—of a pathbreaking scholar who left us too soon. Dr. Gentry will not be able to bring her important scholarship to completion; however, her friends and colleagues can by continuing to put words into action, as she did.

In the spring of 2022, a few months prior to Marcia's passing, she and her Purdue colleagues, Jennifer Richardson, Yukiko Maeda, Kristen Seward, Nielsen Pereira, along with Vanderbilt colleague, Gil Whiting, applied for Jacob K. Javits Funding. Their application, *Having Opportunities Promotes Excellence: Developing Scholar Identities Among Underserved Youth with Gifts and Talents*, was awarded multi-million-dollar funding, thus ensuring that the ideals about which Marcia was passionate—excellence and equity for underserved youth—would endure. That same year, Gentry's (2022) essay concerning excellence and equity included the suggestion that it is time to retire the words gifted and

giftedness. The reasons behind this proposal were multiple, but the primary reason being that those words are steeped in racist history that has culminated in severe underrepresentation and excellence gaps. Now, what do we, as a field, need to consider and act upon regarding Gentry's proposal?

### Historical context of gifted terminology

Such a proposal requires brief contextualizing of terminology. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the term gifted may have been a unifying term for an emerging field of study. Today, many university-based centers, national and state organizations, and K–12 programs are called “gifted” centers. In schools, the programming for high-ability/high-achieving students is often referred to as a gifted program, especially at the elementary level, and students are often referred to as the “gifted.” Now is the time to recognize the harmful impact on children and society by continued use of the labels associated with the words gifted and giftedness (Gentry, 2022; Meyer & Plucker, 2022). Furthermore, traditional structures used for identification for gifted programs have amplified severe and significant disparities with respect to representation (Peters et al., 2019), with adverse carryover effects on children (Long et al., 2023; Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2023). Better words to describe our field as it pertains to advanced learners include talent development and excellence because these words have the potential to take into greater

consideration issues related to equity and social justice. In fact, the shift away from gifted toward words like differentiation, talent development, and excellence began decades ago (Borland, 2005, 2009; Renzulli, 1994, 2012). More recently, the watershed monograph on talent development by Subotnik et al. (2011), offers a profound, theoretically based rationale that complements Gentry's (2022) essay, and advocates for a shift away from terminology associated with giftedness through a concomitant movement toward talent development.

### ***Gifted education and talent development: A related heritage drives a quiet revolution***

Professor Gentry's professional background in gifted education corresponds to my professional background in talent discovery and development, both of which provide context for the evolution of a growing awareness in our field. We shared the belief, as do many of our colleagues, that it is past the time to acknowledge the limitations imposed on the very children we aspire to serve by the continued use of the terms gifted and giftedness.

The launch for Marcia's career in which she advocated for talent development, excellence, and equity may have been Gentry's and Owen's (1999) longitudinal mixed-methods study on the impact of elementary school cluster grouping, which demonstrated that all students were positively impacted by cluster grouping of high achievers when teachers had appropriate professional development about the intervention. What strikes me about Gentry's early work is the recognition that programming designed for high achievers can benefit most advanced learners, especially when teachers use a "*talent development* [emphasis added] approach to enrichment learning and teaching that recognizes student interests, strengths, and talents as a basis for their education" (p. 239).

Marcia's gifted education professional lineage extends back to the University of Connecticut and the many notable professors there. Professors Joe Renzulli and Sally Reis, trailblazers in the field of gifted education, hold a place of prominence in the field. After completing her PhD at the University of Connecticut, Marcia shared her expertise at Mankato State University (Mankato, Minnesota). Notably, she created a master's degree program in gifted education during her relatively short tenure. From Mankato State, she joined the faculty at Purdue University and became affiliated with the Gifted Education Resource and Research Institute (GER<sup>2</sup>I), founded by distinguished Professor John Feldhusen.

Professor Feldhusen earned his PhD from the University of Wisconsin, where he studied with Professor Julian Stanley, famous for many accomplishments, including his establishment of the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) originally located at Johns Hopkins University. SMPY, now directed by two renowned Professors at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education, Camilla Benbow (also Dean of Peabody College) and David Lubinski. SMPY was the predecessor to the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth.

My connection to this illustrious lineage occurred when, upon completion of my PhD at the University of Iowa (the same year, 1988, that the Belin-Blank Center was established by esteemed founding director Dr. Nicholas Colangelo—also a University of Wisconsin graduate), I began a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship with Dr. Stanley's SMPY. When the postdoctoral fellowship concluded, I made a happy move back to the University of Iowa (UI) where I embarked on what would become a 32-year career at the then-nascent Belin-Blank Center.

Thus, I consider Marcia my professional cousin. First, because we share a common heritage informed by our academic ancestry. Second, we experienced similar educational and professional journeys as first-generation college students who earned doctorates and eventually had leadership positions as directors of university-based centers for gifted education and talent development. With leadership comes responsibility to make a difference, especially in the K–12 setting. Professionally, we both started as science teachers for middle school students and spent years in public schools, which contributed to our credibility when conducting research in school settings. This K–12 experience also provided the mutual understanding that large percentages of students who had the potential to excel did not have access to the types of interventions that would enable them to thrive in school and later in life. Many of these students were from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds and/or attended urban or rural schools, often in under-resourced communities.

Marcia dedicated her career to ensuring access of opportunities to underserved, low-income, and culturally diverse students. She understood that advocating for students typically underrepresented in gifted programs (Gentry et al., 2019, 2022) would benefit all students (Gentry & Owen, 1999). Her perseverance and dedication to underserved populations resulted in hard-earned federal grants yielding important research findings that would ultimately start to shift the landscape of the field from one of exclusion to one of inclusion. But there is still much work to be done, which is where her colleagues enter the picture.

## Gifted education and talent development: Words matter

Marcia's (Gentry, 2022) advocacy for retirement of the terms gifted and giftedness, with the suggestion that they be replaced by talent development, gave voice to the growing chorus of professionals who recognize that the words we choose to use have great impact on the children we aspire to serve:

As a field, gifted education struggles for legitimacy, for equity, and for justification. We frequently find ourselves in our echo chambers where we present research to each other extolling the special educational, social, and emotional needs of “the gifted.” We know these youth with special abilities need more than general education; however, making that case has always been a tough sell. (p. 374)

Although I agree in principle with Gentry's proposal to discontinue using the words gifted and giftedness, I am not naïve enough to think that such a move can—or even should—happen overnight. Such a shift will not be easy or simple for many reasons. Nevertheless, one of the most significant ways we can pay tribute to the shared ideals of our colleague is to recognize that shifting from gifted programming, demarcated by historical and systemic racism resulting in exclusion and seemingly intractable underrepresentation (Gentry et al., 2019, 2022), to talent discovery and development means increased access to opportunities *in schools*. Increasing access can result in inclusion of traditionally underrepresented students and narrowing of excellence gaps (for an extensive discussion, see the Thomas B. Fordham Institute's 2023 report on *Building a Wider More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners*).

Shawn Ginwright's book, *Reimagining Justice: Reimagining Ourselves* (2022) offers a sociologist's noteworthy perspective for professionals, especially educators, who advocate for social justice. The book offers an extraordinary take on a way to move forward with respect to social justice by featuring four pivots: (a) from lens to mirror for self-examination of our values, (b) from transactional to transformative relationships, (c) from problem fixing to finding solutions within the context of the problem, and (d) from frenzy to calm. Ginwright's book does not focus on education in general, or the highly specialized niche of gifted education, yet the four pivots offer a substantially different viewpoint on social justice that can be applied to education, and specifically gifted education. In keeping with Ginwright's use of pivot as a metaphor for change to advance social justice in education, I suggest a fifth pivot, from a focus on pedagogy to the integration of pedagogical and psychological principles.

### Pivot 1: From lens to mirror

Ginwright explains that typically we look at the world through a lens, which offers “an outwardly focused explanation, precise analysis . . . and rigid framework about how the world works . . . A lens defines what we see before we even see it” (2022, p. 25). He then suggests pivoting from lens to mirror because, “We use mirrors to show us what's hard to see, like our own face . . . [mirrors] reflect back the truth that's hard to see” (2022, p. 25). Mirrors do not exist in place of a lens, which offers a critical perspective, especially on social issues including the immediate and long-term outcome of our field's use of the word gifted on underrepresented and underserved students. Rather, as Ginwright explains, mirrors are designed to reflect an image. Looking at the face of our field will not be easy; yet, as professionals we must continue to consider carefully (Renzulli, 2012; Sternberg, 2020) how continued use of gifted and giftedness makes us look when considering the impact on children, families, colleagues, ourselves, and education in general. Furthermore, if we gaze closely in the mirror, through the lens of social justice, we can see how programming designed to serve only a small percentage of students is a missed opportunity to address excellence gaps (Peters et al., 2019; Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2023). If the light is just right and the lens through which we are looking is properly focused, we will observe that large percentages of advanced learners, often from diverse backgrounds and/or under-resourced communities, are underrepresented in many forms of advanced programming. This is a loss for the individual student as well as for society.

### Pivot 2: From transactional to transformative relationships

Transactional relationships are efficient because they guide us in how individuals engage with each other (Ginwright, 2022). Within the gifted education paradigm, teacher-student relationships are transactional because they focus on roles and performance of tasks. The transactional roles of educators in gifted programs in schools include identifying students for programs and instructing the identified students. The primary transactional role of students is to succeed in the program.

Transformative relationships shift the basis of the relationship from roles and performance of tasks to “features of life like care, vulnerability, love, curiosity, connection” (Ginwright, 2022, p. 114). Teachers care about their students. Teachers may feel vulnerable within the education system, possibly because of the

transactional nature of some of their responsibilities around selection for the gifted program. Yet, these same educators do not have the agency with which to create more transformative relationships, which are based on curiosity and connection, with their students.

Implicitly, most teachers understand that giftedness is fundamentally a social construct (Borland, 2005), which makes the ideas of cutoff scores and identifying specific percentages of “gifted” students nonsensical. What if, rather than identifying (i.e., selecting) students for a preexisting program (Borland, 2009) educators exercised curiosity about their students’ developmental learning needs? What if teachers offered opportunities for students based upon those learning needs? What if, as proposed by Sternberg (2020), we consider “giftedness” not as a condition that requires an intervention, but as a transformational opportunity with a focus on positive and meaningful societal change?

Pivoting from giftedness to talent development has the potential to be transformative with respect to the impact on the individual as well as on society. A pivot is not in contrast, rather, it is a shift. Lens and mirrors are not opposites, they are just not the same even though they share aspects related to the concept of vision. This is true also for the idea of transactional and transformative relationships because at various times advanced learners need both kinds of relationships.

Assouline and Lupkowski-Shoplik (2012) offer one way to think about the advanced learner’s need for both transactional and transformational relationships vis-à-vis gifted programs and talent development programs. Rather than thinking of them as conflicting transactional relationships that result in incompatible interventions, recognize that both exist in different academic settings. Gifted programs exist primarily in the K–12 setting (and more specifically in the elementary setting), with a focus on identification of a small percentage of overall high-achieving students (Borland, 2005) for enrichment programming. Due to limited resources, the process of selection for gifted programs often results in the exclusion (Meyer & Plucker, 2022; Sternberg, 2020) of students who may have the greatest need for the enriched programming offered by gifted programs. Furthermore, even though the gifted identification process for gifted programs is oriented toward enrichment of the general educational program, the gifted program’s goals may, or may not, be aligned with the gifted identification procedure (Callahan et al., 2017) and may miss students with exceptional talent in a specific domain such as math or science.

In fact, students with extreme talent in the domain of mathematics were the impetus for university-based

talent development programs and centers created as part of the talent search model established by Dr. Julian Stanley at Johns Hopkins University in the early 1970s (Stanley, 2000, 2005; Stanley et al., 1974). The talent search model is an above-level testing process designed to discover advanced learners with an aptitude for accelerated content that was not accessible to them in their schools (Rotigel & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 1999). In contrast to the composite (global) IQ score often used in the gifted identification process in schools, the talent search model focuses on discovery of domain-specific aptitude demonstrated by advanced learners with development of that aptitude provided by expert mentors outside of the K–12 system, which offers transformative experiences for the participants.

### **Pivot 3: From problem fixing to finding possible solutions within the problem**

Education today is very much about finding and fixing problems, rather than considering possible solutions within the context of the problem. For example, the procedures currently in place to identify students for gifted programs in schools or to discover advanced learners who are ready for talent development programs include testing. There has been little change in these procedures over the past several decades. As well, testing has often been associated with disparities in identification (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2023), which has led to the conclusion that testing is the problem that needs to be fixed. However, is the problem the testing per se, or the ways in which students access the testing, and/or how the results are used? Might there be solutions that exist within the context of the problem simply labeled as “testing?”

Much of what occurs in gifted education today, including the procedures for identifying students for gifted programs, (see Rinn et al., 2022) originated with the Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland’s (1972) report, *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, for the U.S. Congress. The Marland Report, as it became known, provided a definition of gifted and talented<sup>1</sup> that is still in wide use across the nation (Borland, 2005; Rinn et al., 2022). The Marland report also indicated that 3% to 5% of the K–12 population could be considered gifted and talented. Probably for expediency, school administrators developed procedures that focused on an all-round gifted student as measured by a general ability (IQ) test. The Marland Report opened a door to enrichment programs for students who had IQ scores that placed them in the top 3% to 5% compared to their peers. However, the ways in which the definition was operationalized (e.g., a focus on general ability as

measured by IQ, even though domain specific aptitude was included in the definition) created problems by inadvertently excluding advanced learners who did not meet the IQ cutoff score. Although the Marland Report recognized domain specific talent in the definition, identifying students' specific academic or talent domains for gifted programs has not been operationalized in many programs (Callahan et al., 2017).

### ***Fixing the “problem,” or finding solutions within the “problem”***

Gentry (2022) and Sternberg (2020) suggest that one fix to this problem of exclusivity for anything associated with testing (i.e., both talent development programs and gifted programs) would be to no longer align programming to testing. Gentry (2022) also posits that because of the historical association of ability testing with Lewis Terman, that is reason enough to discontinue the practice of testing.

True, ability testing today has strong connections (Boake, 2002) to Lewis Terman, who was one of many influential individuals who initially advocated for the pseudoscientific concept of eugenics (Farber, 2008). Furthermore, Terman was one of the last to ultimately change his views on eugenics, which is why his legacy will always remain equivocal—at best. Additionally, Terman overgeneralized from the data (Warne, 2019) in ways that contributed to a false sense of confidence about what can and cannot be discerned from a single test. However, rather than “fixing” the problem by eliminating testing, I recommend consideration that issues connected to testing offer important lessons, and ultimately solutions, about testing, its limitations as well as its benefits. Issues and problems related to ability testing (i.e., IQ testing for gifted programs) and/or aptitude testing (i.e., above-level domain-specific testing as used in the talent search model) are nuanced. Following is a brief discussion of three nuanced situations with possible solutions rather than a problem-fix.

### ***Testing and underrepresentation***

Rather than eschewing information from tests, educators might consider a district-wide assessment process that may include universal screening (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2023; Wells, 2020). Universal screening involves multiple pieces of data that offer a comprehensive look at students (Carman et al., 2018). A comprehensive assessment includes a holistic approach that may involve portfolios for talent areas such as writing or art, as well as rating scales (Gentry et al., 2015; Renzulli et al., 2010). Finally, regarding district policies, it is strongly encouraged that district

administrators consider guidelines for interpreting test scores (Lakin, 2018) rather than using specific cut scores as selection criteria for a program.

### ***Ability testing: Twice-exceptional students***

There is no argument with the assertion that a single measure of ability offers educators a false sense of confidence about a social construct such as giftedness; however, this is too narrow a perspective. When the results from the testing are used appropriately, that is, as part of a comprehensive assessment (Assouline & Foley-Nicpon, 2021; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020), not as a stand-alone measure, ability tests provide essential psychological information about the individual. When used with aptitude and achievement tests as well as other psychosocial indicators, ability tests can be informative especially in better understanding the strengths and concerns of individuals who may be at risk for not being identified for traditional gifted programs, which includes individuals who are twice-exceptional.

Concerning twice-exceptional students Assouline and Foley-Nicpon (2021) and Reis et al. (2014) addressed the topic of testing vs. comprehensive assessment. As an overly simplified example, a student with high cognitive ability and a specific learning disability is sometimes considered to be lazy and unmotivated because of poor performance on writing assignments. Accordingly, they would be at risk for not being identified for a gifted program if only a single test score is used to determine eligibility for a program that has a strict cutoff because their learning disability may mask their academic strengths. Without a comprehensive assessment the individual in our example may miss out on talent development opportunities (Reis et al., 2014), including advanced or honors coursework, because the educator may assume the student is underperforming due to lack of motivation when, in fact, the student has a disability.

### ***Aptitude testing and broadening the talent pool: Increasing access to transformative opportunities***

As described earlier (Pivot 2: From Transactional to Transformative Relationships), Talent search programs (Stanley, 2000) as originally envisioned (i.e., above-level testing for seventh through ninth graders using college entrance exams, i.e., ACT or SAT), increased access to the discovery of specific talent development opportunities that offered transformative experiences for student and instructor. However, the traditional talent search model of above-level testing and commensurate talent development opportunities remains exclusive to many advanced learners, especially those who are traditionally underserved.

Elimination of above-level testing and talent development opportunities is a “fix” rather than a solution to address the seemingly exclusive nature of the traditional Talent Search Model. A solution is found through increasing access by making the process available in schools, as well as by broadening the talent pool beyond the top 3% to 5% of students. The University of Iowa administrative team (Assouline et al., 2017; LeBeau et al., 2020) accomplished this through intentional strategies.

The first strategy was to offer, in schools, an on-line above-level test for high-achieving fourth through sixth graders (Assouline et al., 2023). The above-level test used, *I-Excel* (LeBeau et al., 2020) assesses aptitude in four contents areas, English, Math, Reading, and Science, using eighth grade level content licensed from ACT (2013). The second strategy involved the use of guidelines—not cutoff scores—for participation in the above-level testing. To create a broad talent pool of students in grades four through six, we recommended that teachers extend the option of above-level testing to students with grade-level scores around the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile—rather than the traditional 95<sup>th</sup> percentile—on grade-level achievement tests (Assouline et al., 2017). The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was suggested because it represents one standard deviation from the average; however, any student who wanted to participate in above-level testing was included no matter what their grade-level-test percentile rank was. The test information was used for programming, not to determine who would be included in—or excluded from—programming.

Through these two strategies, we broadened the talent discovery process from the typically exclusive 3% to 5% and discovered a more inclusive pool of talented students (17% of the school population) who are traditionally underserved in schools. These two strategies produced a broader more diverse group of students and shifted the educator-student relationship from primarily transactional to transformative resulting in more students having access to transformative talent discovery and development opportunities (Assouline et al., 2017; Ihrig et al., 2022).

#### **Pivot 4: From frenzy to flow**

Are you multitasking while you are reading this, for example, sitting in a Zoom meeting and skimming this? Multitasking is a symptom of our frenzied lives. Checklists and to-do lists also are symptoms of frenzy (Ginwright, 2022), relating directly to our desire to be productive. Productivity isn’t wrong but it is not always in our best interest. Ginwright suggests a pivot from frenzy to calm. He describes the state of being calm as

flow and cites Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) research on flow, proposing that “flow is a critical ingredient for social change because it gives us permission to separate from the madness of capitalist culture and tap into the ancient power of slowing down” (Ginwright, 2022, p. 213).

A simplistic example of applying this pivot would be to replace the frenzy of selecting a small percentage of students for an exclusive, predetermined program with an approach that is more inclusive of advanced learners who are ready for transformational talent development opportunities. Such an approach could include obtaining additional information that might be accessed in collaboration with colleagues who can offer insights into their students’ talents. Some of the information might be from psychosocial inventories such as the *Hope Scale* (Gentry et al., 2015). Ultimately, there would be a calm and deliberate consideration of how the individual’s talents, including the role of psychosocial factors in the development of talent, can provide a transformative learning opportunity for all involved. Psychosocial factors are a significant part of the megamodel of talent development (Subotnik et al., 2011). A full expansion of this topic is not possible in this essay; however, it does lead to my suggestion for an additional pivot.

#### **Pivot 5: From an exclusive focus on pedagogically based principles to an inclusive focus on psychologically based principles**

As currently practiced across the United States (Callahan et al., 2017; Rinn et al., 2022) gifted education is a pedagogical intervention for an exclusive group of advanced learners. Gifted education has made a tremendous difference for decades for millions of students. However, many millions more have been excluded from gifted programs by virtue of their zip code, the color of their skin, their parents’ educational background, or the language they speak at home. Current selection procedures simply do not address the needs of these students—or of society (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2023). We cannot fix the problem by replacing terms while keeping an exclusive selection process that misses so many students with talents waiting to be discovered and developed. Nor can we fix the problem by eliminating testing. I recommend a pivot to recognize the role of psychologically based principles as they relate to the pedagogy of interventions focused on talent development.

Multiple psychologically based principles have been summarized by the megamodel of talent development (Subotnik et al., 2011). The first principle is that general

ability along with aptitude in a talent domain matter. Rather than eliminating testing of ability, achievement, or aptitude, we need to recognize that these tests are limited in what they were designed to do yet when used as designed, the tests provide relevant information that can better help us navigate the needs of the learner. This is especially true for students who are twice-exceptional and/or for students who have domain-specific areas of talent. Furthermore, universal assessment eliminates the bias often introduced through the nomination process.

Second, different domains of talent have different trajectories of development. Along with that principle is a third, talent development opportunities must be provided. This third principle, the importance of developing the discovered talent through specialized opportunities also is a core component of Stanley's (2005) talent search model. Finally, psychosocial variables are determining factors in the development of talent. Marcia recognized this final principle through the HOPE scale (Gentry et al., 2015). Imagine how the educational landscape could change by intentionally including programming based on the psychological principles of talent discovery and development?

## Conclusion

Dr. Gentry's reputation for scholarship preceded our first in-person meeting. My recollection of our first one-on-one interaction occurred during a social gathering at a small, state-sponsored gifted education conference. Ironically, the last face-to-face interaction, also during a social gathering, occurred at the 2021 National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) conference in Denver, Colorado. Marcia sought me out for a congratulatory toast on my impending retirement as the director of the University of Iowa Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development. What touched me most about that interaction was the unspoken understanding that this was likely her last NAGC conference; yet she took time, which was precious, to recognize me professionally and personally. This was the quintessential Marcia.

My last communication with Marcia occurred during her final days, which coincided with my final days of my tenure as director of the Belin-Blank Center, enhancing the saliency of sentiments associated with concepts including "final," "last," and "legacy." I do not know if Marcia was familiar with the saying, "*It is not up to you to finish the task, neither are you free to avoid it*" (Rabbi Tarfon, *Ethics of our Ancestors*, n.d.). However, I fervently believe she would have whole-heartedly confirmed that one of the most significant ways her colleagues and friends can carry forward the social justice

tasks she tirelessly undertook is by recognizing "The purpose of education ought to be developing the talents and potentials of youth . . . and [forging] new pathways that focus more on the discovery and development of student potentials" (Gentry, 2022, p. 377).

In tribute to Professor Marcia Gentry's legacy, let us continue to walk the talk.

## Note

1. Discussing the definition of gifted and talented is beyond the scope of this essay; however, the 1972 Marland Report recognized that "these are children who require differentiated educational programs . . . beyond those normally provided by the regular school program . . . Children capable of high performance include demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in . . . (a) general intellectual ability; (b) specific academic aptitude; (c) creative or productive thinking; (d) leadership ability; (e) visual and performing arts; (f) psychomotor ability [later removed] (p. ix). Rinn et al. (2022, see page 15) cite the most current federal definition, which reveals that little has changed over a 50-yr period. Perhaps the definition is not the issue, rather how we choose to operationalize the definition?"

## Acknowledgments

This essay was written in Denver, Colorado. I want to acknowledge and affirm Indigenous sovereignty, history, and experiences. May this acknowledgment demonstrate a commitment to working to dismantle ongoing legacies of oppression and inequities and recognize the current and future contributions of Indigenous communities in Denver and throughout the world. I am grateful to the editors of this special issue for this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr. Marcia Gentry through a brief review of her oeuvre regarding excellence, equity, and social justice. This opportunity allowed me to reaffirm for myself, and hopefully for the reader, the necessity of carefully considering how the words gifted and giftedness have impacted our field. It is time to pivot from gifted and giftedness to talent discovery and development.

## Disclosure statement

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