

Gifted and Talented Education: A National Test Case in Peoria

David M. Fetterman
Stanford University

This article presents a study of a program in Peoria, Illinois for the gifted and talented that serves as a national test case for gifted education and minority enrollment. An analysis of the program, and the referral, identification, and selection mechanisms, was conducted. This case study concludes that low minority enrollment need not suggest that the local school district engages in discriminatory practices or that low enrollment is explained by genetic differences between races. Instead, the study points to the impact of the community's socioeconomic characteristics on gifted enrollment. Fundamentally, the study addresses the issues of equal opportunity, ability, and achievement in American education.

Gifted programs throughout the country share the problem of low minority enrollment (see Humphreys, 1984; Lemke, 1984). The Peoria school district received national attention for its failure to enroll a proportional percentage of black children in Peoria's gifted program in the early 1980s. According to Education Week ("District's gifted program," 1984), "The Peoria school district's gifted and talented program is in danger of losing \$57,000 in state funding because of a find-

ing [by a state study] that the program discriminates against minorities" (pp. 3-4). The minority enrollment figures did represent a red flag. Blacks represented 40% of the third grade population from which the gifted program participants were drawn. However, only .4% of this population was selected to participate in the program.

The program became a rallying point for many academics, practitioners, and politicians. The nature-nurture argument reemerged. One side argued from a Jensenist perspective (Jensen, 1973, 1980; see also Reynolds & Jensen, 1983), saying that low enrollment could be explained by genetic differences between races. Another group offered cultural deficit theories (see Swerdlik, 1984, & Karnes, 1984). Others simply called the district racist.

The battle lines on the state political level were drawn clearly. The Illinois State Board of Education withheld funds because the selection process had not produced proportional minority representa-

The author is indebted to the children and the teachers in this program. Thanks are extended to parents and program and district officials, including D. George Burdette, Ross Canterbury, Kay Davis, Mac Frederick, John Garrett, Edward Griffith, Harry Whitaker, and David J. Walvoord. Edward Haertel provided useful technical advice about certain statistical analyses of the data. Work on a previous project by Chris Wood, Bob Swain, Sandy Kaplan, Allyn Arnold, Jeanne Delp, Miriam Surface, and Jean Wiener also contributed to the study. Other helpful advice and contributions were received from Gary Millen, Barbara Quickstad, Milbrey McLaughlin, Paul Hanna, Jerry Dorfman, Deborah S. Waxman, and Kermit Patton.

tion in the program. The School Board voted to sue the state unless the two parties could come to an agreement. In the meantime, the district refused to alter its procedures, believing that they were sound and adhered to state policies and procedures. Each party sincerely desired to resolve the matter on its own terms. A history of problems between the state and the district compounded the situation.¹

As a result of this standoff, the state and the district agreed that an independent evaluation of the program would be useful. The state presented a list of evaluators; however, the list included individuals who had already concluded in an earlier state study that the program selection process was seriously flawed. To complicate matters further, the assistant state superintendent said that, "We will not accept any review that will not put more minorities in the program" (Hausser, 1984a).

The district superintendent and the president of the Peoria Board of Education were convinced that the assistant state superintendent wanted an affirmative action program rather than an academic program (see Hausser, 1984a). The district wanted to know if a problem existed, but at the same time it feared a study with a foregone conclusion, for practical and political reasons. A compromise was struck. The district decided to look for an outside evaluator who had experience in gifted education and a reputation for fairness, and the state agreed to look at the report.

An evaluation of the referral, identification, and selection process was undertaken with the proviso that an appraisal of the entire program take place. If the program lacked substance or did not serve gifted children, an appraisal of its mechanisms would be an academic exercise in futility.

The Program

The Peoria Public Schools' Academically Gifted Program serves gifted children from grades four through eight. Gifted students are drawn from the entire district to study in an all-day homogeneous grouping program. Consolidating the Gifted Program in one building has not fostered elitist behavior. As the principal explains, "It's a leveling experience for many students who've been used to being the top student in everything they do" (Hans, 1976, p. 5A).

The Gifted Program began as an experimental program funded by the Allied Foundation in 1963. The district adopted the program based on the evaluation results of this experiment (Bent et al., 1969). The program, which is based on a high ability/high achievement enrichment model, has a core curriculum similar to the district's curriculum. Additional activities and course requirements supplement the Gifted Program's basic curriculum. Special courses, including speed reading, foreign language, speech, debate, archeology, and anthropology, also are offered. Students also routinely take part in special interest activities such as intramural sports, computers, sewing, drawing, and photography.

In many respects, the enriched curriculum offers gifted students an educational experience that differs qualitatively from their chronological peers in the regular school program. Speed reading is provided for seventh-grade students. According to the principal and the reading teacher, "Speed itself is not the primary goal." Students were observed reading at 800, 900, and 1,200 words per minute. However, they learn to vary their speed depending on the text they are reading.

Foreign language training begins in the fourth grade. The first 3 years of the program stress conversation. During one class, conversational contests were used to make foreign language instruction more exciting. Students were given one minute to engage in conversations using specified words. The competition required precision in comprehension and pronunciation.

This program enables students to enter second- or third-year foreign language

¹For a historical background of gifted and talented education in Illinois—from an evaluation perspective—see Avery and Bartolini, 1979; Colton, 1968; Dooley, House, Lapan, and Kerins 1968; Herche, 1979; House, Kerins, and Steele 1970, 1971a, 1971b; House, Kerins, Lapan and Steele, 1969; House, Lapan, and Kerins, 1968; House, Steele, Kerins, 1970; Kerins, House, Lapan, and Steele, 1969; Newland, 1976; Sjogren, Stake, House, Denny and Lapan, 1968; Steele, 1969; and Steele, House, Lapan, and Kerins, 1970, 1971.

training in high school. It also provides students studying French the opportunity to live in France with a French family during the summer. In addition to reinforcing linguistic skills, this is a culturally enriching experience. One student from the 1984 class spoke enthusiastically about her experience with the rest of the class in Paris. This portion of the program, however, requires parental financial support.

Speech and debate are also part of the seventh- and eighth-grade curricula. The speech classes require demonstrations that emphasize public speaking skills. For example, in one class, a student showed how to make french fries.

Eighth-grade students have the opportunity to participate in the Havana Hope-well Indians' archeological dig under the supervision of the archeological staff of Northwestern University. They use metric measurements to record observations and findings at the site. Students plot the artifacts on graphs and sift the soil through ½-inch mesh screens to catch pottery shards and other fragments. Classroom preparation for the field school is required. Courses include archeology, anthropology, and time measurement.

In one class, students measured and plotted simulated archeological findings to prepare for the field school. Students worked in teams, cross-checking each others' work and striving for accuracy. In addition, students take an introductory research course that orients them to the scientific approach, including research concepts and techniques, and culminates in a research paper. Students in the gifted program have made the school a successful competitor in the Junior Academy of Science State Expositions.

The Fetterman (1984b) evaluation of Peoria's gifted and talented program concluded that the district had designed a gifted education instructional program in response to the educational needs of students with both general intellectual ability and specific aptitude.² Moreover, the

program's strength and community support are unquestionable.

The district, however, does have areas that need innovation and improvement. The district's service to gifted children between junior high school and college should be strengthened. The evaluation determined that underachieving gifted children were not served and recommended extending the program to include these students. It also recommended a mentor program and emphasized the need to collect and maintain follow-up data on graduates. Overall, however, the program was rated very highly. (See Fetterman, 1984b, for the evaluation report and Fetterman, in press, for additional program evaluation details.)

The Mechanisms

Once the value of the program had been established, an analysis of the referral, identification, and selection mechanisms was warranted. The mechanisms themselves were standard. On the basis of district-wide intelligence and achievement test results and teacher-principal nominations, students were referred to a neighboring university for individual intelligence testing. A selection committee screened candidates via a predetermined formula consisting of Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (39.65%); Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) (19.07%); SRA Achievement Series (SRA) (16.09%); Grades (15.14%); Narrative (5.63%); and Behavioral Characteristics (4.42%). Students were ranked according to an overall score based on this formula. The top 60 students were selected for participation in the gifted program. Periodically, students are selected to fill vacancies at various grade levels.

The evaluation found that the Peoria School District is adhering to the State Board of Education's rules, regulations, and guidelines governing the identification and selection process of gifted education reimbursement programs. Criteria for selection have been described in detail and consistently applied to children in the Local Education Agency population.

The district exceeds the state standards regarding the use of identification devices. The state requires a minimum of three identification devices and lists sug-

²This evaluation used psychometric, ethnographic, and auditing techniques. See Fetterman (1984a) and Fetterman and Pitman (1986) for details concerning ethnographic evaluation.

gested methods for the district to use in identifying gifted children. The district has selected five methods from the state's list: the WISC-R, SRA, teacher recommendations, past grades (past performance), and individual rating sheets. In addition, the CAT is used. Identification criteria are established before students are selected for the program. Specific cutoff scores are adopted when standardized tests are used. A direct relationship exists between the criteria for selection and the instructional program for gifted students.

All Gifted Program teachers are certified and are required to meet two of the three state requirements. They must all have attended a summer training institute approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for teachers of the gifted, and have had at least 2 years (some have as many as 18 years) of experience working with gifted children programs.

Refinements

Although the district met or surpassed state requirements, a review of the specific referral, identification, and selection mechanisms in practice suggested that refinements were needed. Viewing each mechanism as a gatekeeper function highlighted the significance of each problem and the nature of the necessary refinement.

For a student, referral is the first door into the gifted program. The district had three referral pools. The first was composed of third-grade students who scored at the 80th percentile or above on district-wide CAT and SRA tests (see Table I). The second pool consisted of students who may have missed one of the tests by being absent. The third pool included individ-

ual teacher or principal nominations. Referral statistics indicated that only 9 black students were referred to the 1983-84 district gifted program—4 from the first pool and 5 from the third. Only two students were referred from five of the southern predominantly black schools in the district. One black parent explained that, "I have heard from others that sometimes the teachers don't recommend the students, and it's not so much that it's because they are black, but . . . that some of the principals want to have those high achievers at their school."

In other cases, the parent explained that low teacher expectations were a problem:

[The teachers] walk into the school. Nothing is expected of them. They walk in and say, "All right, look at his address, where is he from? Okay, I know he is not going to be able to do this. I'm not going to spend that much time if he does not get it right away; I'm not going to spend that much time with him. Label him learning disability or slow learner . . ." It's just so sad they feel like no one wants to teach down there. "Oh, it's boring, I can't teach those kids." They just feel they can't learn, but if they noticed, if they gave these kids a little extra attention, a little encouragement, they would do well.

The number of minority students in the program can increase only if the pools of minority applicants increase. The evaluation pointed to the problem of teacher expectations and the need to conduct in-service training programs in identification and referral procedures, particularly in schools that had not referred any students to the gifted program. The evaluation recommended that teachers with the greatest predictive ability (on the basis of past per-

TABLE I
District-Wide Testing Cutoff Scores Based On
Composite SRA and CAT Scores

CAT	SRA				
	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-99
75-79					
80-84				X	X
85-89			X	X	X
90-94		X	X	X	X
95-99		X	X	X	X

formance) should help develop and conduct inservice training programs. Although it would not guarantee increased selection, such a program would be a first step toward refining the district's procedures and instruments. Increasing the pool of potentially qualified applicants is a necessary, yet insufficient, baseline.

Identification procedures are a second door to the program. Clark (1979) and Getzels and Dillon (1973), among others, emphasize the role of identification methods in explaining underrepresentation. The Peoria gifted and talented program had to make several modifications to answer political, pragmatic, and technical concerns. The selection committee members responsible for reviewing student tests and documents all belonged to the same school. Other schools had no representative on the committee to serve as a potential quality control and political advocate. The evaluation recommended that the district consider appointing a representative to the committee from the southern, predominantly minority schools.

A second problem involved the Characteristics Rating Form, one of the instruments used to identify gifted children in the district. The form was out of date and lacked internal consistency. For example, some questions juxtaposed a "poor" rating response with a "better than a good many" rating response. An updated list of behavioral characteristics was shared with the district to enable it to modify and improve the selection process. (See Davis and Rimm, 1985, Renzulli and Hartman, 1971, and Tuttle and Becker, 1980, for a useful collection of behavioral characteristic checklists.)

A third problem concerned the district-wide tests. The WISC-R, SRA, and CAT are acceptable and appropriate tests for a high ability/high achievement-oriented gifted program. (See Hagen, 1980, regarding the value of the WISC-R and the CAT.) A review of the district achievement test score sheets revealed no significant problem, but a minor mechanical problem did emerge. The pencil quality of recorded answers was inconsistent, which suggested that optical scoring might be affected. Such an observation seems trivial.

However, in a similar case (Breckenridge, 1984),

Hillsborough County, Florida public school officials have pinpointed faulty pencils as the reason a computer misread 10,500 answer sheets for a basic-skills test taken by 85,000 students earlier this year.

Administrators estimate it will cost \$40,000 and take 26 days to rescore all 85,000 tests. (p. 7)

In an investigation of this type all levels, including abstract and mechanical, must be explored. Low graphite pencils may be used disproportionately by one segment of the population. In addition, sections of individual (SRA) score sheets were completely blank. The evaluation emphasized that this finding indicated a need for additional analysis. Further study would enable any school district to determine the frequency of the problem and any correlation with specific teachers, schools, or subpopulations.

A more substantive problem involved the CAT. One of the cutoff scores for the first pool of students (Category I referral) was based on the CAT. The lowest score was selected from the verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative elements of the test. The evaluation demonstrated how a higher measure of consistency could be achieved by selecting a single element for all students, assuming students meet an established standard on each of the CAT subtests. (The quantitative subtest appears to be the best predictor at the middle and secondary school levels.) This refinement may improve the accuracy of the match between the type of student (verbal, nonverbal, and/or quantitative ability) and the program curriculum.

As Hagen (personal communication, 1985) points out, "It is extremely important that the selection process for gifted programs should be closely related to the cognitive, academic, and other demands that the program makes on students." In addition, the evaluation recommended the use of raw scores or scaled scores rather than percentiles in determining this facet of a student's eligibility for the program. Score averaging was also discussed. Hagen (personal communication, 1985) strongly recommends that

... Standard Age Scores be used for se-

lection, particularly if the selection procedure involves averaging two or more of the scores. Whenever averages of two or more of the test scores are used for selection, it is important to remember that a distribution of averages is typically less variable than the scores used to compute the average.

The evaluation also noted one deviation from the conventional administration of the WISC-R: Students did not receive the vocabulary section of the test. The vocabulary test is the greatest predictor of achievement. However, this practice does not compromise the test validity or reliability because the four remaining subtests are averaged (see Wechsler, 1984, Appendix E, p. 190). However, it does represent a different approach. Before the evaluation was completed, the district research director requested that the vocabulary section be administered in the future.

A more technical recommendation involved the weighting system. The following weights were given to each variable in determining the ranking score of the students: WISC-R (39.65%); CAT (19.07%); SRA (16.09%); Grades (15.14%); Narrative (5.63%); and Characteristic Rating Form (4.42%). Straight percentages, however, can give additional weight to IQ scores.

The evaluation suggested a refinement to improve the accuracy of the weighting mechanism (see Figure 1). Briefly, instead of using straight percentages for each variable, percentages can be divided by the standard deviation of the group. This refinement would further increase the accuracy of the measurement by distributing these student scores on the basis of the gifted subpopulation scores (for details, see Guilford, 1956). The evaluation also suggested that SRA raw scores could be used instead of percentiles. Adopting growth-scale values would at least represent an improvement on the use of percentiles. Raw scores can convert to normal curve equivalents to increase the accuracy of the measurement.

A final recommendation involved rank ordering students eligible for a replacement slot. Periodically, students left the program, either by choice or necessity. Potential replacements, however, were not sequentially ranked according to their total scores. This practice, which was un-

fair to students and their parents and inconsistent with program procedures, was also a significant political liability. Politically pressured district administrators may have appreciated the latitude or discretion this loophole offered, but the small amount of discretionary power they gained was insignificant compared with charges of preferential treatment they faced.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that district referral, identification, and selection systems were appropriate given the program's high ability/high achievement model. Suggestions and refinements to improve the accuracy of the existing system were often geared toward enhancing the probability of increased minority representation. However, these fundamental mechanisms clearly were not the most significant cause of low minority representation in the program. The major underlying factors lay in the community, not in the school.

Socioeconomic Context of Minority Representation

The state was primarily concerned about black student representation in the district's gifted program. Black students comprised approximately 40% of the third-grade, however, only .4% of these students participated in the gifted program. Pertinent socioeconomic data were used to explain these figures.

In the district, white students comprised 60% of the third grade. In 1984, 55 of 737 white students (7.5%) were selected to participate in the gifted and talented program. Given their size in the school population, Asians were the most over-represented group in the program. Asians constitute 2% of the third-grade enrollment. However, in 1984, 3 of 26 Asian students (12%) were selected to participate in the gifted program. In contrast, 2 of 475 black students (.4%) were selected to participate. Clearly, blacks were statistically underrepresented in the program. Similar patterns of under- and overrepresentation, resulting from social variables, are common in gifted programs.

Like most communities, Peoria is not socioeconomically homogeneous. Approximately 72% of the black population lives in the poorer, southern section of

Select the weights, calculate the standard deviation of the group, and divide the weight by the standard deviation. Divide this resulting figure by the smallest number resulting from this division (of weight by standard deviation). Multiply this number by 10 and round to nearest whole number. Rank students according to the score derived from this formula.

Variable Name	Weights	Standard Deviation	Weight+ Standard Deviation	New Weight+ Smallest Value	x10	Round
WISC-R	39.65 +3					
Verbal	13.22					
Performance	13.22					
Full-Scale	13.22					
CAT	19.07 +3					
Verbal	6.36					
Quantitative	6.36					
Nonverbal	6.36					
SRA	16.09 +3					
Composite	5.36					
Reading	5.36					
Math	5.36					
Grades	15.14					
Narrative	5.63					
Characteristics	4.42					

FIGURE 1. *Weighting Mechanism.*

town. The southern tracts of Peoria (essentially below the Bluff section) have by far the highest unemployment rate, the highest rate of female heads of household with children and, conversely, the lowest rate of husband-wife households. The south side has the lowest income and educational achievement levels in the community. It also has the highest percent of renters and the highest rate of vacant commercial units. Neighborhood housing on the south side has severely deteriorated.

In contrast, the Bluff and the north side sectors of Peoria are predominantly white (74%). These sections of the community enjoy average to very low unemployment rates and the highest rate of husband-wife households. They also have the highest incomes and educational levels in the community. The middle and northern sections of the town have the highest percentages of home owners, few vacant commercial units, and neighborhood housing in good to excellent condition.

According to the 1980 U.S. census (U.S. Department of Commerce, issued in 1983), the median income for whites was \$19,192 and \$12,063 for blacks in Peoria.

Thirty-four percent of working whites were employed in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations; 23% of employed blacks worked at this socioeconomic level. As one proceeded up the employment ladder, the discrepancy between blacks and whites increased. Twenty-eight percent of employed whites had jobs in managerial and professional specialty occupations—16% in the professional category. In contrast, only 13% of employed blacks worked in this economic group—9% in the professional fields. Similarly, 29.5% of the black population lived below the poverty line, compared with 5.6% of the white population.

Gifted enrollment statistics are a product of societal forces outside the classroom. These socioeconomic variables strongly influence this gifted program's enrollment statistics (see Barbe, 1956, regarding socioeconomic variables). Given such significant socioeconomic differences in Peoria, disproportional representation in a high ability/high achievement program is not surprising. A plethora of social forces inhibit proper academic preparation of blacks in Peoria, ranging from low incomes to insufficient educa-

tional background. Conversely, white families in Peoria have the advantages of higher incomes and better educational backgrounds than blacks.

The evaluation had to take these variables into account when evaluating program enrollment statistics. Looking simply at IQ scores leads to invidious comparisons between blacks and whites. In an ideal world in which all students share the advantages of a supportive, enriched background, IQ scores would have more meaning and proportional representation could be expected. Peoria's vast socioeconomic differences, however, make such expectations unrealistic.

Interpreting the meaning of enrollment data also requires the evaluator to make appropriate comparisons with other communities. For example, comparing Evanston's (Illinois) gifted program enrollment with Peoria's program enrollment would be comparing apples and oranges. Evanston is a more socioeconomically homogeneous community than Peoria; it has only a \$4,000 difference between the median income of whites and blacks. Similarly, 33% of employed whites work in technical, sales, and administrative support positions, and 34% of employed blacks hold jobs within this same occupational group.

Educational differences are not as great as those between blacks and whites in Peoria. In addition, fewer families live below the poverty line, and the ratio between blacks and whites below the poverty line is much smaller than the ratio in Peoria. A significant difference exists between Peoria's and Evanston's gifted programs as well. Evanston's model includes a visual and performing talents category. These socioeconomic and program model differences produce markedly different sets of enrollment figures. Thus, delineating pertinent variables in the process of making program comparisons is essential to an accurate appraisal.

In sum, socioeconomic variables must be considered in interpreting meaningfully the significance of a gifted program's enrollment data. In Peoria's case, the socioeconomic context provides much of the basis for its 40%/4% minority selection ratio.

Quota Systems and Equality of Results

Problems of unequal representation are often addressed by imposing a quota, making proportional enrollment a legislative process. In Peoria, the district faces State Board of Education pressures to establish greater minority representation in its gifted program. A quota system in Peoria would produce proportional representation and be politically expedient. However, a simple percentage quota system—unrelated to existing criteria—would have significant and potentially deleterious effects on the program and on district enrollment.

Peoria's program is designed for high ability and high achieving students. This model serves motivated, goal- and achievement-oriented students with high intellectual potential. Funds limit the program to 60 students. Such fiscal constraints already cause a loss of district enrollment; many eligible students (not included in the 60 selected) are lost to private schools.

A simple percentage quota system in this district would mean abandoning existing program standards and selection criteria. The program curriculum would have to be revamped for high achievers rather than for gifted children. In addition, a quota would jeopardize the concept of fair selection. District-wide enrollment attrition is another probable outcome of this approach. Quota systems reduce program slots through preassignment. High scoring nonminority students, excluded from the program by the quota system, would likely leave the district enrollment rosters as well.

The larger mission of the gifted program is also at issue. Peoria's program is, by its nature, designed to meet the needs of children at the margins of the intellectual distribution. Implementing a quota system redefines the term *gifted* and equates equal opportunity with equal ability—an egalitarian fallacy. Applying a simple percentage quota system—unrelated to existing selection criteria—to a gifted program makes no more sense than applying such a system to an athletic team. The program's purpose is to select and serve children with specific intellectual and motivational needs and qualities. Stu-

dents having the highest predicted criteria performance should be selected. These criteria for program selection should be based on statistical measures supplemented by more subjective measures.

At the same time, scores must be viewed realistically. The difference between an IQ score of 130 and one of 128 is academic. The child who scores 128 will, in all probability, perform as well as the student who scores 130. Comparing scores is much like comparing stereo specifications. The difference between a receiver that has a range of 20–20,000 mhz and a receiver that has a range of 17–25,000 mhz is extremely small, given that the human ear can only hear between 20–20,000 mhz. Similarly, a quota system that selects for minority status within an acceptably high ability and achievement range need not require perfect numerical comparability with competing students. Such an approach would not undermine the program.

The faulty equation of equal opportunity with equal ability is followed by an equally misleading equation—that of equal opportunity with equal achievement or results. According to Pole (1978),

One intellectually important consequence of the Coleman enquiry into educational inequalities was that concepts of equality began to polarise around two dominant principles: one was the old traditional value of equality of opportunity, but the other was the newly appreciated—if not newly conceived—idea of equality of results . . . as Coleman clearly perceived, when equal results were achieved in academic records it did not follow as a matter of course that they sprang from equality of conditions in the schools. Beyond this difficulty, the somewhat crude results thrown up by test scores and other school records could too easily be transmuted from methods of measurement into educational aims. When the aim of the schools was to achieve an equality of recorded measurement the system might be in working order, but some doubt would arise as to whether it was a system of education. Educational specialists would find nothing to surprise them in this problem. Its most acute form had long afflicted America's more gifted children, frequently held back from anything like their full potentialities by the stubborn pace of

statisfied mediocrity. When quality meant equal opportunity for each child to develop fully his or her own potential, it could not be easily reconciled with the view of equality which aimed to produce a steady stream of similar products and failed to offer the incentives, the equipment, or the intelligence needed by children of innately superior abilities (p. 352).

The issues of equal opportunity, ability, and achievement or results can have a profound effect on the operation of gifted education programs. These basic philosophical concerns, as well as pragmatic and political concerns, must be addressed before any alteration of a program's existing model is undertaken.

Conclusion

The evaluation's findings were presented to the school board in a controversial and highly publicized atmosphere, reflecting the political tensions that prevailed during the entire study. Three television channels and a handful of newspaper and radio reporters covered the affair. Cameras were rolling; flood lights and microphones were everywhere. The board heard a point-by-point report and then explored specific points in greater detail and asked for additional suggestions. At the subsequent press conference, some reporters pressed for a vindication of the city. Others viewed this occasion as an opportunity to strengthen the state's case.

Predictably, television coverage presented as many interpretations of the evaluation report as there were reporters. One anchorman reported that the Stanford researcher had given the program a "gold seal." Another anchorwoman reported "mixed findings" by the Stanford professor. A third reporter emphasized the socioeconomic factors discussed in the report. *Education Daily* emphasized the evaluation recommendations regarding "refining the weighting system for tests to select students" and the warning that "teachers too often have low expectations of black children" (see Hausser 1984b, p. 8).

For its part, the district considered each finding and recommendation on its own merits. The district made more than 23

program changes based on the evaluation recommendations. According to Hausser (1984c),

Some of the changes include having a representative from the Valley schools, which have a higher percentage of blacks, on the selection committee for the program; training teachers in Valley schools where few or no students have been referred to the program to recognize gifted students; establishing quality controls on the system used to select students; and developing a more definitive process for ranking students for selection. (p. C6)

The board president sent a copy of the report and program changes to the state superintendent of education to resolve Peoria's ongoing conflict. The district agreed to increase the pool of minority applicants. However, the director of research recognized that, "Increasing the pool of minority students in the referral group will not necessarily increase the number of minorities selected as long as the program is maintained at its original intent and present purpose" (Griffith, 1984a, p. 12).

According to the district's research director, "Our interest is to have an academically gifted program for children with high ability who have proven academic achievement" (Griffith, 1984b, p. D4). Each community selects the type of program it believes to be most advantageous for its children. As Whitmore (1980) points out, "Methods of identification are determined by the goals of the program for which students are being selected" (p. 19). Peoria's model is highly selective and is only one of many excellent gifted and talented program models.

Some programs have broken Peoria's criteria into separate parts for selection consideration: high achievement criteria for one group and high ability for another. Using the high achievement category alone and lowering IQ standards for economically disenfranchised students have been successful in increasing minority enrollment in San Diego. However, a different kind of program is needed to accommodate students selected under these arrangements. Moreover, some difficulties with retention have arisen with the selection system. A program that places greater

emphasis on talents and creativity, rather than on academic giftedness, would probably increase minority representation. Such a focus would, however, require redesigning the program structure and curriculum as well as the staff configuration.

These options were presented to the district to enable it to make a more informed decision. The district chose to select for high ability/high achievement students and decided to retain its criteria in the future. The state superintendent of education offered to sit down with district officials to avoid a lawsuit. "We don't shrink from lawsuits, but we think there are better ways to settle things" ("School officials," 1984, p. A-5). The district, however, was forced to take the case to court and won.

The Peoria program was a test case for a basic problem in gifted education programs throughout the country. The evaluation of Peoria's program demonstrated that problems in the classroom often spring from the local community (see also Tannenbaum, 1983). Program and community variables must be thoroughly evaluated before conclusions about a district's predisposition or a sub-population's ability are made. Schools often reflect societal forces. Inequities in the community will create inequities in its schools. To accuse the schools and school programs of being the sole cause of such problems is an example of blaming the victim.

References

- AVERY, L., & BARTOLINI, L. (1979). Survey of provisions for gifted children in Illinois: A summary paper. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 2(3), 132-140.
- BARBE, W. B. (1956). A study of the family background of the gifted. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 47(5), 302-309.
- BENT, L. G., FREDERICK, W. M., KALUS, R. A., LEWIS, C. W., McDONALD, F. J., ROTHNEY, J. W. M., SIMMONS, W. D., & SOWARDS, G. W. (1969). *Grouping of the gifted: An experimental approach*. Peoria, IL: Bradley University Press.
- BRECKENRIDGE, P. (1984, August 22). Problems with pencils fools test scoring. *Education Week*, p. 7.
- CLARK, B. (1979). *Growing up gifted: Developing the potential of children at home and at school*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing.
- COLTON, D. L. (1968). *Policies of the Illinois plan for program development for gifted children*. St. Louis, MO: Center for Educational Field Studies, Washington University.
- DAVIS, G. A., & RIMM, S. B. (1985). *Education of the*

- gifted and talented. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- District's gifted program charged with discrimination. (1984, August 22). *Education Week*, pp. 3-4.
- DOOLEY, R., HOUSE, R. R., LAPAN, S., & KERINS, T. (1968). *The report on the 1968 Summer Institute on Evaluation* (University of Illinois, July 29-August 9, 1968). Champaign-Urbana, IL: Cooperative Educational Research Laboratory.
- FETTERMAN, D. M. (1984a). *Ethnography in educational evaluation*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- FETTERMAN, D. M. (1984b). *Peoria gifted program evaluation: Referral, identification, and selection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- FETTERMAN, D. M. (in press). *A beacon of educational excellence: Reevaluating gifted and talented education programs*.
- FETTERMAN, D. M. & PITMAN, M. A. (1986). *Educational evaluation: Ethnography in theory, practice, and politics*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- GETZELS, J. W., & DILLON, J. T. (1973). The nature of giftedness and the education of the gifted. In R. M. Travers (Ed.). *Second handbook of research on teaching*, pp. 689-731. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- GRIFFITH, E. H. (1984a). Response to Dr. Fetterman's evaluation of the district #150's gifted program. Peoria, IL: Peoria Public Schools.
- GRIFFITH, E. H. (1984b, July 29). In M. Hausser, Officials study Peoria's gifted program tests: Why blacks, other minorities seem to have trouble getting accepted. *Journal Star*, p. D-4.
- GUILFORD, J. P. (1956). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- HAGEN, F. (1980). *Identification of the gifted*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- HANS, N. (1976, March 31). Washington school: Often controversial and misunderstood. *North Peoria Observer*, p. 5a.
- HAUSSER, M. (1984a, September 18). Stanford consultant impressed by Peoria's gifted program. *Journal Star*, p. A-8.
- HAUSSER, M. (1984b, October 16). Gifted program bias charged in Peoria fund cutoff. *Education Daily*, p. 8.
- HAUSSER, M. (1984c, November 6). School board discusses gifted program. *Journal Star*, p. C-6.
- HERCHE, P. (1979). Project impact: Identification and replication of exemplary gifted programs in Illinois. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 2(3), 127-131.
- HOUSE, E. R., KERINS, T., LAPAN, S., & STEELE, J. M. (1969). *The visibility and clarity of demonstrations and appendices*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Cooperative Educational Research Laboratory.
- HOUSE, E. R., KERINS, C. T., & STEELE, J. M. (1970). *The demonstration center: An appraisal of the Illinois experience*. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois.
- HOUSE, E. R., KERINS, C. T., & STEELE, J. M. (1971a, June). *The gifted classroom*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- HOUSE, E. R., KERINS, C. T., & STEELE, J. M. (1971b, August). *Educating the talented: Illinois gifted program final evaluation report*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- HOUSE, E. R., LAPAN, S., & KERINS, C. T. (1968). *A preliminary assessment of the Illinois gifted program*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Cooperative Educational Research Laboratory.
- HOUSE, E. R., STEELE, J. M., & KERINS, T. (1970, November). *The development of educational programs: Advocacy in a non-rational system*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- HUMPHREYS, L. (1984, July 29). In M. Hausser, Officials study Peoria's gifted program tests: Why blacks, other minorities seem to have trouble getting accepted. *Journal Star*, p. D-4.
- JENSEN, A. R. (1973). *Educational differences*. London: Methuen.
- JENSEN, A. R. (1980). *Bias in mental testing*. New York: The Free Press.
- KARNES, M. (1984, July 29). In M. Hausser, Officials study Peoria's gifted program tests: Why blacks, other minorities seem to have trouble getting accepted. *Journal Star*, p. D-4.
- KERINS, T., HOUSE, E. R., LAPAN, S., & STEELE, J. M. (1969, October). *The Illinois demonstration centers—the visitors' view*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- LEMKE, E. (1984, July 29). In M. Hausser, Officials study Peoria's gifted program tests: Why blacks, other minorities seem to have trouble getting accepted. *Journal Star*, p. D-4.
- NEWLAND, T. E. (1976). *The gifted in socioeducational perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- POLE, J. R. (1978). *The pursuit of equality in American history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- RENZULLI, J. S., & HARTMAN, R. K. (1971). Scale for rating behavioral characteristics of superior students. *Exceptional Children*, 38(3), 243-248.
- REYNOLDS, C. R., & JENSEN, A. R. (1983). WISC-R subscale patterns of abilities of black and whites matched on full scale IQ. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(2), 207-214.
- School officials, Gill plan caucus to avoid lawsuit. (1984, October 19). *Journal Star*, p. A-5.
- SJOGREN, D., STAKE, R. E., HOUSE, E. R., DENNY, T., & LAPAN, S. (1968, July 29-August 9). *Training materials for gifted evaluation institute*. University of Illinois. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- STEELE, J. M. (1969). *Dimensions of the class activities questionnaire*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- STEELE, J. M., HOUSE, E. R., LAPAN, S., & KERINS, T. (1970, August). *Instructional climate in Illinois gifted classes*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: CIRCE.
- STEELE, J. M., HOUSE, E. R., LAPAN, S., & KERINS, T. (1971). Cognitive and affective patterns of emphasis in gifted and average Illinois classes. *Exceptional Children*, 37(10), 757-759.
- SWERDLIK, M. (1984, July 29). In M. Hausser, Officials study Peoria's gifted program tests: Why blacks, other minorities seem to have trouble getting accepted. *Journal Star*, p. D-4.
- TANNENBAUM, A. J. (1983). *Gifted children: Psychological and educational perspectives*. New York: Macmillan.

- TUTTLE, F. B., JR., & BECKER, L. A. (1980). *Characteristics and identification of gifted and talented students*. Washington, DC: National Educational Association.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. (issued in 1983). *1980 census of population and housing: Census tracts—Peoria, Ill.* Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census.
- WECHSLER, D. (1974). *Manual for the Wechsler intelligence scale for children revised*. New York: The Psychological Corporation.
- WHITMORE, J. R. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict, and un-*

derachievement. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Author

DAVID M. FETTERMAN, Administrator and Assistant Professor, Stanford University, School of Education, Stanford, CA 94305. Specializations: Ethnography, evaluation, policy analysis, gifted education, dropout programs, organizational theory.