



# The gifted kids aren't alright: A JDM approach to understanding low support for gifted education programs



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## Key findings

- People are less likely to support gifted education than other types of special education.
- People generally believe gifted students will not suffer negative consequences without specialized educational services.
- Framing decision to support gifted education as a potential loss of contributions to society increases support.

## Background

Gifted students have unique educational needs, and require special educational services to reach their full academic potential. Without appropriate services, gifted students suffer higher rates of academic disengagement, drop out, and behavioral problems.<sup>1</sup> Gifted students also make disproportionate contributions to society in the form of scientific, technological, and artistic innovations. Despite these stakes for both gifted individuals and society as a whole, support for gifted education in the US is very low.

In the current work we investigate how people make decisions about supporting gifted education, and aim to identify ways that such support might be increased.

## Studies 1a-d: Low support for gifted education

Both gifted students and special education students need specialized educational services. However, in four scenario-based studies, we show that people are less willing to support gifted education.

*Study 1a:* People were **less willing to vote** for a tax increase to provide gifted education services.

*Study 1b:* People **were less likely to donate** to a gifted education initiative.

*Study 1c:* People **allocated less resources** to gifted programs.



*Study 1d:* People **less likely to give additional educational resources** to a gifted student. This choice was related to gain/loss framing.

DV: Allocating resources to gifted student

- Prevent negative outcomes,  $b = -.43, p < .001$
- Promote positive outcomes,  $b = .25, p = .007$

## Study 2: Beliefs about gifted education

We tested beliefs about the consequences when gifted students do not receive appropriate services.

### If gifted students DO NOT receive specialized services

Positive outcomes MORE likely

- Contribute positively to classroom climate
- Help the classroom teacher
- Achieve full educational potential

Negative consequences LESS likely

- Drop out of school
- Cause problems in their communities

One Exception

- **Society would miss out on important innovations**

Note. All effects significant at  $p < .001$

## Study 3: Increasing support for gifted education

Our findings suggest that losses are not salient when people consider supporting gifted education. One exception is when people considered contributions to society that gifted students might make. We thus tested if framing the decision as a potential loss of contributions to society would increase support for gifted education.

**Control condition:** "Gifted students require special programming to develop their academic and intellectual abilities..."

**Loss to society condition:** "Imagine what society would look like without personal computers, the internet, or antibiotics to fight infections... by not supporting gifted education we are likely to miss out on groundbreaking innovations that transform society."

## Results

The loss to society condition ( $M = 6.29$ ) showed higher support for gifted education than the control condition ( $M = 5.38$ ).  $F(1,243) = 8.89, p = .003, d = .32$ .

## Future directions

- Test if society loss framing impacts real-world behaviors and decisions
- Examine other biases at play, such as gifted students come only from wealthy families

## Zoom presentation link

<https://wustl.zoom.us/j/94366413564>

#	Item	<i>t</i>	<i>M</i> <i>gifted</i>	<i>M</i> <i>special</i>
1	They would have to repeat one or more grades	22.1	3.43	8.79
9	They would drop out of school	15.11	4.05	7.79
15	They would disrupt classroom instruction	10.6	4.05	7.79
2	They would cause problems in their communities	10.28	3.89	6.61
4	They would distract other students in class	9.42	4.86	7.29
12	They would disengage from academic topics they were interested in	7.91	6.19	8.18
8	Society as a whole would be worse off	3.81	6.49	7.51
16	They would be bored during class	0.19	8.00	8.04
6	Society would miss out on important innovations or inventions they might have created	-2.28	7.82	7.21
7	They would achieve their full educational potential	-8.33	5.88	3.58
17	They would help their classroom teacher	-8.55	6.44	4.42
3	They would do their classroom work quietly	-10.56	7.50	4.91
13	They would make important contributions to society as adults	-10.9	7.07	4.51
10	They would help other students with their work	-11.33	6.50	3.63
18	They would continue to develop intellectually in a way that is typical for their age	-12.04	7.03	4.11
14	They would contribute positively to their classroom climate	-12.1	7.21	4.41
11	They would go to be productive members of their communities	-12.26	7.79	5.03
5	They would eventually go to college	-18.78	8.75	4.41

Scale from 0 (do not agree at all) to 10 (completely agree)