

Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within

Michelle Ronksley-Pavia & Geraldine Townend

Griffith University, Brisbane, Qld

Abstract

This paper presents findings from two separate research projects conducted between 2012 and 2015, which together examined the experiences of 19 twice exceptional children. The first study used a mixed methods approach with eleven students to investigate their educational experiences through quantitative instruments and in-depth interviews. The second study used narrative case study inquiry methods to elicit eight children's in-school and out-of-school experiences of being twice exceptional, using the unique method of interviewing the children in their own home settings.

Relatively little is known about the educational experiences of twice exceptional children, particularly in Australia, and how their experiences may contribute to our understanding of individual needs. Findings across both studies point to twice exceptional children's insights about their giftedness and their disability. These insights reflect feelings of being different to their peers, issues with interpersonal relationships; such as bullying and limited understanding from others. Many of these experiences increased stress and anxiety levels, which were further exacerbated by some educators' frequent focus on disability rather than ability. These negative experiences were often ameliorated by out-of-school support, personal interests, and both parental and self-advocacy. Together, the findings across these two studies provide new understandings about these children's experiences.

Key words: Twice exceptional, gifted, educational experiences, narrative inquiry

Background and Literature Review

It is generally understood in the field of twice exceptional research that giftedness can co-occur with any disability (Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & Huber, 2006; Foley Nicpon & Assouline, 2015; Foley Nicpon, Assouline, & Colangelo, 2013). For this paper, twice exceptionality is defined as a child who is "identified as gifted/talented in one or more areas while also possessing a learning, emotional, physical, sensory, and/or developmental disability" (Assouline et al., 2006, p. 14) that impacts on their learning (Ronksley-Pavia, 2015; Townend, 2015).

Twice exceptional children are said to be “among the most underserved students in our schools” (Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & Whiteman, 2009, p. 102). The educational life of twice exceptional students is often littered with negative experiences that can cause them to feel like a failure and to have low self-efficacy, increased internalised and externalised anger, and depression (Barber & Mueller, 2011). These children generally have characteristics and unique needs of children who are both gifted, and also have a disability (or disabilities). The term twice exceptional is widely used by researchers, although it remains a relatively new term amongst educators (Foley Nicpon et al., 2013). The label *exceptional* is traditionally a special education term, and is generally used to identify children with either exceptional *strengths* or exceptional *weaknesses* (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1980).

Studies with twice exceptional students have found that these children are at risk for underachievement in school because their giftedness is frequently not recognised by educators (Foley Nicpon, Allmon, Sieck, & Stinson, 2011; Robinson, 1999). Additionally, research has put forward that their exceptional characteristics and learning attributes contribute to their already present low self-concept and low self-esteem (Barber & Mueller, 2011; Cross, Coleman, & Terhaar-Yonkers, 2014; King Williams, 2005). While the literature indicates the possibility of social problems for twice exceptional children (e.g., poor friendships and relationships with peers), there is little research on these children’s social experiences. Bullying can be problematic for gifted children (Coleman & Gallagher, 2015; Parker Peters & Bain, 2011; Peterson & Ray, 2006), and for children with disability (Queensland Government, 2015; Sveinsson & Morris, 2006). There is limited research into bullying experiences of twice exceptional children; however, it is likely that their experiences of bullying may be comparable to those of students who are gifted, and those who have a disability.

In Australia there is a paucity of research on twice exceptionality (Ronksley-Pavia, 2016; Townend & Pendergast, 2015). Most research exploring the phenomenon of twice exceptionality has been carried out in North America where studies have focused on scholastic achievement and classroom interventions for twice exceptional students, mainly taking a quantitative approach (Friedman-Nimz, O'Brien, & Frey, 2005). The gap in the knowledge that the present two studies address is the limited research from the viewpoints of twice exceptional children, exploring their experience both at school and outside school.

Overview of the studies

Two separate research studies are presented in this paper that together, explored perceptions of 19 twice exceptional students. The findings of these two studies are brought together to demonstrate commonalities across the experiences of these children. Study 1 (Townend, 2015) explored school-based academic self-concepts of twice exceptional students. Study 2 (Ronksley-Pavia, 2016) explored the lived experiences of twice exceptional children. These studies acquired an in-depth understanding of some of the contextual factors impacting these children.

In Study 1, Townend (2015) used mixed-method, case study methodology that investigated eleven twice exceptional students in an Australian Foundation to Year 12 school. The participants were all boys, aged 7 to 16 years from Year 2 through to Year 1. Each of the participants were identified by the school as twice exceptional based on a disability diagnosis by a medical professional, alongside an indicator of their giftedness. The giftedness of each participant was identified by the school through the use of psychometric test instruments, such as a Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-fourth edition (WISC-IV) or Stanford Binet 5 (SB-5), indicating sub-scales in the gifted range of 90th percentile and above. Cognitive assessments (e.g., WISC-IV), administered by a psychologist, are broadly accepted in the field for identifying children who are twice exceptional (Assouline et al., 2006; Barber & Mueller, 2011; Rogers, 2011). The disability diagnoses for each participant were one or more of the following: attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing impairment, central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), dysgraphia, dyslexia, and Asperger's Syndrome.

In Study 2, Ronksley-Pavia (2016) used narrative case study inquiry methods to elicit eight children's in-school and out-of-school experiences of being twice exceptional. This study explored those experiences through a non-disability category approach using the unique perspective of interviewing the children, and their parents, in their own home settings, rather than at school. This approach was undertaken in a setting where the children felt comfortable to share their experiences of being twice exceptional. The eight participants comprised five males and three females, aged between 9 and 16 years. All of the participants were identified as gifted independent of, and prior to, the study through holistic assessment methods and through psychometric testing, such as the WISC-IV and SB-5. Medical professionals and allied health assessment reports were reviewed to identify and corroborate the children's

disability diagnoses. The disability diagnoses were accepted and not used as a primary focus of the study but used to aid in structural corroboration (Eisner, 1998) and crystallisation (Richardson, 2000), qualitative approaches to traditional methods of triangulation. However, it is worth noting the various disability diagnoses for the children as many had multiple identified *conditions*. Of the eight participants all had more than one disability diagnosis: all eight had anxiety; and, two of the males had six co-morbid disability diagnoses. The participants' disabilities included: CAPD; ASD; anxiety; dysgraphia; dyspraxia; ADHD; sensory processing disorder; and, dyslexia.

Both research studies included interviews and participant observations. In Study 1, the context for interviews and observations was in the participants' school. In Study 2, the context was the participants' homes. Data triangulations were used in both studies, with the qualitative triangulation method and crystallisation being used in Study 2 to corroborate the data. Furthermore, Study 1 included the administration of quantitative standardised test instruments wherein the participants, parents and teachers provided data. The test instruments used for the student participants in Study 1 were two self-report tools that have been used and widely supported within the field of gifted education (e.g., Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & Doobay, 2009): the Piers-Harris Self-Concept scale (PH2); and the Behavioural Assessment for Children (2nd edition) scale (BASC-2), including all forms completed by the student participant, teachers, parents, and classroom observation.

Commonalities and differences in findings for the two studies

The findings presented for this paper are focused on common themes that emerged across both studies, with a total of 19 participants. The aim of this paper is to synthesise the findings due to the paucity of twice exceptional research in the Australian context and to provide information for those taking a *whole child perspective* (Plucker, 2012). The findings presented are from the participants' perspectives, but there are also insights from parents and, in Study 1, teachers. Due to the limited number of participants and the qualitative nature of the case-study methodology, the authors do not claim that the studies are generalisable. However, despite the different methodologies of the two studies, the findings show that the majority of emergent themes from each study overlapped, with only some slight differences being identified in the findings from both projects. These minor differences amongst the findings from both studies were most likely due to the different contexts within which the

studies were carried out: Study 1 in the participants' school setting; and Study 2 in the participants' home settings.

The key differences between the studies were that Study 1, the school-based study, did not have some of the same themes that emerged in the home-based Study 2. Specifically, Study 2 found themes such as downtime from pursuit of personal interests, being singled-out by teachers in front of peers, and the importance of the participants' pets in their lives. Additionally, Study 2 identified the pervasiveness of bullying in the lives of all eight of the participants (although Study 1 did have a sub-theme around participant perceptions of exclusion by peers). Study 2 did not find the theme of social comparison theory that emerged in Study 1. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) considers how an individual's perceptions of self are informed by their comparison with others. Two theories emanating from this that were used in Study 1 are the big-fish-little-pond-effect (BFLPE) (Marsh, 1987), and the reflected glory effect (Aberson, 1999; Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, et al., 1976; Marsh, Kong, & Hau, 2000). The BFLPE is based on how the classroom context and the ability of peers directly influence academic self-concept for individuals (Marsh, 1987). The *reflected glory effect* occurs when high-ability students experience enhanced self-concept upon acceptance into a selective program, due to their association with a successful group of people (Aberson, 1999).

The authors consider that the different research contexts of home and school, and the theoretical reflexivity of the researchers, may highlight how the lived experiences of the participants might vary. For example, *bullying by peers* at school was a strong theme in Study 2, and emerged possibly due to the participants feeling safe in their home environment and more able to share such information as opposed to the nature of Study 1, which was undertaken in the school setting. In contrast, *social comparison theory* emerged as a strong theme in Study 1 possibly due to the participants being in the context of school wherein social comparison is more distinct.

Findings across both studies point to twice exceptional children's insights about how they perceive their giftedness and their disability. These insights reflect feelings of being different to their peers and issues with interpersonal relationships. Many of these feelings and experiences increased stress and anxiety levels, which were further intensified by some educators' frequent focus on disability rather than ability. These negative experiences were

often improved by out-of-school support, personal interests, and both parental and self-advocacy.

Together, findings across the two independent research studies provide new understandings about these twice exceptional children’s beliefs and feelings in relation to their experiences. Some of these findings support previous research which states that teachers have an impact upon the educational achievements and psychological well-being of their students (Assouline, Foley Nipcon, & Whiteman, 2010; Assouline, Nicpon Foley, & Huber, 2006; Townend & Pendergast, 2015).

Exploration of Commonalities

In this section we explore the commonalities across both studies. Despite the different theoretical and methodological approaches of these two studies, both found that the majority of themes which emerged had considerable overlap and connections worthy of further exploration. These themes and sub-themes are set out in Table 1 and show the participants’ own interests, negative experiences, support networks, stress and resilience, and self-understanding.

Table 1: Commonalities and differences evident in findings across both studies

Theme	Sub-Themes
1. Personal Interests	a. Self-directed pursuit of personal interests
2. Negative Experiences	a. Bullying by teachers b. Teachers’ yelling c. Significant others
3. Support networks	a. Stress responses; b. Resilience and protective factors
4. Stress and Resilience	a. Feelings of difference; b. Labelling; a. Academic Achievement.
5. Self-Understanding	a. Academic Achievement.

1. Personal interests

Opportunities to engage in, and pursue, their own interests formed significant aspects of the children’s experiences, although parents were important in encouraging their children’s pursuit of their hobbies and activities, the children were the driving forces in that part of their

lives. All of the children in both studies engaged in activities that were in their areas of interest, frequently self-directed, rather than those fostered by schools, such as outdoor activities (mountain-biking, skateboarding), art, music, science experiments and computer gaming. These findings are consistent with Reis, Neu, and McGuire (1997), who noted that school experiences and interests are important for twice exceptional children as they provide outlets from their recurrently negative school experiences. Furthermore, these findings support what Reis et al. (1997) found with regards to non-school based interests for twice exceptional children, that they contributed to positive self-understanding.

A sub-theme under personal interest included, *a. self-directed pursuit of personal interests*. This was found in both studies. For example, each of the participants in Study 1 had a passion for at least one self-directed pursuit outside of school, such as computer and online gaming, sport, art or music. As Benny (aged 9 years) stated, “My [computer] programming is my life, I am really good and if it wasn’t for that I would think I was stupid.” On this theme, Ethan (aged 11 years) further explained, “I love my footy, and I really feel like I matter when I’m there, the guys are great and just accept me for who I am.”

For the second study, opportunities to engage in and pursue their own interests formed important aspects of the children’s lived experiences. Although parents were important in encouraging their children’s pursuit of the activities and providing avenues and outlets for their interests, the children were the driving forces in that part of their lives. As Turbo (aged 13 years) elaborated, “I can beat most kids on the bike in my class ... it means a lot to me to [win]. I’m one of the underdogs in my class because ... I’m rubbish ... I’m not good at classroom stuff ... Just being out there and forgetting everything helps me.”

2. Negative experiences

The theme of negative experiences was wound through both studies. This was also corroborated by the parents. All 19 participants reported ongoing negative experiences, mostly at school which usually involved interpersonal relations. All the children perceived that they had experienced negativity, particularly from others, and for the most part at school.

In Study 1, the negative experiences, such as perceptions of exclusion and misunderstanding by others, were more explicit in the Primary school years and then transferred as a negative self-perception as the participants progressed through Secondary school. Imposter syndrome (Lovecky, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2006) and believing they

were not really liked, despite their acknowledgement that there were no behaviours from others to support such an assertion. The findings around negative experiences are consistent with much of the literature on twice exceptional children's school experiences where many have noted that they are frequently negative (e.g., Reis et al., 1997; Willard-Holt, Weber, Morrison, & Horgan, 2013).

Sub-themes under negative experiences included: *a. bullying by teachers*, and *b. yelling by teachers*. Bullying by teachers was evident in both studies. The participants described experiences of conflicts with their teachers, at times particular teachers who they felt would regularly negatively target them at school.

Some participants reported feeling bullied by their teachers, incidents that left them feeling at risk and unsupported at school. Recurrent incidents which the children saw as bullying by teachers were evidenced by their descriptions of how teachers' yelled at them; being negatively singled out in class; being embarrassed by incidents such as having their work torn up in front of their peers; and having their disability openly divulged by their teachers. Some of the children recounted feeling a distinct lack of support from their teachers. Examples verifying this came from narratives that the children revealed, mentioning being segregated; retaliatory and embarrassing punishments; teachers singling them out; being accused of negative episodes at school; and foregoing learning opportunities. For example, in study 1 the teachers had labelled all of the participants as *lazy* at some point. Additionally, 10 out of the 11 participants reported that, despite preparing extensively for tests, they had been accused by some teachers of lack of preparation for tests.

Our findings agree with Besnoy et al. (2015) who found that parents regularly reported teachers bullying their children (who had disabilities), which they detailed played a major part in their loss of confidence in teachers and schools. Further, this finding is consistent with Hartley, Bauman, Nixon, and Davis (2015), who described high levels of verbal and personal bullying by teachers of students who had special education requirements. This finding is significant and supports previous research which emphasises that all children, particularly children identified as twice exceptional, need schools that are supportive and safe, where conflicts between teachers and learners, and learners and their peers are very low (Wang & Neihart, 2015). Negative relationships with teachers can lead to an unfavourable relationship with school which can lead to increased school anxiety, or disengagement and decreased academic outcomes (Beck & Malley, 1998; Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008;

Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2009; Wang & Neihart, 2015). Previous research provides evidence that positive relationships between teachers and learners, especially for twice exceptional students, can improve their academic achievement levels (Goodenow, 1993; Hughes et al., 2008; Wang & Neihart, 2015). Furthermore, an absence of understanding connections between learners and their teachers can influence learners in achieving lower than expected academic achievements.

The sub-theme of teachers yelling was evident in both studies. In Study 1, each of the participants stated that they were fearful in situations when a teacher was yelling, even if it was not directed at them. Andrew (aged 16 years), illustrated this when he said, “The [religious education] teacher is always yelling, he just loses it, and I feel sick even though I’m not in the firing line.” In Study 2, a strong dislike for teachers’ yelling was woven through most of the children’s narratives, especially for those children with sensory disabilities. The participants’ feelings of teachers yelling at them could relate to hypersensitivities that are often associated with the effects of their disability, (e.g., hypersensitivity to sound levels, frequently linked with ASD and sensory processing disorders). Bob (aged 11 years) related the effect that her teacher’s yelling had on her: “She [the teacher] was always yelling. It drove me mad. I couldn’t concentrate on my stuff ... the only thing she did was yell, yell, yell!” This type of aggressive classroom *management* could also impact negatively on students’ academic achievements, their anxiety and resistance to school.

Being perceived as the object of the teacher’s anger has connotations for the way peers relate to children treated this way by teachers (Reis et al., 1997). Children see teachers as role models in how to relate to and regard others, particularly children who are twice exceptional. By behaving toward students with diverse needs in this way, teachers are modelling unacceptable actions to other students who may see it as appropriate to exclude and bully certain children whom they identify that the teacher treats differently in negative ways. Our findings agree with Hartley et al. (2015) who found that high verbal bullying by teachers of students in receipt of special education provisions and the negative effects on their sense of belonging at school.

3. Support networks

Support networks emerged as an important theme across both studies. By support networks we refer to the identified external factors which the participants acknowledged as

supporting them on a daily basis. The children identified specific supports coming from significant others. These support networks contributed to enhancing school experiences and the participants' abilities to cope with stress, build resilience, and contribute to a sense of who they are.

a. Significant others was a common theme for both studies. For the purposes of these studies, significant others are those who interacted with the participants in their school and home contexts, namely: parents, teachers, siblings and peers. Studies have uncovered that students state their parents and teachers are an important influence on their academic and career choices (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Knowles, 1998), and peers are an important influence for their social choices (Neilson & McNally, 2013). In Study 1, the importance of parental support, in particular maternal advocacy, was considered by the participants as being important for their success in school. An example that illustrates the common perception among participants came from Evan (aged 15 years): “Mum was always there, annoyed by [teacher] stupidity but you would never pick it when she came to school and *nicely* got things happening for me.”

In study 2, significant others and the importance of support networks was exemplified by Ashley (aged 16 years), who stated that she had “stopped associating with people who associated with others that just upset me ... I was making more friends on my own with much more creative artsy friends.” The importance of finding like-minded peers, who shared her interests, particularly in her area of interest of art, was stressed as being very important to Ashley.

For these 19 twice exceptional children, significant others formed their support networks that acted as regulating factors for both their disability and giftedness and negative experiences. Our findings agree with Ozbay, Johnson, Dimoulas, and Morgan (2007) who found that the importance of these networks are in protecting and supporting students' resilience to stress, genetic, and environmental vulnerabilities. Additionally, the finding of the value of support networks for all 19 participants supports research by Dole (2001) which stressed the efficacy of strong support systems for developing twice exceptional children's positive identity formation.

4. Stress and Resilience

Both studies had a strong emergent theme pertaining to stress and resilience. For both studies, the stress responses frequently manifested as anxiety in the children, which presented as school refusal, and/or perfectionism, and/or imposter syndrome. Perfectionism was the perceived inability to commence or complete work, or the fear they will be *discovered* as being of low ability (Rimm, 1993; Townend, 2015). Imposter syndrome (Clance, 1985; Reis, 1987) is interpreted as very low self-esteem and occurs when individuals attribute their success to factors other than their own efforts, when they perceive that their success is undeserved or accidental. The complex construct of sensitivity, intensity and perfectionism produces common characteristics and counselling concerns for gifted children and adolescents (Christopher & Shewmaker, 2010).

a. Stress responses were common to both studies. However, it was the parental and teacher feedback in the first study that highlighted this rather than the participants. All of the participants' parents suggested that each one of their children were stressed in school and coped with venting their frustration at home. As one parent stated, "It's like a pressure cooker going off, he comes home and then the explosion happens and we have to pick up the pieces and get him in a good enough state to face school the next day" (Parent of Ben, aged 13 years). This was a common theme from parents in both studies. For example in study 2, one parent related that she was "forever at school collecting him ... the school would call me because of things like his eye hurt, 'He says can't breathe very well', 'he's got headache', 'he feels sick', that sort of thing. It's all just because everything was too chaotic in the classroom that day that he gets a headache" (Mum of Cat51, aged 9 years). Many of the parents in Study 1 referred to elements of *imposter syndrome* or *perfectionism*. For example, one parent observed that her son "just does not believe he should be in the gifted program, even though he is now in the high streamed classes, his work is never good enough, it just seems like his baggage from Primary school is still with him" (Parent of Mark, aged 14).

Study 2 also emphasised perceptions of heightened stress amongst all eight of the participants. The children's accounts of stressful events were interrelated and continuous; the cumulative effects of these stressors on individual stress levels, affected their ability to cope in many ways. This may be accounted for, at least in part, by their pre-existing situation of being twice exceptional. Ashley (aged 16 years) related stress in her life as existing at times where she found it difficult to "have a one-on-one conversation with a person, where I have

to look at them for a very long time, [it] gets stressful and I will cut off. I think it's just the stress of one-on-one.”

b. Resilience did come through both studies. In Study 1, the older participants suggest that they were able to survive and adapt as a result of parental advocacy, and positive experiences outside school in their areas of interest, such as sport, art and drama. In Study 2, the children's prior negative experiences affected their perception of, and their resilience to adverse situations. These included the effects of ongoing bullying particularly through schooling contexts which left some of the participants feeling vulnerable and having self-reported low self-esteem. Some of the causes appeared to be related to being viewed as *different* and being frequently targeted by bullies at school because of this perceived difference.

Despite the many negative experiences that the children had, they were still able to function and get on with their lives at school and outside of school. Their ability to continue in school, and to move forward, clearly indicated their resilience. This occurred notwithstanding negative experiences of bullying and exclusion; being humiliated in front of peers; finding making friends problematic; not having friends; being negatively perceived by other people; and being stigmatised and avoided (Ronksley-Pavia, 2016). Despite these many frequently ongoing negative events, all 19 participants continued to grow, develop, and continue their education and expressed a strong need to move forward and do the best that they could to feel better about their lives. This was exemplified in Study 2 by Cat51 (aged 9 years): “I just get really mad in my brain really ... When like something bad happens, or something annoying, that I'm probably going to remember for quite a long time, I try to just chuck it out of my brain, put it in the short term memory, not the long term memory ... So I feel better.” In study 1, resilience was summed up by Chris (aged 14), who said, “Tell the Primary kids that it gets better in high [Secondary] school, you get stronger and it just gets better”.

5. Self-Understanding

The common theme of *self-understanding* refers to aspects of self-knowledge. School experiences due to late or non-identification of giftedness, and/or disabilities that affect learning, can give rise to psychosocial issues relating to anxiety and depression. If the student is not identified, there will be frustration as a result of limited self-understanding. Lack of or late identification of either or both exceptionalities (giftedness or the disability) can

negatively impact on students, due in part to a limited or lack of self-understanding, leading to feelings of difference and to social difficulties (e.g., Assouline, Nicpon Foley, & Doobay, 2009; Dole, 2001; Olenchak, 2009; Vespi & Yewchuk, 1992).

All 19 participants in both studies reported social difficulties, particularly at school, feeling, or being perceived as being different by others. These feelings were affected by being ascribed particular labels relating to their disabilities and giftedness, and in some cases misunderstandings about these and the use of the term twice exceptional. In turn labels gave rise to amplified or lowered academic expectations of the students by others, and themselves at times, which when academic expectations were amplified they had trouble fulfilling. It became apparent that the labels used to *classify* and purportedly support the students, actually hampered their social interactions, education, and self-understanding. This was illustrated by Ashley (aged 16 years) in Study 2, who explained the effects that being labelled with a disability of ASD: “I am perfectly able to do the same things as others; sometimes I’m better than what is considered normal. I didn’t want that related to me anymore. It wasn’t going to help me. It was just essentially a label that people could make preconceived judgements about me.”

a. Feelings of difference were evident in both studies. In Study 1, each of the participants perceived that they felt different from their age peers and were excluded from friendship groups and games because of this. This perception was manifested by peer exclusion, feelings of being misunderstood by peers and teachers, their insights that their *way of thinking* was different to how others thought and, as Fadil (aged 12) stated, “I was so sad that all the teacher could see was my bad handwriting and not my great ideas.” Although all 11 of the students wanted to fit-in, they also simultaneously wanted to stand out in positive ways.

The second study identified that all eight participants felt different to their peers *not being normal* and feeling different were recurrent elements of the children’s stories. The participants referred to themselves as *wanting to be normal*, perceiving that they were not normal, and thinking that others (e.g., peers and teachers) also viewed them as not being normal. The children viewed themselves in relation to their peers, whom they did not see receiving special provisions for disabilities, or being withdrawn for special education or gifted classes, or having issues in educational areas (e.g., writing). They perceived that they were different because they could accomplish some academic tasks better than their peers,

yet, had considerably more difficulty with other tasks that their peers generally found easy. Anny (aged 12 years) saw herself as “not normal”, stating that she “was afraid of being myself because I was just not normal I would say, I mean no one’s normal, I was just afraid of being myself because I just came up with strange ideas, the way I did my work [at school], I don’t know I just was not normal ... but I’m fine now!”

b. Labelling was apparent in both studies. In the first study, labelling was revealed when the participants discussed the continual focus by teachers on their disability, which for all 11 were diagnosed prior to the identification of their high ability. Some of the students were labelled as *lazy* by teachers. All of the participants were labelled as *weird* at some time by peers. In contrast, each of the participants stated that they felt positive about the label of *gifted* as this was something they wanted to engage with to inform, in part, their identity.

The second study revealed that both of the labels of disability and of giftedness, which had been ascribed to the children, affected the beliefs they held about themselves, in particular in relation to their abilities, limitations, and expectations. Harry (aged 16 years) chose not to disclose his disability to others, stating that he did not feel like explaining to people and would rather keep it to himself. By placing his view of disclosing disability to others in the context of his whole narrative, it became evident that this was directly linked to his understanding of disability as being a “lack of an ability”.

c. In Study 1 Academic Achievement was important for participants’ self-understanding concerning their ability and social comparison. These data provided insights into perceptions around academic achievement were from the BASC-2 forms completed by both teachers and participants, alongside participant interviews. Feedback from the teachers to the participants about their academic work, either through performance results or more informally, informed the participants’ understandings of their academic performance, which in turn informed achievement expectations. Each of the participants recalled having high expectations for academic achievement at the start of Primary school, and that by Year 2 such expectations were greatly diminished. Achievement expectations increased again either on acceptance into the gifted education program, and/or on entry to Secondary school “because we were not in one class with one teacher who had low expectations of us” (Ben, aged 13). Additionally, *enjoyment* of a subject was connected to the achievement levels and has been supported in the literature. Academic success has a reciprocal relationship with enjoyment, and as enjoyment increased, so too did their performance outcomes in that subject. Mark

(aged 14) exemplified this when he stated, “I used to hate science but I love it now, since getting to here [Secondary school] and having a decent teacher who is really cool with me, I’m not on D’s now but on A’s.”

Similarly, in Study 2, the children perceived that their teachers had varying expectations about their levels of school achievement; if the child failed in a subject this was anticipated by some teachers as an indication of the child’s true ability level. This was likely due to low expectations of their performance being attributed to the effects of their disability. Equally, when the children achieved highly, they perceived that some teachers expected that this would always be the case because their teachers held stereotyped views of giftedness based on anticipated continuing high achievement. Boomstick (aged 9 years) talked about his concern over wanting to get better marks (grades) at school and how the teacher appeared to consider that he was not putting in sufficient effort: “The teacher says what I need to do to get better marks ... [she] tells me to try harder! That’s really all she says. ‘Work harder and go better than you can go,’ and I can’t really go better than I am now, so that worries me.”

Discussion

The findings and implications from these two separate studies are significant, particularly in the context of Australia where there is a paucity of research into the phenomenon of twice exceptionality. The findings present similarities which, although not generalisable, are worthy of attention because they are as distinctive as they are complex and novel. The needs of twice exceptional students are extensive, particularly in the areas of education, understanding and social supports, and are supported by legislation (e.g., the Australian Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) , and the Disability Standards for Education (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). However, no specific legislation currently exists in Australia for explicitly supporting twice exceptional children at school, nor gifted children (points beyond the scope of this paper but worthy of consideration at state and national levels). As can be seen from the findings from these two studies the lack of legislation is problematic for the social and emotional development and education outcomes for twice exceptional children, (and gifted children).

Each of the 19 participants revealed experiencing a sense of *difference* from their peers at school, and, while they all wanted to fit-in, at the same time they also desired to stand out. The data revealed that they all had faced negative school experiences, mainly in

primary school due to school practices and the educational foci (such as a focus on handwriting and reading rather than on ideas and innovation); perceptions of difficult interactions with teachers; perceived *threats* of having to repeat a year or attend special needs classes; and detentions for supposedly *lying* (e.g., that the individual prepared for a particular test when *clearly* the test performance indicated otherwise, as in the case of Ethan (aged 11 years). Many of the participants, particularly in the first study, had all been accused by teachers of being lazy or had the implication of being lazy ascribed to them.

Many ongoing issues with peers at school such as; bullying, exclusion from games and name calling by peers, are indicated through perceptions of feeling an *outsider*, feeling *different*. The consequences of a lack of a sense of belonging, a lack of a sense of feeling valued, and a lack of feeling safe, are vast for the potential of twice exceptional children. Being bullied not only affects children's social and emotional welfare and learning now, but can also impact later in life on mental health and wellbeing, in relation to eating disorders, depression, and suicide ideation and attempts at suicide (Cross, 2013; Woodrow, 1996). Consequences for scholastic achievement and school engagement are also noteworthy. For example, peers and teachers can have a major impact upon the educational achievements, psychological well-being, and social interactions of twice exceptional students, thus informing their positive connections with school and, ultimately, their academic self-concept (Townend & Brown, 2016; Wang & Neihart, 2015). Additionally Dai and Rinn (2008) suggest that there are many factors influencing achievement and wellbeing including social interactions, motivation to school, and social-contextual influences in school (Dai & Rinn, 2008).

Due to positive out-of-school experiences, the older, high school participants in particular, suggested that they were able to survive and adapt. Many of the younger participants stated that they did not like school and that their favourite place was out of school, usually at home. The primary source of support for each of the participants was their parents (usually the mothers), who advocated for their children to be recognised, supported, nurtured, and rewarded in school. School support mechanisms for these participants came from some classroom teachers and school support personnel (e.g., school counsellors) and the support programs that may have been in place at school for some of the students. However, teachers' support was perceived to be variable due to differing teacher attitudes, different understandings, late identification, and lack of a coherent *gifted* support programs (Townend,

2015; (Ronksley-Pavia, 2016). The support mechanisms that did work, either provided by individual teachers or as part of a coherent school program, included compensation strategies (e.g., using a personal laptop); discreet support for the learning disabilities (e.g., allowing the student with dysgraphia to use a laptop, with the learning focus on the flow of ideas rather than the presentation of the work); interaction and learning opportunities with gifted peers; positive teacher talk; counselling and learning self-advocacy (individual children specifying to educators what they need to be able access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers without disability); and learning life strategies, especially organisation, time management, metacognition and planning techniques.

These findings about the influence of support systems (e.g., parents, counsellors) and peer relationships, and the protective factors (against bullying in particular), are important for children who are twice exceptional because previous research has not specifically explored this from children's perspectives. Extensive research supports the positive effect that strong and secure peer relationships have on the social and emotional stability of children, as well as the positive influences of these on their academic achievements (Wang & Neihart, 2015).

Due to limited knowledge and understanding, the labels given to disability, giftedness and twice exceptionality are not necessarily working at a provision level in schools (Assouline et al., 2006; Ronksley-Pavia, 2016; Townend, 2015). Reasons as to why these labels may not be working at a school level relate to the stereotyped and stigmatised views often associated with disability labels (Ronksley-Pavia, Pendergast, & Grootenboer, in press). However, due to the systems of funding in Australia, diagnostic labels are required to attract government funding for children with disabilities, particularly at a school level. Despite inherent limitations to labelling (e.g., lack of knowledge about effect of disabilities for individuals; stigmatised views of disability/ability), disability labels can be important at a school level as they can enable schools to access necessary funding (e.g., to provide in-class support) for students with disability, and subsequently students who are twice exceptional. The diagnostic labelling is usually provided by health care professionals (e.g., developmental paediatricians; Occupational Therapists) and is aimed at giving schools background information about individual students so educators are able to support such students. Of course this provision at school is dependent on educators being adequately skilled to support twice exceptional children. A further compounding factor in both Study 1 and Study 2 was related to diagnoses, at times these were perceived by participants as misleading educators, in

part due to the same diagnosed disabilities manifesting differently within different children. For example a participant diagnosed with ASD (and identified as gifted) can be quite different in support needs to another individual diagnosed with ASD (with or without co-existing giftedness).

Furthermore, for reasons such as a lack of comprehensive teacher education to support teachers in catering for these children, our two studies show that these students are experiencing immense difficulties at school. In some respects diagnostic labels are frequently placing a burden on the children. Various educators, from the participants' perspectives, did not understand what particular diagnoses meant in relation to addressing individual twice exceptional children's needs and differentiating their learning.

Key Recommendations

Examining the findings across both studies suggests some key recommendations for policy and practice. We outline these below as they pertain to areas such as teacher education, creation of confirmatory school environments, listening to and supporting these children, and the need for policy and legislation to specifically address these children's needs. We identified three key recommendations for practice.

1. Provide specific professional development for teachers to increase understanding and support of gifted and twice exceptional children.
2. School leaders need to resolutely create and uphold confirmatory educational environments; which includes an emphasis on the importance of attending to, supporting, and acknowledging twice exceptional children's experiences and feelings.
3. Policy and legislation should recognise the actuality and requirements of twice exceptional children.

Recommendations for Future Research

While these two separate research studies have explored some of the experiences of twice exceptional children, further research is necessary to establish how recommendations from this research can become embedded in the educational systems such as educational and disabilities policies and practice.

There are two recommendations for future research stemming from these studies that are aimed at promoting and augmenting the positive side of the experiences of these students

in order to support them in fulfilling their potential. First, both studies found that bullying or exclusion of twice exceptional students was problematic, and so much so in Study 2 that it was described by the participants to be ubiquitous. To be able to form a clearer understanding of the ubiquitous nature and the pervasiveness of bullying for twice exceptional children, specific research is needed about this, and on creating specific, concrete strategies that these children can use to counteract bullying if it is acknowledged as being a pervasive problem.

Second, the finding from both studies that suggests the significance of promoting outside school interests for the benefit of twice exceptional children is in need of further examination. So, as to augment the educational experiences of these children, future research needs to investigate the benefits of promoting their outside school interests and how these can be used in schools in order to support twice exceptional students' development and educational needs.

Conclusion

Whilst there is not one collective experience for twice exceptional children, there are similarities across these children's experiences. Both studies showed that there is a multifaceted connection between giftedness and disability for each individual child. This multifaceted connection is not easily divided into disability and gifted labels and classifications. Therefore, each child should be appreciated and recognised on an individual basis, taking into consideration their explicit needs. The significance of distinction between individuals identified with the same disabilities cannot be overstated. The studies found that external factors contributed to their experiences and to their self-insights such as interactions with teachers and peers, which included negative experiences within the classroom, misunderstandings and bullying. Parents and participants believed that the teachers had limited knowledge about twice exceptional students' exceptionalities, and were ill-equipped to provide for their unique learning needs, and that those teachers who did have some knowledge of disability categories may have responded to those labels in a standardised way. By failing to recognise the uniqueness of twice exceptional individuals, the schools saw the participants in terms of isolated disability labels, or in terms of gifted labels, or in terms of no labels and consequently in no need of intervention. We believe that this conception might, to some extent, be remediated by specific professional development for teachers and ongoing in-class support for twice exceptional students.

Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.

References

- Aberson, C. L. (1999). Low self-esteem and ingroup bias. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 27(1), 17–27. doi: 10.2224/sbp.1999.27.1.17
- Assouline, S. G., Foley Nicpon, M., & Doobay, A. (2009). Profoundly gifted girls and Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Psychometric case study comparison. *The Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(2), 89–105.
- Assouline, S. G., Foley Nicpon, M., & Huber, D. H. (2006). The Impact of vulnerabilities and strengths on the academic experiences of twice exceptional students: A message to school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(1), 14–24.
- Assouline, S. G., Foley Nicpon, M., & Whiteman, C. (2009). Cognitive and psychosocial characteristics of gifted students with Written Language Disability. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 20(10), 1–14.
- Assouline, S. G., Foley Nipcon, M., & Whiteman, C. (2010). Cognitive and psychosocial characteristics of of gifted students with specific learning disabilities. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54, 102–115. doi: 10.1177/001698620935597
- Assouline, S. G., Nicpon Foley, M., & Doobay, A. (2009). Profoundly gifted girls and Autism Spectrum Disorder: A psychometric case study comparison. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(2), 89–105. doi: 10.1177/0016986208330565
- Assouline, S. G., Nicpon Foley, M., & Huber, D. H. (2006). The impact of vulnerabilities and strengths on the academic experiences of twice exceptional students: A message to school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(1), 14–24. doi: 10.5330/prsc.10.1.y0677616t5j15511
- Barber, C., & Mueller, C. T. (2011). Social and self-perceptions of adolescents identified as gifted, learning disabled, and twice exceptional. *Roeper Review*, 33(2), 109–120.
- Beck, M., & Malley, J. (1998). A pedagogy of belonging. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 7(3), 133–137.
- Besnoy, K. D., Swoszowski, N. C., Newman, J. L., Floyd, A., Jones, P., & Byrne, C. (2015). The advocacy experiences of parents of elementary age, twice exceptional children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 59(2), 108–123. doi: 10.1177/0016986215569275

- Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.
- Christopher, M., & Shewmaker, J. (2010). The relationship of perfectionism to affective variables in gifted and highly able children. *Gifted Child Today*, 33(3), 20, 112-121.
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34(3), 366, 56-61.
- Clance, P. R. (1985). *The impostor phenomenon: Overcoming the fear that haunts your success*: California: Peachtree.
- Coleman, M. R., & Gallagher, S. (2015). Meeting the needs of students with 2e: It takes a team. *Gifted Child Today*, 38(4), 252–254. doi: 10.1177/1076217515597274
- Commonwealth of Australia. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Canberra: Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2005). *Disability Standards for Education 2005 with guidance notes*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Documents/Disability_Standards_for_Education_2005_pdf.pdf.
- Cross, T. L. (2013). *Suicide among gifted children and adolescents: Understanding the suicidal mind*. Waco, TX.: Prufrock Press.
- Cross, T. L., Coleman, L. J., & Terhaar-Yonkers, M. (2014). The social cognition of gifted adolescents in schools: Managing the stigma of giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37(1), 30–39. doi: 10.1177/0162353214521492
- Dai, D. Y., & Rinn, A. N. (2008). The big-fish-little-pond-effect: What do we know and where do we go from here? *Educational Psychological Review*, 20(3), 283-317. doi:10.1007/s10648-008-9071-x
- Dole, S. (2001). Reconciling contradictions: Identify formation in individuals with giftedness and learning disabilities. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 25(2), 103–137.
- Eisner, E. W. (1998). *The Enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140. doi: 10.1177/001872675400700202

- Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.
- Foley Nicpon, M., Allmon, A., Sieck, B., & Stinson, R. D. (2011). Empirical investigation of twice exceptionality: Where have we been and where are we going? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(1), 1–15.
- Foley Nicpon, M., & Assouline, S. G. (2015). Counseling considerations for the twice exceptional client. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 93(2), 202–211.
- Foley Nicpon, M., Assouline, S. G., & Colangelo, N. (2013). Twice exceptional learners: Who needs to know what? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57(3), 169–180. doi: 10.1177/0016986213490021
- Friedman-Nimz, R., O'Brien, B., & Frey, B. (2005). Examining our foundations: Implications for gifted education research. *Roeper Review*, 28(1), 45–52.
- Goodenow, C. (1993). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 13(1), 21–43. doi: 10.1177/0272431693013001002
- Hallahan, D. P., & Kauffman, J. M. (1980). *Exceptional education: An introduction to special education*. Retrieved from <http://www.nimhindia.org/Exceptional%20Children.pdf>
- Hartley, M. T., Bauman, S., Nixon, C. L., & Davis, S. (2015). Comparative study of bullying victimization among students in general and special education. *Exceptional Children*, 8(2), 176–193. doi: 0.1177/0014402914551741
- Hodkinson, P., & Sparkes, A. C. (1997). Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18(1), 29–44. doi: 10.1080/0142569970180102
- Hughes, J. N., Luo, W., Kwok, O. M., & Loyd, L. K. (2008). Teacher-student support, effortful engagement, and achievement: A 3-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(1), 1–14.
- King Williams, E. (2005). Addressing the social and emotional needs of twice exceptional students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(1), 16–20.

- Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.
- Knowles, S. S. (1998). *Effects of the components of parent involvement on children's educational and occupational aspirations*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Alfred University, New York, USA.
- Lovecky, D. V. (2004). *Different Minds*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Marsh, H. W. (1987). The big-fish-little-pond effect on academic self-concept. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 79(3), 280–295.
- Marsh, H. W., Kong, C. K., & Hau, K. (2000). Longitudinal Multilevel Models of the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect on Academic Self-Concept: Counterbalancing Contrast and Reflected-Glory Effects in Hong Kong Schools. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 337–349. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.337
- Neilson, G. R., & McNally, J. (2013). The negative influence of significant others on high academic achieving school pupils' choice of nursing as a career. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(3), 205–211. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2012.02.019
- Olenchak, F. R. (2009). Effects of talents unlimited counseling on gifted/learning disabled students. *Gifted Education International*, 25(2), 143–162.
- Ozbay, F., Johnson, D. C., Dimoulas, E., & Morgan, C. A. (2007). Social support and resilience to stress: From neurobiology to clinical practice. *Psychiatry (Edgmont)*, 4(5), 35–40.
- Parker Peters, M., & Bain, S. K. (2011). Bullying and victimization rates among gifted and high-achieving students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34(4), 624–643. doi: 10.1177/016235321103400405
- Pekrun, Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2009). Achievement goals and achievement emotions: Testing a model of their joint relations with academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(1), 115–135. doi: 10.1037/a0013383
- Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. E. (2006). Bullying and the gifted: Victims, perpetrators, prevalence, and effects. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(2), 148–168.
- Plucker, J. A. (2012). Positively influencing gifted education policy. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 56(4), 221–223. doi: 10.1177/0016986212456071

- Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.
- Queensland Government. (2015). Bullying, disability and mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/children-young-people/bullying-disability-mental-health/>
- Reis, S. M. (1987). We can't change what we don't recognize: Understanding the special needs of gifted females. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 31(2), 83–89.
- Reis, S. M., Neu, T. W., & McGuire, J. M. (1997). Case studies of high-ability students with learning disabilities who have achieved. *Exceptional Children*, 63(4), 463–479. doi: 10.1177/001440299706300403
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 516–529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rimm, S. B. (1993). Giftedness may be related to difficulties in socializing, *Milwaukee Journal*, p. G.8. Retrieved from <http://libraryproxy.griffith.edu.au/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=64244491&Fmt=7&clientId=13713&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Robinson, S. M. (1999). Meeting the needs of students who are gifted and have learning disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 34(4), 195-204.
- Rogers, K. B. (2011). Thinking smart about twice exceptional learners: Steps for finding them and strategies for catering to them appropriately. In C. Wormald & W. Vialle (Eds.), *Dual exceptionality* (pp. 57–70). Wollongong, NSW: Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented.
- Ronksley-Pavia, M. L. (2015). A model of twice exceptionality: Explaining and defining the apparent paradoxical combination of disability and giftedness in childhood. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 38(3), 318–340. doi: 10.1177/0162353215592499
- Ronksley-Pavia, M. L. (2016). *The lived experiences of twice exceptional children: Narrative perceptions of disability and giftedness*. (PhD), Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland.
- Ronksley-Pavia, M. L., Pendergast, D., & Grootenboer, P. (in press). Privileging the voices of twice exceptional children: An exploration of lived experiences and stigma narratives.

- Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.
- Sveinsson, A. V., & Morris, R. J. (2006). School bullying and victimization of children with disabilities. In R. J. Morris (Ed.), *Disability research and policy: Current perspectives*. London, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Townend, G. (2015). *Academic self-concept in twice exceptional students: An exploratory investigation*. (Dissertation/Thesis), Griffith University. (PhD), Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland.
- Townend, G., & Pendergast, D. (2015). Student voice: What can we learn from twice exceptional students about the teacher's role in enhancing or inhibiting academic selfconcept. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, 24(1), 37–51.
- Townend, G., & Brown, R. (2016). Exploring a sociocultural approach to understanding academic self-concept in twice exceptional students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 80, 15-24. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2016.07.006
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (2006). The role of emotion in talent development. *Parenting for High Potential*, 3(1), 3-4.
- Vespi, L., & Yewchuk, C. (1992). A phenomenological study of the social/emotional characteristics of gifted learning disabled children. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 16(1), 55–72.
- Wang, C. W., & Neihart, M. (2015). Academic Self-Concept and Academic Self-Efficacy: Self-Beliefs Enable Academic Achievement of Twice exceptional Students. *Roeper Review*, 37(2), 63-73. doi: 10.1080/02783193.2015.1008660
- Wang, C. W., & Neihart, M. (2015). How do supports from parents, teachers, and peers influence academic achievement of twice exceptional students? *Gifted Child Today*, 38(3), 148–159. doi: 0.1177/1076217515583742
- Willard-Holt, C., Weber, J., Morrison, K. L., & Horgan, J. (2013). Twice exceptional learners' perspectives on effective learning strategies. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57(4), 247–262. doi: 10.1177/0016986213501076
- Woodrow, L. (1996). *The epidemic in youth suicide*. Brisbane, Qld: Queensland Parliamentary Library.

Ronksley-Pavia, M. & Townend, G. (2017). Listening and responding to twice exceptional students: Voices from within. *TalentEd*, 29, 32–57.

Wormald, C., & Vialle, W. (Eds.) (2011). *Dual Exceptionality*. Wollongong, NSW: Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented. Retrieved from <http://www.aegt.net.au/DEEWR%20Books/DE%20Final%20Compile.pdf>

[Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia is a sessional academic and researcher at Griffith University in the School of Education and Professional Studies lecturing in undergraduate and postgraduate Primary and Secondary Education courses, where she has been awarded Teaching Excellence Awards for her work with pre-service teachers. Since migrating from Belgium to Australia in the late 1980s, Michelle has worked in a few different sectors including as a professional artist, graphic designer, retail manager, and Arts writer. Since becoming a teacher, Michelle has taught in a variety of educational settings: ACE and TAFE colleges, and at a number of schools both in New South Wales and Queensland. Michelle has worked with gifted and talented students and in special education across P-12 schooling sectors. Michelle has recently completed her doctoral research in the area of gifted education and twice exceptionality.]

Dr Geraldine Townend has over a decade of experience in the field of gifted education, having a special interest and expertise in the area of twice exceptionality. Geraldine completed her PhD at Griffith University in Queensland and is now a research fellow at the Griffith Institute of Educational Research. Her research interests focus on supporting gifted and twice-exceptional students to aspire to their potential in education, which includes the development of positive academic self-concept. Her research findings indicate that there are several sociological and psychological influences on academic self-concept, including a social comparison theory, and she is particularly interested in the interaction between teachers and their students. She has also focused on outcomes for pre-service and post-graduate teachers' understandings of diversity in education, particularly in the field of gifted education, including the inclusive classroom practices and applications of the Australian National Curriculum.]

Address for correspondence:

michelle.ronksley-pavia@griffithuni.edu.au