In Appreciation: Julian Stanley

October 24, 2005

Julian Stanley started his career as a high school math teacher, after getting his bachelors from the Georgia Southern University. He went on to get his doctorate in education from Harvard in 1950, as well as two honorary doctorates from North Texas and the State University of West Georgia. After receiving his doctorate, he taught at Vanderbilt, University of Wisconsin, Madison, and finally Johns Hopkins. He spent decades working for gifted children to help provide an outlet for their advanced intellect and at the age of 87, had made more of a positive impact in our nation's gifted youth than just about anyone.

Stanley

His most notable work, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research on Teaching*, has remained a benchmark in educational psychology since its publication in 1963. In 1971, he began the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youths to help identify young students with highly advanced intellect. Eight years later, he created the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University where students 13 and younger with incredible skills in mathematics could participate in college level programs, some achieving their doctorate when normal students would be graduating from college. He believed that students were often not allowed a means of utilizing their extreme talents, and the center helped provide them with an outlet for this talent.

After such an incredibly dedicated career, Stanley was awarded the Mensa Lifetime Achievement Award for his work. His name was also added to the distinguished lecture of the Henry B. & Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development, hosted by the University of Iowa to bring together researchers devoted to highly gifted students, and the educators facilitating their learning needs as Stanley so graciously did. While he may no longer be with us, his research lives on in the many centers that were created based upon his work.

A Kind and Compassionate Intellectual Giant

Julian Stanley and I met in 1991, at the University of Iowa's first Wallace Symposium. Our friendship was immediate and we began corresponding and talking on the phone almost weekly with a few visits sprinkled in. We spent many enjoyable hours together over the years, and he became one of my teachers.

Julian was as impressive interpersonally as he was scientifically. He loved to talk, with his personal charm being every bit as distinctive as his methodological acumen and scientific integrity. His wisdom can be experienced in his advice to graduate students (Stanley, 1995) and in how it shaped his educational philosophy on the importance of appropriate developmental placement, which should be required reading for all educational psychologists and policy makers (Benbow & Stanley, 1996; Stanley, 2000). Julian believed that all children have the right to learn something new every day, and that educators have a responsibility of ensuring that they do (Colangelo et al., 2004).

In 1992, Camilla Persson Benbow and I organized a symposium to celebrate this great man's extraordinary career: high school teacher, world class methodologist, creator of the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY), and mentor of intellectually talented students and developing scientists. Knowing how busy the contributors we sought were, we invited twice as many speakers as we hoped to secure. How we underestimated how strongly people felt about Julian and his contributions! All but two agreed to come and we had a spectacular event! Over the course of 14 hours, 8:30 AM to 10:30 PM, on Easter Sunday and during Passover, stopping only for meals, 22 distinguished speakers presented scientific papers on education, genetics, learning, and measurement that had been influenced by Julian's work (Benbow & Lubinski, 1996). Lee J. Cronbach captured the participants' sentiments best: "In 100 years, when the history of gifted education is written, Lewis Terman and Julian Stanley are the two names that will be remembered."

Ten years later, the Wallace Symposium, the ultimate research conference on giftedness, established a Julian C. Stanley Distinguished Lecture to acknowledge his contributions. I was deeply honored to deliver the first lecture (with Julian in the audience), where I provided empirical support for Julian's forecasts about the educational and career accomplishments of gifted youth whose needs have been met by drawing on data provided by the SMPY longitudinal study (Benbow et al., 2000; Lubinski et al., 2001). More recently, in a 20-year follow-up, and the last manuscript of ours to profit from Julian's insights and notorious red pen (Lubinski, Benbow et al., in press), the level of creative accomplishments of profoundly gifted youth, identified before age 13 and served subsequently, surpassed even Julian's expectations. In future extensions of his work, I suspect that Julian's expectations for himself will be surpassed as well.

Julian shone light on individual differences in learning rates and how tailoring the pace of the curriculum toward the individuality of each student engenders more learning for all even if individual differences in achievement increase. Although through his research we learned that one size will never fit all, and how powerful the effects of talent development can be, Julian's mentoring and teaching offered something for everyone.

I will forever miss his brilliance, friendship, and wisdom. I also will miss the traces of his pen.

— **David Lubinski**
Vanderbilt University

Tribute to Julian

Julian loved his work. He loved ideas, he loved methodology, he loved research questions. He was never too tired to talk about issues in gifted education, about individual differences, about the imperative to understand the uniqueness of each child and then respond to that uniqueness. If you sent Julian a research manuscript for his comments, you would receive comments in the margins in his unique handwriting. His comments were hard to read, but easy to understand. Julian was not just astute, he was courageous. He believed in honesty, both as a scientist and as a man. It was always refreshing to be around Julian. And he loved movies!

I think Julian will always be connected to the concept of above-level testing. He believed that well-

formulated tests of mathematics and verbal reasoning could tell us a lot about the academic potential of a child. He certainly understood and respected that tests had their limits and could never capture the whole child, but he also believed strongly that tests could and did provide rich and valid information that had academic relevance. Julian never stood down when it came to defending tests, and it would have been easy to "just give in a bit." Above-level testing and talent search are part of the lexicon of gifted education today and will be for many years to come. Julian's insight about above-level testing has produced the most powerful model we have today in the identification of exceptional mathematics and verbal abilities. The talent search reaches hundreds of thousands of students every year. I know of nothing else in the field that approaches that impact. In my estimation, Julian Stanley will be viewed as one of the most—if not the most—influential people in gifted education.

I started this tribute with Julian's love for his work. I am saving the most important for last. The most defining aspect of Julian was his love for people. He was a friend and mentor to so many in the field. It seems everyone who knew Julian was greatly influenced. Every student Julian met was special to him and that is his legacy.

For me, Julian was a friend and mentor. Establishing the Julian C. Stanley Distinguished Lecture as part of the Wallace Research Symposium is a genuine tribute to this wonderful man.

— **Nicholas Colangelo**
University of Iowa

Forever Improving

In the mid-1970s, Julian Stanley, a friend of my husband Hal, accepted our invitation to visit us at the University of Washington as a distraction after the death of his first wife.

G.I. JULIAN: Stanley went to Harvard University on the G.I. Bill and earned his EdD.

During that visit, Julian spoke with infectious enthusiasm about the several very young students who were thriving at Johns Hopkins. Julian was so inspiring that Hal said, "If Julian can do it, we can do it," and proceeded to develop a program of radical acceleration to college for very young students on our own campus.

It did not occur to us at the time that Julian didn't *have* a program; Julian was the program – the imaginative, red-tape-breaking, nurturing, demanding, proud, and devoted mentor to very bright young students at Hopkins. Not all the early entrants were as young as the ones Julian was fond of bragging about. Indeed, it wasn't until after Hal's death in 1981 that Julian, visiting the program that Hal had put in place – a "quasi-experiment" (pun intended) complete with a preparatory year, support staff, and a student home base – that I discovered our misunderstandings! By then it was too late – we were launched on a program that worked. And forever grateful for the idea, too, in spite of Julian's flat-out statement at my retirement celebration in 2000 that he had concluded that radical acceleration to college is a mistake. The two-year programs he was by then energetically supporting at several universities, he maintained, are instead the way to go (and, in fact, an additional way we have gone).

Julian was a pioneer who loved to break new ground (such as identifying highly talented youth at a young age and offering them appropriate educational options) and establish paths for others to follow and expand, to the significant benefit of by-now millions of gifted young people. He was enormously generous with all kinds of support, tangible and intangible, but especially generous with time and advice –his standards for himself, as for others, were high. (He couldn't help it; any paper you sent him, even one already in print, came back with suggested improvements.) He was willing to change his mind. Those of us who were lucky enough to receive Julian's advice – and who now have a great gaping hole in our hearts – generally had the good sense to follow it, or perhaps lacked the will to refuse – for who could refuse anything of this wise, earnest, caring, intense, and powerful counselor?

— **Nancy M. Robinson**
University of Washington

Stanley and Terman: Co-stars in Research on the Gifted

It is difficult to write about Julian Stanley in a highly personal or anecdotal manner. He was so admirably normal, so consistently a gentleman, of genuine character, typically charming and socially adept, and completely lacking the eccentricities that H. J. Eysenck technically termed "trait psychoticism," as to leave me without any colorful anecdotes to enliven my appreciation of his outstanding career. Most notable was his intense interest in his research; virtually an obsession, it readily dominated his conversation, given any sign of his listener's interest.

When a psychologist's career is especially prominent, the first question is its locus in the firmament of psychological history. Stanley's career is appropriately centered as co-starring with Lewis M. Terman (1877-1956) as the most recognized figures in the constellation on the psychology of the gifted — their discovery, defining features, and educational development. For either scientist to be as honored, their contributions must be uniquely distinguishable. It is this feature of Julian Stanley's contribution that we celebrate. It makes him one of the luminaries of applied psychology.

After notable contributions in statistical methodology, reliability theory and quasi-experimental designs, Stanley turned to the educational potential of academically-gifted children. This was at a time of considerable popular prejudice against the educational system's taking note of the special needs of the gifted. The crusade for special treatment was focused on the educationally disadvantaged. Stanley, however, applied his research skills to what he considered just as important: the advantage of the academically most promising segment of the school population.

Terman aimed to debunk the popular notion of the gifted as eccentric, maladjusted, and sickly. His celebrated longitudinal study of the gifted largely abolished this stereotype.

Stanley's aim was to explore the limits of educational acceleration in mathematics and science that were predictable from a psychometric criterion. Stanley eschewed an explicit theoretical position. His experimental design was purely empirical and operational. His selection criterion of giftedness in math and science was a high score on the SAT-Math, higher than the average for admission to selective colleges. His working hypothesis was that children meeting this criterion could thrive as math and science majors in college. Stanley kept theoretical notions about the nature and causes of individual

differences in intelligence far in the background, knowing how they often become entangled with purely ideological positions, to avoid side-tracking his program in unproductive controversy. His hypothesis was borne out, allowing the criterion-selected students to be better adjusted and generally happier among their college classmates, older by several years, than they would be among their age peers in regular school. Stanley's probands were obtaining BA degrees in math and science at the age that most students typically graduate from high school; some even attained the PhD by that age. Begun in 1971, Stanley's program, the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youths (SMPY), has thrived. Follow-up studies attest that thousands of high SAT-M individuals have reaped the benefits of Julian Stanley's innovative inspiration, and so has the nation.

— Arthur R. Jensen
University of California, Berkeley

A Powerful American Intellect

As an undergraduate recently emigrated from Europe, I met Julian Stanley in 1976. I had no category for my experience. In front of me was a lanky Southerner, wearing double-knit pants, a great scholar who spoke passionately about gifted children. I sat amazed. Years later I came to appreciate that Julian Stanley epitomized the American contribution to academe: the practical use of knowledge for society's betterment.

Julian grew up outside Atlanta, became a chemistry teacher at age 19, wasn't especially serious, and joined the army's chemical warfare division during World War II. The ensuing boredom cured him of his intellectual laziness, he said. When he returned, he went to Harvard on the GI Bill, where he earned his EdD, and from there to Peabody College, now Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, to assume his first academic post, having married and had a daughter along the way.

After Vanderbilt, he moved to the University of Wisconsin, becoming famous for his work in experimental design and psychometrics. He formed the Laboratory for Experimental Design, which attracted such later luminaries as Gene Glass, Carl Bereiter, and Andy Porter. He coauthored the famous monograph, *Experimental and Quasi- Experimental Design* (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

In the late 1960s, he moved to Johns Hopkins University, where he remained, working until one week before his death at age 87. His chapter on reliability in Thorndike's Educational Measurement (1971) was a tour de force, but as he often remarked, it resulted in his becoming sick and tired of "dry-bone methodology." This set the stage for his next career at age 53.

With a grant from the then-new Spencer Foundation, he formed the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY). He developed the concept of a talent search, piloting it in 1972 with 450 7th and 8th graders in the greater Baltimore area who took the SAT, normally given to 11th and 12th graders. It was a shocking experiment because it worked so well in identifying talent. Once demonstrated, the idea soon spread. Several million youth nationally have participated in talent searches sponsored by Hopkins, Duke, Northwestern, University of Iowa, and the University of Denver.

Inspired by Browning's aphorism, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp or else what is a heaven

for?" Julian began programs for talented youth, using educational acceleration as their guiding philosophy. He promoted AP classes, taking college courses while still in high school, entering college early, and skipping grades. Calling his approach "benignly insidious," he encouraged schools to make special exceptions for his protégés. He formed fast-paced mathematics classes, followed by similar classes in science. Later researchers extended these to the humanities. These were incorporated by talent search programs and in many other places, such as Vanderbilt and Iowa State, serving thousands annually. In the 1970s these ideas were as heretical as 12-year-olds taking the SAT, but Julian was undeterred, convinced by the available scientific evidence on acceleration's effectiveness. He was right.

In 1980, Julian began his pet project, working with students who score at least 700 on the SAT-M before age 13 (top 1 in 10,000), later expanding to such scorers on the SAT-V. Julian spent countless hours working with these students one-on-one. This consuming passion sustained him in later years and led to the formation of the Study of Exceptional Talent at Johns Hopkins' Center for Talented Youth, directed by Linda Brody. SMPY continues at Vanderbilt University, directed by David Lubinski and me. It is dedicated to completing SMPY's 50-year longitudinal study of intellectual talent with 5,000 individuals now approaching mid-life.

Julian Stanley's persistence and commitment to helping young people develop their talents fully has changed not only the lives of those he touched, it has changed the educational landscape of America.

— **Camilla Persson Benbow**
Vanderbilt University

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