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### In response to Gagné's critique

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are abandoned. It takes time, but little by little progress is made. No doubt that we should adopt such an approach.

Because of that conviction, I was very disappointed that Morelock chose to ignore my own model and build instead her own little bungalow. Not only would I have appreciated a detailed and thoughtful critique of those aspects she didn't like, but it would have been much more productive in the long run for our field. This is why I decided to write this article and discuss our divergent, sometimes opposite viewpoints. It is my conviction that if we want to become a respected subdomain of educational research, we have no choice but to start building our knowledge base in a more united and interconnected way.

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## In Response To Gagné's Critique\*

Martha J. Morelock

I was surprised that Gagné characterized his model as being in *competition* with the ideas set forth in the *Chaos* article. Indeed, if I had thought that to be the case, I would have addressed that issue in the article. I saw—and continue to see—Gagné's Model as a model of talent development. It appears that because of a semantic glitch, Gagné maintains that his model is at odds with the *Chaos* article. He comes close to revealing the problem when he discusses using the term "talent" to refer to potential.

Gagné's point about the problems of using "talent" to refer to potential is well taken. I began using "talent potential" in a book published in 1996 (Morelock & Morrison, 1996; in press) and would suggest that for greater precision, Gagné might substitute that term for what he now calls "giftedness" in his model, since "talent potential" is really what he is talking about. When this sub-

stitution is made—either in the model itself or in the minds of readers, it is easy to see that there is no need to characterize our views as being at odds. His model, as well as other talent development models, can be incorporated quite easily into the *Chaos* framework. Indeed, a central point of the entire article is that *this kind of competition is totally unnecessary* given the broader perspective offered. The purpose of the *Chaos* article was not the articulation of a detailed model such as Gagné's, but rather, the raising of consciousness. While I, like Gagné, address the refinement of academic discourse, my *major* concern lies with the children.

Which brings us to a core consideration—the Columbus Group Definition. This definition is, perhaps more accurately, a *description* of the children who were originally *defined* as 'gifted' according to a quantitative measure. It describes the qualitative differences observed over time in the children originally selected out because of

being positive deviates from the norm on an IQ scale. Gagné takes issue with the Columbus Group's purported emphasis on the qualitative, asserting that the definition itself uses words that are highly quantitative to refer to "qualitative" differences. Gagné suggests that there is a logical inconsistency in this. However, a closer look reveals no such inconsistency. This, as well as some other points in Gagné's argument are listed and discussed below.

**1. Qualitative vs. Quantitative:** Gagné takes a highly behaviorist and quantitative stance in critiquing the Columbus Group definition. For him, if something cannot be measured, it doesn't exist. However, the concept of "measurement" itself contains a fallacy: Scales do not detect qualitative differences. Measurement *creates* an illusion of continuum by systematically leaving out other factors.

\*The author sincerely thanks her Columbus Group colleagues for their valuable comments and feedback during the writing process. The final product remains the sole responsibility of the author.

When we choose to view something solely through the lens of measurement, we are viewing an artifact of the measuring stick we have chosen while pretending that the false picture we see is *all there is*.

In reality, “qualitative” and “quantitative” are *not* mutually exclusive (Berliner, 1986). All around us we can see qualitative differences emerging at points along quantitative continua. One common example are the transitions that water goes through as its temperature changes—a change which is measurable by a thermometer. As the amount of heat in the water decreases, at a certain point in the quantitative continuum, i.e., 32 degrees Fahrenheit, we begin to see a *qualitative* difference as ice crystals form. Likewise, if the amount of heat is gradually increased, another qualitative shift takes place at 212 degrees Fahrenheit when the water turns to steam. We *could* say that the only real change is the amount of heat measurable in the water. But if we try to ice skate on water which is 34 degrees in temperature or bathe in water at 212 degrees, it has very real implications for safety. While there is a smooth continuum as one goes up or down the measuring scale, there are also definitely discernible qualitative shifts in the substance being measured.

**2. Generalizability:** Gagné questions whether the Columbus Group relies too heavily on issues surrounding the highly gifted in constructing its definition of giftedness. Is the Columbus Group definition generalizable to the largest population of gifted—the moderately gifted? I asked a similar question myself when I began to study children of 200+ IQ (Stanford-Binet L-M). Would my knowledge of the highly gifted (140+ IQ) be transferable at all to this extreme group of children? I found that it was imminently transferable. The problems with fitting in to societal expectations, the heightened intensity, the problems in parenting associated with advanced cognitive development—all of these were recognizable and generalizable across both groups. The *manifestations* of these problems were more clearly visible in the profoundly gifted and the accommodations required were more extreme. Parents of profoundly gifted children must more frequently entertain options such as radical acceleration and home education. Nevertheless, the basic problems are the same. Likewise, while moderately gifted children may thrive in classrooms that would not be appropriate for the highly gifted, they, too, need

more abstract learning material than their agemates and special attention paid to the emotional needs stemming from advanced understanding. The mirror image of this is that the traits which identify an individual as mentally retarded are present at 65 IQ but become increasingly more significant in the lower IQ ranges. Because of the extreme developmental trajectories of children of extraordinarily high IQ, I have found that family forces and developmental issues which are salient, yet easily overlooked even in *normal* human development, are cast into stark prominence, allowing for careful scrutiny.

**3. Intensity:** Gagné questions the nature of the construct of *intensity* included in the Columbus Group definition. His questioning of this construct illuminates a deeper problem. Unfortunately, he has attempted to address what he considers the faults of a view of giftedness without reference to the exposition of that view available in the literature (e.g., Kearney, 1992; Morelock, 1992; Morelock & Morrison, 1996; Silverman, 1993a; 1993b; 1994; 1995; Tolan, 1992; 1995). He is attacking this whole view on the basis of an article written not to fully explicate the view, but to “impose order on chaos” by sorting the threads of current controversy in the field.

*Intensity* is often thought of in relation to emotion. But as used in the Columbus Group definition, it refers to the work of the Polish psychiatrist Kazimierz Dabrowski and a whole range of “overexcitabilities” that intensify experience. Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) observed five realms of intensity and complexity: psychomotor, sensual, imaginal, intellectual, and emotional. Neural activity substantially beyond the norm in any of these five dimensions is called “overexcitability,” representing an abundance of physical, aesthetic, creative, intellectual or emotional energy. A person endowed with different forms of overexcitability sees reality in a different, stronger, and more multisided manner (Silverman, in press). Several studies have established correlations between these “overexcitabilities” and giftedness (e.g., Ackerman, 1993; Gallagher, 1985; Miller, Silverman, & Falk, 1994; Schiever, 1985).

**4. Asynchrony, Dyssynchrony, and Precocious Development:** Gagné suggests that the Columbus Group borrowed the concept of *asynchrony* from Terrassier. In actuality, Terrassier (1985) used the term “dyssynchrony” to denote a lack of synchronicity in the rates of development of intellectual,

affective and motor progress. This, in turn, results in “social dyssynchrony”—a discrepancy between the speed of the gifted child’s mental development and that of his or her classmates. Although the Columbus Group’s concept of “asynchrony” is closely related to “dyssynchrony” and was indeed influenced by Terrassier’s thought, there are some important differences (Silverman, 1993b). Asynchrony is broader, taking into account the combination of complexity and intensity that gives birth to different awareness (Morelock, in press; Silverman, 1993b; Silverman, in press). It is also because of considerations of the rich inner life and heightened intensity of the gifted that asynchrony *cannot merely be equated with precocious development*.

**5. Vulnerability—**Gagné’s questioning of the vulnerability of the moderately gifted in light of the research documenting their excellent social adjustment bears consideration. Silverman (1993a) notes that clinical experience reveals that many of these well adjusted young people suffer great loneliness, enduring inner conflicts between their desire to fit in and their ideals. Research studying how well gifted children relate to other students or how well they adapt to group norms will not reveal this. Students may adopt a happy-go-lucky facade with classmates, while experiencing intense inner conflict and self-doubt (Silverman, in press).

**6. Moral Superiority:** The equating of *unique* or *qualitatively different* with *superior* is spurious. If one has a hierarchical mindset, then being “qualitatively different” implies being “above” or “below,” “better than” or “less than”. However, a valuing of diversity is better served by an image of an organism, a growing thing—perhaps a tree. Is the leaf any “better” than the branch, the trunk, or the roots? It bears noting that clinical evidence (Gross, 1993; Silverman, 1994) documents that gifted children have higher moral sensitivity than their peers in childhood, and they rate higher on assessments of moral judgment (Gross, 1993). They do not, however, necessarily develop into adults who live principled lives. Whether they do depends on a number of environmental and personality factors.

**7. Gifted Development As Only A Childhood Phenomenon:** Gagné’s observation that giftedness as simple precocity would logically preclude the existence of ‘gifted’ adults is valid. The previous paragraphs clarify the differences between asynchrony and precoci-

ty. In an excellent discussion of how gifted development manifests itself in adulthood, Tolan (1995) writes:

*In adulthood we might refer to "differentiated development," rather than asynchronous development, since the direction any individual chooses for his or her continued growth is likely to be idiosyncratic. This makes the difference between the gifted adult mind and others harder to recognize, harder to measure. However, the reality of giftedness remains a different experience of life, whether or not the individual is able to use that different experience to drive continued growth and learning, or to create products or perform in ways that the larger culture recognizes and rewards. (p. 16)*

### Conclusion:

In writing the *Chaos* article, my purpose was not to set out and then defend the Columbus Group constructs or even to propose a new model differentiating 'giftedness' and 'talent'. The article was an attempt to bring some

sanity and clarity to the cacophony of competing voices in the field. I wanted to highlight the constructs which are *absolutely necessary* in order for us to retain the best of what we know and move on to higher ground. I wanted to provide a view of our evolving domain from a perspective allowing the reader to see the forest rather than just the trees. Happily, many readers have thanked me for writing the article. For them, it succeeded in doing what it was meant to do. And that, in the end, is what matters.

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## Much More Than a Semantic Glitch: A Rejoinder to Morelock's Response

François Gagné

1. Morelock is surprised that I saw her *Chaos* article in direct competition with my own Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT). But, as I look again at the two major questions in her first paragraph (quoted in my critique), as well as a first page almost completely devoted to a discussion of the total confusion in the definitions of giftedness and talent, I cannot imagine how else that could be interpreted but as an attempt to bring order with her own differentiated definitions of these two concepts. Indeed, that is exactly what she does in the following pages. And since that is the explicit purpose of my own DMGT, her surprise surprises me.

2. Morelock then suggests "for greater precision" that I substitute *talent potential* for *giftedness* in my own model. The role of gifts as building blocks for talents—thus talent potentialities—is clearly described in my model, so that any reader will see, as Morelock did herself, the synonymous meaning of the two expressions. Consequently, I cannot see how clarity would be improved. She adds that without that "semantic glitch," our respective views would no longer be at

odds. Unfortunately, I cannot share her optimism. First, if giftedness is replaced by talent potential and if talent is defined as a "multi-level potential"—as Morelock does define talent—then we are faced with two causally related "potentials." In other words, giftedness becomes the potential of a potential, something that I cannot logically accept. Second, Morelock does not address any of my three major objections to her definition of talent. So, there is much more than just a semantic glitch: our respective definitions of talent remain totally at odds.

3. But, let us suppose that the substitution she suggests was made. What would become of the giftedness label? I see three alternatives: discard the label, as some scholars in the field suggest; use giftedness as a label for some other reality; or keep giftedness as a synonym for talent potential. This last option is, in my view, what Morelock's suggestion implies: talent potential is more precise, but still a synonym of giftedness. In this case, I cannot see the gain; not only would we change four quarters for a dollar, but we would discard a shorter and more familiar label. If, instead, we chose the second