

Counseling Needs and Programs for the Gifted

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Introduction

What does it feel like to be gifted? Mined as a national resource, ignored in the name of egalitarianism, flaunted for their achievements, chastised for not living up to their potential, taunted by their peers when they work too hard, laughed at when they care too much, silenced when they see too much: to be gifted is to be *vulnerable*. A young child with intense emotions and heightened awareness of the suffering and perils in the world feels helpless and afraid. Who is there to turn to who really understands? Counselors are needed who comprehend the complex inner lives of the gifted as well as their difficulties living in a world in which they feel alien. Developmental counseling is not a response to problems: it is a sensible, systematic way of preventing them from occurring. Gifted children need the support of trained counselors to ensure their emotional well-being and to enable them to actualize their potential in the service of humanity.

Historical Roots

Leaders or Lunatics?

The first recorded attempt to differentiate individuals with extraordinary skills and abilities appears to have been in 1115 B.C. in China (DuBois, 1970). Candidates aspiring for government offices were required to take proficiency examinations in various disciplines. The Chinese government continued to seek scholars to serve as political leaders for 2000 years. Identifying and grooming gifted individuals for leadership positions has been a recurrent theme throughout history: in ancient Greece as well as in the Roman and Turkish Empires. During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, little attention was given to the development of gifted leaders in the Western world with one exception: Thomas Jefferson proposed a bill early in the nineteenth century to identify and educate gifted students at public expense. Jefferson recognized that giftedness would perish if not recognized and cultivated, and that the talented poor were the most vulnerable (Hildreth,

1966). Jefferson hoped to mine the talents of these youths for the good of the state.

Systematic cultivation of gifted leaders gave way to a growing interest in child prodigies throughout Europe. Unfortunately, many of these children were perceived as freaks of nature, a view which remained prevalent well into the twentieth century. Explanations of creative genius in adults were similarly tinged.

The genius differs in *kind* from the species, man. Genius can be defined only in terms of its own unique mental and temperamental processes, traits, qualities, and products. Genius is another psychological species, differing as much from man, in his mental and temperamental processes, as man differs from the ape (Hirsch, 1931, p. 298).

This attitude became generalized so that all children with special abilities were seen as abnormal. In the nineteenth century, Quetelet's doctrine of *l'homme moyen* declared the average man nature's ideal and deviations in either direction nature's mistakes (Boring, 1950). Exceptional talent was ascribed to unnatural forces and those who possessed it were rejected rather than nurtured.

The amazing capacity which men call genius lies so obviously beyond the range of average men as to seem supernatural to them. The contemplation of genius thus came to be accompanied by a kind of superstitious awe, and the notion gained currency that people of genius constitute a separate species. . . . [This] superstition . . . may also result in persecution of the genius and even in his destruction by the multitude (Hollingworth, 1926, pp. 3-4).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Lombroso (1893) in Italy and Nisbet (1893) in England were claiming that genius and insanity are biologically linked. Their "proof" was based on certain illustrious persons (e.g., Byron, Joan of Arc, Keats, Mozart, Poe, Shakespeare, Socrates) who exhibited "degenerate qualities," including originality, fondness for special words, left-handedness and stammering (Hirsch, 1931, p. 281). Nisbet (1893) even warned parents that discussing their children's giftedness with them could

lead to the transmission of insanity. Thus, early conjecture about the psychological makeup of the gifted could be used to justify their persecution.

A few decades earlier, in 1865, Sir Francis Galton began the scientific study of genius (Hollingworth, 1926). He also has been credited with providing the first comprehensive list of characteristics of gifted children (Hildreth, 1966). A child prodigy himself, as well as a genius in his later years—Galton's most important contributions occurred after his 50th birthday and continued until he was past 80 (Terman, 1917). Galton (1869) saw genius as a difference in *degree* rather than in kind. Shortly after the turn of the century, Alfred Binet supplied the method by which these degrees of difference could be measured (Binet & Simon, 1905), thereby enabling giftedness to be detected in childhood and the claims of Lombroso and Nisbet to be refuted. Binet, like Galton, had an intense interest in prodigies, studying children with extraordinary talent in mathematics, chess, writing, and other areas. Ironically, he maintained that these children are qualitatively different from the rest of humanity (Hildreth, 1966).

The study of giftedness in children (not just prodigies) began in earnest at the beginning of the twentieth century, with William Stern's (1910) work in Germany, Lewis Terman's (1914) in California and Leta Hollingworth's in New York (Garrison, Burke, & Hollingworth, 1917). Terman and his colleagues' detailed description of the development of giftedness over the lifespan clearly made the greatest impact on world thinking about this population. Their longitudinal data on the social, emotional, moral and physical development of over 1400 gifted children (Terman, 1925; Terman & Oden, 1947, 1959) largely put to rest the myths of insanity and degeneracy. But it was Leta Stetter Hollingworth who studied the rich inner milieu of gifted children and laid the groundwork for counseling this population.

The Contributions of Leta Hollingworth

Leta Hollingworth (1886–1939) was the first counselor of the gifted (Kerr, 1990). In addition, as the first clinical researcher of this population, she was “the first to contribute evidence indicating that gifted children do have social/emotional needs meriting attention” (Colangelo, 1991, p. 273). While others concentrated on the achievements of gifted children or groomed them for leadership positions, Hollingworth navigated the interior of giftedness—the vast unexplored territory of the psyche. She mapped the critical developmental issues with which atypical children have to contend. She listened compassionately to the children and to their parents. She listened intently—as a marine biologist might listen to whale songs in hopes of decoding their hidden meanings—until the deepest layers of their experience were revealed to her. They shared with her their loneliness, their need for precision and fairness,

their impatience with superficiality and foolishness, their desire to find like minds, their love of beauty, their early grappling with good and evil, their fledgling attempts to build a philosophy of life, their search for their place in the universe and their delightful sense of humor—which she called their “saving sense” (Hollingworth, 1940a, p. 274). The richness and enduring quality of her insights attest to the depth of her compassion and perceptiveness, as well as her enormous investment of time as a researcher. She remains unparalleled as the “greatest counselor to the gifted and talented” (Kerr, 1990, p. 178).

The eminent Carl Rogers was one of Leta Hollingworth's students, and his client-centered therapy is thought to have been a derivation of Hollingworth's deeply respectful “child-centered therapy” (Kerr, 1990, p. 180). Rogers once remarked that he learned as much from *who* Leta Hollingworth was as from *what* she taught him. Her niece, Margaret Overton, wrote: “She believed that life was very precious, *talent* was a blessing to be nurtured and shared for the good of others, and that *people* were to be cherished and helped” (Overton, 1975). Hollingworth lived her philosophy.

As one of the earliest scientist-practitioners, Leta Hollingworth carefully documented both her clinical observations and the effects of her interventions. She “pioneered research and development in naturalistic settings—in functioning classrooms and schools” (Passow, 1990, p. 135), employing tapescripts of classroom interaction, psychographs, and photographic records. In addition, she conducted 30 cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, the most famous of which, *Children above 180 IQ* (Hollingworth, 1942), still remains the only comprehensive study of children in this IQ range. Her original research included investigations of personality development, social adjustment, playmates, leadership, effects of special class placement over time, comparison of the sexes on mental traits, early intellectual development, adult status, and the relationship between general intelligence and special talents. Her standards for research would be deemed exemplary even in modern times (Benbow, 1990).

Leta Hollingworth's research contributions must be viewed as a model to be aspired to even today. Although there are clear exceptions, the general research contributions in the field of gifted rarely have approached the standards she set. Her research questions, which were varied, were addressed with scientific rigor. She even used control groups to evaluate her findings. . . . Moreover, many of her papers were published in the best journals (Benbow, 1990, p. 214).

It is also worth noting that Hollingworth taught the first course on the psychology of giftedness at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1922–1923, and wrote the first comprehensive textbook: *Gifted children: Their nature and nurture* (1926). Julian Stanley (1990) credits her with having inspired the international

talent searches, as she conceived of the notion of “above-level” testing.

From her research, Hollingworth (1940a, 1942) concluded that children in the 130–150 range have an “optimal” level of ability that permits adjustment to school and society. Beyond this range mutual rejection tends to occur, which can lead to psychological isolation of highly gifted children. She observed that the majority of children above 160 IQ play little with other children “because the difficulties of social contact are almost insurmountable” (Hollingworth, 1939, p. 588). They much prefer “to play with others of like mental age” (Hollingworth, 1926, p. 136).

Early interest in origins and destinies, Hollingworth (1931) noted, is one of the conspicuous symptoms of intellectual acumen. “Who made the world?” “Where did I come from?” “What will become of me when I die?” “Why did I come into the world?” (p. 11). She discovered that children do not begin to require logically coherent answers to these questions until they reach the mental age of 12 or 13. Religious ideas and needs also originate whenever these children develop to a mental level of 12 years. The higher the IQ, the earlier the child develops a pressing need for an explanation of the universe. Children she tested who scored above 180 IQ desired a systematic philosophy of life and death at the age of 6 or 7.

Hollingworth developed the first comprehensive program to serve the emotional needs of the gifted; it is the only one which has been studied for its long-range impact on the students involved. Her program of “emotional education” (Hollingworth, 1939, p. 585) was designed to assist the children in dealing with a specific set of issues she had gleaned from her research. These “special perplexities in the life of a gifted child” (Hollingworth, 1942, p. 255) are the direct result of their deviation from the norm. Although Hollingworth only listed five or six of these issues in any one article, collectively she addressed 11 specific concerns:

- finding enough hard and interesting work at school
- adjusting to classmates
- being able to play with other children
- not becoming hermits
- developing leadership abilities
- not becoming negativistic toward authority
- learning to “suffer fools gladly”
- avoiding the formation of habits of extreme chicanery
- conforming to rules and expectations
- understanding their origin and destiny from an early age
- dealing with the special problems of being a gifted girl

(Hollingworth, 1926, 1930, 1931, 1939, 1940a, 1942).

A detailed description of how Hollingworth dealt with each of these issues is presented elsewhere (Silverman, 1990b). Space permits only a brief summary here of her major findings.

Solutions to the social and emotional problems that beset the gifted, Hollingworth (1930, 1940b) observed, could be effected most readily when they were placed in full-day programs with children of similar abilities. The design of her programs included fast paced instruction; teaching basic skills in half a day (now known as “telescoping” or “compacting”); a challenging academic curriculum which motivated the students to work hard; study of the history and evolution of civilization; biographical study (bibliotherapy) to expose the children to gifted individuals who had sustained effort against odds and contributed to society; introduction to modern languages and literature; independent study and small group projects; extensive classroom discussion; student-designed curriculum around broad themes of knowledge; interdisciplinary studies to allow students to experience the interconnectedness of the world; teaching the children how to handle the apparent foolishness of others with patience and love; helping them learn to balance candor with tact; and training in the fine art of argumentation, including “argument with oneself,” the art and etiquette of polite disagreement with others, and public debate (Hollingworth, 1939, p. 585). Infused throughout this program was a beautiful set of human values: basic respect for humanity, awareness of our global interdependence, and commitment to service.

Studies completed after students were enrolled in this type of program for a period of three years revealed that the students did just as well in their academic subjects as those who had studied nothing but academics, but in addition they developed a love of learning through their self-directed learning experiences, and they were *happier*, having found friends and true peers—some of them for the first time in their lives (Hollingworth, 1930, 1940b). Follow-up studies indicate that Hollingworth's program had a profound, lifelong impact on the students' achievement, friendships and values (Harris, 1992; White 1990). Harris (1992) asked some of these individuals, almost 70 years later, “From your point of view, what constitutes success in life?” “The replies . . . quite evidently mirrored the curriculum. Their answers were strongly focused on societal connection, awareness and sensitivity to others as elements inseparable from self-actualization, and definitions of success” (p. 102).

No discussion of Hollingworth's contributions would be complete without mention of her lifelong crusade against the entrenched belief in the innate intellectual inferiority of women. Galton (1869) had established *eminence* as quintessential evidence of giftedness, and the fact that there were so few eminent women constituted “proof” in educated circles of women's inferior intelligence. Hollingworth argued that the paltry number of eminent women was due to sociological rather than biological limitations of women, and that these factors also affected the achievements of other less advantaged groups in society.

Those who investigate eminence agree . . . upon the following facts. An overwhelming majority of illustrious persons have had fathers who were far above the average in social-economic conditions. . .

. . . One possible interpretation is that education and opportunity are the prime determinants of achievement, since nearly all the great men have been born in comfortable homes, of parents in superior circumstances. If opportunity were indeed the prime determinant of eminence, then we should expect those who belong to socially inferior categories to be virtually excluded from it. This is just what we do find, since the uncultured, the poor servants, and women are very seldom found to have achieved eminence (Hollingworth, 1926, p. 11).

In contrast to the strong hereditarian positions of Galton and Terman, Hollingworth staunchly supported the role of opportunity in society. She distinguished between ability and achievement. What a person *can do* may depend on congenital equipment, but what he or she actually *does do* probably depends on the environment (Hollingworth, 1926, p. 14). Thus, Hollingworth provided a philosophical foundation for contemporary views of the importance of nurturing giftedness.

Early Research and Programs in the United States

During the last decade of Hollingworth's career, the concepts she had sown began to blossom. Paul Witty (1930), who "was actuated to study gifted children by the work of Leta S. Hollingworth" (p. 38), published a study of one hundred gifted children with IQs ranging from 140 to 183. Like Terman and Hollingworth, Witty found his subjects primarily well-adjusted, free from nervous disorders, and exceptionally honest as compared to a control group. The children in his sample were somewhat more solitary and sedentary in their play than average children. He concluded that special class placement was necessary for optimal development of the students. This was echoed by Merle Sumption (1941) in her follow-up study of 328 gifted children who had been placed in the Cleveland Major Work classes. Her study revealed "significant differences in attitudes, behavior and ideals" (p. 163) that were direct outcomes of placement in the Major Work program. The major benefit attributed to the classes by Sumption's subjects was the opportunity for social relationships, which was the first stated goal of the program. Sumption's study also established the need for vocational guidance of gifted students.

In the early 1930s, John Gowan and John Rothney developed the concept of "differentiated guidance for the gifted" while studying together under the direction of John Brewer and Truman Kelley at Harvard University Graduate School of Education (Gowan, 1982). The idea still was considered radical in the 1960s (Gowan, 1979).

Rothney went on to found the Guidance Laboratory for Superior Students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1958. The Guidance Lab served as a model of direct service to gifted youths and their families, a training facility for counselors, and a laboratory for research of this population until 1985. Its major focus was high school students. Gowan developed an intensive summer demonstration and training program for teachers and counselors at San Fernando Valley State College in Northridge, California, from 1961 until 1972. Groups of elementary-aged gifted students received creative instruction in the basic subject areas from master teachers while being observed by classroom teachers pursuing advanced coursework in education of the gifted. A counselor receiving advanced training in counseling the gifted was assigned to each class.

Another individual who contributed specific counseling strategies was Ruth Strang (1945, 1951). Strang recommended that in large schools a group of professionals should be trained as teacher-counselors in order to provide individual guidance to a greater number of students. These teacher-counselors would work under the direction of specially prepared full-time guidance counselors. She emphasized the importance of gifted students developing a sense of social responsibility and recommended that they explore the meaning of their lives. Strang recognized the importance of parent involvement in the educational and counseling processes.

Although the pioneers and their successors were prolific in contributing their insights to the field, serious attention was not given to the counseling needs of the gifted in the United States until the 1980s (Colangelo, 1991). Colangelo (1991) now predicts that in the years ahead "counseling and psychological issues will become one of the distinguishing features of the growing movement in gifted education" (p. 274).

A New Perspective of Giftedness

Traditional definitions of giftedness, linked to achievement or the potential for achievement, provide little insight into the phenomenological realities of the gifted, nor do they inform counselors. A new definition has been proposed which focuses on the emotional development of gifted individuals and emphasizes the important role of the counselor. This perspective builds upon the insights of Kazimierz Dabrowski (1964, 1972) and Jean-Charles Terrassier (1985).

Giftedness is *asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally (Columbus Group, 1991).

Although there are some distinct differences between *asynchrony* and Terrassier's *dyssynchrony*, Terrassier's conceptions help set the stage for this new way of looking at giftedness.

Dyssynchrony

Terrassier (1985) coined the term "dyssynchrony" to refer to the psychological and social ramifications of the uneven development of gifted children.

Gifted children often suffer from a lack of synchronicity in the rates of development of their intellectual, affective and motor progress, which has its effect in a number of aspects of their lives, and its results in turn produce further psychological problems. (p. 265)

Dyssynchrony has two aspects: internal and social. Internal dyssynchrony refers to disparate rates of intellectual, psychomotor, language and affective development. One of the most frequent imbalances occurs in the rates at which gifted children master writing as opposed to reading. Many gifted children read before school age; however, Terrassier contends that "the concomitant problem with children who read so easily is their exceptional difficulty in learning to write" (p. 267). The problem appears more often among boys than girls. Terrassier also finds reasoning ability "always in advance of a gifted child's language ability" (p. 267). Nonverbal tests, such as the Performance section of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) or the Raven's Progressive Matrices, apparently yield much higher scores for French children than verbal assessments (160-170 vs 130-140).

Terrassier suggests that there is often a large gap between intelligence and emotional maturity. Anxieties and fears may overwhelm the child when "his sharp intelligence provides him with anxiety-provoking information, which he is unable to process appropriately" (p. 268). Several types of defenses may come into play at this time, such as intellectualization. Children who intellectualize their feelings are at risk of becoming neurotic; some expressions of boredom may actually be a form of depression.

Social dyssynchrony is more obvious than internal dyssynchrony. It can be defined as the discrepancy between the speed of the mental development of the gifted child and that of his or her classmates. Terrassier suggests that understimulated gifted children may be working three to five years below their potential. To emphasize this point, he has devised a "school quotient" composed of the student's "school age" (determined by grade placement) divided by his or her mental age, which graphically depicts the extent to which these children are "retarded" in their academic development (p. 270). The situation is exacerbated by what Terrassier calls a "Negative Pygmalion Effect" (p. 273), in which a teacher who is ignorant of a student's real potential sets

age-appropriate expectations for him or her and then the student accommodates to those expectations—never revealing greater capacity. Then, of course, the teacher assumes the child is not advanced. Terrassier suggests that the Negative Pygmalion Effect applies to about two-thirds of gifted children in French public education.

Social dyssynchrony is also evident in the expectations imposed upon the child by parents and other children, who "often expect the gifted child to behave according to his age" (p. 271). Under-expectations from parents and other children creates "social pressure for the gifted child to conform" and can "make it difficult for him to discover and accept his precocity" (p. 273). Underachievement frequently results. In addition, the child's intelligence may become a source of socially induced guilt as he or she attempts to accommodate to the social norm. Dyssynchrony is evident in gifted children's choice of older friends for indoor games and conversation, and children their own age and size for outdoor games.

Terrassier stresses that dyssynchrony is not a pathological condition, but "a description of the actual conditions in which many gifted children develop; in most cases, their problems are the result of maladaptation between society and education" (p. 272). The concept of *asynchrony*, which has much in common with its precursor, actually developed independently of Terrassier's work and the similarities were only noted later.

Asynchrony

The Columbus Group definition (1991) emerged in reaction to the increasing emphasis on products, performance and achievement in American thinking about giftedness. In the United States, it had gradually become politically incorrect to think of giftedness as inherent within the child and safer to talk about its external manifestations. Experts were recommending that "gifted children" be replaced with "gifted behaviors," "talents in different domains" and "gifted program children." Something vital was being missed in these popular formulations: the child.

JENNIE

One particular child recently had come to the attention of several clinicians and practitioners. "Jennie" had gone through what appeared to be a "positive disintegration" in Dabrowskian terms (Dabrowski, 1964) at the tender age of 4½. Jennie's ordeal was a direct result of her giftedness; yet, none of the contemporary American conceptions were beneficial in understanding her or helping her and her family. Martha Morelock (in press) has captured Jennie's experience in an extensive case study; excerpts of this study are presented below as they illustrate the basic concepts of this new perspective of giftedness.

Jennie had been complaining that there was nothing for her to do at her Montessori School. One day she was uncharacteristically quiet all the way home from school, and then announced she wasn't going back. She went upstairs, put on the television and record player, took out a third grade math book and proceeded to do the problems, and initiated a conversation with her mother—all at once. It seemed as though she were trying to make up for not getting enough stimulation at school. That night Jennie had her very first tantrum, crying uncontrollably and hitting her mother until she wore herself out. Her mother felt Jennie was reacting out of frustration to schoolwork that wasn't complex enough for her. This episode "marked a major turning point in the qualitative tone of Jennie's cognition. . . ." (Morelock, in press, p. 24). Jennie's mother reports:

When she awakened the morning after the tantrum, it was almost as if everything took on a new and different meaning. . . She went through a period of about three weeks where she was looking at everything and saying, "Well, where did we get that from? . . . And where did *this* come from?" (p. 25).

Jennie appeared confused. She kept asking where things like the computer and the refrigerator had come from and how long they had had these things. Then she began asking about the universe and how life began. She seemed to be "going back to the very beginnings. And with the ocean, it wasn't like she wanted to know about the ocean, it was *how the ocean was created*" (p. 25). One night while bathing Jennie, her mother realized what Jennie was really trying to find out.

I said, "Gee, Jennie, when you were asking about the computer and how long we've had this and how long we've had that, you meant how long have they been here *on earth*." And she turned away from me and her voice started getting really choked and her eyes teared up and she took about a minute and all of a sudden, she went, "Yes, Mommy," and her voice shook and she started to cry. She was so frustrated (pp. 25-26).

Jennie had difficulty getting to sleep at night throughout this phase. One question led to another endlessly. She seemed to be trying to trace back from generation to generation how knowledge is passed on. For several nights in a row she began to ask about God and death.

She was very upset because she *wanted* to believe in God and that everybody goes to Heaven, but in her mind, it wasn't rational enough for her. She'd say, "Well, does God love everybody?" And it'd be "Of course, Jennie. He loves everybody." "Well, where do the *bad* people go? Don't *they* go to Heaven? If God *loves* everybody, then *all* people would go to Heaven. . ." (p. 26).

And she'd lay at night with tears in her eyes and not wanting to cry, cause she was so self-controlled, knowing that *she* could die at any time. Cause she knew her own mortality. . . You'd say to her "Oh you're gonna be fine, of course." "You're gonna live and I'm gonna be a Nana and . . ." And she'd say, "Well, nobody knows for sure what's gonna happen, Mom. Nobody knows for sure. You can get in an accident and nobody knows really when they're gonna die. It's nice if everybody lives to be old, but that's not always what happens, cause children die sometimes" (pp. 26-27).

After this three-week period of questioning, Jennie became very quiet and immersed herself in fantasy play. During this time there was an incredible leap in her reading ability. She went from second grade readers to *Mathilda*, *Charlotte's Web* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Sometimes she would read two books in a day. Her thought processes mirrored her reading ability: she had shifted to a new level of thought. Jennie had been tested on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M) almost a year earlier and had scored in the high 140s. After this period of inner turmoil, she was tested again and achieved a score of 176. The psychologist described Jennie's dramatic increase as a "cognitive leap" (p. 17) and attributed her emotional turmoil in part to the speed with which this cognitive leap had taken place. Jennie's experience underscores the need for an internal view of giftedness.

As Jennie grappled with the sudden onslaught of increased abstract capacity, she was forced to deal with the emotional repercussions of her own thought. Thus, in Jennie's mind at the age of 4, God could not possibly be a loving God if he would refuse Heaven to anyone. And the terrible realization of her own mortality could not be softened by her mother's reassurances because "Nobody knows for sure; *children* die sometimes." In spite of her impressive capacity for abstract thought, Jennie was only 4. Her emotional needs, like those of other 4-year-olds, included a trust in the strength and reliability of her parents and in the predictability of a secure world. However, her advanced cognitive capacities . . . left her emotionally defenseless in the face of her own reason (pp. 37-38).

Regardless of Jennie's potential for recognized achievement in the world, she obviously has needs in childhood directly related to her giftedness that must be addressed. Her powerful cognitive/emotional life could easily be misunderstood by counselors with no training in the unique developmental issues of the gifted.

THE MANY GUISES OF EMOTION

Jennie's experience is dramatic, but apparently not that rare or exceptional in highly gifted children. Hollingworth (1931) had noted the early concern with

"origins and destinies" (p. 11) of this population, and Terrassier (1985) as well:

In my experience, gifted children are concerned at a very early age about what can be called "the problem of limits"—limits of life such as birth, death, God, and the universe. When expressed as early as 3 or 4 years-old these concerns only contribute to the parents' perplexity (p. 271).

However, Terrassier perceived the anxieties wrought by such questions as indicative of the "emotional immaturity" of the child (p. 268). The problem lies in the imprecise terms available to us to describe the emotional realm.

To understand Jennie and other highly gifted children it is necessary to differentiate between *emotional needs*, *emotional development* and *emotional immaturity*. Jennie had the emotional needs of a 4-year-old. She had some age-appropriate rather than "immature" emotional reactions. But her emotional development was *qualitatively different* from other 4-year-olds due to the impact of her greater cognitive awareness. Individuals who are highly emotional are often considered "immature" in societies in which emotion is typically repressed. Sensitive gifted boys, for example, cry easily; in the United States this is often seen as a sign of "emotional immaturity" and used as a reason to hold them back in school.

Sommers (1981) introduced the term *emotional range* (p. 555), which may help to clarify these distinctions. In her study of cognitively advanced college students, Sommers found a high level of "emotional responsiveness" (p. 560). She attributed this responsiveness to "advanced cognitive organization" (p. 560).

All of the cognitive skills that were found to be related to the ability to respond with more emotions are marks of a highly organized awareness—an awareness that might be governed by a well-structured system of values, oughts, and beliefs, but not by momentary excitements (Sommers, 1981, p. 560).

Therefore, the heightened emotional sensitivity and responsiveness often documented in the gifted (Clark, 1992; Genshaft & Broyles, 1991; Roedell, 1984; Whitmore, 1980) is directly related to their advanced cognitive development. Jennie demonstrates emotional intensity rather than emotional immaturity, which is a positive sign of potential for advanced emotional development, according to Dabrowski's Theory (Dabrowski, 1972). Other researchers have also found gifted children to be emotionally advanced on a variety of measures (Robinson & Noble, 1991). It is in this linkage of cognition with emotion that the concept of *asynchrony* diverges most from Terrassier's "dyssynchrony." Asynchronous development results in unusual "awareness, perceptions, emotional responses and life experiences" throughout the lifespan (Morelock, 1992, p. 14).

Comments on Dyssynchrony

Webster's (1979) dictionary defines "asynchronous" as "without coincidence in time; not synchronous" (p. 117). While there is no definition provided for "dyssynchronous," the prefix "dys" is defined as "hard, ill, bad, difficult" (p. 568). Asynchrony has less value judgment attached: it simply means "out of sync." And gifted children are, indeed, out of sync—internally and externally, as Terrassier has aptly described. Their hands and feet often cannot keep the promises their minds make. The unevenness of gifted children's development, especially that of the highly gifted, has been well substantiated (Altman, 1983; Delisle, 1990; Hollingworth, 1942; Gowan, 1974; Kerr, 1991; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985; Manaster & Powell, 1983; Munger, 1990; Roedell, 1989; Schetky, 1981; Sebring, 1983; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). Hollingworth pointed out over 60 years ago:

To have the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties. It follows that (after babyhood) the younger the child, the greater the difficulties, and the adjustment becomes easier with every additional year of age. The years between 4 and 9 are probably the most likely to be beset with the problems mentioned (Hollingworth, 1931, p. 13).

She recognized that problems of right and wrong, and evil in the abstract, become troublesome for very highly gifted children because their awareness is so far advanced of their emotional control and physical powers.

Although Terrassier's (1985) main thesis is clearly supported, certain minor points in his description permit some different interpretations. Early readers do not always have difficulty with writing. Most gifted children have age-appropriate motor skills (Tannenbaum, 1992; Wright, 1990). It is possible that children with normal motor development will experience some frustration with the writing process, since their minds go so much faster than their hands. However, the writing difficulties described by Terrassier may actually be the result of motoric disabilities—particularly since he found this more often in boys than in girls. Significantly more boys than girls have been found who are both gifted and learning disabled (Schiff, Kaufman & Kaufman, 1981; Silverman, 1989). In the United States, primary grade gifted boys whose fine motor skills are weak are in danger of being held back in school. Gross motor difficulties cause problems socially for gifted boys, and these problems increase with age. The non-athletic, gifted youth is often among the least popular students in high school (Tannenbaum, 1983). This type of asynchronous development can have severe social consequences for males.

The pronounced discrepancy Terrassier encountered between language and reasoning abilities may be related to the fact that American tests were used (even if

L. K. Silverman

translated into French). A French vocabulary test on French students (e.g., Binet's original test) probably would not produce such marked variation. A high correlation is found between language development and reasoning ability in American children, and highly gifted children do consistently better on verbal tests such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M) than on nonverbal assessments (Silverman & Kearney, 1992).

In a recent study of 20 highly gifted children with Stanford-Binet IQ scores ranging from 151 to 191, with a mean of 173, the Performance IQ scores derived from the WISC-III ranged from 99 to 144, with a mean of 120 (Silverman, Atkinson, & Camden, in preparation). The nonverbal IQ score dramatically underestimated the abilities of these children. Whether the nonverbal scores are significantly higher than the verbal scores, as in Terrasser's data, or significantly lower, this type of pronounced asynchronous development can prevent a gifted child from being recognized or served. Unfortunately, subtest scores tend to be averaged and placement decisions made on the basis of Full Scale scores rather than strengths in abstract reasoning abilities. Only 3 of the 20 highly gifted children in the WISC-III vs Stanford-Binet L-M study achieved Full Scale WISC-III scores in the highly gifted range (146, 148 and 150) and all three were below the lowest score on the Binet L-M (Silverman, Atkinson, & Camden, in preparation).

Terrasser indicated that dyssynchrony affects "many" gifted children (p. 272). It could be argued that the concept applies to *all* gifted children. From the time Binet and Simon (1908) invented the mental age, gifted children have been defined as those who reason more like older children than like their agemates. It would follow that uneven development is basic to the understanding of gifted children—a more universal principle than achievement. Although intelligence tests have been under serious attack in recent years, they do provide valuable information about the rate at which cognitive development (mental age) outstrips physical development (chronological age). The intelligence quotient can be thought of as an *index of asynchrony*, yielding at least a *minimal* estimate of the discrepancy between cognitive and physical development. The higher the child's IQ, the greater the asynchrony. Another type of asynchrony can be found in the discrepancy between the child's strengths and weaknesses. The greater the asynchrony, the greater the vulnerability of the child.

Vulnerability

Dyssynchrony implies vulnerability; asynchrony—the combination of cognitive complexity and emotional intensity—makes that vulnerability explicit. Vulnerability requires appropriate responses from parents, teachers and counselors. The Columbus Group definition is the first to acknowledge the emotional fragility of

the child and the important role that counselors play in fostering emotional development. With increased intellectual advancement comes increased vulnerability (Roedell, 1984).

... there is general agreement that highly gifted children are more susceptible to some types of developmental difficulties than are moderately gifted or average children. Areas of vulnerability include uneven development, perfectionism, adult expectations, intense sensitivity, self-definition, alienation, inappropriate environments, and role conflicts (Roedell, 1984, p. 127).

Certainly a child who is very dissimilar from agemates would be vulnerable in the social arena. And school systems are not set up to deal with children who are out of sync with grade level norms.

Kate, like every highly gifted child, is an amalgam of many developmental ages. She may be 6 while riding a bike, 13 while playing the piano or chess, 9 while debating rules, 8 while choosing hobbies and books, 5 (or 3) when asked to sit still. How can such a child be expected to fit into a classroom designed around norms for 6 year olds? (Tolan, 1989, p. 7).

But the most profound source of the child's vulnerability is internal asynchrony, as demonstrated in Jennie's case. The child may not have sufficient emotional resources to deal with the information brought into awareness by his or her advanced cognition. Gowan (1974) likened precocious cognitive awareness to premature rupturing of the protective placental shell during the prenatal period. Too early exposure to environmental realities can be as precarious in post-uterine as in prenatal development.

The impact of asynchrony is magnified by the intensity which is characteristic of the gifted. To understand this heightened intensity, we turn to Dabrowski's Theory, originally called "The Theory of Positive Disintegration" (Dabrowski, 1964, 1972).

Dabrowski's Theory of Emotional Development

Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902–1980) was a Polish psychologist, psychiatrist, philosopher, as well as an accomplished poet, musician, composer and playwright. His theory grew out of witnessing the best and worst of human nature in two world wars. He concluded that individuals who gave up their lives to save or comfort strangers had to be cut out of different cloth from those who were capable of extreme brutality. He differentiated five levels of development, ranging from pathological egocentrism to extraordinary altruism.

Dabrowski's theory shares many but not all of the suppositions of stage theories as outlined by Piaget (1960): (1) development consists of a series of structural

transformations; (2) each level represents a qualitatively different mode of relating to experience; (3) there is an invariant order to the levels; and (4) each level is a structural whole with a unique underlying organization. However, there are three departures: (1) progression from lower to higher levels is the exception, instead of the rule; (2) the levels are non-ontogenetic (not related to age); and (3) higher levels do not incorporate less evolved structures. Instead, a kind of inner dialectic is set up between the vestiges of a lower level and the emergent higher level, and the more integrated structure gains strength in the personality only as the less integrated structure dissolves.

According to Dabrowski (1972), development is influenced by three factors: heredity, environment, and the "third factor"—a sense of inner-directedness. "The third factor is the dynamism of conscious choice (valuation) by which one affirms or rejects certain qualities in oneself and in one's environment" (pp. 305–306). Heredity determines developmental potential. Environment acts either as an enabler or an inhibitor of the individual's attainment of that potential. The third or autonomous factor is an inner drive to make conscious choices in accordance with those principles highest in oneself. It appears at higher levels of development as a powerful internal force furthering development.

Since Dabrowski's death in 1980, his "Theory of Positive Disintegration" often has been referred to as "Dabrowski's Theory of Emotional Development," as he placed greater emphasis on the role of emotions than most other theorists. Advanced emotional development is the commitment to live one's life in accordance with higher order values. Potential for that development is largely determined by the strength of the individual's "overexcitabilities"—innate capacities to respond in a heightened manner to various stimuli. Jennie demonstrates potential for advanced emotional development by the depth of her emotional sensitivity, moral concern and cognitive awareness. The relationship of Dabrowski's theory to giftedness will be made clearer in the discussion of overexcitabilities. The levels are addressed first as they give meaning to the overexcitabilities.

Dabrowski's Five Levels of Development

Dabrowski (1964, 1970) proposed five levels of development: an integrated primary level of existence in which the individual is at the mercy of unconscious impulses, an integrated secondary level in which the personality ideal is attained, and three transitional states which represent phases of disintegration. Disintegration is the process by which instinctive modes of functioning deteriorate to enable higher order value systems to develop. As the evolution of the personality cannot take place without the dissolution of less evolved psychological structures, pain is attendant to psychological growth and maturity.

Disintegration occurs most frequently during puberty and when the individual faces crises.

LEVEL I

At Level I, individuals "are unaware of any qualities of life beyond those necessary for immediate gratification of their primitive impulses, and they act solely on behalf of their impulses" (Dabrowski, 1964, p. 4). They experience no guilt, shame or inner conflict, and there is little empathy for others. Egocentric motives—such as the drive for power, status, wealth—are unfettered by concern for other people; therefore, these individuals often achieve what they want in the world at the expense of others. In order for moral, social, intellectual and esthetic values to emerge, it is necessary for this primitive level of functioning to disintegrate. Unfortunately, there are many for whom that disintegration does not occur: they remain at this automatic level of functioning throughout their lives.

Example of Level I:

I rarely think of inner conflict in relation to myself. I presume such conflict means in the area of morals, etc. . . . I consider success in mainly a mundane way. That is, I consider success to be the accomplishment of certain goals in life, one of which is material possessions, i.e., car, house, clothes (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977b, p. 54).

LEVEL II

At Level II, the rigidity of the primitive structure begins to loosen, leaving the individual confused and uncertain. Internal conflicts shake the foundation of the psyche, laying the groundwork for the "birth and development of a higher psychic structure" (Dabrowski, 1964, pp. 5–6). Level II is marked by ambivalences (contradictory thoughts) and ambivalencies (changeable and conflicting courses of action). Because of their bewilderment, individuals at this level of development are easily led by those who seem more certain, but are usually less evolved than themselves (Dabrowski, in Piechowski, 1975). At Level II, values and attitudes tend to be stereotypical—introjected from the environment, rather than self-determined. Individuals are pushed and pulled in many different directions; their values are ingested whole and may contradict other beliefs. There is no inner hierarchy of values against which to evaluate conflicting beliefs. Therefore, many paths appear equally compelling.

Example of Level II:

I idealize women, my girl friends, mostly. I have feelings of exclusiveness and fidelity toward them, but at other times I feel dominated by primitive impulses.

L. K. Silverman

I hate being directed by others, but often I feel no force within me capable of directing my actions (Dabrowski, 1964, pp. 7-8).

LEVEL III

Dabrowski's greatest contribution was in the delineation of "multilevel" development which constitutes the highest three levels of human experience (Dabrowski, 1964, p. 8). At Level III, vertical conflicts occur between higher and lower motives and the personality gains depth. Discontent, shame, and guilt are aroused as the individual begins to evaluate his or her behavior against an inner ideal. Tension is experienced between "what is" and "what ought to be" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 42). At the same time that inner conflict intensifies, empathy deepens and creativity emerges as a manifestation of personal growth, expressing the heroic struggle of human existence. A critical feature of Level III is "positive maladjustment: protest against . . . standards and attitudes of one's social environment which are incompatible with one's growing awareness of higher values" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 46). Intelligence becomes "a major force helping the individual to seize life deeply, wholly, and objectively" (Dabrowski, 1964, p. 13).

Example of Level III:

Along similar lines, it bothers me greatly when I notice myself passing up an opportunity to do good. . .

I feel a tremendous obligation to do all that I can for people (not an encumbering or begrudging obligation, but a moral, and therefore absolute, obligation which brings me joy. . .). However, I chastise myself for not seeking out people to help (as opposed to helping those with whom I am naturally in contact) nearly enough. . .

I feel anger towards myself when I catch myself feeling anger towards others. I despise the thought of doing wrong, acting in a cruel manner, or becoming angry towards anyone/anything besides myself. . . (Unpublished data).

LEVEL IV

At Level IV, the process of synthesis begins to occur and inner conflicts abate. Those conflicts that remain are "existential, philosophical and transcendental" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 53). There is congruence between an individual's ideals and capabilities, and an intensification of the inner hierarchy of values. The personality becomes organized under the unifying power of the personality ideal. The individual develops the capacity to observe the self and others objectively. Dabrowski called this "subject-object in oneself" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 49). This is a very high level of functioning in which the individual takes conscious control of his or her development.

Example of Level IV:

I think the quality of compassion is best for an ideal life. The ability to suffer with another, to understand their perspective, while honestly naming my own seems essential to building a good life. I see this attribute only being born of listening, love, a gentle yet firm discipline, an ability to wait, a curbing of untamed reactions yet requiring that one feel strongly with others. Such compassion remembers joy and sadness in a way that helps a person connect with others rather than standing in isolation from them. At the same time such compassion can only be born out of quiet reflection and a willingness to undergo disorientation from my way of seeing things and doing things. (Miller & Silverman, 1987, p. 224).

LEVEL V

At Level V, transformation is complete: the individual has attained the personality ideal. Secondary integration is marked by harmony, service, altruism, universal values, lack of inner conflict. There is profound empathy for others and a constant willingness to help. Obviously, very few attain this highest level in Dabrowski's hierarchy, and Dabrowski (1964) seemed to refer to it as a process of becoming rather than as a completely attainable reality. "Partial secondary integrations occur throughout life as the result of positive resolutions of minor conflicts. . . As secondary integration increases, internal psychic tension decreases" (pp. 20-21). Fortunately, some moral exemplars have described this highest level of existence. Peace Pilgrim illuminates our understanding of Dabrowski's Level V.

Peace Pilgrim (1982) gave up all her possessions except what she could carry in her blue tunic and walked more than 25,000 miles across America for nearly three decades teaching peace among nations, peace between people and how to attain inner peace. She had no religious affiliation and no organizational backing. Her message was simple: "This is the way of peace—overcome evil with good and falsehood with truth and hatred with love" (Peace Pilgrim, 1982, p. 26).

Example of Level V:

I became increasingly uncomfortable about having so much while my brothers and sisters were starving. Finally I had to find another way. The turning point came when, in desperation and out of a very deep seeking for a meaningful way of life, I walked all one night through the woods. I came to a moonlit glade and prayed. I felt a complete willingness, without any reservations, to give my life—to dedicate my life—to service. "Please use me!" I prayed to God. And a great peace came over me (Peace Pilgrim, 1982, p. 7).

After this realization, it took Peace Pilgrim 15 years of intensive preparation and inner seeking to transform her

willingness into action. Her description of the conflict between the "lower self" and the "higher self" (p. 8) is remarkably similarly to Dabrowski's conceptions:

Your lower self sees things from the viewpoint of your physical well-being only—your higher self considers your psychological or spiritual well-being. Your lower self sees you as the center of the universe—your higher self sees you as a cell in the body of humanity. When you are governed by your lower self you are selfish and materialistic, but insofar as you follow the promptings of your higher self you will see things realistically and find harmony within yourself and others (Peace Pilgrim, 1982, p. 8).

Other individuals who have been considered exemplars of Level V are Dag Hammarskjold and Mother Teresa of Calcutta (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a). Although the full attainment of secondary integration occurs only rarely, it is significant that Dabrowski's theory includes it as a developmental possibility. The theory gives psychological credibility to the highest of human experience. The acknowledgment of an ideal is the first step in its actualization.

Psychobiographical case studies of individuals who have attained higher level development (as analyzed by either Dabrowski's or Maslow's theory) reveal that all were gifted individuals (Brennan, 1987; Brennan & Piechowski, 1991; Grant, 1990; Piechowski, 1978, 1990a, b, 1992). However, intelligence is insufficient as a predictor of advanced development; there must be built into the personality an extraordinary capacity to respond emotionally and creatively. Dabrowski describes these capacities as "overexcitabilities."

Overexcitabilities

Developmental potential is determined by the person's original endowment of overexcitabilities, special talents and abilities (Piechowski, 1979). The term "overexcitability" (OE) has been translated from the Polish *nadpobudliwosc* which means to be superstimulated (Falk & Piechowski, 1992, p. 1). The five overexcitabilities can be thought of as excess energy derived from physical, sensual, imaginal, intellectual and emotional sources. Only when these capacities for responsiveness are higher than average do they contribute significantly to developmental potential.

One who manifests a given form of overexcitability and especially one who manifests several forms of overexcitability sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner. Reality for such an individual ceases to be indifferent but affects him deeply and leaves long lasting impressions. Enhanced excitability is thus a means for more frequent interactions and wider range of experiencing (Dabrowski, 1972, p. 7).

Psychomotor OE refers to excess physical energy,

workaholism, nervous habits (such as tics and nailbiting), rapid speech, love of movement, impulsivity and pressure for action. Sensual OE includes responsiveness of the senses, esthetic appreciation, sensualism, and enjoyment at being the center of attention. Imaginational OE is the capacity to visualize events very well, inventiveness, creativity, fantasy, and poetic, dramatic or artistic abilities. Intellectual OE includes probing questions, analytical thinking, reflectiveness, problem solving, interest in abstraction and theory. Emotional OE involves intense connectedness with others, the ability to experience things deeply, fears of death, embarrassment and guilt, and emotional responsiveness. The overexcitabilities are described in more detail elsewhere (Piechowski, 1979; Silverman, 1993b).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the overexcitabilities in gifted populations. The earliest study reported in the literature was executed by Dabrowski (1972) in Warsaw in 1962. He reported that all of the gifted children and youth studied showed strong manifestations of the overexcitabilities. High energy levels in the gifted have been noted by several researchers and clinicians (Schetky, 1981; Whitmore, 1980). However, in published research to date, Psychomotor OE has not been shown to differentiate gifted from average development in children, adolescent or adult populations (Gallagher, 1985; Miller, Silverman, & Falk, in press; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984; Schiever, 1985). It must be integrated with other overexcitabilities before it becomes developmentally significant (Manzanero, 1985; Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985).

In the realm of Sensual OE, clinical data indicate that gifted individuals tend to have heightened sensual responses. Meckstroth (1991) suggests that gifted infants tend to react intensely to noise or wet diapers. Young gifted children often are fussy about sock seams and clothing of certain textures and require labels to be cut out of their clothes. Freed (1990) reports:

I have noted that children with IQs above 140 seem to have heightened sensory awareness. They taste more acutely, smell everything, observe more in their environment. They get so much information that they have trouble filtering it out. They are constantly bombarded by stimuli (p. 11).

However, here again the research has not yielded statistically significant differences in the Sensual domain between gifted children or adolescents and control groups (Gallagher, 1985; Rogers, 1986; Schiever, 1985). But a significant difference was reported in a study of gifted and unselected adults (Silverman & Ellsworth, 1980), in favor of the gifted sample.

In the areas of Imaginational, Intellectual and Emotional OEs, empirical studies support clinical observations. Gifted adolescents have been found to be consistently higher than their average peers in Imaginational OE (Gallagher, 1985; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984; Schiever, 1985). Artists surpassed the

intellectually gifted in this domain and equalled them in Intellectual OE (Piechowski, Silverman, & Falk, 1985). It is not surprising that all gifted samples studied scored high in Intellectual OE. One of the earliest signs of Intellectual OE is intellectual curiosity:

Almost all of the gifted children were perceived by their parents as asking "probing" rather than simple questions. At the age of 18 months, one child wondered, "What is air? How high does it go? Why doesn't it all float away?" A 3-year-old boy wanted to know how airplanes work and how people breathe. Another 3-year-old asked, "Will I still be me when I grow up?" Global and abstract issues occupied the minds of several of these youngsters. One child asked detailed, probing questions about politics, nuclear war, world peace, starvation, pollution, energy and so forth (Rogers & Silverman, 1988, p. 16).

The most important overexcitability in terms of developmental potential is Emotional OE. Gifted children, adolescents, and adults all exhibit high levels of Emotional OE (Gallagher, 1985; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984; Schiever, 1985; Silverman, 1983; Silverman & Ellsworth, 1980). Some examples are presented from clinical files:

P [age 7] is quite sensitive to the feelings of others and has a well developed sense of justice. She befriends the outcasts in her class. She comments to me if she feels her teacher is not treating children consistently. . . . When she was 3 she burst into tears because I told her a snapdragon had "died" after being trampled.

A [age 4] is an exceptionally gentle and kind boy. I have never seen him hit or push and, in fact, have had to teach him that it is not good to let his little brother hit him. . . . He is extremely loving (e.g., he sings, "I'm so glad when Daddy comes home" every day to me). He daily praises my wife and I for taking care of his baby brother. He has an intense love of games and frequently seeks out adults to play with him. When he plays with his friends, he will help them find the best move in a game and deliberately lose—all the while telling his friend how good *they* are at the game. . . . He is easily upset if he believes someone else has been treated unfairly (e.g., was sobbing because someone had taken his friend's toy—the friend was not crying).

These extraordinary levels of sensitivity and compassion do not disappear with maturity. A capacity for rich, intense emotions remain in the personality throughout the lifespan. Many adults, as well as children, who have deep feelings are called "too sensitive." It is important for counselors to recognize that emotional intensity comes with the territory of giftedness; it is not a sign of dysfunction.

Piechowski (1992) addresses the need to "find and nurture human potential for altruism, self-actualization, and high levels of moral development" (p. 181):

We need tools for identification and cultivation of such potentials. Dabrowski's theory of emotional development is such a tool; it is a theory of human transcendence toward a life inspired by universal ideals of human brotherhood, peace, service, and self-realization. The theory arose from his extensive clinical experience with gifted and talented children, adolescents, and adults. One of the basic characteristics of the gifted is their intensity and an expanded field of their subjective experience. The intensity, in particular, must be understood as a qualitatively distinct characteristic. It is not a matter of degree but of a different quality of experiencing: vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding—a way of being quiveringly alive (p. 181).

A Theoretical Framework for Counseling

Dabrowski's Theory provides an excellent framework for counseling gifted adolescents and adults. Through this lens, intense inner conflicts can be seen as an integral part of the process of development rather than as pathology. Crises are reframed as the dissolution of old ways of being in the world and an opportunity for latent higher level values to emerge.

Perfectionism, a regular companion of giftedness (Hollingworth, 1926; Kerr, 1991; Manaster & Powell, 1983; Robinson & Noble, 1991; Roedell, 1984; Whitmore, 1980), can be seen as a tool for self-development. It manifests as dissatisfaction with what is and a yearning to become what one ought to be. There is an inner knowing that there is more to life than the mundane, and a desire to create meaning by doing the best one is capable of doing. Within the context of Dabrowski's Theory, perfectionism is viewed as an early form of the drive toward self-perfection, to be valued and nurtured (Silverman, 1990a).

The excruciating sensitivity of the gifted can be understood as the roots of compassion in adult life. Empathic individuals fight for human rights because they can feel other people's pain. The intensity of the gifted can be appreciated as the basis for passion and commitment in adult life. It takes passion to change the world (Kerr, 1985). The core personality characteristics of the gifted are captured within Dabrowski's theory and the individual is seen as whole instead of damaged.

Ogburn Colangelo (1989) has provided the most complete description of the application of Dabrowski's theory in counseling a gifted student, with tapescripts of actual counseling sessions and commentary about how the theoretical perspective has informed the counseling process. The theory tells the counselor what deserves attention in the therapeutic interchange; the counselor is then able to support those values, attitudes, emotions and behaviors that foster personal growth. Dabrowski's (1970) emphasis on the emotional rather than intellectual function leads the counselor

to probe deeply into the feelings of the client. The counselor is guided by the theory in identifying the client's strengths. In the case described, the student wants to be a singer/song writer, while her parents want her to prepare for a more financially secure future.

"The counselor validates both sides of the conflict because (consistent with Dabrowski's theory) wanting to make those we love happy and ascertaining our own intrinsic values are both multilevel behaviors" (Ogburn Colangelo, 1989, p. 90). The counselor helps the student recognize that her conflict is healthy, since both desires are healthy. She also helps the student acknowledge her strengths: her sense of responsibility to her family, her awareness of her own talents, and her willingness to determine her own future. At no time does the counselor dismiss the negative consequences the student might face by following her own path instead of the one designed by her parents, nor does she attempt to solve the problem for the student. Instead, she listens, helps the student sort out the problem by herself, and gives her confidence in her strengths and ability to cope with the situation. The counselor acts as a nourisher of the student's emotional development.

Exposure to Dabrowski's theory, whether in the context of counseling sessions or in group discussions in a classroom, helps gifted students understand and accept themselves. When inner conflicts are perceived as developmentally healthy, resistance melts, and new sources of energy are mobilized for coping with difficult periods. Dabrowski's theory also helps make sense of the discrepancy between research on social adjustment of the gifted and clinical experience with this population.

Socialization vs Social Development

Socialization of the gifted has been a major concern since the earliest writings in the field. It was feared that brilliant children were doomed to live in social isolation and alienation.

A passion for perfection will make its subject solitary as nothing else can. At every step he leaves a group behind. And, when, at last, he reaches the goal, alas! where are his early comrades? (Alger, 1867, p. 144).

The genius is constantly forced to solitude, for he early learns from experience that his kind can expect no reciprocation of their generous feelings. . . . (Hirsch, 1931, p. 303).

Socialization continues to receive more attention than this group's self-concept, academic progress or inner development. All provisions for gifted students—ability grouping, acceleration, pull-out programs, full day programs, special schools, homeschooling—are held suspect on the grounds that they will interfere with children's social adjustment. Ironically, the immense amount of research that has accumulated over the last 70 years indicates that gifted children tend to enjoy greater popularity, greater social competence, more

mature social relations, earlier psychological maturity, and fewer indications of psychological problems than their less gifted peers (Hollingworth, 1931; Janos & Robinson, 1985; Monks & Ferguson, 1983; Olszewski-Kubilius, Kulieke, & Krasney, 1988; Purkey, 1966; Robinson & Noble, 1991; Silverman, 1993c; Terman, 1925; Wright, 1990). In a comprehensive review of the literature, Robinson and Noble (1991) report:

Perusal of a large group of studies of preadolescent children revealed [that] . . . as a group, gifted children were seen as more trustworthy, honest, socially competent, assured and comfortable with self, courteous, cooperative, stable, and humorous, while they were also seen as showing diminished tendencies to boast, to engage in delinquent activity, to aggress or withdraw, to be domineering, and so on (p. 62).

Many of these studies were conducted with students who were enrolled in special classes or accelerated. Clearly, then, gifted children's socialization does not suffer when special provisions are made for their learning needs.

Social development of the gifted appears paradoxical. Research unequivocally indicates that gifted children have excellent social adjustment; however, clinical experience reveals that many of these well-adjusted young people suffer great loneliness and endure inner conflicts between their desire to fit in and their ideals (Silverman, 1993c). Their vulnerability is not reflected in the research. The paradox can be resolved with the assistance of Dabrowski's theory. The majority of studies address the question of how well gifted children relate to other students—how well they adapt to group norms, which is a Level II concern. Gifted students, particularly girls, frequently have excellent social skills, which may be practiced at the expense of their inner lives (Silverman, 1993c). Young people who are highly adapted may be beginning the process of personality transformation—striving to attain inner ideals, which is a Level III concern. Such students may adopt a happy-go-lucky facade with classmates, while experiencing intense inner conflict and self-doubt.

We are not "normal" and we know it; it can be fun sometimes but not funny always. We tend to be much more sensitive than other people. Multiple meanings, innuendos, and self-consciousness plague us. Intensive self-analysis, self-criticism, and the inability to recognize that we have limits make us despondent. In fact, most times our self-searching leaves us more discombobulated than we were at the outset (American Association for Gifted Children, 1978, p. 9).

The lack of precision in describing the emotional realm carries over into the social realm of experience. Terms such as *socialization* and *social development* are used interchangeably in the gifted education literature, but these actually may be very different concepts.

Socialization is defined as adapting to the common needs of the social group (Webster, 1979, p. 1723) or acquiring "the beliefs, behaviors, and values deemed significant and appropriate by other members of society" (Shaffer, 1988, p. 2). Gifted children do have the inclination to adapt to the group, but at what price? If one works very hard at fitting in with others, especially when one feels very different from others, self-alienation can result. In their desperation to belong, many "well-adjusted" gifted youth and adults have given up or lost touch with vital parts of themselves.

Social development is a much broader concept than socialization; it may be thought of as awareness of socially acceptable behavior, enjoyment of other people, concern for humanity and the development of mutually rewarding relationships with a few kindred spirits. Lasting friendships are based on mutual interests and values, not on age. Self-acceptance is a related goal, as people who like themselves are more capable of liking others. When framed in this way, social development becomes a precursor to self-actualization, whereas socialization is merely the desire to conform, which may inhibit self-actualization. In Dabrowskian terms, socialization would be a Level II goal, while social development would be a multilevel goal. If the aim for gifted children is social development rather than socialization, they need to be provided with true peers who are their intellectual equals, a program of humanitarian studies to enhance their awareness of global interdependence, and counseling for greater understanding, acceptance and appreciation of self and others.

Conclusion

The principal objective of a developmental counseling program is the full development of the Self so that it can express its uniqueness for the greater good. The aim is for gifted children "to live lives deeply imbued with immutable values, to have the wisdom to choose the path of integrity, the compassion to choose the path of service, and the moral courage to become their best selves in the face of a world that often settles for less" (Silverman, 1993a, p. 52).

Goals of counseling

- moral courage
- authenticity
- compassion
- altruism
- reflective judgment
- strong sense of self-efficacy
- responsibility
- self-actualization
- commitment to goals
- contribution to society
- sense of wonder

- global awareness
 - integrity
 - devotion to high ideals
 - ethical behavior
 - high state of moral development
 - creativity
 - advanced emotional development
 - autonomy
 - wisdom
- (Silverman, 1993a, p. 53).

Leadership often results from this type of self-development, a kind of leadership that requires more than just high intelligence. Leaders with higher level emotional development are people of integrity and responsibility, who combine high intelligence with deep feelings of emotional connectedness with others. Many gifted children have the developmental potential—the intellectual, emotional and imaginal overexcitabilities—to become this type of humanitarian leader (Dabrowski, 1972; Piechowski, 1991). Counseling programs and educational philosophies that attempt to get gifted children to fit in better with age peers are misguided and short-sighted. To serve humanity in the long run, a concerted effort should be made to identify gifted children as early as possible, educate them with others of similar developmental potential, and provide them with developmental counseling so that their potential for cognitive, emotional and moral leadership can be actualized.

Counseling is essential, because the journey to discovering that which is finest in oneself is precarious, and those who embark upon this journey sometimes falter and lose their way. Higher level development begins with an intense awareness of the gap between where one is now and where it is possible to be. It takes great personal courage to live in that gap and try to close it. The desire for self-perfection is painful and not everyone is willing to experience that pain. This is what separates the person of high moral commitment in adult life from the apathetic person who is comfortable with the way things are or adapted to the limitations that currently exist in oneself and the world. The counselor's role is not to protect individuals from their pain, but to reassure them that they have enough inner strength to use that pain in the service of their development.

Emotional development is clearly as important as cognitive development and deserves equal consideration in educating the gifted. Education should not be limited to preparing students to enter the work force. Gifted children need their parents, teachers and counselors to nurture their emotions as well. Personal sensitivity is the root of compassion; perfectionism compels people to strive toward excellence and moral integrity; intensity gives rise to the willingness to fight for justice in adult life. These qualities are not to be "cured"; they are to be celebrated as signs of potential for moral courage, responsibility and humanitarian values. Our gifted children may be leading the world toward a more

humane society, one in which people respect and care about each other, and dedicate their lives to healing the suffering on this planet.

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