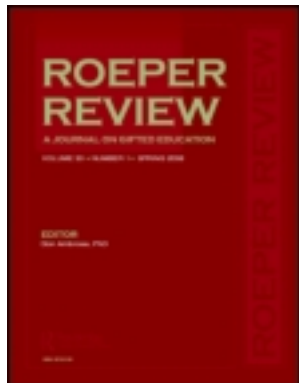


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A framework for understanding the social and emotional development of gifted and talented adolescents

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and scientific inquiry have no choice but to be at once bold and humble. Neither would be warranted if charting new vistas were not part and parcel of being human; and neither is authentic, true to itself, if ever taken to be more than temporally conclusive. But the practicality of philosophy (and by extension science) has been usefully depicted as a "game" with real consequences. George Newsome (Newsome, 1970), notes that the activity of philosophy is like a game, which when played with the subject matter of itself, or with that of other disciplines, the language and the logic of the discipline are revised.

The meticulously phrased assertions comprising the three-fold propositional thesis of the present essay, are in fact intended as a purposeful "revision" in the language and logic of giftedness and of guidance at selected junctures. With respect to the function of guidance and counseling with gifted youth, the argument of centrality constitutes a revision in what has been conventionally practiced. And the endeavor, both as explicitly postulated and implicitly inferred, in regard to giftedness and talent evocation is intended to manifest the language and logic of the original conception and practice.

The summary challenge with which this essay must close, lies in yet further aspects of the relationship between theory and practice. Both the certainty of the specific course of the history of the movement in behalf of gifted youth, and the temporal lag between what we believe we know, and what we do, appear to be at stake. Two questions suggesting the nature of the opportunity and the obligation which face the field of Differential Education for the Gifted in the foreseeable future are submitted as relevant to the closing of the present reflective piece.

On one hand, there is the question of alternative directions. Will we through whatever dynamic currently at play — forced economies and budgetary reductions, scholarly analysis from outside the field, the sheer weight of critical inquiry among an enlightened citizenry now looking more sharply at all facets of public education — change course at all from the present historic misdirection and deflection in the advancement of the scientific and theoretic foundations of the field; or is there instead and in fact now in progress a conceptual revolution, and an attending practice, which represent a new and authentic order of things, a new paradigm that is of giftedness and of gifted education, such that conceptual

change would be improper?

On the other hand, given the happier instance of a return to the focal intellectual clarity of the original movement, and the solid empirical foundations to which this commanding advance in the history of educational inquiry soon led, methodological progress occasioning not rejection but refinement, in behalf of the generically gifted, what of the time lag to be involved in the turnaround of idea and predilection, and institutional readjustment in accordance therewith? But lest it appear that in this analysis it is men and women who are culpable, rather than the relatively inchoate and frequently indeterminable movements in the sociology of knowledge, the writer's respect for his colleagues now in the forefront of leadership suggests that many among them could quite as aptly lead in the forward thrust of science and theory and professional practice, given their own change in persuasion, as with the current immediacy and activity and product orientation which have beset us.

On the resolution of these two inquiries then, it is here submitted, hangs in balance the division between the luxury of the present indulgence which we do not deserve and cannot afford; and the advancement of the science and theory of DEG which are both feasible and deserved in behalf of the gifted persons who in small proportions are scattered among the species in every nation, in every ethnic concentration and at every socioeconomic level, who stand fair to gain from the disciplined and criterially referenced efforts, and in turn to reward these initiatives through all manner of benefits to the welfare of the human species.

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A Framework for Understanding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted and Talented Adolescents

Thomas M. Buescher

Does the process of adolescence produce different reactions and repercussions among gifted and talented adolescents than their normal peers? Identifying the origins of social and emotional concerns among these unique adolescents is the first step in designing an effective counseling program. This article probes patterns of adolescent development believed to exist among both normal and gifted students, and previews issues rising from current clinical and research investigations that need to become the basis for understanding and guiding both the educational and psychosocial growth of highly talented adolescents

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When adolescence and exceptional ability meet in a young person, the results delight, confound, and stretch the resources of parents, teachers, and adolescents alike. Gifted adolescents, like all adolescents, experience a wide range of physiological, social, and emotional changes that mark their passage from childhood to young adulthood. In many ways, though, being both gifted and adolescent means learning to understand and cope with a unique set of developmental circumstances that can reach beyond the normal dimensions of adolescence.

Young adolescents, those between the age of eleven and fifteen, seem to be particularly vulnerable to the confusion and misinterpretation precipitated by their outstanding abilities. While their talents might provide them with recognition and stature beyond that of their more normal peers, they can at the same time experience real distance and separation from them. In the most extreme cases, some gifted young adolescents become dissatisfied with their own accomplishments, abandon their remarkable abilities, and struggle through an anxious, seemingly endless adolescence.

Counseling gifted adolescents well means first untangling a complex knot of developmental issues, psychosocial mechanisms, and long-standing relationship questions that characterize the adolescent passage. Only when social and emotional concerns have been uncovered can an understanding adult direct the most appropriate educational and career guidance efforts on behalf of a gifted adolescent.

This article will examine the origins of those social and emotional issues that concern not only counselors, parents, and secondary teachers, but gifted adolescents themselves. It will review current understandings about the nature of adolescence, probe critical dynamics of giftedness that unfold during adolescence, and suggest new directions for research that can shed a more focused light on the best approaches for counseling highly talented adolescents.

Why Adolescence? Some History

To every adult who has retained memories of his or her adolescence, to every parent who now shares a household with an adolescent or two, and to every young person who struggles with

the stresses and strains of growing up, one question recurs: why adolescence? Is there any sound reason for this developmental stage that stretches almost endlessly from age ten or eleven until twenty-four? What purpose does adolescence serve?

It is wise to separate the biological event of puberty from the psychosocial process of adolescence that unfolds afterwards. Human beings do need to experience the onset of puberty if they are to fully develop the biological capacity to reproduce. Adolescence, on the other hand, is a culturally induced and supported psychosocial process. It serves an important social function, but it is very much a product of the society in which it occurs. Witness the fact that in some primitive cultures the "adolescent passage" could occur in three to fourteen days, marking the onset of puberty and heralding the entrance of the youngster into the circle of male or female adults. In more complex societies, however, where adult socialization and career preparation is more involved, adolescence expands to fit the circumscribed time. Most developmentalists today (GAP, 1975; Ausubel, Montemayor, and Svajian, 1977) agree that despite the increasingly earlier ages for the onset of puberty, adolescence itself is not fully resolved until the mid-twenties, a period of nearly fourteen years.

Given the fact that adolescence is culturally linked, what important goals does it serve? The history of psychology seems quite full with theories of adolescence, and it would be useful to note and weigh these in their disagreement before probing the relationship between adolescence and giftedness today.

Freud has generally been credited with inventing or at least recognizing adolescence as a critical life stage; but given the context of his psychosexual theory, his primary focus was on the burgeoning problems linked to evolving sexual prowess, guilt, and tensions prior to adulthood. Fortunately, the neo-Freudians, Horney and Erikson in particular, rescued adolescence from the purely sexual identity area by introducing a key concept for understanding the adolescent process: identity. Erikson's inclusion of adolescence as one of his stages or "ages" of life devoted to clarifying the young person's true identity was a crucial step. He argued that adolescents' resources were focused almost exclusively on discovering how they were uniquely different from their families and friends. The goal of adolescence was to see oneself as separate from yet equal

to the family of origin.

Peter Blos (1965, 1979), one of the most preeminent of the post neo-Freudians, and a psychiatrist keenly interested in the adolescent passage, shifted the attention from the process of seeking one's identity to the mechanisms of rebellion and differentiation employed to secure those goals. In his able hands, adolescence could be seen as a somewhat conflictual epoch where such strategies as rebellion, acting out, and even social maladjustment served important phase-specific ends. The key role of adults, according to Blos, was to soften the edge of the conflicts inherent in adolescence and facilitate the gradual attainment of responsible adulthood.

Developmental psychologists like Marcia (1966) refocused the adolescent process from a task of separation to one of "creation," emphasizing identity formation as key in adolescence. Marcia proposed that every adolescent had the opportunity to pass through four distinct stages in achieving an adult identity, noting that internal conflicts (crises) were instrumental in forging the final shape of that identity.

More recently, two psychologists have underscored the need to view adolescence not only as a process of "differentiation" (seeing oneself as distinct from both the family of origin and the peer group), but also as an important social task of "integration," that is, learning to belong and fit into the broad context of an adult world.

David Elkind (1984), examining the critical role of reflective thinking in early adolescence, has argued that the pressing need for attaining an identity today has overtaken the earlier interest in rebellion and conflict as a developmental focus. His articulate descriptions of an adolescent's "patchwork Self" and the resulting complications in psychosocial adjustment and life goal setting are fertile areas for clinical investigation.

Manaster and Powell (1983) proposed an equally intriguing framework for adolescence that is built on the social task of "belonging" and learning how to "fit in" and accommodate one's own needs with those of others. They argue that this particular developmental issue is the root cause of most serious maladjustment and relationship difficulties among gifted and nongifted adolescents alike.

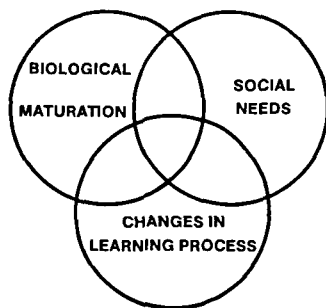
In summary, it is helpful to remember that adolescence is decidedly a psychosocial process governed by shifting cultural parameters. It is the chameleon-like aspect of the changing

social context, as described by Michael Rutter (1980), that precludes tying down the realities of the adolescent passage. Not only does the adolescent change, but so also does his or her family, school, community, and national context. One thing is clear: adolescence is a lengthy developmental epoch in which young persons learn not only how to be different from others, but just as importantly, how to fully belong to the society that surrounds them.

A Systems Perspective of Adolescence

Adolescence can best be viewed as a complex system of development in which three major spheres of change interact with increasing potency (see Figure 1). Given the somewhat volatile nature of the process, it is easy to see why adolescence presents enough challenge to any youngster without adding into the mixture critical features like exceptional ability, uniquely creative perspectives, or idiosyncratic ways of learning or behaving that are characteristic of the gifted!

Figure 1
Spheres of Change in the Adolescent System



Beginning with the early onset of puberty, a series of three major changes occur within every adolescent: hormonally-linked biological maturation; shifts in psychosocial demands away from the family of origin; and attainment of new ways of thinking and learning. Since these three areas constitute major changes in the previous homeostasis of the adolescent, it is quite useful to view them as the main stage upon which later development unfolds. While the plot is inevitable, it is the individual "twists" in the story that cause excitement for the young and grey hairs for their elders!

Changes in the Body and Its Image

Developmental psychologists and pediatricians have documented the powerful role the onset of

puberty plays in setting the tone and course of adolescence. Tanner (1972) has described the influence of increased hormonal activity during and after pubertal onset not only on physical growth and sexual maturation, but also on accompanying psychosocial developments. More recently, Brooks-Gunn and Petersen (1984) have collected the intensive investigations of researchers who are examining in great detail the cognitive and social repercussions of puberty in adolescent girls. These studies underscore an important facet of the biological roots of adolescence, namely, that there is a major disruption in the young person's equilibrium at all levels across the system. This acknowledgement of the powerful role hormones play in setting the course of adolescence in every youngster is critical to understand if one is attempting to help adolescents make sense out of the social and emotional changes occurring within them.

The characteristic "growth spurt" that follows on the heels of pubertal onset is a good case in point. Changes in young adolescents' height, weight, coordination, physique, and secondary sex traits not only alter their perceptions of how attractive or "grown up" they are, but also create varying degrees of stress about changing self images and their acceptability by particular friends or the peer group at school. Many young people sense for the first time during puberty that their bodies have taken on "lives of their own" — acting and reacting in concert with unseen, unfelt hormonal commands that they themselves cannot control. It is not surprising that young adolescents, particularly girls, begin to experience lowered self-esteem following puberty. An adolescent's body can change so many ways in four years or less that emotions surrounding change and acceptance continually fluctuate. This creates a pervasive sense of unpredictability: "If I cannot predict what my body is going to do, look like, or respond to from day to day, how can I plan or control anything?" While perhaps overstated, that perception of ceaseless change in one's body sets the tone for the other two areas active during adolescence: relationships and modes of learning.

Changes in Relationships

Despite the intensity of physiological changes in the early stages of adolescence, most of the prominent needs of an adolescent are more social in nature. Table 1 summarizes particular areas of growth and support sought by these youngsters. Clearly, the main focus is on the working out of new

Table 1. Prominent Needs of Most Adolescents

1. Opportunities to experience real independence.
2. Concrete experiences of successful self-direction.
3. A variety of adult and leadership models to emulate.
4. Ability to cope while building real life skills.
5. Successful avenues for defining oneself beyond the options suggested by adults.
6. A desire to be taken seriously by peers and adults.
7. Predictable space where one can safely explore acceptance and rejection by peers.
8. A factual basis for understanding the process of adolescence.

patterns of acceptance and relationship between adults and peers.

Shifts in the locus of psychosocial demands characterize the adolescent passage. Parents and educators are particularly familiar with the growing narcissism (self-centeredness) that creeps into adolescent relationships. In the race to finally differentiate themselves, adolescents quickly displace family ties, relationships, and priorities in order to guarantee that their own needs are gratified first. Elkind (1984) has noted that this final return to the issues surrounding egocentrism (first resolved in early childhood) is a source of conflict for the entire family. The adolescent strives to be "disconnected" from the system, yet desires to remain attached to benefit from the altruistic supports inherent there. Recent research by Montemayor (1982, 1983, 1984), Cooper and Grotevant (1985), and Hauser et al. (1985) has empirically verified the nature of shifting patterns of attachment, loss, and conflict throughout adolescence. All have remarked on the intense interplay between power, love, and intimacy that occurs during the adolescent epoch.

Blos (1979) argued that the adolescent's determination to remain attached yet separated provided the psychic fuel for rampant experimentation with relationships inside the family as well as among the peer group and wider social context. Toying with friendships, playing one's affiliation needs off of several competing "suitsors," or trying on a variety of identities among both peers and adults are each modes of experimentation. But the stakes in these relationship games can be very high, particularly when young

persons might already perceive themselves as different or even unattractive. The picture is clouded further by the normal anxiety, irritability, and moodiness that can rear its head due to the hormonal pressures of puberty.

Despite these hazards, adolescents plunge forward into the shifting sands of relationships within the peer group. By age fourteen or fifteen, it is the peer group and not the family that is pivotal for decision making and support in day to day life. The need to belong to a particular group that the adolescent sees as necessary and desirable can outweigh most previous expectations about achievement, independence, and self-determination fostered by the family. Often, conflict over these issues is unavoidable. That is when one of the adolescent's keenest liabilities surfaces: the inability to be self-critical. Lack of perspective and objectivity creates major struggles when a young person feels victimized by friends or family. No amount of factual, sensitive feedback can convince an adolescent that he or she also has had a hand in creating an uncomfortable social situation. The preference is to see others as always being in control, and oneself as weak and powerless, although in reality the adolescent may have the most coercive control of all.

Changes in Thinking and Learning

It is somewhat ironic that young adolescents' inability to see themselves in a self-critical way becomes a vulnerability just at the time when they are beginning to think in a more reflective, efficient manner. Elkind (1984) has termed this evolving cognitive ability "thinking in a new key," an idea that captures well an earlier concept developed by Piaget: formal operational thinking. Briefly stated, youngsters gain the ability at this age to see the world in abstract terms, to think in a self-consciously deductive manner, and to be able to create hierarchical models to accommodate novel experiences.

Despite the evolution of these major gains in cognitive ability in adolescence, later learning is still built in large part on previous skills, successes, and accomplishments. Consequently, young adolescents who have been achieving well and who have been rewarded for doing so in earlier grades at school can be predisposed for a difficult problem, "negative acceleration." For students in a middle school or high school program, the experience of negative acceleration (the apparent "slowing down" of cognitive acumen) is characterized by a sense of taking more time

and increased effort to master what seem to be "smaller," though certainly more complex, concepts or skills (Buescher & Higham, 1984). For a bright student who has seldom needed to study, or practice methodical language learning skills, or organize time carefully, a course like advanced biology, chemistry, Latin, or French can be immediately challenging and therefore threatening to an already unstable self image in adolescence.

Clinical data have shown that the frustrations produced by experiences of negative acceleration can precipitate reluctance in a talented adolescent to engage in more challenging learning situations where immediate success is not "guaranteed" (Foster, 1984). It is not surprising that adolescents with particular academic or artistic talents seek to specialize early in certain areas of study where they already possess sufficient expertise to perform as an "expert" (like computer programming, mathematics, or drawing) and avoid other areas of development that might produce initial failure (statistics, computer modeling, and sculpture). Effective, proactive counseling at both school and home when coupled with appropriately designed coursework can be a potent combination for stemming the frustrations that accompany negative acceleration in adolescence.

One final stress point associated with "thinking in a new key" is the typical adolescent disenchantment with the organizational structures of middle school and high school. Once again, the dynamics of differentiation and integration interact to kick against the tightened goad of required courses, anonymous counseling, arbitrary prerequisites, and a general lack of appropriate levels of instruction for more capable students. Adolescents' impatience with the structures of secondary schooling is often defused by isolated attempts at closure and independence: choosing inappropriate elective coursework; constructing one's own course of study in high school; taking too many courses in a given term; or selecting courses that offer little challenge but promise easy high grades (Delisle, 1985). On the other hand, some adolescents become more engrossed with issues of school governance, student politics, and campaigns to reorganize programs of study. Regardless of the alternatives enacted, bright adolescents view secondary schooling with a wary eye, and for many, it is clearly a stressful ordeal of alienation, isolation, and missed opportunities.

Before concluding this first section, it is important to point out the vigorous

research investigations that have been conducted during the last ten years to reshape and clarify the understanding we have of the adolescent passage. "Normal" adolescence has been much more closely scrutinized due to renewed interest among psychologists, educators, pediatricians, and policy makers. Pioneering work by Daniel Offer (1975, 1981), Czikeszentimihalyi and Larson (1984), Hill (1980), Grotevant and Cooper (1983), and Youniss and Smollar (1985) has emphasized that there are widely differing paths accessible to adolescents and their families toward adulthood. More recently, investigators working with highly gifted adolescents (Buescher, 1984; Pollins, 1983; Piechowski and Colangelo, 1984; Seeley, 1984; and VanTassel Baska, 1984) have embarked on similar studies to probe the depth and diversity of the adolescent experience among this group. The next section of this article explores patterns of adjustment and issues implied by these studies, underscoring as much as possible the prominent social and emotional concerns inherent in counseling gifted and talented adolescents.

Dynamics of Giftedness in Adolescence

Social and emotional concerns about gifted and talented adolescents are rooted in developmental changes, but they do not end there. Having described the framework upon which adolescence is built, the prominent steps in achieving social maturity, and the major stress points calling for coping and adjustment, it is important to turn to the dynamics of giftedness that operate among these young people.

One might view the six issues described below (see Table 2) as initial "check-up points" for assessing the relative "health" of talented adolescents, particularly those seeking support and counsel from educators, counselors, and parents. While all six issues are seldom operating together at any one moment, they do represent dimensions of the dynamics experienced by gifted youngsters after the age of eleven.

1. Who Says I Am Gifted?

One primary issue about recognized ability or talent that surfaces during adolescence is the matter of recognition and ownership. Any recurring doubts about the reality of talent, its depth, and its acceptability among peers and adults are likely to gain added impact during early adolescence. The power of peer pressure and con-

Table 2. Dynamic Issues of Giftedness During Adolescence

1. Ownership:	Who says I am gifted anyhow?
2. Dissonance:	Recurrent tension between my performance and my own expectations.
3. Risk-Taking:	Should I be taking new risks or seeking secure situations?
4. Others' Expectations:	Being pushed by others' expectations, being pulled by my own needs.
5. Impatience:	I have to know the answer right now!
6. Identity:	What counts is who I am now.

formity coupled with a young person's wavering sense of being predictable or intact can easily lead to denial of an already recognized ability. The conflict, whether mild or intense, must be resolved by gaining a more mature sense of ownership and responsibility for the recognized talent. For an adolescent, that means owning the fact that talent and ability exist beyond the recognition of parents or others whom the youngster would expect to be supportive. "Who says I am gifted?" is a question the young person must now be able to answer clearly for himself or herself.

2. Tension Between One's Performance and Expectations

Gifted and talented adolescents, by their own admission, are prone to be perfectionists. Typically, this propensity to expect more than one can actually deliver appears to be a common carry over trait from middle childhood. Parents, for example, lament that their eight-year-old daughter becomes highly frustrated when her own illustrations for a new story do not measure up to her own image of what they ought to be. Such problems become compounded during adolescence. Strained by the shifting tides of self-concept, physical maturation, and peer judgement, it is not uncommon for gifted adolescents to experience real dissonance between what they do and how well they think they should have done. The issue, of course, is the lack of awareness of the limitations of their own growing talents as they strive to increase the quality of their performances. Adults need to be sensitive to the vulnerability this dissonance creates in an adolescent. They must move deliberately to confront those adults who would challenge the quality of a product or performance without first probing the adolescent's awareness of the impracticality of his or her own expectations. Talented young people do not need to be overtly criticized by insensitive teachers or tutors who cannot recognize

that adolescents mark themselves even more severely than they do.

3. Should I Be Taking Risks?

It is ironic that the earlier risk-taking behaviors which often mark younger gifted children become so reclusive in adolescence when normal adolescents increasingly engage in risky activities. What prompts the seeking of a more secure, predictable lifespace during adolescence by talented young people?

Several reasons seem to drive the resolution of this issue. First, gifted adolescents are more keenly aware of the repercussions of certain activities (Seeley, 1984). They know that antisocial or delinquent acts that often encompass the risk-taking repertoire of normal adolescents can have long lasting harmful consequences. Second, they have learned to carefully check out the advantages and disadvantages of certain activities or opportunities. Unfortunately, their agility at this may too quickly cause them to reject a somewhat "risky" activity (an Honors or AP level course) where high success is less predictable before adequately weighing all possibilities.

Finally, talented adolescents enjoy being in control of as many aspects of their lifespace as possible. Challenging new friendships, experimental or complicated educational opportunities, or regional competition may seem too far removed from their immediate spheres of influence and security. In all three cases, sensitive support from adults is absolutely essential to stretch a young person's goals and resources to match his or her potential.

4. The Push and Pull of Competing Expectations

Adolescents with exceptional abilities are always prone to criticism, direction, and support from others. Parents, siblings, friends, relatives, and teachers all appear eager to add their expectations to a young person's own intentions and goals. As might be

expected, these aspirations for highly capable young people often compete, tugging at their own dreams and plans for career choices and lifestyles. Delisle (1985) has candidly discussed the matter, pointing out that the "pull" of an adolescent's own expectations must swim against the strong current of incredible odds posed by the "push" of others' desires. The situation is complicated by the multiple options available to a highly talented youngster — more talent, more expectations, more outside interference. This dilemma no doubt feeds into the final two issues described below: low tolerance for ambiguity, and the quest for an immediate identity.

5. Low Tolerance for Ambiguity

Like other adolescents in general, gifted and talented students are an impatient group. This predisposition for impulsive decision making coupled with an exceptional talent makes them intolerant of ambiguous, unresolved situations. Edward de Bono's characterization of bright students' vulnerability to the so called "intelligence trap" appears to be quite pronounced in these adolescents. Their impatience with a lack of clear-cut answers, options, or decisions drives them to seek answers where none exist. This seems most prominent in terms of personal relationships and the choice of career paths. They expect ready acceptance and resolution of even the most complex problems. Their anger and disappointment when the hasty resolution falls flat is fierce and bitter. Only compassionate, caring adults can temper this dynamic in adolescence.

6. The Quest for an Immediate Identity

As described earlier in this article, one of the key historical goals of adolescence has been the quest for and resolution of one's own identity. Elkind and others have focused particularly on present-day adolescents' tendency to employ so called "patchwork selves" to reach a premature sense of identity as a means of coping with society's pressure to reach an earlier adulthood. Clinical data gleaned from talented adolescents has revealed a similar pattern (Delisle, 1985; Buescher and Higham, 1984, 1985). Apparently, the weight of competing expectations and the inability to tolerate ambiguity feed increasingly earlier attempts to reach identity formation. The problem this poses for gifted adolescents is acute: as they reach for premature career choices to short cut the normal identity resolution process, they run the real risk of closing important doors to opportunities critical to reaching their full poten-

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tial. For example, a young person who firmly decides at age thirteen to become an engineer may never fully develop aspects of her talent that stretch beyond the confining preparation of an engineer. Similar narrowing of interests among talented students in arts and letters can actually preclude them from the satisfying, integrated careers and relationships that best reflect their outstanding abilities. In the final analysis, however, the real concern must be the stress early identity foreclosure brings to the later stages of adolescent development and early adulthood.

Conclusion: Probing the Framework of Adolescence

Adolescence is a complex stage upon which talent development is intensely played out before adulthood. The systems perspective that has formed the framework of this present discussion of the adolescent passage for gifted and talented students needs much further probing and analysis. The social and emotional concerns identified represent only the tip of a more complex investigation that is presently incomplete.

For the past two years, this author and Sharon Higham (at The Johns Hopkins University) have been carefully interviewing, studying, and analyzing information gathered from groups of young adolescents who participate in the regional Talent Searches conducted by these two university programs. The initial line of investigation (Buescher and Higham, 1984) was to determine to what degree highly talented adolescents seek to adjust to their remarkable abilities in terms of their internal compensation and the external demands posed by families, peers, and schools. More recently, attention has been given to the systematic documentation of the use of various coping strategies among representative groups of adolescents, and the degree of success these mechanisms allow (Buescher and Higham, 1985). The most important question, however, will be the most difficult to answer: what is the "cost" of being a gifted adolescent and seeking to adjust and cope in this manner? It will take the combined insight of researchers and the clinical sensitivity of counselors and parents to fully understand the dimensions of the social and emotional concerns of these talented young people.

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The Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids: Responding to Special Needs

Judy Galbraith

This article examines "The Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids," as identified through surveys and interviews with over 400 gifted students from six states They ranged in age from 7 to 18 and there were nearly equal numbers of girls and boys The purpose of this research was to provide information about the social/emotional concerns of gifted and talented youth at school, home and with peers

The information presented here is written from the students' point of view Suggestions for responding to their "Eight Great Gripes" are proactive in nature

In better understanding social and emotional concerns, as expressed by gifted children themselves, it is hoped that parents and educators will be better able to foster healthy attitudes and behaviors among the gifted

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"Finally someone is asking us what we think about all this gifted stuff. What took you so long?"
11 year old girl

Interviews with "Gifted Kids Survival" centered on students' social and emotional experiences at school, home and with peers. Respondents were asked to identify, rank order and discuss difficulties — some related to giftedness and others of a general nature. This article presents an

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