

The 1994 Keystone Colorado Dabrowski retreat.

William Tillier

The Institute for the Study of Advanced Development (ISAD) organized a meeting in Keystone in 1994, chaired by Sharon Lind, to discuss and elaborate on issues that had occurred over the years concerning Dabrowski's original presentation of the theory and subsequent interpretations presented at meetings in the 1980s and early '90s. To address these issues, invitations were issued to Michael Piechowski, Linda Silverman, Frank Falk, Nancy Miller, and Cheryl Ackerman (add a number of their students) and the "Edmonton group" – Marlene Rankel, Leendert (Leo) Mos, Bill Hague, Rose Marie Hague, Dexter Amend, and me, Bill Tillier. Norbert Duda, a student of Dabrowski from Laval, Quebec, the individual who pointed out many of these issues over the years at various meetings, was also there.

The meeting got off to a rocky start from the beginning. Marlene and I brought the original books with us and placed them on the desk. Someone asked what they were, and we told them. Some of the students were quite shocked as they apparently had been told that Michael had translated the only materials available in English and Dabrowski had not written anything in English. I looked at Linda and said, "But I sent all of these to you as photocopies," and she denied receiving them. Now, this also didn't make any sense to us because these books had been referenced at times in some of the material that was given out at conferences in the past, but apparently, these were not noticed. This created an immediate confrontation – why had the students not received the original materials?

Over the course of the meeting, several other issues pertaining to the theory were discussed. Why were there no female exemplars? Discussion of the "levels of emotional development." Why were the "two versions?" Why were two titles – "Dabrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and The Theory of Positive Disintegration? The role of the theory in gifted education. Also, issues popped up, for example, Dabrowski's view of homosexuality and the credibility of gifted education in general.

Michael got up and gave a short presentation on the dynamisms where he showed his graph and declared that if he had not done this work, the theory would not have included dynamisms at all.

Frank and Nancy expressed their surprise and disappointment at the problems with the levels. Frank said, "So I have to go back and start again at level one?"

There was a panel where the original students from Edmonton talked about their impressions of Dr. Dabrowski.

On the last day of the meeting, Linda suggested that we settle the title issue by taking a vote, and we did. The group endorsed using the original title, and Linda was visibly upset.

It was decided that we should meet every two years to discuss ongoing issues and alternate between Canada and the United States. I took on having the next meeting in 1996 in Kananaskis Alberta.