

Jensen quotes Salthouse (1996) on the importance of mental chronometry:

Because time is an objective and absolute dimension rather than a norm-reference scale, as is the case with most behavioral measures, it is inherently meaningful in all disciplines and this has the potential to function as a Rosetta stone in linking concepts from different disciplines. (p. 425)

In *Clocking the Mind*, it is evident that the author is indeed the Rosetta stone of the field of mental chronometry, bringing together many different disciplines, linking great minds together so that this might spur forward great work. What is clear in the writing style, the clarity of logic, and the extraordinary thoughtfulness of this book is that Arthur R. Jensen has created a masterpiece.

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Note

1. Changed incorrectly by the editor to *mid-1920s* on p. 97.

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Piechowski, M. (2006). *"Mellow out," they say. If I only could. Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright*. Madison, WI: Yunasa. (ISBN 0-9777530-0-X)
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Piechowski begins and ends his book with the assertion that he wants to give voice to gifted adolescents and their experiences of emotional and spiritual growth. Quoting liberally from interviews, surveys, and interactions with gifted children and adolescents over the course of three separate studies and 40 years, Piechowski conveys the unique quality of inner development experienced by gifted individuals. The overall effect is one of a

revered expert in the field of gifted education sharing his cherished work.

Piechowski leaves the spotlight on the adolescents and says very little to influence the meaning of their words. Yet by weaving in autobiographical data, Piechowski also shares his own story and the work he accomplished with the renowned Polish psychologist and psychiatrist, Kazimierz Dabrowski, author of the theory of positive disintegration, a theory of personality development. Consciously or unconsciously, Piechowski draws us into his story and the story of his participants and students.

In the beginning of the book, we learn of Piechowski's own well-developed sense of self and his decision to turn away from life as a professor of molecular biology.

I began to be haunted by the image that I was walking down a hallway. At the end was a wall with glass blocks to let in the light but there was no exit. This recurring image was showing me a block in my life's trajectory. I knew then that I . . . had to change fields. (p. 15)

Thus began his lifelong study of the emotional life of gifted children and adolescents. By the end of the book, we, too, are walking with Piechowski down a hall that enlightens. The crowning section of the book introduces us to a central theme in the lives of many gifted children and adults, that of spiritual knowledge and development. In between, Piechowski devotes sections to explaining the role of energy in the development of the intellect, how imagination fuels the intellect, and the role of the emotional life in the growth of an individual.

Piechowski remains true to his intent to provide an opportunity for readers to listen to the voices of gifted young people as they discuss the vagaries of the inner struggle to know themselves and their relationship to others and the world. Rather than creating another model of emotional development, he interweaves Dabrowski, Kawczak, and Piechowski's (1970) work on personality development, as well as Lovecky's (1990, 1992) on entelechy, "a vital force guiding one's life" (p. 224), and William James's (1900) classic early-20th-century thought on religious experience.

In the first section, "A Matter of Heart," Piechowski justifies his decision to study the emotional lives of individual gifted children and adolescents by pointing out the lack of such study among the great founders of the field of psychology. Freud's conceptions of how the mind works and Carl Rogers's theory of emotional nurturance and positive regard, and the work of other well-known theorists, do not provide the material he

seeks. Piechowski situates his study of individuals in a framework of well-being that emphasizes the importance of connections to self, others, the world, and the spiritual universe and uses this framework to trace emotional development within individuals.

The second section, "Energy, Sensorium, and Intellect" elaborates on Piechowski's concept of energies that gifted adolescents use to fuel the development of their talent. Dabrowski's theory of psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional overexcitabilities and the schema Piechowski developed to present his analysis of Dabrowski's original work is provided in table and narrative form as a framework for examining the vital energies gifted students have.

The imagination and its connections to inner realities and external possibilities in the lives of gifted children is the focus of the third section, "Imagination." The findings, related to the prevalence among Piechowski's students and participants of imaginary friends, day-dreaming, use of the imagination to combat negative life experiences, and the imagination's role in developing the power of absorption, introduce the reader to a vast, fairly untold, world of personal experience.

In section 5, "Emotional and Spiritual Growth," Piechowski looks intently at the emotional life as a key to self-knowledge. He argues with Descartes and builds a case for the primacy of emotions over cognition as how we humans know we exist. "I feel therefore I am" supplants Descartes' "I think therefore I am" because conscious thought is not possible without feeling" (p. 127). The intensity of emotional response drives individuals to bond not only with people but with places and ideas as well. Such emotional intensity and affection also fuel accomplishment and persistence in the lives of Piechowski's adolescents.

In this last section, Piechowski develops the concept of having a strong will, in the sense of totally accepting, investing in, and pursuing a selected path. He devotes considerable attention to the will and provides, through examples and explanations, a refreshing discussion of individual freedom, personal power, and action. Finally, he crowns his work with his recognition of the spiritual lives of many of the individuals he has studied. In addition to examples from his studies of adolescents, Piechowski also shares examples of spiritual development from his eminence studies such as Leta Stetter Hollingworth's attachment to the "Law of Life" and Eleanor Roosevelt's pursuit of paid work to provide promised funds to individuals she befriended.

Although each section can stand on its own and provide insight and food for thought to the reader, the concepts presented are interwoven throughout, and

the book is best read as a whole. The author develops his thought and lays it out for the reader. It progresses from understanding self, overexcitabilities, and the energy required for talent development to the role of the emotional life in the development of personal attachments and intellectual productivity and, finally, to deepening spiritual and humanitarian connections to the world. Reading the book as a whole gives the reader a chance to appreciate this particular organization of ideas in the context of emotional development.

Initially, I found Piechowski's writing style somewhat choppy and too direct. However, upon reviewing some of his scholarly articles (Piechowski, 1990, 1997a, 1997b; Piechowski & Miller, 1995), it occurred to me that this book might be not only a presentation of the voices of his participants and students but also a means of presenting himself. His discussions of underlying theories and empirical work that supports his own are cogent and clear. Yet in presenting his participants' words, he gives but a brief introduction and then allows the words to stand alone with no further reflection. This is a bit jarring but accomplishes his stated purpose. He nudges readers with whispered suggestions. His reflection, that "Socrates would be proud" (p. 186) of the struggles of these thinking adolescents leads us deeper into realms of inner development and spirituality. Likewise, the defense of the "judging" (decision-making) personality type of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as one which also may be deeply spiritual beckons the reader to a deeper appreciation of these strong and admirable individuals.

In sum, "*Mellow Out, They Say*" appears to be a compilation of Piechowski's life's work. It clearly builds on the scholars of the field of gifted education and provides support for the work of Dabrowski on personality development. By using the voices of gifted adolescents to enliven the concepts he develops, Piechowski offers his readers an important look at the extremes of gifted students' inner experiences. He then lays out the empirical and logical bases for respecting and supporting emotional, intellectual, and spiritual extremes in individuals.

In school districts where many programs for gifted students are folded into advanced course offerings designed for all students (e.g., the cluster model at the elementary level, Advanced Placement® courses, and international baccalaureate programs at the secondary level), this book can serve as a great source of information for teachers and administrators about gifted students and how they may perceive and experience the world. The cover illustration, drawn by a young college undergraduate who felt as if "her brain was unraveling

and she was drowning” (p. 26), expresses the pain that a life of intensity in a nonsupportive culture can produce. The reader is drawn quickly into Piechowski’s plea for understanding of those whose overexcitabilities bring novelty, life, and excitement to the world, yet whose own experiences may be lonely and isolating ones.

For scholars in the field, the work suggests several avenues of further research. Replication of the Overexcitabilities Questionnaire (OEQ) results with groups further defined by race and socioeconomic status, as well as age and gender, as in the original research, would provide needed understanding of many of today’s students.

Consideration of the psychological and social effects of the intensity of the overexcitabilities versus the attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis in gifted children is needed. Piechowski’s concept of the importance of the will or “the executive faculty of the self, not imposed but freely applied to act upon one’s choices” (p. 228; chap. 20, Personal Growth), and the results of his and others’ work with will exercises also needs to be explored.

Despite some initial confusion when Table 1 was referenced in the chapter following its position in the book, I found most of the technical aspects of the book very useful. Several versions of the OEQ and information on procuring a copy of the latest version are available in an appendix. The book is well indexed; its notes are listed with the chapter numbers and titles, making it fairly easy to consult them, and the reference list is a treasure trove for interested graduate students.

Bloom (1985); Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1997); and Piirto (2004) also have contributed to the literature of gifted adolescent psychology and have focused primarily on factors that lead to talent development, eminence, and achievement. Piechowski’s work is more a lens into the interior life of adolescents in the moment. For those who care deeply about the quality of the adolescents’ experiences while they are with us, in a classroom, in an after-school activity, or in conversation, Piechowski provides a look at what we can expect. As all of us become more adapted to the complexity and speed of communication and transportation in a technologically

advanced global environment, preservation of our ability to be in the present moment, to judge the good of a particular personal action, and to decide to make a difference, however small it may be, seems a worthwhile path to pursue. Having struggled myself with the ups and downs of gifted adolescent well-being, both in the classroom and in the home, I find that the value of the moment of understanding and compassion is profound. I agree with Piechowski’s reflection about his thoughtful students and, in turn, must reply to him about his thoughtful book, “Socrates would be proud!”

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