

ers through such instruments as the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking or SOI-Learning Abilities subtests helps both students and the adults working with these students. Since many divergent thinkers are not aware that their problem solutions and other ideas are unusual, or that they interrupt the usual scheme of things, they profit from a discussion on the value of ideas and of acceptable ways to present them.

The gifted and talented reach the highest levels of mutual interchange (Land, 1973) by participating in the design of an environment appropriate for a development of their uniqueness. As criteria for learning and performance are developed, they cultivate a commitment to life-long learning and to cooperative relationships with peers and adults. A statement of how individuals view the world and their roles in it is an appropriate beginning. The statement could appear as a bill of rights similar to the one suggested for victims of mathematics anxiety (Tobias, 1976). It might look something like this:

I have a right to identify my abilities and to excel.

I have a right to contribute to society.

I have a right to learn more in school than I knew last year.

I have a right to share my knowledge with others.

I have a right to develop my curiosity and creativity.

I have a right to apply what I learn through problem solving.

I have a right to make friends with gifted peers.

I have a right to contribute to the growth of my peers.

I have a right to be different from my peers.

I have a right to respect and learn from others who differ from me.

I have a right to explore alternatives and to experience consequences.

I have a right to say how I might be freed from undue anxiety.

The uniqueness of the gifted suggests that these children must respond independently to their world. Adults might ask the age at which children should use problem solving and self-monitoring to minimize conflict, especially if these strategies are to take precedence over their directives. At what age should children be independent enough to use their gifts in situations that are not designed for it? Ten years old? Eighteen? Although all children are faced with anxiety, the gifted must often deal with it at younger ages than other children, and with a keener sense of the possibilities open to them.

It is unfortunate that we know so little about how Einstein, Picasso,

Roosevelt and other noted persons dealt with anxiety as children. What we do know is that scientists, artists, and many outstanding leaders were independent thinkers and made playful hunches and trials in the development of their contributions to society (Walberg, 1981). A few were known also for their humor, an anxiety-reducing characteristic often lacking in the gifted.

The advantages and disadvantages associated with anxiety are tied to the total persons. The uniqueness of individuals and the complexity of their environments call for assessments and problem solving that is done best by the gifted themselves. Rather than reinforce dependence on one or two solutions to a situation, adults and peers alike should invite gifted youth to become creative problem solvers and decision makers. This approach stimulates, in turn, a sense of intrinsic control and the development of criteria for action. When gifted persons integrate problem solving into their lives, they use positive correlates of anxiety to advantage and transform negative correlates into problem solving opportunities.

REFERENCES

- Barber, I. W. "Motivation" *Practical Applications of Research*, 5(1), 1982
- Clark, B. *Growing Up Gifted*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1979
- Firestein, R. L. and Treffinger, D. J. "Creative Problem Solving Guidelines and Resources for Effective Facilitation" *G/C/T*, 1983, 26, 2-10
- Guilford, J. P. "Creativity Retrospect and Prospect" *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 1970, 4(3)
- Land, G. T. *Grow or Die*. New York: Random House, 1973
- Newland, T. E. *The Gifted in Sociocultural Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1976
- Ozer, M. *Solving Learning and Behavior Problems of Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980
- Roeper, A. "How the gifted cope with their emotions" *Roeper Review*, 1982, 5(2), 21-23
- Salter, H. T. and Bruch, C. B. "Use of the DGG model for differential guidance for the gifted" *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 25(4) 1981, 167-174
- Stipek, J. J. and Weisz, J. R. "Perceived personal control and academic achievement" *Review of Educational Research*, 1981, 51(1), 101-137
- Tobias, S. *Overcoming Math Anxiety*. New York: Norton, 1976
- Torrance, E. P. "Personality dynamics of under-self-evaluation among intellectually gifted college freshmen" In E. P. Torrance (ed.), *Talent and Education*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960
- Trotter, R. J. "Self-image" *Science News*, 1971, 100, 130-131
- Tyron, G. S. "The measurement and treatment of test anxiety" *Review of Educational Research*, 1980, 50(2), 343-372
- Walberg, H. J. "Childhood traits and environmental conditions of highly eminent adults" *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 1981, 25(3), 103-107
- Webb, J. T., Merckstroth, E. A. and Tolan, S. S. *Guiding the Gifted Child*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Psychology Publishing, 1982
- Young, J. G. "Conflict and artistic creativity" *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 1981, 15(3), 179-182

A Framework for Understanding Gifted Adolescents' Psychological Maladjustment

Guy J. Manaster
Philip M. Powell

A framework for understanding common psychosocial problems of gifted adolescence is based on the assumptions that people want to fit into society, and people want to understand how they fit. Common problems for the gifted are: being different in cognitive development from average (out of stage), having abilities and interests which make it difficult to adjust socially (out of phase), and feeling different from others

Guy J. Manaster is Professor of Educational Psychology, editor of *Individual Psychology*, and known for his work in the fields of adolescent and adult development. **Philip M. Powell** is Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology and a Contributing Editor of this journal. Both are at the University of Texas, Austin.

Theoreticians, researchers and practitioners of the gifted have noted a considerable number of problems common to gifted adolescents. It is not difficult to understand the basis for each of these problems, or at least to arrive at a plausible explanation. It is, however, more difficult to understand the full array of problems which appear as potential pitfalls.

In discussing psychosocial maladjustment and potential problems of the gifted adolescent, the implication is not that these adolescents are in danger of having more social and psychological difficulties than other adolescents. Rather, the premise is that certain kinds of problems are more probable for gifted adolescents. These problems can be explained by analyzing the characteristics of gifted adolescents and describing their social environments. The framework in this article primarily deals with potential maladjustment problems of gifted adolescents which are inherent in the definition which describe these young people: they are mentally gifted, and they are adolescent.

Assumptions

The first of two theoretical assumptions on which the framework is based is the simple notion, central to the *Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, that all people want to belong (Adler, 1956, 1964; Manaster and Corsini, 1982). All people want to fit in, to have a place in the human group. Implicit in this assumption is that personal and psychological needs require other people for fulfillment, and that a sense of mastery and competence demand a sense of connection with society. To achieve this sense of belonging, people may develop extraordinary beliefs about themselves and others and behave in extraordinary ways which are only understandable within the context of their own beliefs.

The second assumption, an extension of the first, emanates from social interaction and role theory (Festinger, 1954; Mead, 1934/1965). People want to know where they stand or how they fit in. Although we might not all agree some of the time, society provides labels and roles which serve as guides for self-definition and appropriate behavior. Knowing what role one has taken or may take, and the attitudes, values and behavior associated with that role, makes it easier to move within the role and to decide about its appropriateness for the individual.

Adolescent and Gifted

The range of descriptions of adolescence, including development and change, runs from mildly disruptive to extremely turbulent. Kurt Lewin (1939) termed the position of the adolescent, no longer in the children's group and not yet in the adult group, that of a *marginal man*. The *marginal man* is characterized as a person standing on a boundary between two groups, not belonging to either and uncertain about his belongingness. A person in this position, belonging partially to two groups but not completely to either, may exhibit symptoms of emotional instability and sensitivity (Manaster, 1977, p. 111). Adolescents in this marginal position are confronted with roles which are undefined or loosely defined, confused, and sometimes contradictory. Due to the ambiguity of position and roles with which adolescents are confronted, they stress similarity and sameness in order to fit in and to belong.

The psychosocial aim of the adolescent is to find and secure a personally comfortable place in which to belong

during this life stage, while recognizing; that these years are transitory. The aim is the same for all, and youth, regardless of their mental ability, have difficulty with the process and attainment.

The Framework

Gifted adolescents are in particular psychosocial jeopardy because (1) they are different and do not fit; (2) they appear different to themselves and to others and can or should not fit; or because (3) they feel they are different, feel they do not fit, and accept these conclusions. These three conditions, which define potential adjustment problems for gifted adolescents, will be referred to, respectively, as *out of stage*, *out of phase*, and *out of sync*. Table 1 relates these labels to the three conditions and the psychosocial location of the developments and situations of gifted adolescents, and constitutes the basic framework.

Table 2 presents problems of gifted adolescents that are related to being *out of stage*. Gifted adolescents who are well able to achieve in school, possibly with great ease and greater understanding, may in traditional classrooms find themselves **bored**. They may have **multiple talents** and gifts that are unharnessed, unusual and unrecognized by themselves and/or others. They may have reached a cognitive level which allows them to construct a sense of **success and perfection** beyond the realm of those around them, and allows them to pressure themselves to reach that high. They may, in fact, be

so successful academically, and concentrate so in that area, that none are aware of their **deficiencies in other areas**. In sum, gifted adolescents who are *out of stage* may be reacting to and dealing with concepts and goals far beyond the reach of those around them, while being bored and/or out of touch with their immediate environment and the meanings and potential satisfactions that may be there for them.

Out of phase gifted adolescents (see Table 3) often are **alienated** and distant from or **without a peer group** with which to interact. Numerous authors identified these problems and other specific behavioral or attitudinal problems which alienate *out of phase* gifted adolescents from peers, as well as teachers and other adults. These more specific problems, such as a high sensitivity to issues and to personal relationships, lack of social skills, uncertainty over social roles and a highly active and questioning approach to issues, may be seen as indicators of being *out of stage*, as in confronting life with higher level cognitive skills and lower social skills. However, some of these specific problems may indicate only social deficits, i.e., being *out of phase* but not *out of stage*.

Two additional social problems relate to giftedness and sex role in adolescence. The potential for problems in being *out of phase* as a gifted male adolescent are increased because acting out giftedness is contrary to traditional male-macho sex-appropriate stereotypes. For example, being a *brain* is not being a *real man*. In the same vein, the early maturing gifted female

Table 1

Condition	Description	Psychosocial Location
Out of Stage	Gifted adolescents are different from <i>average</i> adolescents in their stage of cognitive, and related development and/or in the quality and variety of their talents.	Cognitive developmental & talents
Out of Phase	Gifted adolescents, possibly because they are <i>out of stage</i> , have abilities and interests at variance from their <i>average</i> peers and are themselves unable or unwilling to fit in socially due to these apparent differences.	Social
Out of Sync	Gifted adolescents, either because they are <i>out of stage</i> or <i>out of phase</i> , or both, <u>feel</u> that they are different, whether in <u>positive</u> or <u>negative</u> , self-enhancing or self-deflating ways, and feel they do not, should not or cannot fit in.	Psychological

Table 2: Identified Problems of Gifted Adolescents related to being *Out of Stage*

Type of Problem	Comment and Reference ¹
Boredom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Easily bored, frustrated by traditional instruction (Alvino, 1981) 2 Boredom (Compton, 1982) 3 Listed as problems in J H S – <i>school waste of time</i> (Bachtold, 1978)
Multi-Talented	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 They need feedback about their gifts provided by professional Teachers need to be taught to recognize and deal with these issues with the gifted (Sanborn, 1979) 2 Isolated interests and talents (Gifted Children's Resource Center, undated) 3 By definition of gifted as multit talented (Butler, 1978)
Perfectionism and Pressures for Success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Discontent with any performance short of own goals (Whitmore, 1980) 2 The underachievers refuse to compete because of feelings of inadequacy (Barrett, 1957) 3 Gifted children may be under considerable pressure to achieve (Strang, 1951)
Pressures for Success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Pressures for success (Schetky, 1981) 2 Unrealistic expectations of gifted (Whitmore, 1980)
Success masks students needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Many gifted students do so well that this very fact desensitizes us to their needs (Sanborn, 1979) 2 High academic achievement, social skills at early age (Whitmore, 1980)
Uneven development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 <i>Discrepancies between physical, emotional and intellectual maturation are common but may be even more exaggerated in the gifted</i> (Schetky, 1981) 2 Brain reaches a plateau (Compton, 1982) 3 Dialogue between superior intelligence and maturity (Hollingworth, 1942)

¹Comments are often paraphrased

Table 3: Identified Problems of Gifted Adolescents related to being *Out of Phase*

Type of Problem	Comment and Reference ¹
Alienation, Distance from/without peer groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Alienation because of divergent thinking and creativity, etc (Alvino, 1981) 2 Being different in adolescence is bad enough for normal teenagers, but more for gifted early adolescents (Compton, 1982) 3 Due to different interests, self-direction (Gifted Children Resource Center, undated) 4 Listed as Problem-disillusionment with system (Bachtold, 1978)
Sensitivity To issues not-relevant to peers To Interpersonal Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 <i>Feelings of alienation versus the wish to be accepted</i> (Schetkey, 1981) 2 Lack of acceptance by age peers (Alvino, 1981) 3 J H and H S gifted students resemble each other not age peers Problems arise in matching gifted with intellectual and age peers Lessinger and Martinson, 1961)
Deficit Social Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Supersensitive to issues and concerns not viewed as important by age peers (Alvino, 1981) 2 Sensitivity-a mixed blessing, both an asset and a liability It is a liability when abused by manipulating other (Schetky, 1981) 3 Hypersensitivity leading to connections and relationships often too much for normal peers (Whitmore, 1980) 4 Supersensitivity of nervous system creates intellectual giftedness by allowing the assimilation of extra amounts of sensory input (Cruickshank, 1963) in Whitmore, 1980
Uncertainty over roles Activity level Tendency to Challenge Authority Being Male Early maturing girls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Two types of students 1) High academic achievement, socially skilled at an early age, 2) Deficient because of limited pre-school peer interactions Social isolation acute for gifted youth (Whitmore, 1980) 2 Problems with interpersonal relationships (Bachtold, 1978) 3 The higher the IQ of the gifted, the more difficult it is to become socially adjusted (Hollingworth, 1942) 4 Very high IQ child faces a more difficult problem in social adjustment than the less precocious (Terman, et al , 1947)
Uncertainty concerning roles in society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 <i>Uncertainty concerning roles in society</i> (Alvino, 1981)
Child can be physically and mentally exhausting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Child can be physically and mentally exhausting (Schetky, 1981)
Tendency to challenge authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Tendency to challenge authority (Schetky, 1981)
More adjustment difficulties for males than females	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 More adjustment difficulties for males than females (Bachtold, 1978)
Gifted girls who are early maturers and large may have considerable problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Gifted girls who are early maturers and large may have considerable problems (Compton, 1982)

¹Comments are often paraphrased

adolescent may appear exaggerated physically as well as mentally to most of her peers, and be seen not as a friend but as someone to fear.

A gifted adolescent may recognize that the positive attributes that indicate precociousness do not always bring satisfaction, for there may be boredom with peers, teachers and parents, or frustration in not reaching extravagant goals. A gifted adolescent may recognize that talents in some areas are not matched by abilities in others. Gifted adolescents may recognize that they are *out of stage* and attempt to deal with the problems in constructive ways to fit in socially.

However, gifted adolescents who do not cope successfully with problems of being *out of stage* and/or *out of phase* may attribute these problems to deficiencies or extraordinary qualities in themselves and as such they feel different. Within this framework, they would be psychologically *out of sync* with themselves and their environment (Table 4). They may develop poor self-concepts which are reflected in alienation. They may feel anxious and insecure when facing the discrepancy between their enormous cognitive potential in some areas and their normality in other areas. They may burn out or give up, and, over time, the severity of the psychological problem may increase to a point where they are totally out of synchrony as in extreme neurosis or psychosis.

Imposed Problems

The framework presented above is an attempt to conceptually organize problems that gifted adolescents may have because they are gifted and adolescent, and because of the social and psychological dynamics related to the rate and magnitude of their emotional and cognitive development. The assumption is that these factors could interact to increase the potential for gifted adolescents to display these three types of maladjustments even in the best of worlds. That is to say, gifted adolescents might come to maladjusted conclusions and feelings about themselves, and behave in socially nonfunctional ways even if peers, parents and teachers did not label and stereotype them.

However, none of us, gifted adolescents included, live in the best of all possible worlds. The label *gifted and talented*, and its equivalents, can provoke stereotyped, nonfunctional attitudes and behaviors (Reschly and Lamprecht, 1979). Families may not accept and support children with high mental

Table 4: Identified Problems of Gifted Adolescents related to being *Out of Sync*

Type of Problem	Comment and Reference ¹
Self-Concept Problems	1 Poor self-concept (Alvino, 1981) 2 Self-image problems (Bachtold, 1978) 3 <i>Excessive self-criticism</i> (Caroll, 1940)
Insecurity and Anxiety	1 Insecure and anxious because of perceived physical deficits, different interests, self-direction (Gifted Children Resource Center)
Too much, too cognitive	1 <i>Far more attention is given to the gifted child's cognitive development than to his or her emotional needs</i> (Alvino, 1981) 2 Burn-out gifted tired of extra work, label of them in <i>different</i> category (Compton, 1982)
Severe Psychological Problems	1 Caused by accumulated environmental insensitivity (Gifted Children Resource Center, undated) 2 Maladjustment increases with age (Witty, [1940] in Whitmore, 1980)

¹Comments are often paraphrased

abilities (Compton, 1982). Parents may have unrealistic expectations for their accomplishments (Whitmore, 1980). Teachers, too, may have unrealistic expectations (Whitmore, 1980), or they may be intolerant and insensitive (Alvino, 1981), unprepared to cope (Compton, 1982), inflexible (Landau, 1981), or too narrow (Holland, 1961) in interacting with gifted students.

Conclusions

A change of attitude by teachers, researchers, and gifted children alike, would go a long way toward ameliorating the psychosocial problems of the gifted. All must recognize that although the gifted differ from the average in particular identifiable ways, it is only in these ways that they differ. In all other ways the gifted are typical, common, ordinary, regular and normal and able to healthily fit in with others. When their differentness is seen as primary by others and themselves, gifted adolescents accentuate them, and strive for increasing superiority and do not adjust to others well.

The gifted must be seen as average with gifts, not as superior with faults. Like everyone, the gifted must have the courage to be imperfect and (Manaster and Corsini, 1982, p. 55) the courage to be average in order to be psychosocially adjusted.

REFERENCES

Adler, A *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler A Systematic Presentation in Selections from his Writings* (H L and R R Ansbacher, eds) New York Basic Books, 1956

Adler, A *Superiority and Social Interest* Alfred Adler (H L and R R Ansbacher, eds) Evanston, Illinois Northwestern University Press, 1964

Alvino, J "Guidance for the Gifted" *Instructor* Nov/Dec 1981, pp 64-66

Bachtold, L M "Reflections of Gifted Learners," *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 1978, XXII 1, 116-124

Barrett, H.O An intensive study of — 32 gifted children *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1957, 36, 192-194

Butler, B "Career Search for the Gifted A Comment" *G/C/T*, 1978, 3, 27-28

Caroll, H *Genius in the making* New York McGraw-Hill, 1940

Compton, M F "The Gifted Underachiever in Middle School" *Roeper Review*, 1982, 4 4, 23-25

Festinger, L A *Theory of Social Comparison Processes* Human Relations, 1954, F, 117-140

Gifted Children Resource Center "Gifted Children, What Are They Like?" Los Angeles Undated

Hollingsworth, L Children above 180 IQ Stanford-Binet Yonkers-On-Hudson, New York World Books, 1942

Holland, J L "Creative and Academic Performance Among Talented Adolescents" *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1961, 52 3, 136-147

Landau, E "The Profile of the Gifted Child," *Gifted Children Challenging Their Potential New Perspectives and Alternatives* (Bitan, Bulter-Por, Evyatar, and Landau, eds) World Council for Gifted and Talented Children Trillium Press New York, 1981, pp 21-32

Lessinger, L M and Martinson, R. A "The Use of the California Psychological Inventory with Gifted Pupils" *Personnel and Guidance Journal* March, 1961, 572-575

Lewin, K Field theory and experiment in social psychology *American Journal of Sociology*, 1939, 44, 868-897

Manaster, G J *Adolescent Development and the Life Tasks* Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, 1977

Manaster, G J and Corsini, R J *Individual Psychology Theory and Practice* Peacock Publishers Itasca, Illinois, 1982

Mead, G H *Mind, Self, and Society* (ed Charles W Morris), Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1934/1965

Reschly, D J and Lamprecht, M J Expectancy effects of Labels Factor or Artifact *Exceptional Children* 1979, 46 1, 55-58

Sanborn, M P "Counseling and Guidance Needs of Gifted and Talented" Chapter XXVII, *The Gifted and the Talented Their Education and Development* 78th Year book of National Society for the study of Education Part I University of Chicago 1979 NSSE ed A Harry Passow, 424-438

Schetky, D "The Emotional and Social Development of the Gifted Child" *G/C/T*, No 18, May/June, 1981, 2-4

Strang, R Mental Hygiene of gifted children In P Witty (ed) *The Gifted Child* Lexington, Massachusetts Heath, 1951

Terman, et al *The Gifted Child Grows up Genetic Studies of Genius Vol IV* Stanford Stanford University Press, 1947

Whitmore, J R *Giftedness Conflict, and Underachievement* Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, 1980 137-163

Witty, P A Some Considerations in the education of Gifted Children cited in Whitmore, J R *Giftedness, Conflict and Underachievement* Boston, Massachusetts Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980, 143-144

Mistakes Gifted Young People Too Often Make

Leslie Kaplan

While gifted young people appear to have it all, they often make serious mistakes about themselves and their giftedness. Without an accurate and realistic self-concept, many of these youths create emotional difficulties for themselves which prevent them from fully using their talents in constructive or satisfying ways. Specifically, gifted youths frequently misunderstand what giftedness actually means in their lives, hold unrealistically high expectations for their own achievement, confuse the means and the ends of their accomplishments, overvalue their cognitive dimensions at the expense of their affective natures, or view giftedness as an entitlement.

Leslie Kaplan is a guidance counselor for a high school in Virginia and adjunct faculty for the College of William and Mary. Dr. Kaplan recently has written *Coping with Peer Pressure* published by the Richards Rosen Group

Gifted young people seem to have it all — high intelligence, creativity, outstanding achievements, and good feelings about their own worth. Parents and teachers applaud them and other youths look up to them. The relentless energy to accomplish whatever they choose to do, the penetrating questions and in-depth pursuit of answers, the determined concentration on tasks of interest all suggest special qualities about these individuals. It appears as if these young people have clear paths to successful futures.

At least it looks that way. While gifted youths may rack up honors, awards, and acclaim for their brilliant answers in school, they frequently make important mistakes costing a few points on a math quiz, but they cannot as easily correct the types of mistakes which strongly influence the way they view and value themselves. Having exceptional classroom and standardized test abilities does not guarantee the desire to put these talents into meaningful, constructive, or satisfying activities. Making mistakes about who