Holding a gifted child is a mixed blessing, and many parents feel battered in the bargain. From birth on, these children present an unusual set of challenges. They tend to begin life as active babies, sleeping less than their parents, responding intensely to their environment, often colicky. They exhaust their primary caretakers with their constant need for stimulation. Two gifted children in a family may be highly competitive. The uniqueness of a gifted child for themselves and for their parents. It is not easy having an 8-year-old mind in a 8-year-old body. Decisions that are quite simple for other families—such as, Where should we send our child to school—are often agonizingly difficult for parents of advanced children. Grade placement is another problem. Should the child be accelerated, kept at grade level, or held back? Peer relations can be a source of strain. Gifted children often enjoy playing with children older than themselves, mothering children younger than themselves, and relating to adults. They often have difficulty, however, playing with average children their own age.

Perhaps the greatest source of stress in the lives of parents of gifted children is the degree to which they are discounted. There are great emotional risks in going to the principal and saying, "I believe my child is gifted and has special needs." Too often parents hear the patronizing reply, "Yes, Mrs. Smith, all our parents think their children are gifted." No group has a more difficult time being taken seriously than parents of gifted children. They need counselors who are knowledgeable about the gifted who can give them guidance in dealing with the educational system and with their complex home lives.

The Uniqueness of Rearing a Gifted Child

It is no easier to be a parent of a gifted child than it is to be a gifted child (Nathan, 1979). Dirks's (1979) research indicated that it may be even harder to be a parent. In counseling parents of the gifted for the past 25 years, I have found that a dozen unique concerns provoke them to seek psychological services:

- Observing that their child is "different"
- Desiring assessment of the child's abilities
- Feeling inadequately prepared to raise an exceptional child
- Determining appropriate school placement
- Needing assistance with school personnel
- Determining appropriate home stimulation and development of special talents
- Desiring information about available resources (such as enrichment programs)
- Coping with underachievement and lack of motivation
- Dealing with the child's intensity, perfectionism, heightened sensitivity, introversion, or depression
- Helping the child develop better peer relations
- Experiencing increased tension in the family as a result of the special needs of their gifted children
- Understanding their own giftedness

They also engage in counseling for reasons similar to those of other parents: poor family
dynamics, stress-related disorders, conflicting perceptions of parents, divorce, sibling rivalry, depression or suicidal ideation in an adolescent, and so on.

Observing Differences

When parents observe the advanced intellectual development of their child compared with their neighbors' children, they often begin to worry that the child is growing too fast or that they are being left behind by their playmates or with the school curriculum. They may recognize on their own that their child is "different," or these developmental differences may be pointed out to them by the teachers. Unfortunately, the advice they are likely to receive from friends, family, educators, pediatricians, or writers of popular articles tends to be counterproductive. The models of "good child rearing" that these well-meaning individuals espouse are derived from the development of average children (Ross, 1964; Sebring, 1983) and are frequently not applicable to rearing gifted children than to rearing retarded ones. However, because gifted children look "normal," many retarded children, it is more difficult for them to get in their lives—including their parents—to be aware of their unique needs.

Even extreme signs of precocious development do not automatically alert parents to the fact that they have a gifted child. Parents tend to distrust their own perceptions of their children and to discount abilities because of the pervasive myth that all parents think their children are special. More tend to overlook the signs of giftedness in their children than to overstate the case (Gottfredson & Harrison, 1977; Rogers & Bluemke, 1986). In Dickinson's (1970) study, just half of the children who tested in the gifted range had parents who recognized their children's high abilities. Dember and Marks (1978) found that only 35% of the parents recognized their children as gifted before school age. Most of the rest were identified with the help of the school. Given the critical role played by the family in the first six years, it is unfortunate that information about early signs of giftedness is so difficult to obtain.

We have found that parents of young children are more likely to seek the help of professionals when they see a list of characteristics of gifted children (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986).

Gaining Assessment

Gaining a meaningful assessment of a gifted child's abilities can be a complex and frustrating task. Blocks. Giftedness is usually defined as being selected for a gifted program. Many public schools do not assess giftedness until third grade and then just one exam. Unfortunately, the advice they are likely to receive from friends, family, educators, pediatricians, or writers of popular articles tends to be counterproductive. The models of "good child rearing" they are likely to receive from friends, family, educators, pediatricians, or writers of popular articles tends to be counterproductive. The models of "good child rearing" that these well-meaning individuals espouse are derived from the development of average children (Ross, 1964; Sebring, 1983) and are frequently not applicable to rearing gifted children than to rearing retarded ones. However, because gifted children look "normal," many retarded children, it is more difficult for them to get in their lives—including their parents—to be aware of their unique needs.

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found this to be true with younger gifted children as well. These children tend to behave manipulatively or disrespectfully in situations in which they feel powerless or not respected.

The antidote is to help parents create a family system with a balance in power, in which all members feel supported. One method of establishing a balance of power is by establishing a family council—usually a regularly scheduled meeting of the entire family. A family council provides direct experience in democratic decision making. Everyone is given an opportunity to air grievances, request changes in rules, learn negotiation skills, and practice effective communication techniques on a regular basis. Family council meetings can also be a vehicle for building self-esteem and family solidarity. A time for complaints can be included as well as a time for complaints. Gifted children can participate competently in family council meetings at about 7 or 8 years old.

Determining Appropriate School Placement

The counselor needs to be aware of the philosophies of giftedness in local schools and the available services. Various types of special programs. Part of the counselor's task is to discover the information about options. If public school offerings are limited and the child qualifies for science class in a private school for the gifted, this alternative should be explored. The counselor can assist the parents in developing an evaluation criteria for examining several pre-schools or private schools. With appropriate diagnostic information, schools can be selected that provide a good match with the child's learning style and range of abilities.

At the Gifted Child Development Center, we recommend that parents visit several potential schools and determine which ones are affordable and responsive to giftedness, are within a reasonable distance, and appear congruent with their own philosophy. After they have narrowed the choice to a few alternatives, we suggest that they take their child to spend a morning or afternoon in the environment and help select his or her own school. We have found that even 4-year-old gifted children can make effective choices of their school environment (Waters & Silverman, 1986). They often notice characteristics of the school that parents miss, such as how the children act on the playground.

Within the public schools, several choices may also be available (e.g., a pullout program, a magnet school, a special interest magnet program within the regular classroom). Parents may need to determine which of several alternatives is best for their child. A recurring question is the impact of transportation children to a magnet or private school away from the neighborhood school. Since gifted children often have different sets of peers for different types of activities (Lewis, Young, Brooks, & Michelson, 1975; Rodell, 1985), they usually develop two sets of friends: school friends and neighborhood friends.

In schools with no gifted programs, or in the case of highly gifted children, the question of acceleration should be addressed. This is often a loaded topic, but the familiar biases are well supported by research (Daurio, 1979; Jano et al., 1988; Stanley, 1988; see Chapters 11 and 13). Strong opposition to acceleration may be countered by sharing information from the existing studies. Although many children have benefited from acceleration (Hullgren, 1989; Kean, 1981), research remains unimportant with educators. Ironically, gifted parents may be pressured to move in the opposite direction: to hold children back instead of accelerating them. Gifted boys are sometimes held back at the kindergarten level on the assumption that it will enhance their social relationships. A 5-year-old boy with an 8-year-old mind can play chess, Scrabble, and board games with rules, but he has a very difficult time relating to 5-year-old boys with 5-year-old minds who do not yet understand the meaning of rules. He is likely to refuse to play the "baby" games of his age-mates. The solution to this problem is not retaining the child—so that next year he can be a 6-year-old with a 9-year-old mind still trying to adjust to 8-year-olds. A more appropriate solution to social adjustment difficulties is finding the boy true peers—age-mates of similar ability with whom he can be socially comfortable (Kandel, 1965; Silverman, 1969a).

Rodell (1988) wrote:

When parents and teachers understand the implications of the differentness inherent in being gifted, they can create conditions that will support the child's positive social and emotional growth. The first step is to realize the inextricable link between social and cognitive development. If the child also makes the discovery that communication with classmates is difficult, and that others do not share his/her vocabulary, skills or interests, peer interactions may prove limited and unsatisfactory. We cannot ignore the gifted child's social stimulation and expect social development to flourish. (pp. 10-11, emphasis in original)

Assistance with School Personnel

A school counselor can help select the most effective teachers for the child and assist teachers in adapting their methods to meet the student's needs. At times, the counselor is also called upon to act as an advocate for the child. If a student is particularly unhappy and the teacher is unresponsive to the parents' attempts to ameliorate the situation, the counselor may have to intervene. A typical situation is when the parents feel that the child would be happier in first grade and the kindergarten teacher feels that the child is not ready. The counselor can talk to the child in both kindergarten and first grade, request a staff meeting to discuss the placement, provide insights about the child, and mediate the situation.

Another typical scenario is the case of the junior or senior high school boy whose grades are Ds and Fs. At midterm his parents place him in counseling, but he does not see the point of trying to reverse the pattern. Even if he turned in all his assignments for the rest of the semester, his grade would reflect the months of noncompliance, so why bother? The counselor can intervene on the student's behalf, approach each teacher, explain that the youth is now in counseling, and ask the teacher to allow him to have a fresh start. This will enhance the potential effectiveness of the therapeutic intervention.

Family Counseling

Many parents are confused as to how much and what type of home stimulation is appropriate (Cologan & Dettmar, 1983). They receive conflicting messages about the value of early home enrichment (Clark, 1988) and the perils of "hurrying" their children (Elkind, 1984). It is widely accepted that gifted children are the first years 5 are the most critical learning period (Bloom, 1964). Yet, parents—especially parents who are also teachers—are often anxiety, "I didn't teach my child to read—honestly. She just picked it up on her own." The fear that they will be seen as pushy parents presents many parents from exercising their rightful role as educators.

A major study of individuals who achieved world-class recognition before the age of 30 (Bloom, 1980) highlights the important role parents play in the development of talent.

We believe, as do the parents, that the parents' participation in the child's learning contributed significantly to his or her achievement in the field. We find it difficult to imagine how these children could have gotten good teachers, learned to practice regularly and thoroughly, and developed a love of a particular activity in the talent field without a great deal of parental guidance and support. (p. 476)

Further confirmation of the role of the family comes from a study of the MacArthur Fellows, all of whom received substantial awards for their outstanding creativity (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985).

Almost without exception the MacArthur Fellows pay tribute to their parents. While the educational level of the parents varied, and the level of financial backing as well, the parents let their children know the value of learning by personal example. The parents supported without pushing their homes, and they read to their children. Most important, they respected their children's ideas. (p. 24, emphasis in original)

Additional research indicates that parents assist the development of their gifted young by
encouraging autonomy (Dewig & Taft, 1973; Weisberger & Springer, 1961); providing a high degree of adult attention (Robinson, Roedell, & Jackson, 1973); strong formal and informal values and clear standards of conduct (MacKinnon, 1962); mutual trust and approval (Piekowski, 1987); holding high expectations for their children (Akin, 1978; Bloom & Selig, 1981); providing good role models (MacKinnon, 1962; Simonton, 1978); supporting their children's interests (Bloom & Insko, 1981); avid reading; and reading frequently to their children (Caikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979); and helping their children to believe in their dreams (Darnell, personal communication, November 1985).

Parents should be encouraged to provide a stimulating home environment—including involvement, which is easier, interested, and enjoying the activities. If the experience is fun for both the parent and the child, it is not harmful. On the other hand, parents should be discouraged from pushing unwanted enrichment on their child to give him or her the "edge" in the competition of life. Felder (1986) provided some suggestions for home stimulation and guidelines for parents:

These activities should be offered, not pushed, and they should be presented as games, not required exercises. If this is not interest, they should be dropped from the curriculum and perhaps brought up again after a year or two.

The object is...to allow the children to experience the joy that comes from allowing their interests, abilities, and gifts to develop naturally according to someone’s arbitrary schedule of when learning is supposed to occur. (p. 176)

Locating Available Resources

It is important for the counselor to be prepared to answer questions about after-school enrichment programs, early college entrance, simultaneous enrollment in high school and college, college internships, mentorships, and scholarships. In addition, parents need information about local, regional, and national support groups and conferences; newsletters, magazines, and journals; books for parents of the gifted; and software and software for gifted children. If the families are unhappy with the neighborhood school, the counselor can investigate open-enrollment policies within the school district, other districts, and private schools. If the student needs assistance in certain skill areas, the counselor should have on hand the names of competent tutors.

At the Gifted Child Development Center, we have found it necessary to make frequent referrals of gifted children to allergists, developmental optometrists, audiologists, occupational therapists, and play therapists. Many of the children who come to us for testing for giftedness also exhibit signs of learning disability (Silverman, 1986). Gifted-learnin disadvantaged children are a hidden population because the disability depresses the IQ score and the giftedness masks the disability. The net result is a child who appears "average.

Underachievement

Concern with a child's underachievement is the most frequent reason that parents of adolescent gifted children seek help at the Gifted Child Development Center. There are many possible causes of underachievement. We routinely administer a diagnostic battery to determine if there is an underlying disability, an inadequacy in the student's lack of motivation or lack of success. We have found remarkable consistencies in the test profiles of underachievers: high scores in vocabulary, abstract reasoning, spatial relations, and mathematical analysis, coupled with low scores in tasks requiring sequential processing (coding, digit span, and graphical analysis). We have found that these patterns are consistent with the characteristics of the gifted child. (p. 178)

The pattern is indicative of a spatial learning style and may also suggest auditory/sequential processing deficits (Silverman, 1989b). We go over the test results with the students and help them to understand that they are neither "dumb" nor "lazy." The testing itself has had an ameliorative effect on self-concepts of these young people. Through counseling and educational therapy, we help them understand their learning style and their strengths. We teach them (as well as their parents and teachers) methods of compensating for their deficiencies.

Parent counseling is an important part of this process. We have found that in the majority of cases the child's learning style and behavior echo the patterns established in childhood. We explain that very frequently, that parent is the one who "gets on the child's case" the most. The child mirrors those qualities that the adult most dislikes in him or herself. I have had parents frequently turn around parents' attitudes toward their children by helping them appreciate the child's learning disabilities. These parents are often "late bloomers" since they have managed to compensate for their weaknesses, they are in the best position to understand the learning processes of their children and can become their children's greatest allies. A deeper bond- ing often ensues between parents and children through these discussions.

Perhaps the most comprehensive intervention model for underachievers was created by Whitmore (1980). The Cupertino Program for Highly Gifted Underachievers was an intensive approach using the following strategies: early identification; self-contained classes made up solely of underachievers; extended day; smaller classes (16-21 students); in-depth diagnostic assessment; student-centered curriculum, rich in creativity, problem-solving, and higher level thinking skills; individualized instruction; opportunities for self-directed learning and active inquiry; small-group interaction; extensive parent involvement; regular individual and group counseling within the context of the classroom; and teachers specifically trained in counseling as well as teaching strategies with underachieved gifted students.

Primary-grade students needed the program for 1 full year and intermediate-grade students for 2 years. Whitmore (1980) reported that the project produced "definite evidence that the later the intervention occurs, the longer the child will be in need of the special intensive program" (p. 206). The Cupertino project reminds us that most of the unsuccessful strategies attempted in the 1960s for reversing underachievement in high school students were too little, too late (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Tannenbaum, 1980). Today the picture is more hopeful.

Some success has been reported in the use of small-group counseling of underachievers and parent involvement (Jackson, Chafouleas, & Merenda, 1975; Mink, 1964; Perkins & Wics, 1971; Zilli, 1971). Shaw and McCuen (1960) described an intriguing group technique for counseling families of underachievers. They had a small group of underachieving students listen to the difficulties expressed by a group of parents for 45 minutes and then had the parents listen to the students for another 45 minutes. A unique aspect of the format was that in the first two sessions the students were matched with parents of other underachieving youth. In the remaining four sessions, students felt that they were able to communicate more freely with their parents. Parents were able to gain insights into their own family dynamics by observing the dynamics of other families.

The major strategies for dealing with underachievement include early identification; obtaining individual diagnoses; interviewing parents to determine if the problem is school related or a pervasive part of the child's functioning; home visits to the Gifted Child Development Center. There are many different causes of underachievement. We routinely administered a diagnostic battery to determine if there is an underlying learning disability, an inattention (Silverman, 1986). Gifted-learning disadvantaged children are a hidden population because the disability depresses the IQ score and the giftedness masks the disability. The net result is a child who appears "average."

Personality Variables

The complexity of the thought processes that mark individuals as gifted is mirrored in the intricacy of their emotional development. Intensity, perfectionism, and heightened sensitivities are three emotional tributaries of the gifted personality that appear most often in the counseling population with whom I have worked—
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both children and adults (Silverman & Kearney, 1989). Intensity is the hallmark of passion; it is not an inherent or invariable in the achievement of excellence (Feldman, 1979). Perfectionism is the driving force behind the pursuit of excellence (Silverman, 1987b). And heightened sensitivity is the basis of compassion. These three qualities combine to create a unique personality structure governed by a vision of the ideal. They also indicate a capacity to bring one's ideals to fruition.

Dabrowski and Piotrowski (1977) have provided a theoretical framework for understanding the unique experience of the gifted. Studying gifted, creative, and eminent individuals, Dabrowski (1972) constructed a theory of emotional development that explains the unusual striving and dedication of our society's most gifted and evolved members. Piotrowski (1979, 1986, 1987; Piotrowski & Kolangelo, 1984; see Chapter 21 by Piotrowski) has shown that the gifted have greater potential for reaching higher levels of development—levels at which life is imbued with universal values, extraordinary responsibility, compassion, and dedication to service. This developmental potential grows out of the synthesis of emotional depth and intellectual awareness. Such individuals gain a greater intensity of feeling, greater awareness of feeling, and greater capacity to be concerned (Piotrowski, 1987, p. 22).

Intense emotions can lead to depression, and much of the depression stems from the individual's inability to reconcile his or her emotional experience with expected norms. For gifted adolescents and adults often feel that they should not have conflicts or negative feelings. They have been labeled "too sensitive," "too intellectual," or "too perfectionistic" by so many people in their lives that they internalize the message that there is really something wrong with them. The counselor's first task is to clear the misconception that strong feelings are inappropriate. The young person's family also needs this information.

Counselors inadvertently may attempt to cure the very conditions that constitute their potential for higher development. In contrast, Ogburn-Colangelo (1979) provided an example of how the application of Dabrowski's theory in a counseling context can enhance a gifted youth's potential to excel. The counselor helped her client see that her inner turmoil was positive, since her two conflicting desires (her need to develop her abilities and her attachment to her family) were both genuine, and the desire to please her family was also genuine. Thus, the two desires were both positive, and the counselor helped 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. The counselor listened, helped the student sort out the choices she had made, and gave her confidence in her strengths and ability to cope with the situation. The counselor's developmental strengths became apparent within the framework of Dabrowski's theory.

Often, Dabrowski's theory of families of the gifted. The theory helps family members view their intense inner experiences as positive signs of development rather than as indicators of emotional disturbance. This frees energy being used in self-doubt and self-deprecation, making it available for the development of other important psychological resources (Silverman, 1987a). As each member of the family gains self-understanding, there is more awareness and care for the feelings of others in the family. Compassion and problem-solving grow out of this enhanced awareness.

Another personality trait that I have found common with the gifted is introversion, which seems to increase with IQ (Silverman, 1986a). Introversion is not well understood in our society, so I spend a great deal of time explaining this personality type to parents. They are quite relieved to learn that the naturally reticent behaviors of their child, their spouse, or themselves are healthy rather than abnormal. My colleagues and I administer the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962) to families that come to our center for counseling and then interpret the results in terms of family dynamics. Families are usually surprised that their interactions can be depicted so accurately through a test. The result is that family members come to see the gifted child in a new light, with differences to a greater extent and stop trying to mold each other into their own likenesses.

Peer Relations

Controversy exists in the field as to whether gifted children experience greater adjustment difficulties than children of lesser capabilities (Grossberg & Cornwell, 1983; hollowingworth, 1942) reported that highly gifted children (above 145 IQ) were more prone to develop social adjustment problems than were mildly gifted children. Terman and Oden (1955) supported her conclusions. Grossberg and Cornwell (1983) failed to find adjustment problems among children enrolled in gifted programs; however, this does not refute previous research. All of the research previously reported were of children not enrolled in gifted programs. When the highly gifted children we assessed were placed in a school for the gifted and then in the Harter scale, their cognitive and social self-concept scores were much closer together. Programs for the gifted tend to have a beneficial effect on social relations (Highman & Buescher, 1983; Hultgren & Strop, 1985).

In an environment where all students are gifted and where intelligence and ability are highly valued, social relationships flourish. For the gifted, this is the first time that they feel "average" or "normal," which for adolescents, can be a great relief. (Highman & Buescher, 1987, p. 30)

The solution to peer problems for the gifted is usually the location of gifted peers (Reedell, 1965, 1966). I recommend that parents enroll their children in self-contained classes for the gifted (public or private), pullout programs, enrichment classes, or summer opportunities for the gifted in order to create potential for them. Parents could also join support groups for parents of the gifted so that they can meet others with children close to their child's age. In rural areas, if no support groups are available, they may need to feel isolated. Contrary to superstitions about associations with other gifted students preventing these children from fitting in to their world, their ability to relate to heterogeneous groups increases from finding others like themselves. Highman and Buescher (1987) reported a case study of a gifted boy's experiences with adolescents in school enrichment programs to their regular school experiences. The students felt more confident and generally accepted. Once they knew a few friends who truly appreciated them, laughed at their jokes, and enjoyed their company, their self-confidence increased in other situations. They demanded less from average peers because they knew that somewhere someone liked them just the way they were.

Increased Tension

Although there are reports in the literature of increased tension in families caused by labeling a child gifted (Cornell, 1984; Dirks, 1979; Fine, 1977), I have seen little evidence of this in my practice. One reason my experience differs is that I rarely label one child in the family
as the given text. My research indicates that when one child in the family is gifted, the rest are not far behind (Silverman, 1986a). In one study, we reviewed the IQ scores of 148 sets of siblings and found that 33.6% were within 5 points of each other, and 61.2% were within 10 points of each other (Silverman, 1986b). When discrepancies were much larger, one of the siblings usually had a learning disability or a history of chronic otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear), or else there was a substantial age difference between the siblings at the time of testing.

Several writers have indicated that there is an increase in friction in families in which there are gifted and "nongifted" siblings (Ballenger & Koch, 1984; Cornell, 1984; Hackney, 1981; Pfouts, 1980; Sunderlin, 1981). Jealousy and competitiveness among siblings is quite common in this situation, and itself is usually "the bad guy" (see Chapter 20 by Colangelo for more labeling). One variable that has not been studied is the effect on children of being perceived as gifted when they are just as bright as the family "star."

Increased tensions do exist, however, when the family focuses on the achievements of one child over those of other children. Achievements and abilities are not synonymous. Sloane (1986) reported that parents who have devoted their lives to the tennis champion, concert pianist, or Olympic swimmer in their families have experienced occasional twinges at the neglect of other siblings. The tensions between parents reported by Cornell (1983) can also be examined as a focus on achievement, rather than ability. Fathers tend to perceive giftedness as achievement, whereas mothers perceive giftedness as developmental advancement (Silverman, 1986a). When these discordant points of view are discussed in counseling, much of the tension is put to rest.

Gifted Children, Gifted Parents

Gifted children usually have gifted parents (Silverman & Kearney, 1989). Other studies have also shown that giftedness runs in families (Albert, 1978, 1980a, 1980b; Burka, Jen- sen & Terman, 1930; Hollingworth, 1926; Mackinnon, 1962). I see giftedness as a quality of the family, rather than as a quality of one child that differentiates that child from the rest of the family. This lends a different cast to family counseling than an approach that assumes that gifted and nongifted children are randomly distributed in families.

It is painless for parents to acknowledge their own giftedness. Unfortunately, this aspect of parenting the gifted has received little attention in the literature. When we have known one parent's IQ, we have been able to predict the child's abilities within 10 points. Therefore, when a child is identified as gifted, the parents are probably gifted too. Testing their child means dealing with the implications for themselves.

It is not fashionable to speak of the hereditary component of giftedness. But the assumption that gifted children are randomly assigned to nongifted parents does a disservice to families of the gifted. Learning about their own giftedness has had a profound impact on many of the parents who have come to our Gifted Child Development Center. After having their child tested, parents have gone back to school, applied for scholarships, or changed career aspirations - a result of radically altered self-perceptions.

The reaction of the mothers has been particularly revealing. Most of the mothers with whom I have had substantial influence, and the achievement of a child as a result of their own giftedness: "He gets it from his father." These mothers may have gifted parents, spouses, siblings, and children and still see themselves as not gifted - as if the phenomenon could just skip over them. They suffer under the notion that giftedness equals achievement. They have no basis for recognizing themselves as gifted. When they identify with the characteristics of giftedness in children, this perception slowly begins to change.

I remind mothers that they are their daughters' major role models and suggest that the greatest gift they can give their daughters is the acknowledgment of their own abilities. Otherwise, these girls come to believe, "If mommies can't be gifted, how can I be gifted?"

Counseling groups have been effective in helping women come to terms with their giftedness (Noble, 1989).

Conclusion

Giftedness is a family affair. There are far-reaching implications of this phenomenon for every member of the family. Whether gifted or nongifted, families can be identified or not, labeled or not, encouraged or not, there is no escape from the impact of giftedness on the family system: The characteristics and needs will still be there. Parents of the gifted have not been taken seriously, and this has compounded the problems. Too many of the normal attributes of giftedness are misjudged, and too much misinformation continues to be propagated. Few counselors are aware of the unique concerns of gifted families or prepared to give them appropriate guidance. Without this knowledge base, counselors may prove more harmful than helpful to these families. Counselors are needed who have special training in the area of giftedness and who understand the powerful emotional lives of their gifted clients.

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Career Development

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My goals in writing this chapter are threefold. First, I want to explain briefly why counseling psychologists place such great importance on understanding career development of gifted students. Second, I want to introduce the reader to the writings of two career theorists. Gottfredson (1981) offers a structure that enables us to better understand gifted persons’ career development because her theory is based on cognitive development. Holland’s (1962, 1973) model helps in understanding the direction career development takes. Third, I will identify unique factors in career development of the gifted in order to highlight how their career development deviates from career development of other students.

Counseling Psychology and Career Development

Herr and Cramer (1988) succinctly define career development as “understanding the factors underlying free and informed choice, the evolution of personal identity in regard to work, and the transition, induction, and adjustment to work” (p. 98). Their definition suggests that successful career development is fundamental to achieving the promises of a democracy, namely, making free and informed choices. Their definition also suggests that free and informed career choices are the basis of adult mental health.

Gottfredson’s Theory of Occupational Aspirations

Gottfredson (1981) has presented a theory of how occupational aspirations develop from early childhood through the college years, basing her theory on the writings of Van den Daele’s (1968) description of cognitive development and the formation of children’s ego-ideals (see Table 23.1). She clearly took some liberty in compacting his 10 levels into 5 stages. Also, Gottfredson did not develop her theory in regard to Van den Daele’s 9th and 10th levels of conceptual development. That is, she failed to elaborate on a 5th stage because only a tiny fraction of adolescents were seen as exhibiting behavior at this high level of career development. Because, according to Van den Daele, intelligence largely determines the rate at which children and adolescents move through these stages, gifted adolescents may very well make career plans and decisions from the referent point that characterizes this stage.

Gottfredson’s theory rests on the assumption that individuals seek jobs compatible with their images of themselves. Gottfredson concurred with Van den Daele that social class, intelligence, and gender are the important determinants of self-concept and of career aspirations. In turn, the compromises made in career planning and career decisions revolve around expectations, which are products of social class; job accessibility, which is largely dependent upon having the aptitude and opportunity to meet entry requirements; and one’s self-definition relative to sex roles.

Overview of Gottfredson’s Theory

Gottfredson described four stages of conceptual development and hypothesized that conceptual development and career development leapfrog one another. These stages were identified as (1) an orientation to size and power (ages 3 to 5 years), (2) an orientation to sex roles (ages 6 to 8 years), (3) an orientation to social valuation (ages 9 to 13 years), and (4) an orientation to the internal, unique self (beginning around age 14). I will attempt to be consistent with