

*Handbook for*  
**COUNSELORS**  
SERVING STUDENTS WITH  
**GIFTS & TALENTS**

*Development, Relationships, School Issues,  
and Counseling Needs/Interventions*

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## CHAPTER 14

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*More Is Different':  
Understanding and Engaging  
the Exceptionally Gifted Child*

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To engage an exceptionally gifted child is to engage complexity. Such remarkable, precocious individuals are among the most misunderstood and vulnerable persons in our society. As one parent and champion of the needs of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children has written,

To understand highly gifted children it is essential to realize that, although they are children with the same basic needs as other children, they are very different. Adults cannot ignore or gloss over their differences without doing serious damage to these children, for the differences will not go away or be outgrown. They affect almost every aspect of these children's intellectual and emotional lives. (Tolan, 1990, Differences section, para. 1)

The growing literature on exceptionally gifted children verifies this complexity: More is indeed different when it comes to their inner nature. Those in community with extremely gifted children, and especially profoundly gifted children, have witnessed the unique attributes of these children that emerge as by-products of the interactions among their unique and dynamic parts—attributes that cannot be understood or observed in isolation. Such unique emergent properties characterize complex living systems (Anderson, 1972; Buchanan, 2004; Corning,

1995) and that includes exceptionally gifted children (e.g., Cross, 2005; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Grobman, 2006, 2009; Gross, 1993; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985). Perhaps this inherent complexity and its resultant systemic differences manifested as emergent characteristics was best articulated by the Columbus Group:

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (Morelock, 1992, p. 13)

We posit here that these emergent manifestations serve as important markers that identify exceptionally and profoundly gifted children, even in the absence of expected levels of performance.

Gross (1993) reported in her study of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children that these young people differed quite radically not only from those of average ability, but also from their peers who had been classified as moderately gifted. She emphasized that few children in her study would even be recognized as gifted under any model incorporating motivation or task commitment as an integral component of giftedness; moreover, curiosity and love of learning only returned after the child was radically accelerated. Gross's salient data illuminates a perpetual and troubling outcome of not understanding these emergent properties of exceptionally gifted children: a failure to identify them.

Counselors need to be aware of emergent qualities associated with exceptional giftedness, as well as the fact that they can serve as identifying markers—even when test scores or behavioral criteria might fail to disclose it. Witness the case study of Jonathan.

### *Case Study: Jonathan—Brilliant or Unremarkable?*

Jonathan, a highly observant sixth-grade boy, had been making average to above-average grades across all subjects in school. However, he was chronically disengaged from the classroom, sports, and other social activities typical of boys his age. He walked around with his clothes disheveled, his hair in his eyes, and his hands in his pockets. His teachers dismissed him as lazy. Because of his lack of performance and interaction with others, they found him unremarkable. His nontraditional writing style was said to be inappropriate and somewhat offensive,

given the strict and formal religious culture of the private school he attended. One angry teacher even called Jonathan's parents to chastise him and his parents for such a blatant disrespect of her authority, as he had written his mini-book assignment in a "smart-aleck" tone. Concerned by the troubling relationship between the child and the school, his parents brought Jonathan to counseling—in this case, a marriage and family therapist who had experience in counseling gifted children. As a systems-trained counselor, she was also sensitive to working with both family and schools.

Jonathan's therapist found Jonathan to be anything but "unremarkable." The therapist was purposeful about establishing a relationship with Jonathan. She carefully selected aspects of her own personal experience to disclose to him so that he could build a level of trust and comfort with her. She enjoyed laughing out loud at the insightful cultural commentaries and irreverent, out-of-the-box humor that ran through his work. She was impressed with his performance in "thinking duels" (e.g., finding 101 uses for the enormous thorns that grew en masse on a vine in his backyard) and thought experiments in session (e.g., "How would life be different if there were no light?").

Attending to emergent qualities suggestive of a substrate of exceptional giftedness, Jonathan's therapist requested a meeting with the school team to discuss the creative thinking, insightful comments, and extraordinary sensitivity and compassion that Jonathan consistently displayed in session. In the meeting, she shared with them how much she enjoyed his incredible deadpan humor, and explained that such humor reveals an ability to perceive multiple levels of meanings in daily experience and is an emergent quality of exceptional giftedness. The team was unaware that the child had taught himself the basics of electricity when he was 5 and was currently working with his grandfather on an invention that would convert sound into electricity. She asked the team to participate in a 2-week experiment and to observe Jonathan's behaviors in a new light, reframing them as indicators of exceptional intelligence rather than relegating them to the category of behavioral problems.

The following week, the therapist received an e-mail from his math teacher. It read, "You're not going to believe this. I have already told everyone. I noticed that I was always asking Jonathan to get back into his seat, but I never really thought about why he kept getting up. I noticed that he would somehow make his way back to the board. I thought he was just goofing off. Then I really started watching him: he was working on problems on the board that were left over from my high school students in the class just prior to his—and he was solving them!"

Ultimately, Jonathan successfully completed his sound-based generator, and he invited his therapist to his science fair where he was to test its validity and reliability. The therapist was first to arrive.

## UNDERPERFORMANCE AND ACCELERATION

It is estimated that 40% of gifted children are functioning as academic underachievers (Seeley, 1993). Many in the gifted community characterize it as an epidemic (Reis & McCoach, 2002). This phenomenon is a result of myriad inter-related underlying causes, both individual and environmental, that drive a child's disengagement from the educational process. These include, but are not limited to: social rejection and bullying; peer pressure to "dumb down" to fit in; failure-avoidance; unrecognized and untreated learning deficits; misdiagnosis; clinical depression and/or anxiety; chronic rebellion or nonconformity; and deficits in self-management and emotional regulation (Reis & McCoach, 2002; Rimm, 2008; Webb et al., 2005). For a thorough treatment of underachievement, see Chapter 30 by Siegle, McCoach, and Rubenstein, this volume.

One common contributor to underachievement, the problem of social rejection and isolation, continues to plague children in this higher stratum of intellect (Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Gross, 2000a; Kearney, 1996; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985). Hollingworth (1942) noticed that this injurious social phenomenon disappeared when these exceptional children engaged daily with other students who were true intellectual peers, despite the chronological ages of the children. Hollingworth (1942) found that when these children, who had been previously rejected by age-mates, were placed with mental peers in the appropriate grades, they were socially valued and accepted as equals.

Gross (1994) found a large difference between the self-esteem of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children who were radically accelerated and those who remained with age-mates. Positive and healthy levels of self-esteem were reported by students who were radically accelerated; however, these more complex children require a carefully designed and monitored program of radical acceleration, linked to ability grouping as well as individualized instruction. Gross (2000a, 2000b) noted that research continues to find profound cognitive and affective differences between moderately and exceptionally gifted children. She asserted that in intellect alone, a profoundly gifted child of IQ 190 differs from his or her moderately gifted classmate of IQ 130 to the same degree that the latter differs from an intellectually handicapped child of IQ 70.

## UNDERSTANDING MORE

Grobman (2006, 2009) reported from trends in his treatment of exceptionally and profoundly gifted young patients that conflicts and anxieties about each one's "remarkable endowment" were powerful contributors to their underachieve-

ment and self-destructive behavior. He noted specifically that experiencing their own giftedness simultaneously as an asset and a deficit bewildered them.

He also reported great inner disturbance among his clients by another unique emergent quality of extreme giftedness: extracognition. That is, many of his clients had unusual sensations, perceptions, and observations that took the form of properties such as clairvoyance, synesthesia, and what Morelock (1995) termed "spontaneous knowing." Grobman (2006, 2009) noted that his exceptionally gifted patients were able to move forward when they came to embrace both their superior intellect and their striking intuition, allowing the two to support one another.

## IDENTIFYING EXCEPTIONALITY

It is possible to recognize, although not fully comprehend, exceptionally and profoundly gifted children through traditional means of assessment using measures of performance as tools of identification. Exceptionally gifted children have traditionally been recognized as those who score above the third or fourth standard deviation on IQ tests.

Researchers have previously noted that children with an IQ of 180 or higher (referred to as "profoundly gifted") occur at a rate of fewer than one in one million. Children identified in the "exceptionally gifted" range (IQ 160–179) occur in approximately one in 10,000 to one in one million (Gross, 1993, 2002; Kearney, 1996). It is critical to note, however, that in modern assessments some children who may have scored in the profoundly gifted range on earlier instruments may attain scores around the 140 IQ range on modern instruments (e.g., Wechsler tests [WISC-IV and WAIS-IV] and Stanford-Binet, Fifth Edition). This is due to the ceiling effects on both group and individual measures of achievement and intelligence. These tests do not discriminate as reliably in the upper ranges of ability, as there may not be enough difficult items on these tests to find an exceptionally gifted child's true ability.

In light of the limitations of using cognitive and academic assessment measures as the sole means for recognizing this advanced population, we recommend that counselors identify giftedness by considering developmental history (including early developmental milestones) as well as the emerging qualities described in this chapter. Ruf (2009) has proposed five levels of giftedness to assist parents in placing their children in the most appropriate educational environments. Ruf emphasized that learned underachievement and asynchronous development combine to muddle the picture of a child's true potential; she explained that a gifted child may in fact appear to be functioning at a lower level of intellectual ability

when proper supports and approaches are not in place. However, in the appropriate environment, the same child will perform at higher levels—the result of an appropriate match between educational provisions and the child's unique interests and needs.

It is important to note in the framework we are developing here—and which was conceived in earlier writings (Morelock, 1992, 1996)—that “talent” is defined as being separate from giftedness. However, talent development is recognized as a vital component of meeting the emotional, educational, and developmental needs of the gifted child (Henshon, 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004).

Tolan (1982, 1990) echoed these principles of intervention for the exceptionally and profoundly gifted and emphasized that it is imperative that the child's strong internal drive to develop his or her abilities is not thwarted, as this often leads to crippling emotional damage. The story of Alayna is a case in point.

### *Case Study: Alayna—Depression and Disengagement*

Nine-year-old Alayna presented with severe depression and anxiety symptoms, sleep disturbance, oppositional behaviors, recurrent stomachaches and headaches, aggression, disorganization, and lack of focus—all associated with school. Her parents noted that the majority of these behaviors were not displayed in other social venues, and they wondered if she had ADHD. Although she could read at a 10th-grade level, she refused to read any kind of literature for school or for pleasure and preferred to lay around the house. She was, however, consistently interested in playing her violin and seeing her friends in gifted class once a week. Her grades were slipping, as were her achievement tests, placing her at risk of losing her “gifted status” and services.

Alayna had become a chronic behavior problem at school. She criticized her teacher's lesson plans in front of the class, interrupted class activities, and often refused to do her work. When she did complete her work, it was mistake-laden and rushed. Her teacher shared, in embarrassed tears, “I don't have the training or the experience to give her what she needs. She knows that I know she's smarter than me. I'm stuck. I'm sorry . . . I have failed her.” Alayna's parents were unable to advocate for any forms of acceleration, because of her current poor performance. They decided to withdraw her from the school so that they could homeschool and observe what she really needed. Her parents hired tutors for one-on-one instruction and selected an accelerated curriculum from a different philosophy to create a different learning culture. Alayna was given freedom to focus on her music as often as she liked. She was asked to choose two elective topics; she chose pottery and “whatever class it is that answers, ‘Why does war exist?’”

Through these tutors emerged mentors who, through ongoing conversations, reported that Alayna had been subject to chronic bullying since kindergarten. She was ridiculed every time she left class for her weekly gifted module, chastised for consistently testing into the first-chair violin seat, and berated daily for having differing political views, to the point that no classmate would sit beside her at the lunch table. The seasoned math tutor (also a college professor) discovered that Alayna had been interrupting class discussions, apparently because she was asking higher order questions—questions few high school math teachers would understand. Alayna had been punished weekly for continually asking questions “that had nothing to do with the lesson” and had to sit out of recess, never getting a physical outlet for her stress. Alayna had not told her parents about any of these incidences, declaring, “I can handle it. I don't need anybody's help. Besides, I HATE tattle-tales.”

Alayna's therapist asked her to write down every question that came to her mind in a “Wonder Journal.” She and her parents were to seek experts willing to meet one-on-one with her to dialogue about her questions. After filling in knowledge gaps from the two consecutive bad school years, a new private school was found—per Alayna's request—that allowed Alayna to “start over” in a college campus atmosphere. The school allowed her to be radically accelerated in violin, placing her as the only junior high student in the junior/senior strings group. But instead of enduring insult and injury for her talent, she readily received “high fives” as she walked across campus, and calls of “You go, violin-girl!” Alayna was surrounded by children of all ages during the day, although she preferred to hang out with students who were 3 to 4 years older. The math tutoring served as a sort of slingshot, catapulting her from performing at the 80th percentile to the 94th, earning her a spot in an advanced honors math class. Alayna gradually became more organized on her own, taking great care to address many details she formerly neglected, and her grades slowly rose to above average and beyond.

Her mother brought in a sticky note that Alayna had left her on the bathroom mirror, “Mom, could you buy me some staff paper? I have one (well, two) symphonies in my head, and I need to figure out how to write it all down.”

## LOST IN COMPLEXITY

It has been observed that the thinking of children becomes more evident as intellectual capacity increases (Lovecky, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007). Even though accurate IQ assessments and developmental milestones are important means of identification, such information may not be available the moment an educational professional first interacts with a

young person. Therefore, it is beneficial to recognize more immediately recognizable traits—the distinct cognitive attributes—that differentiate the exceptionally gifted from their moderately gifted peers (Lovecky, 1994; Morelock & Feldman, 1993). The recognition of complexity itself is displayed by those highly aware of the myriad answers available to any potential question or task approached (Kline & Meckstroth, 1985). Such sensitive awareness quickly provokes an exceptionally gifted child to initiate his or her own complex analysis, often “get[ting] lost, wandering among their associational networks” (Eide & Eide, 2006, p. 442). The nature of this kind of internal organization often renders the child unable to navigate simple daily demands, making what others find easy unnecessarily complicated for the gifted (Lovecky, 1994). Conversely, these children also have the ability to find the core of a complex idea by embracing the essential element of the idea or perceiving an underlying principle, which then can be applied to further problem solving.

These children are whole-brain thinkers, utilizing multiple parts of their brains in performing imaginative and challenging tasks (Eide & Eide, 2006). They have a remarkable ability to store, recognize, and manipulate patterns of many types regardless of whether the information is sensory, abstract, or emotional in nature. Moreover, the exceptionally and profoundly gifted’s ability to think holistically enables them to perceive many layers of meaning in any given situation, as they readily experience the world in all its connectedness, with the associated emergent qualities. These include an early grasp of humor, metaphor, symbol, innuendo, and paradox (Gross, 1993, 2000b; Hollingworth, 1942; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985; Lovecky, 1994; Morelock, 1997).

Given this attribute, it is not surprising that these children have an inclination toward immersion, with the characteristic passion to master bodies of knowledge, although in a nonlinear, omnivorous, and intuitive fashion (Feldman, 1986/1991; Lovecky, 1994). It has been observed (Morelock, 1995) that profoundly gifted children exhibit a biologically based craving for intellectual stimulation, akin to the biological drives of hunger and thirst. These children maintain a compelling desire to experiment continually with ideas and objects and often have quite a wide range of interests, although at times they prefer to apply their voracity to a single topic in great depth for an extended period of time (Eide & Eide, 2006; Shavinina, 1999; Shavinina & Ferrari, 2004; Webb et al., 2005).

### IMAGINAL SYNERGIES

Some exceptionally gifted—and many more profoundly gifted—children have the ability to go a step beyond, solving one mental problem while simultane-

ously working on another. Such synchronized immersion in different domains of interest allows the “intellectual octopus” to aggregate patterns across subjects and reflect on how one particular aspect influences another. Typically, these children demand complex information about each subject in order to formulate new connections and associations between patterns and their individual parts (Lovecky, 1994). Even though exceptionally gifted children are able to comprehend the whole thoroughly, because their thinking moves through so many associations so quickly, they may reach conclusions without being aware of how they arrived. This becomes troublesome in a classroom setting where they are frequently required to show their work or support their conclusions (Eide & Eide, 2006). While in this intensive process of reflection, these children may appear to be “spaced out” and show signs of disorganization, leaving professionals to underestimate their abilities or view them in light of an attention-deficit profile (Grobman, 2009; Webb et al., 2005).

Another emergent intellectual property emanating from the happy collision of these super-abilities is metacognition: the ability to think about one’s own ways of knowing, remembering, and understanding. This particular ability is considered by many in the field to be an essential component of extraordinary giftedness (Cheng, 1993; Lovecky, 1994). Whether this is an essential component or an emergent byproduct of giftedness is a point for debate. Kline and Meckstroth (1985) related that meanings ascribed to personal events are defining forces in the life of an exceptionally gifted child.

Yet another emergent property: Such complex and intense internal experiences bring these children to internalize much of their experience, to the extent that it is at times difficult to distinguish what is imagined and what is actual (Morelock, 1997; Piechowski, 2006). Morelock (1997) described the imaginal products of the exceptional and profoundly gifted “as complex clusters of diverse concepts, both real and mythological, joined together logically and applied to a problem of interest” (p. A-2). She noted that these children possess a powerful drive for internal consistency that requires all parts of their conceptual structure to relate to one another in a logical way.

Their need for logical precision may lead them to incorporate precise quantitative measures and plausible arguments to successfully defend their imaginal constructs. Due to this emergent property of the “logical imperative,” these children are known to correct errors, be persistently argumentative, and demand an exactitude of thought that sets them apart from their peers (Kline & Meckstroth, 1985). These children also demonstrate a fierce independence in their thinking and incredible confidence in their own opinions at an early age (Eide & Eide, 2006; Grobman, 2009; Lovecky, 1994). When misunderstood, these behaviors may be quite unwelcome in the classroom where they are easily perceived as beligerence.

## THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE GIFTED

The imperative portion of this emergent property is driven in part by the strong emotional valence and resulting attachment these children feel with the subjects they mentally engage. Indeed, neuroscientists Eide and Eide (2006) noted that gifted children tend to be especially good at using personal memory to encode patterns, which means that in a very real sense they “love their ideas.” It is no surprise, given this whole-brain phenomenon, that these children form significant emotional attachments, rich with deep feeling and personal meaning, to their opinions and conceptualizations.

The exceptionally gifted are known for their strong, emotionally infused intolerance of perceived or real injustice; they possess a deep and unusually developed moral insight and reasoning ability as applied to pondering the meaning of life and death, religion and its practices, and their own personal philosophies (Gross, 1993; Hollingworth, 1942; Schuler, 2003). Morelock (1992) called attention to an important research link in which cognitive complexity is connected to a wide range of emotional responses. The number and variety of emotions experienced by an individual seems to indicate a highly organized awareness, predictably governed by an impressive system of values, beliefs, and mandates. Roeper (2009; Roeper & Higgins, 2007) underscored the premise that emotions of the gifted grow out of their greater cognitive awareness and are the key to motivation. She believed it is in the emotional realm that the gifted differ most from others. This is especially true of the most highly gifted. She noted that these children overflow with emotion, passion, and enthusiasm, at times exhausting others with their emotionality. She wrote, “In a household of gifted people, the electricity is palpable. Everything is more so” (Roeper, 2003, para. 3).

The powerful nature of the impassioned emotional experience is a testimony to the inherently intense inner worlds of this unique and sensitive population. The exceptionally gifted possess such depth of feeling that a sense of profound empathic identification results—not only with people, but also with animals, nature, and the universe. Lovecky (1993) noted that the compassionate side of their sensitivity often leads to an incredible commitment to people, ideas, and causes such as friendships, poverty, or wildlife conservation. This high capacity for projective empathy is evidenced in the many accounts of strong language of children being inside something or something being inside them (Feldman, 1986/1991; Morelock, 1995).

This remarkable range, depth, and intensity of emotion can also lead others to mistake their profound sensitivity with severely dysregulated emotions that are commonly associated with mental illness (Webb et al., 2005). Mahoney (1994)

noted that diagnoses with atypical emotional profiles may share characteristics of extreme giftedness. As a result, giftedness may mimic conditions such as borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, ADHD, depression, anxiety, and some forms of autism. Grobman (2009) argued that it is critical that the professional distinguish between the symptoms of a gifted person in crisis from a true disorder. For a thorough treatment of this matter, see Chapter 35 by Amend and Peters, this volume.

## RELATIONAL DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

One would not expect that counselors, above all others, would be included in the ranks of those who at times misunderstand the exceptionally or profoundly gifted child, resulting in neglect of his or her needs or the misdirection of appropriate educational resources. And yet, good science and a wealth of experience with the exceptionally gifted tell us otherwise. Wood (2010) related that in a 2000 analysis, half of the gifted students surveyed felt misunderstood or that their concerns were dismissed. Asynchrony was identified as the area least understood by their counselor; moreover, participants stated that they did not experience having their personal philosophy or values as a focus in counseling. It is critical for the counselor to note that the child's inability to articulate these parts of self may be a significant contributor. Nonetheless, Wood strongly concluded that the school counselor must gain a thorough understanding of the traits and characteristics associated with the gifted mind as well as their function; she urged counselors to begin by becoming highly aware of the best practices and guidelines championed by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and American School Counselor Association (ASCA; VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 1993; Wood, 2010; Wood, Portman, Cigrand, & Colangelo, 2010). For a fuller discussion on asynchrony, see Chapter 16 by Silverman, this volume.

It is interesting to note that this underlying principle—the lack of focus on client concerns and personal philosophy—aligns with research trends conducted across multiple domains in terms of reported outcome (Duncan, Hubble, & Miller, 1997). In *The Heart and Soul of Change* (Hubble, Duncan, Miller, & Wampold, 2010), research-informed clinicians communicate the common factors of “what works” in therapy through meta-analysis of psychotherapy data and report that therapeutic potency emerges from the common factors working together or via their complex interrelatedness (Karam & Sprenkle, 2010).

The most powerful ingredient of what works (40%) is the complete commitment on the therapist's part to place the experience of the client at the center

of the therapeutic intervention. Successful therapy is focused on who clients are, what they want, and what constitutes and influences the circumstances of their lives. In particular, a client's theory of change would be held in the highest esteem (Duncan et al., 1997). The clinician would earnestly and continually seek feedback regarding the client's perception of progress (Duncan, Miller, & Hubble, 2007; Norcross, 2010). The clinician must thoroughly understand the client's readiness for intervention. This includes coming to an understanding of the client's theory of change (the client's beliefs about what must happen for change to occur), as well as his or her strengths, resources, current level of functioning, social support, personal motivations, and significant life events. As these scientifically grounded clinicians have dramatically noted, "in many ways, clients are the most neglected factor in studies of psychotherapy" (Duncan et al., 2010; p. 35). Success in counseling gifted children, then, is predicated on whether the counselor genuinely enrolls a child as a full partner and collaborator in the process (Jackson & Moyle, 2009).

Without surprise, a positive therapeutic alliance emerges as another powerful predictor of success, albeit based on the client's—and not the clinician's—evaluation of the alliance. Clinicians must ensure from the first moments of interaction that the relationship is meaningful and positive (Norcross, 2010). It is important to note that models and techniques do impact clinical success to the degree to which any particular therapeutic activity is consistent with the therapist's allegiances, while simultaneously fostering hope and expectation in the client. Therapists who create and maintain strong alliances would begin early in treatment to gain full agreement on goals and build partnership toward achieving those goals. They would also embody Rogers' (1961) philosophy of empathy, warmth, and positive regard. Additionally they would share infrequent but meaningful self-disclosures that validate reality, normalize experience, and offer alternative choices (Norcross, 2010). The actual tools of therapy work best when they engage and inspire, or impassion, both participants.

It has been the experience of these authors and many others who work with the exceptionally and profoundly gifted that such a rich working relationship is readily forged with an egalitarian approach—that is, a collaborative therapeutic alliance between equals (Grobman, 2009; Jackson & Moyle, 2010; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985; Mahoney, 1994; Morelock, 1997; Silverman, 1993). Given this special population's considerably advanced intellect, the multiple factors consistently placing them in vulnerable positions in educational and social systems, and their deep need for unusually rich, nontraditional, and transparent dialogue, the egalitarian mindset fits well as a means of building and maintaining rapport (Blair, 2004; Ellsworth, 1999; Henriksen, 2006; Rader & Gilbert, 2005; Scofield, Saginak, Reljic, & Harper, 2009). It is worthy to note that another essential

component in an alliance is the therapist's genuineness or congruence (i.e., the ability to share his or her personhood). This is most effective when experienced in combination with warmth, empathy, and positive regard. It is evidenced when a therapist is self-confident, has a positive mood and smooth dialogue, and is responsive in session—even to the extent of disclosing information from the therapist's own experiences that validate the client. This complex combination is most potent when used with clients who have high levels of self-exploration (Norcross, 2010), another hallmark of a highly gifted mind. Bratter (2007) also advocated for this partnership with the gifted client who is experiencing crisis, and strongly urged the mindful clinician to partner with the gifted adolescent in crisis in an egalitarian way as the counselor engages different community systems. Acting as a "special friend" through an egalitarian collaboration, Bratter encouraged personal responsibility and engendered hope and expectancy at a time of considerable trial.

## ACCELERATION AVOIDANCE

Research highlights another unfortunate truth associated with the unique needs of the exceptionally and profoundly gifted. Wood et al. (2010) found that counselors are unknowingly misguiding gifted students when considering acceleration practices. School counselors are being solicited by parents and administration alike to provide expertise in acceleration without any formal training. This results in well-meaning professionals passing on erroneous information, from informal hall conversations and sound bites from workshops, which then reinforces false information to districts and subsequently researchers regarding what works.

Specifically, Wood et al. (2010) found that school counselors are hesitant to recommend particular options for advancement, such as early kindergarten entrance or grade-skipping, likely due to their fears of the negative social-emotional impact, even when research clearly and consistently states otherwise (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). This research team asserted that it is critical that administrators provide school counselors access to the thorough training needed to properly assess acceleration strategies as well as information regarding the myriad resources available to students (Van Tassel-Baska & Baska, 1993). Viable, carefully researched resources might include available mentors, local university or Internet-based enrichment courses, technology, enrichment opportunities, and financial support. Current information on district practices and acceleration policies must be maintained in order for them to advocate for the children effectively. Acceleration needs to be done carefully, as there are many ways to go about this. With a child whose natural pace of learning is accelerated, the question is not whether but *how* the curriculum should be accelerated to match the child's natural pace of learning.

## PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTEDNESS

It comes as no surprise that this critical feedback, emphasizing new ways of thinking about the inherent, dynamic complexity of these children, as well as the manner in which to engage them, brings the counselor of the gifted back to the pioneers of gifted education and humanistic psychology: Leta Stetter Hollingworth and her student, Carl Rogers. The long-term influence of Hollingworth's myth-busting research on gifted children and the nontraditional child-centered educational approach that she modeled cannot be underestimated; however, the impact of her values on counseling this complex population is no less profound (Delisle, 2002, 2006; Hollingworth, 1926, 1942; Kerr, 1990). She firmly believed that science should serve humanity and has the potential to create equality for talented children of all backgrounds. She consistently held the uniqueness of each individual in high esteem and challenged colleagues who focused solely on their subject's statistical value to "take pains" to interact in full with the children they were studying (Kerr, 1990). She formed such rich, authentic relationships with these children that many of her students continued to write to her for years to follow (Hollingworth, 1942).

It is no surprise that her genuine warmth and high scientific standards influenced many in her company. Few are aware of Hollingworth's key mentoring relationship with her former student, Carl Rogers. An emerging pioneer of client-centered therapy, Rogers sought out colleagues in the nascent field of child guidance, who practiced psychology with equal scientific rigor as his former colleagues in psychiatry, but without the cold distance, which contributed to unnecessary objectification of the client (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989; Thorne, 1992). Many would consider him the father of humanistic psychology, characterized by a genuineness, warmth, and client centrality.

As research-informed clinical professionals seek to authentically engage the exquisite uniqueness of the exceptionally and profoundly gifted child, it is the hope of the authors that they would indeed "take pains." As Morelock (1997) reminded those in frequent or constant community with these individuals:

The complexity and depths of these children's understanding and the uniqueness of their individual phenomenological experiences may be strikingly different from anything for which our background may have prepared us. Unless we go gently with these children, approaching them without judgment, with openness to whatever we may learn from a variety of sources, we may come away without ever really knowing who they are. (p. 15)

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 We are indebted to Nobel Prize Laureate Phillip Anderson, Ph.D., for his salient 1972 article, "More Is Different," the title of which we borrow for our chapter. This seminal article advanced cross-disciplinary dialogue between physicists and biologists that contributed to the development of complexity theory.