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Keeping Their Talents Alive: *Young Women's Assessment of Radical, Post-Secondary Acceleration*

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Twenty-seven of the 30 young women who entered the University of Washington's Early Entrance Program (EEP) between 1988 and 1992 completed a 25-item questionnaire which asked why they chose early college entrance, whether gender played a role in their decision, and how their and others' attitudes toward themselves were affected by their participation in the EEP. They were also asked about their perceptions of sexism in educational and work environments; the values and dreams that guided their educational, professional, and relational decisions; and whether they thought early college entrance had been a help or a hindrance to their goals. Results indicated that although gender was not a factor in most respondents' decision to enroll in the EEP, young women derive a number of unique benefits from radical acceleration, including a rare combination of acceptance and encouragement at a critical age that might help to inoculate them against less supportive environments as they grow older.

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The transition from adolescence to early adulthood is a critical period for gifted young women. Societal ambivalence about gender roles leads many to believe they must make a choice between being smart or being found attractive and socially valuable. As a result, some young women forego opportunities to participate in academically challenging programs.

Over the years, a number of programs have evolved to promote the development of young women's talent, particularly in nontraditional fields like mathematics and science. McCormick and Wolf (1993) provided an overview of several of these programs (e.g., Project REACH, Expanding Your Horizons, EQUALS, and Multiplying Options Subtracting Bias) and reported on their success, as measured by both longevity and proliferation. They caution, however, that gifted girls ...

> *continue to face dilemmas which involve conflicts between social acceptability and intellectual prowess. Until these issues are addressed as an integral part of gifted girls' educational experience, we will continue to see situations in which women are underrepresented in the majority of technical and scientific careers. (p. 87)*

How can parents, educators, and counselors of the gifted redress and reverse this trend? We believe that one way is to create accelerated educational environments where females do not have to downplay their intellectuality to be accepted by peers. Academic acceleration has long been greeted with skepticism by parents and educators, primarily because of fears about its psychosocial ramifications. Many well-meaning adults are concerned that students who skip grades will feel lonely and isolated, and by-pass opportunities to develop critical social skills with chronological age peers. Still others worry that accelerated adolescents, particularly girls, will miss out on important social and extracurricular activities afforded by high school. However, a number of studies have shown that academic acceleration has a very positive effect on gifted student's social and emotional well-being, as well as their intellectual growth.

Cornell, Callahan, and Loyd (1991b) used a battery of assessment instruments, including the California Personality Inventory, to examine the psychological adjustment of 33 adolescent women who were enrolled in their first year at Mary Baldwin College. They found that in contrast to non-accelerant control subjects, accelerants "evidenced a surprisingly consistent pattern of healthy psychological growth over the course of the year" (p. 135). Early entrants became "more independent, resourceful, and self-sufficient,...more self-assured, more self-disciplined, and more strongly oriented toward completing tasks" (p. 140). They also developed a stronger sense of self and became more empathic and psychologically minded. At the same time, some students experienced adjustment problems

that may have reflected a mismatch with this particular residential program (Cornell, Callahan, & Loyd, 1991a).

Richardson and Benbow (1990) conducted an extensive follow-up study of over 2000 12-to-14 year olds who scored in the top 1% on a national mathematics achievement test and at the level of bright students four to five years older on the SATs, and who were encouraged to accelerate their education in a variety of ways. They assessed students' social development at ages 18 and 23 using extensive self-report questionnaires which asked about their education, career aspirations, family background, employment history, friendships, and opinions about acceleration. Richardson and Benbow found that, overall, students felt quite good about themselves and in control of their lives, and said they suffered no detrimental effects from skipping grades or taking college-level courses while they were still in middle or high school. "Greater amounts of acceleration were not related to greater amounts of social and emotional difficulties" (p. 467). Furthermore, more females than males reported that acceleration had positive effects upon their social lives.

We have found this favorable picture to be true in the Early Entrance Program (EEP) at the University of Washington. Each year the EEP accepts 16 bright, motivated, and highly disciplined students, maximum age 14, into the Transition School, a one year preparatory program that prepares them for full-time enrollment in the University the following year. When asked in a qualitative study (Noble & Drummond, 1992) why they chose to radically accelerate their education, both female and male students described how difficult it was for them to show or use their intelligence in junior or senior high school, how bored and lonely they felt in those environments, and how free they were to be themselves at the University. A recent follow-up study of former early entrants who had enrolled in the EEP between 1977 and 1986 found that those who had elected to skip high school and proceed directly to the University were as happy, psychologically healthy, and satisfied with their lives as were equally able young adults who had chosen to remain in high school (Noble, Robinson, & Gunderson, 1993). Not only did early college entrance prevent many bright individuals from turning off to school before they had experienced the joys and possibilities of their intellectual potential, but both females and males proceeded to graduate or professional school in greater numbers than did either of the comparison groups. These groups included National Merit Scholarship finalists, individuals who had been accepted into the EEP but elected, instead, to go to high school, and individuals who had been asked to leave the EEP and return to high school.

Noble, Robinson, and Gunderson speculated that acceleration was particularly beneficial for young women because it allowed them to by-pass a secondary school social milieu that is often destructive to female intellectuality, and "to develop and display their abilities in a supportive and nurturing environment" (p. 130). Their study, however, had not queried female respondents on this issue. The present inquiry was therefore designed to ask current female early entrants about the effect of radical acceleration upon their goals, aspirations, and sense of self, and whether they would recommend it as an option for other highly capable young women.

Method

Participants

The 30 young women who had completed the Transition School and enrolled in the University of Washington's Early Entrance Program between 1988 and 1992 were invited to join the investigation. None had participated in the 1991 follow-up study. A letter explaining the investigation was sent to all eligible participants, along with a questionnaire. Twenty-seven students (90%) responded, a rate obtained by sending one follow-up request to all prospective participants.

Procedure

A 25-item questionnaire was developed which interspersed open-ended questions with Likert-scale response items. The questions were designed to elicit information about why young women would choose early college entrance, whether gender played a role in their decision, and how their and others' attitudes were affected by their participation in the EEP. Respondents were also asked about: their perception of sexism in educational and work environments; the values and dreams that guided their educational, professional, and relational decisions; and whether they thought early college entrance thus far had been a help or a hindrance to their goals. The questionnaire was piloted with several students prior to its administration.

Results

Undergraduate Education

At the time of this study, all but five respondents were undergraduate students whose major fields of study were evenly distributed among the humanities, social sciences, and physical or life sciences. Three students were double-majoring in science and a humanity or a social science. The five remaining respondents had recently graduated; one was in graduate school in physics, one was in medical school, and three were working. Twenty participants (74%) claimed that gender played no role in their decision to enroll in the EEP, although one student said she might have been less frightened of high school had she been male, and another believed that the "anti-intelligence sentiment" was less pronounced in high school for males than for females. Another student stated that she would not have opted to enter the EEP had she been male because she would not have looked old enough to feel comfortable in college classes. (See Tables 1 and 2)

Twenty-four students (89%) believed they had made the right decision to skip high school and enter the EEP. Only one student said that after having been a university student for three years, "the benefits of being ahead of my peers academically don't outweigh the disadvantages of being so much younger than the other students in my classes and social activities." Sixteen (59%) felt that high

Demographic Information

Total *N*:	**30**	
Responses Returned	27 (90%)	
Responses Not Returned	3 (10%)	
Age:		
Mean	16.8	
S.D.	1.9	
Range 14-20		
Ethnicity:		
Asian American	6 (22%)	
Caucasian	21 (78%)	
Parents' Highest Level of Education		
	Mother	Father
High School Graduate	—	1 (4%)
Some College	2 (8%)	1 (4%)
College Graduate	15 (56%)	7 (26%)
Master's Degree	6 (22%)	8 (30%)
Doctoral Degree	2 (8%)	8 (30%)
Missing Data	2 (8%)	2 (8%)

Table 1

school would have had a dampening effect upon their intellectual potential. Only three respondents (11%) strongly believed that they would have been as motivated to develop their abilities had they gone to high school. (See Table 3)

Perceptions of Faculty Treatment

Respondents' perceptions of treatment by Transition School, Early Entrance, and University faculty were mixed. Two believed that females received better treatment by Early Entrance staff and that "it shouldn't be that way." Seven respondents felt that males received better treatment in the Transition School, six of whom cited male favoritism by the physics instructor as the problem. Two of these respondents attributed this differential treatment to their perception that the best students in physics were usually male. But one commented that "it could very well be that my own sense of weakness made me feel as though the boys were getting more attention. Or perhaps in our group there were more males who happened to excel in physics." One other respondent said

I know that there have been complaints on both sides (male and female) about female staff members' treatment of males and male staff members' treatment of females. However I've experienced little of either. I've found mostly that teachers have treated students according to how well they do, how hard they try, or how well they conform to a teacher's ideas in some circumstances.

Respondents perceived University faculty to slightly favor male students, an experience that was especially irritating to one young woman because "the best students in all my classes are women."

Perceptions of Parental Attitudes toward Participants

Parents were generally perceived as very supportive of their daughters' decision to accelerate their education, although mothers were perceived as slightly less supportive than were fathers. All respondents believed that acceleration positively changed their parents' attitudes toward them, particularly in terms of their independence and ability to work hard. Twenty-six respondents (96%) perceived their parents' academic expectations to be high or very high; 23 (85%) felt similarly about their parents' professional expectations, although as one student said, "This isn't to say my parents put pressure on me, but just knowing my capabilities, assume that I will achieve highly." Another pointed out that her parents "expect me to do my best and they are satisfied with that, no matter what it is. They don't push me toward anything. I can be a housewife or a doctor or anything in between and they would be satisfied as long as I was happy." Only two respondents felt their parents' professional expectations (but not their academic expectations) to be low or very low.

Self-Perceptions

As Table 4 suggests, respondents' perception of their own level of ability was, they thought, most powerfully affected by their participation in the EEP. Early entrance also made them feel more confident socially, and appeared particularly to enhance the perceptions of peers and family members as well. One respondent complained, however, that her peers "think I am smarter than I am when they learn that I attend college."

Undergraduate Education

Current Educational Status:

Undergraduate Student	22 (82%)
Graduate Student	1 (4%)
Professional Student	1 (4%)
No Longer a Student	3 (11%)

Undergraduate Field of Study:

Undecided	1 (4%)
Humanities	5 (19%)
Social Science	5 (19%)
Natural Science	8 (30%)
Double Major	3 (11%)
Missing Data	5 (19%)

Would you have made the same decision (to skip high school and enter the EEP) if you had been male?

Yes 20 (74%) No 2 (8%) Missing 5 (18%)

Do you think you made the right decision?

Yes 24 (89%) No 1 (4%) Missing 2 (8%)

Would you be willing to do it again?

Yes 20 (74%) No 5 (18%) Missing 2 (8%)

I would have been just as motivated to develop my potential had I gone to high school.

1=Strongly Agree	3 (11%)
2=Somewhat Agree	8 (30%)
3=Somewhat Disagree	6 (22%)
4=Strongly Disagree	10 (37%)

Mean 2.85 S.D. 1.06

Table 2

How do you feel that teachers treated female and male students?

1=Treated Females Better, 3=Same, 5=Treated Males Better

	Mean	SD
TS English Teacher	2.77	.59
TS History Teacher	2.85	.46
TS Math Teacher	2.96	.45
TS Physics Teacher	3.73	1.00
UW Professors	3.12	60
EEP Faculty/Staff	2.62	64

Table 3

Parental Attitudes and Support

How supportive were your parents of your decision to enter the EEP?
(1=Very Supportive, 3=Neutral, 5=Very Unsupportive)

Mother: Mean 1.81 SD .74
Father: Mean 1.26 SD .56

How did acceleration change your parents' attitudes toward you on the following dimensions? (1=Very Supportive, 5=Very Unsupportive)

	Mother		Father	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independence	2.04	.96	2.08	1.02
Dating	2.65	.98	2.60	.91
Your aspirations	2.46	.93	2.26	86
Your ability to work hard	2.08	.89	2.96	.90
Your ability to handle stress	2.31	1.19	2.29	1.00

How would you rate your parents' expectations of you:
(1=Very High, 3=Average, 5=Very Low)

Academically: Mean 1.37 SD .56
Professionally: Mean 1.63 SD 1.04

As a result of participating in the EEP,
(1=Strongly Disagree, 3=No change, 5=Strongly Agree)

	Mean	SD
My parents have greater appreciation and understanding of my abilities.	3.65	.80
My peers have greater appreciation and understanding of my abilities.	4.07	96
My siblings have greater appreciation and understanding of my abilities.	3.93	.96
My other family members have greater appreciation and understanding of my abilities.	4.11	.85
I appreciate and understand my abilities better.	4.33	1.07
I have become more confident socially.	4.11	1.05
My expectations of myself in terms of my career goals have increased.	3.52	1.16
I view myself as much more capable.	3.74	1.10
I have higher expectations of myself.	3.89	1.19
I feel better about myself.	3.67	1.36

Table 4

Values and Goals

One open-ended question asked respondents what they hoped to accomplish in their lives, both personally and professionally. Participants cited financial independence most frequently (n=11), followed by happiness, emotional security, and life satisfaction (n=8), finding a spouse and having children (n=8), and earning doctoral degrees (n=6). Individual professional goals included becoming a concert pianist, a physician, a scientist, and an environmental engineer. One respondent expressed her goals in this way: "[I want] to be in a leadership position, to feel that I am using my skills and knowledge, to develop strong relationships, to have a healthy, strong family, and to continue growing and learning."

Another open-ended question asked respondents what values were most important in deciding what to do with their lives. Participants cited happiness and personal enjoyment most frequently (n=10), followed by helping others (n=8), challenge, recognition, and achievement (n=-5), integrity, morality, or religious ideals (n=5), and financial stability (n=4). One student told us that

It's important to me that I do something that is, at least, not harmful to anyone and, preferably, can do some good. I also have very strong feminist and 'liberal' convictions which motivate my actions. For example, there are very few women in my chosen field, physics. I think this actually attracts me to physics because I think it's important to prove to people that women can be successful in traditionally "masculine" careers.

Participants were also asked, in an open-ended question, what qualities they would look for in a spouse or partner. Their responses were quite varied and included in descending order: intelligence (n=16); interpersonal compatibility (n=15); a sense of humor (n=11); a feminist orientation (n=4); physical attractiveness (n=4); religious compatibility (n=3); and respect (n=3). Although most (n=20) felt that it was important to them to be in a long-term relationship, Table 5 indicates that it was somewhat more important to be financially independent. The majority (n=18) anticipated having children at some point in their lives, although eight thought that conflict might arise between their careers and family lives.

Attitudes And Goals

Do you want to take advantage of more opportunities for acceleration in the future?
Yes 8 (30%) No 13 (48%)
Missing 6 (22%)

Do you feel you have more than one career option?
Yes 26 (96%) No 1 (4%)

How important is it for you to be financially independent?
(1=Very Important, 3=Neutral, 5=Very Unimportant)
Mean 1.70 S.D. .87

How important is it for you to be married or in a long-term partnership?
(1=Very Important, 3=Neutral, 5=Very Unimportant)
Mean 2.04 S.D. .81

Do you anticipate having a family?
Yes 18 (67%) No —
Don't Know 8 (30%)

Do you anticipate a conflict between your career and your personal or family life?
Yes 8 (30%) No 11 (40%)
Don't Know 8 (30%)

How well do the following adjectives apply to you?
(1=Very Well, 3=Somewhat, 5=Not At All)

	Mean	S.D.
Courageous	2.81	1.04
Self-Confident	2.56	.97
Resilient	2.19	1.08
Determined	1.52	.70
Self-Motivated	1.52	.89
Independent	1.81	1.08
Autonomous	2.24	97

Table 5

Propositions about Giftedness

Participants were asked to respond to a variety of propositions that have been cited in the literature as most powerfully influencing the development of gifted women's talent (Noble, 1989). Eighteen respondents (67%) had first-hand experience of the popularity vs. intellectuality dilemma. The comments of two students are telling: (See Table 6)

It depends where your talent lies. For example, musically, artistically, or athletically talented young women are more popular, generally, than women with gifts for mathematics or other 'nerdy' things. This is probably true for young men as well. One of the great things I experienced in Transition School was, at times, being popular because I was doing well academically.

Girls who are of above-average intelligence are often more likely to be popular, but extremely bright girls are thought strange or boring. Of course, it also depends on your interests. If you're very bright but into makeup and boys and music, etc., you have a better chance.

Only two respondents agreed with the proposition that "if women develop their potential they are less likely to get married or enter a long-term relationship." As one young woman said, "I believe that these women are less likely to have a full dating calendar, but those that are intelligent and develop their potential are more likely to find men that are willing to commit to long-term relationships."

Although 17 respondents (63%) disagreed with the proposition that "males don't like to date females who are smarter or more competent than they," 16 (60%) said they had had to hide their talents from males at some point in their lives in order to be accepted, and 19 (71%) said they had felt some pressure to hide their abilities in order to be accepted by other females.

Ten respondents (37%) had experienced males in positions of authority to be threatened by females who are bright and competent, while 11 (41%) had experienced this same reaction from females in authority. Respondents perceived both males and females in authority to be much less threatened by bright males (11%, 11%, respectively).

Please respond to each of the following propositions in terms of your own experience. (1 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.)

	Mean	SD
Bright and/or talented females are less likely to be popular.	2.15	1.01
Have you experienced this? Yes 18 (67%) No 7 (26%)		
Males don't like to date females who are smarter or more competent than they.	2.33	1.05
Have you experienced this? Yes 7 (26%) No 17 (63%)		
If women develop their potential they are less likely to get married or enter long-term relationships.	3.28	.74
Have you experienced this? Yes 2 (18%) No 22 (82%)		
Males in positions of authority are threatened by females who are bright and competent.	2.12	.82
Have you experienced this? Yes 10 (37%) No 18 (67%)		
Females in positions of authority are threatened by females who are bright and competent.	2.38	.96
Have you experienced this? Yes 11 (41%) No 12 (45%)		
Females in positions of authority are threatened by males who are bright and competent.	2.32	.80
Have you experienced this? Yes 3 (11%) No 17 (63%)		
Gifted females are under social pressure to hide their abilities in order to be accepted by other females.	2.00	.92
Have you experienced this? Yes 19 (71%) No 6 (22%)		
Gifted females are under social pressure to hide their abilities in order to be accepted by males.	2.00	1.00
Have you experienced this? Yes 16 (60%) No 8 (30%)		

Table 6

The Pros and Cons of Acceleration

The final open-ended question to which participants were asked to respond was what they considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of radical acceleration. The most commonly perceived advantage was the experience of being surrounded by intellectual peers for whom education was a high priority. As three respondents said,

EEP could respect making academics my highest priority. I never felt this would have been true in high school. The EEP let us escape from some very real social pressures of high school, many of which prove to be devastating to women who don't choose acceleration.

I think it is the best decision a gifted female can make. Radical acceleration gives a chance to fully develop your abilities, instead of being held back by slower students and forced to stunt your intellectual growth. Also, it puts you together with others, male and female, who are at your intellectual level. This is a wonderful benefit - it provides unique social opportunities, such as finding a "kindred spirit," that most gifted students, especially females, have never experienced.

One benefit is that I have finally found people who are willing to argue about things that would not have even come up with my other friends. I feel I can be who I am, and people will still respect me and like me.

Two students cited an increase in their self-esteem and self-confidence as the most important advantage. One said

There have been times when I've thought to myself..."You're not good enough - you're not as talented as so and so." And then I stop and think to myself, "Yeah, but you skipped high school. You must have something going for you." Silly as it sounds - silly as it is, it has worked and has given me the confidence many times to assert myself and my opinions in situations where I might otherwise not have.

Six respondents relished the opportunity to test themselves and rise to such a difficult challenge, and to have extra time to explore a variety of options and interests. In the words of one,

*I can't overemphasize the importance of the **time** I've saved and the freedom I've gained to **educate myself** in the direction and to the extent that I see fit by choosing my own classes. What an incredible gift!*

Respondents tempered their positive perceptions with the awareness that there were certain disadvantages to radical acceleration. One woman disliked being so much younger than other university students and occasionally being "treated like a kid"; two others regretted losing high school opportunities for recognition and achievement such as competition for various scholarships. Two respondents wished that they had had more time to prepare themselves in mathematics and science before encountering those subjects in the university arena. And two bemoaned the lack of life experience that they brought to the university.

There definitely is a downside. As an 18 year old senior I feel a certain pressure (not from parents) to know exactly what I want to do with my life and to go out and do it...At an age when I would normally just be entering college, I am being pressured by the circumstances to be planning a career and preparing to jump into the real world with all the 21 and 22 year old graduates. I am confused and lonely at times because there is not a clear cut group where I fit in...It is just hard to sort everything out and I feel that by growing up so fast, even by my own choice, I have parts of me that may never catch up to the rest of me. I sure hope they do, though, because it is hard being more than one age at once.

The one thing that has been hard on me is my lack of "life experience," just the fact that I have not lived long enough. This is not something I can "pick up." I just have to live with it. This also forces me to grow up a lot sooner.

One young woman mentioned a unique drawback:

You cannot say "I've been programming computers for (x) years" when you're trying to get a job. There isn't time to get the impressive experience others might have when you skip several grades. Sure, I've been programming since I was 12, but as one of my potential employers pointed out, it hasn't been that long.

Dealing with other people's perceptions of early entrance was especially irritating for one participant.

I have found that college students, both men and women, become supercilious and distant when they learn I am younger. I must tell them I am 17 when they ask and then sit through their questions, and they begin to treat me like I am their child or else they act uncomfortable and say things like, "Gee, you must be a genius."

But another had found a solution to this dilemma.

If you don't look or act as if you were very young, no one will notice that you are until they know you already, thus sparing you the feeling of being in a zoo. In general, older folks tend to be more accepting of giftedness than younger ones, so I think radical acceleration (like at least a couple of grade levels) is an excellent idea.

One young woman regretted a bad experience she had had with a boyfriend who was considerably older than she:

Large age mismatches in partners are not a good thing. In my experience, academic development can be greatly accelerated, social and emotional development can be somewhat accelerated, but sexual development is not a good quantity to mess with.

But another respondent who also dated older men had a different perspective.

I and a number of other EEP women have at one time or are currently dating men much older than ourselves. I think that this is often because older men are much better able to deal with smart women - they tend to be less insecure about themselves. This is also probably a side effect of our social lives being in college instead of high school.

Discussion

One question that has concerned many educators and parents of the gifted is how to recognize those students for whom radical acceleration is a wise option and those for whom it is not. The data from this and previous studies (Cornell, Callahan, & Loyd, 1991a; Noble & Drummond, 1992; Noble, Robinson, & Gunderson, 1993) demonstrate that intelligence is essential but never enough. Students who do well in accelerated educational programs are independent thinkers who are determined and assertive, and who have a strong

intrinsic motivation to succeed. Early entrants cannot be overly dependent upon others for either discipline or motivation. As our respondents reminded us repeatedly, students must want to undertake this kind of challenge and continue to want it, even when difficulties arise.

Overall, the young women in this study found early college entrance to be both intellectually and socially stimulating, and grew enormously as a result. Our data suggest that although gender was not a factor in most respondents' decision to enroll in the EEP, young women derive a number of important benefits from radical acceleration. Participants in this study developed more confidence in themselves and in their intellectual and social skills as a result of their efforts and the enhanced perceptions of families and friends. The experience of being surrounded by intellectual peers, something few believed they would have had in high school, meant that they didn't have to hide their level of ability or enthusiasm for learning, or perform less well than their capabilities allowed. Although this experience is also true for males who accelerate (Noble & Drummond, 1992), we believe that it is particularly important for gifted young women because it exposes them to a rare combination of acceptance and encouragement at a critical age and might help to inoculate them against less supportive environments as they grow older.

The most frequently cited problem by female early entrants involved dating men who, though traditional college age, were considerably older than they. As mentioned earlier, two respondents felt that they had been extremely mismatched with boyfriends in terms of both sexual and life experiences. When dating is introduced in college rather than in high school, some unique problems can arise for some young women. One student complained that "Both of my parents had difficulties with the idea of my wanting my social life at college and not high school. All through Transition School they hampered college activities and encouraged high school ones." Parental fears about dating may have contributed to respondents' perceptions that their mothers were somewhat less supportive of their decision to enter the EEP than were their fathers. It may be that mothers are more aware of the hazards of dating older men and thus more sensitive to this aspect of their daughters' development. Parenthetically, we might add our own observations that this concern may be misplaced, at least for this population of gifted young women. There have been no adolescent pregnancies and almost no reports of illicit drug use among the young women who have graduated from the EEP, and EEPers who proceed to graduate or professional school almost always complete their education before marriage and childbearing.

Several intriguing questions arose during our analysis of these data. For the most part, respondents' parents are a highly educated group (see Table 1). We wondered how many had taken unusual educational paths in their own lives and whether this might have enhanced their comfort with enrolling their child in an unusual program like the EEP. We also wondered why mothers were perceived as slightly less supportive than fathers. Does this reflect the mother-daughter conflict over issues such as privacy, curfew, and freedom of movement and/or action that frequently characterizes adolescence, or something else?

We were surprised and disturbed that 41% of our respondents perceived females in authority to be threatened by bright females (see Table 6). Because we did not ask for clarification or amplification of this item, it is difficult to know how to interpret this finding. Given that respondents' mean age was 16.8, it is doubtful that they would have many experiences with persons in authority outside of educational or religious settings. Could they be referring to recent experiences with women faculty? There are indications that some respondents felt differentially treated by some professors. Their perceptions might support Basow's (1994) contention that

> *people who violate expectations generally are rated more negatively than people who behave as expected. To receive good evaluations, male professors simply must demonstrate their competence and knowledge; that is, they need to fulfill their stereotypical gender role expectations. But female professors bear a double burden; they must fulfill both their gender role by being nurturant and warm, as well as their professional role by being competent and knowledgeable." (p.1)*

Unfortunately, we have no data with which to understand this important issue.

How might radical acceleration affect the lives of gifted young women who are neither White nor Asian? Again, we cannot say. Despite extensive and annual efforts to recruit appropriate students from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, very few students of color apply to the Early Entrance Program. To date, the EEP has served only three students who were of African- American or Hispanic descent; no Native American has requested admission. The fact that non-Asian students of color are underenrolled may support Evan's contention that "For some gifted young women of color, the very act of attending a predominantly White school or special program is a rejection of their culture...Peers may call them "oreo" (as in the cookie which is Black outside and White inside), "banana" (Yellow outside and White inside), or "apple" (Red outside and White inside" (in press, p. 8). Hopefully, sustained recruitment efforts will raise public awareness and increase the diversity of our student population.

Finally, are the effects of radical acceleration different for young women than for young men? If high school were a more appealing environment, would bright students continue to opt for early college entrance? At present the EEP provides students with a large peer group, facilities that serve as a home base, special seminars to apprise students of academic, cultural, recreational, counseling, and health care opportunities, and an active support system that includes their own University advisor. They are also eligible to compete for scholarship programs open to high school seniors such as National Merit Scholars and University of Washington Scholars, and to participate in athletic programs at their home high schools. Are there additional ways to alleviate some of the concerns that some students have about foregoing certain high school opportunities? Although we cannot answer these questions at this time, they do indicate promising directions for future research.

The data in this study were derived from self-report questionnaires rather than from standardized psychological or personality tests. Thus, we cannot objectively assess changes that occurred within our respondents before and after completion of Transition School and their entry into the EEP. Furthermore, the EEP is a very small and close-knit program. Even though we assured respondents of their confidentiality and anonymity by assigning a randomly selected code number to each questionnaire, some participants may not have felt free to be totally forthright.

With the exception of only one respondent, however, all the young women who participated in this study were glad they had made the choice to

radically accelerate their education, regardless of the stressors they encountered on the way. All believed that their decision had markedly improved their intellectual and academic skills, reinforced their self-confidence and professional goals, and strengthened their social and emotional well-being. Taken as a whole, the findings from this study and those cited earlier in this report clearly suggest that the most important question parents, educators, and champions of gifted females can ask is not "What are the negative effects of acceleration?", but rather "What are the negative consequences of not accelerating mature and self-disciplined gifted young women?"

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