

Influences of Self in Career Decision-making among Gifted Adolescents Attending Governor's School in Science and Technology (Virginia)
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The purpose of this study was to investigate conflict in educational and career decision-making of gifted adolescents who had attended a summer residential program in science and technology. The sample consisted of 147 gifted and talented young men and women who attended the Virginia Governor's School in Science and Technology in either 1990 or 1995. Subjects completed the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ) as a measure of work needs and values, and an investigator-designed questionnaire that probed the path of their career decision-making. Results on the MIQ indicated the 1990 cohort was significantly higher on the needs subscales of achievement, altruism, comfort, and safety. There was no significant difference, however, on the subscales of autonomy and status. There was also no significant difference in the MIQ profiles of those conflicted compared to those who were not. Results on the investigator-developed questionnaire indicated a significantly higher percentage of subjects from the 1990 cohort who indicated conflict in their educational and career decision-making than from the 1995 cohort. The results also indicated that those who experienced conflict in decision-making had many of the same academic experiences, attained similar levels of achievement, and took advantage of similar opportunities as did those who were not conflicted. The two groups differed in respect to certainty of career plans, intention to remain in mathematics or science, and pursuit of graduate studies. The overall results suggest that developmental growth may play an important role in expressed satisfaction in gifted adolescents' chosen career paths.

Implications of the study suggest that effective career counseling efforts may want to focus on how developmental influences impact on decision-making at different points in career planning, and how short and long-range goals may accommodate potential shifts in needs and values. Effective counseling interventions will depend on the specific features of the gifted program design and service delivery model in place. Programs utilizing gifted resource teachers as well as residential programs have a greater opportunity to embed awareness of the role of developmental influences on decision-making. Dovetailing suggested interventions with existing counseling programs may prove efficient as well as effective. Finally, infusing career counseling strategies within teacher preparation programs serving teachers of the gifted may also prove effective.