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Suggested Further Reading

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Nurturing Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Children

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Introduction

Historical Perspective

The notion of high intelligence being associated with emotional or social difficulties has been, in some ways, counter-intuitive. That is, a major and generally accepted key facet of the construct of "intelligence" is that intelligence includes problem-solving abilities in various areas, and these problem-solving abilities most often include such related areas as forethought, reasoning ability, ability to see cause-effect relations, attention to details, memory for relevant data, and a wide array of knowledge upon which the individual might draw (Sattler, 1988). To the extent that an individual possesses more of these cognitive qualities, it might seem that such an individual would then have fewer—not more—social and emotional problems. According to this logic, such individuals should be able to anticipate, avoid and/or solve more interpersonal problems than others, and should have more self-understanding.

Such assumptions and implications regarding the impact of intelligence on emotional and interpersonal functioning apparently are not always valid. Authors periodically have written of individuals who were highly able cognitively, but who demonstrated significant emotional or interpersonal deficits. Other authors (e.g., Kerr, 1985), however, have suggested that intelligence does seem related to interpersonal adaptiveness.

Historically, controversy has existed about the extent to which intellectually gifted children are prone to social and emotional problems. In the early 1900s, the prevailing notion within Western cultures was that intellectually gifted children were constitutionally more prone to insanity or to becoming social misfits. Early cognitive development was likely to result in similarly early atrophy, as was expressed in the then-popular saying of "Early ripe; early rot." The classic Terman longitudinal studies of gifted children disproved this general notion, and found that the identified gifted children were, as a group, no more likely to experience social or emotional difficulties than were children in general (Terman, 1925; Terman & Oden, 1947). In fact, these children seemed to have fewer problems, although retrospective consideration suggested that Terman's sample was

probably biased in ways that favored environmentally advantaged, teacher-favored children, many of whom received advice and guidance as they grew (Kerr, 1991; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982).

Even so, subsequent voices sometimes differed. Hollingworth (1926, 1942) agreed with Terman's findings with regard to most gifted children, but noted that children of unusually high intelligence seemed more prone to certain types of problems. Using the then-new IQ tests, she concluded that there was an "optimum intelligence" range of about 120-145, in which range children generally had fewer social and emotional problems. However, children above that range, in her opinion, were more at risk for various personal and interpersonal difficulties.

In the 1940s and 1950s, little professional emphasis was placed on social or emotional problems of gifted children, although a few authors (Strang, 1951; Witty, 1940) wrote about the psychology of gifted students. In the 1960s and 1970s, a very few programs were begun to counsel and guide gifted students, usually programs that were affiliated with universities (Kerr, 1991), but few publications resulted concerning social-emotional needs.

In the 1980s, a surge of interest occurred in this topic. Webb, Meckstroth, and Tolan (1982) published *Guiding the gifted child*, a book which focused on social and emotional issues faced by gifted children and their families. Much of their work was based on limited amounts of research available at that time, and on the experiential evidence from numerous therapists, educators, parents and counselors. In the intervening years, new issues, perspectives, and substantial research have emerged. This chapter attempts to summarize these issues and perspectives.

Definitional Issues

During the twentieth century, studies of gifted children generally defined them primarily in terms of intelligence as measured on a standardized IQ test (Alvino, McDonnell, & Richert, 1981), thereby identifying academically gifted children. Talented children were more often considered as having one or two unusual

abilities—usually in areas such as music or art that were not considered part of the more traditional educational genre—and more often such children were described as “creative.” As a result, studies concerning the extent to which talented or creative children—as contrasted with academically gifted children—might be more prone to social or emotional problems are more often anecdotal and less well organized (Piirto, 1992).

In the last decade, particular attention has been given to reconceptualizing the concepts of “intelligence” and “giftedness,” as well as the methods used to identify such children. Prior to that time, educational and psychological practice almost exclusively identified gifted children in terms of intellectual ability and/or specific academic aptitude, despite the conceptual breadth of legislative or textbook definitions (Fox, 1981). In particular, “giftedness” was often treated as though it were synonymous with intelligence test scores and/or academic achievement test scores or educational achievements (Webb & Kleine, 1993).

Recent investigations have raised strong doubts as to the adequacy of current IQ tests to measure “intelligence,” because most assess convergent, culturally bound thinking rather than divergent, creative and innovative mental processes. Perhaps the most salient conceptualization is that of Gardner (1983) who posited the notion of “multiple intelligences” and delineated at least seven (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal). By doing so, he highlighted that intelligence and unusual achievement exists in areas other than the two or three (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial) which are traditionally measured by most intelligence and achievement tests currently used in educational and psychological settings.

Questioning whether intelligence is primarily a *g* (general) factor or a combination of *s* (specific) factors occurred far earlier in this century (Sattler, 1988); Gardner's work is only the most recent and most oriented toward public understanding. With the emphasis on multiple intelligences, gifted, talented and creative children appear increasingly to have been considered jointly as essentially one group, where the constituents may vary greatly in the areas of high ability as well as the extent of those abilities.

Despite the refinement of these concepts, research to date on social and emotional difficulties generally has not made distinctions between these types of gifted individuals, even though several persons have expressed the opinion that more creative, “right-brained,” divergent thinking youngsters were more at risk for social problems, as well as perhaps emotional difficulties (e.g., Janos & Robinson, 1985; Piirto, 1992; Torrance, 1979).

In considering social and emotional needs of gifted children, it is therefore necessary to recognize that most of the research and observations concerning such needs revolves around gifted children who were considered gifted in more traditional ways. That is, the existing knowledge about possible social and emotional diffi-

culties is derived from children who showed unusual aptitude primarily in academic areas; children with high aptitude in other “intelligences” (to use Gardner's term) generally have not been studied regarding social and emotional difficulties, nor has there been much study of highly able students who have been unwilling or unable to show their abilities academically. Thus, the present comments are generally limited in this regard.

What are the Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Children?

Current Views

At the outset, it is important to recognize that publications concerning social-emotional needs of gifted children and their families can be grouped into two basic categories. One group of authors views gifted and talented children as being prone to problems and in need of special interventions to prevent or overcome their unique difficulties (e.g., Altman, 1983; Hayes & Sloat, 1989a; Delisle, 1986; Kaplan, 1983; Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Silverman, 1991). The other group of authors (e.g., Colangelo & Brower, 1987; Scholwinski & Reynolds, 1985) views gifted children as generally being able to fare quite well on their own; gifted children with problems needing special interventions are seen as a relative minority (Dirkes, 1983; Janos & Robinson, 1985; Shore, Cornell, Robinson, & Ward, 1991).

These divergent views are not as contradictory as they might first appear. Those authors who find that gifted children are doing relatively well on their own usually have chosen students from academic programs specifically designed for gifted children. Such children, by the very nature of the selection process, are typically functioning well in school, which then generally implies also that they are not experiencing major social or emotional problems. Such selection procedures are likely to limit the representativeness of the sample of the gifted children being studied (Colangelo & Dettman, 1983) and would exclude gifted children who are academically underachieving because of social or emotional problems (Whitmore, 1980) and who are not being served educationally in special programs for gifted children. By contrast, those authors who find consistent problems among gifted children often rely on data gathered in clinical settings and from individual case studies where the population is self-selecting (Webb et al., 1982; Silverman, 1991). Likely there may be a sample bias as well in studies of such nature so as to prompt an over-estimate of the incidence of social and emotional difficulties.

It would appear that both views have at least partial validity. Gifted children who are able to function sufficiently in school settings such that they can be identified as such are likely also to be functioning generally well in other areas of life, and thus do not appear to be at major risk for developing social and emotional

problems, particularly if these children are also being served by some school program which is attempting to meet their needs. On the other hand, high potential gifted children who have not been identified and are not in school programs appear to be more at risk for certain social and emotional difficulties (e.g., Ballering & Koch, 1984). The latter group has received fewer empirical studies, however, probably because of the difficulties in locating subjects in ways that fit with accepted experimental designs, as well as because of the emphasis on considering children as gifted only when they overtly have achieved.

It should also be recognized, though, that there are exceptions to both groups. Some unidentified and unserved gifted children function quite well personally and socially; conversely, some gifted children in excellent school settings experience notable problems. The following discussion describes key dimensions that appear to relate to these exceptions, as well as to some of the more common reasons why gifted children are unable to function well enough to be identified and served.

Contextual Issues

A second major consideration involves the context within which the gifted child functions. Consideration of social and emotional functioning of gifted children cannot be considered without first considering the cultural aspects of giftedness. As Gardner (1983), Mistry and Rogoff (1985), Tannenbaum (1983) and others have pointed out, different cultures define giftedness in different ways, and different cognitive talents are valued in various cultures. In addition to the cultural attitudes that overtly define the human abilities being valued as “gifted,” cultures likewise vary in the more covert attitudes that devalue gifted. It appears that most—perhaps all—cultures have ambivalence about certain individuals possessing unusually high cognitive abilities. Thus, not only must the gifted child's characteristics and needs be considered, but also the cultural context.

To a large degree, the needs of gifted children are the same as those of any other human, and generally these children go through the same developmental stages as other children, though they may reach these developmental stages at a younger age (Webb & Kleine, 1993). Similarly, gifted children face potentially limiting problems (as do other children) such as: poverty and low socioeconomic status, drugs, including alcohol, minority group status and chance (Kleine & Webb, 1992). To the extent that such needs and challenges are met by positive and supportive responses from their environment, social or emotional problems are less likely. However, social and emotional problems are more likely to the extent that the family or school meets these needs and challenges with hindrances such as harsh, inconsistent punishment, over-conformity to societal expectations, family disintegration, emotional problems by family members, perfectionism, or rewarding indiscriminately

the child's behaviors. Even so, there appear to be some social and emotional problems of gifted children that develop even when the environment, family and school personnel are supportive. In such cases the environment appears only to play a role in determining whether these difficulties become more or less resolved.

Endogenous vs Exogenous Problems

In keeping with this line of thought, a clear distinction must be made which specifically considers contextual aspects as distinct from internal personal characteristics of gifted children. It is helpful to separate social and emotional difficulties of gifted children and their families into two categories—exogenous and endogenous.

Exogenous problems are those that arise—or are caused—primarily because of the interaction of the child with the environmental setting (e.g., family or the cultural milieu). Endogenous problems are those that arise primarily from within the individual child essentially regardless of environment; that is, endogenous problems stem from the very characteristics of the gifted child. The endogenous-exogenous distinction has been used in psychology, but has not been used heretofore specifically with regard to the emotional functioning of the gifted child. Such a distinction, however, appears to have considerable merit in conceptualizing the social and emotional needs of gifted children.

Needs and Types of Problems Likely to Occur

One useful approach to understanding needs and potential problems is to examine those intellectual and personality attributes that characterize gifted children, and which often are considered to be strengths. However, as Clark (1992), Seagoe (1974) and others have noted, the very characteristics that may be strengths also may have potential problems associated with them. Some of the more common of such characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Even so, relatively few of these characteristics of gifted children inherently make such children more likely to experience social and emotional problems. Instead, whatever difficulties occur most often arise as exogenous problems from the interaction of these characteristics with the cultural settings, attitudes and value-milieu within which gifted children may find themselves.

Endogenous Problems

Nevertheless, some characteristics of gifted children do seem to increase the probability of social and emotional difficulties essentially regardless of the influence by the cultural milieu. Several of these characteristics are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 1
Possible Problems That May be Associated with Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children

Acquires and retains information quickly.	Impatient with slowness of others; dislikes routine and drill; may resist mastering foundation skills; may make concepts unduly complex.
Inquisitive attitude, intellectual curiosity; intrinsic motivation; searching for significance.	Asks embarrassing questions; strong-willed; resists direction; seems excessive in interests; expects same of others.
Ability to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize; enjoys problem-solving and intellectual activity.	Rejects or omits details; resists practice or drill; questions teaching procedures.
Can see cause-effect relations.	Difficulty accepting the illogical—such as feelings, traditions, or matters to be taken on faith.
Love of truth, equity and fair play.	Difficulty in being practical; worry about humanitarian concerns.
Enjoys organizing things and people into structure and order; seeks to systematize.	Constructs complicated rules or systems; may be seen as bossy, rude or domineering.
Large vocabulary and facile verbal proficiency; broad information in advanced areas.	May use words to escape or avoid situations; becomes bored with school and age-peers; seen by others as a "know it all."
Thinks critically; has high expectancies; is self-critical and evaluates others.	Critical or intolerant toward others; may become discouraged or depressed; perfectionistic.
Keen observer; willing to consider the unusual; open to new experiences.	Overly intense focus; occasional gullibility.
Creative and inventive; likes new ways of doing things.	May disrupt plans or reject what is already known; seen by others as different and out of step.
Intense concentration; long attention span in areas of interest; goal-directed behavior; persistence.	Resists interruption; neglects duties or people during period of focused interests; stubbornness.
Sensitivity, empathy for others; desire to be accepted by others.	Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection; expects others to have similar values; need for success and recognition; may feel different and alienated.
High energy, alertness, eagerness; periods of intense efforts.	Frustration with inactivity; eagerness may disrupt others; schedules; needs continual stimulation; may be seen as hyperactive.
Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self.	May reject parent or peer input; non-conformity; may be unconventional.
Diverse interests and abilities; versatility.	May appear scattered and disorganized; frustrations over lack of time; others may expect continual competence.
Strong sense of humor.	Sees absurdities of situations; humor may not be understood by peers; may become "class clown" to gain attention.

Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seagoe (1974).

TABLE 2
Characteristics of Gifted Children Associated with Endogenous Difficulties

- Drive to use one's abilities
- Drive to understand, to search for consistency
- Ability to see possibilities and alternatives
- Emotional intensity (focus; intrinsic motivation)
- Concern with social and moral issues (idealism)
- Different rates or levels of physical and emotional development

Even the characteristics listed in Table 1 are seldom inherently problematic by themselves. More often it is combinations of these characteristics that lead to problematic behavior patterns. Some of the more common patterns from such interactions are as follows.

INTERNAL DYSSYNCHRONY

Motor skills, particularly fine-motor, often lag behind a child's cognitive conceptual abilities, particularly in pre-school gifted children (Page, 1983; Rogers, 1986; Sebring, 1983; Webb & Kleine, 1993). When the lag is substantial, and when it is combined with their intensity, the result is often emotional outbursts like temper tantrums. That is, the child may see in his "mind's eye" what he wants to do or construct or draw; however, his motor skills do not allow him to achieve his goal. The more intensely he tries, the more frustration he experiences, often resulting in an emotional outburst which may be viewed by others as immaturity.

Another kind of internal dyssynchrony is the lag of judgment or emotional maturity behind intellect (Roedell, 1980; Webb et al., 1982). Significant stress in the lives of gifted youngsters occurs when they attempt to deal with emotions or social or interpersonal concepts that are simply beyond their capacity (Hayes & Sloat, 1989b; Kerr, 1982, 1991). Many aspects of life cannot be "reasoned out" and can be understood only through the accumulation of experience (Webb & Kleine, 1993). Advanced reasoning abilities do not necessarily help in weighing emotions (Foster, 1985).

Internal dyssynchrony can likewise occur between the emotions and intellect of a gifted youngster, or within areas of emotions. Piechowski's (1991) descriptions of Dabrowski's theories appear to be most relevant. Dabrowski's concept of developmental potential not only includes talents, special abilities or intelligence in the more usual sense, but also includes five primary underlying components of psychic life. These five "forms of psychic overexcitability" are (1) psychomotor, (2) sensual, (3) intellectual, (4) imaginal, and (5) emotional, and it is these five components that give power or intensity to talent or abilities. It is also these five components that drive persons toward self-knowledge and self-actualization. Since gifted persons appear to have more intense overexcitabilities, they are more driven in these areas. However, Dabrowski

notes that the progress toward self-knowledge and self-actualization often involves times of intense emotional growth, turmoil and "positive disintegration" or "positive maladjustment" where acute self-examination and change are undertaken, and which constitute a necessary step in personal growth and development.

These endogenous aspects, however, do also have exogenous consequences. As Piechowski (1991) noted, the stronger one's overexcitabilities, the less welcome they are among peers and teachers. Further, overexcitabilities in some areas (e.g., sensual) may not be as welcomed by society as would other areas of overexcitability.

PEER RELATIONS

Although, as seen below, most peer relation problems are exogenous, there is at least one type of peer relation problem that is primarily endogenous. As pre-schoolers and in primary grades, gifted children (particularly highly gifted ones) repeatedly and intensely attempt to organize people and things, and in their search for consistency, emphasize "rules" which they attempt to apply to others. Often they invent games and then try to organize their playmates. Almost regardless of the setting, tensions are likely to arise between the gifted children and their peers (Webb et al., 1982).

PERFECTIONISM

The ability to see how one might perform, combined with emotional intensity, leads many gifted children to have unduly high expectations of themselves. The fervor of involvement in their activities combined with their unrealistic goals consumes great amounts of personal time and energy, often unproductively. Various authors (e.g., Clark, 1992; Hollingworth, 1926; Powell & Haden, 1984; Roeper, 1988; Takacs, 1986; Webb et al., 1982; Whitmore, 1985) have noted perfectionism to be frequently found among high ability children, with estimates that between 15–20% of highly able children may be significantly handicapped by perfectionism at some point during their academic careers. Some authors have suggested that anorexia is related to perfectionism, particularly among gifted adolescent girls. Though this may be true, the larger literature on anorexia also suggests an exogenous component, namely power struggles between the anorexic youngster and his or her parents.

AVOIDANCE OF RISK-TAKING

In the same way that gifted youngsters can see the possibilities, they also to the same extent can see the potential problems in undertaking those activities. Though the prevalence has not been estimated, authors generally agree that some of these children are unwilling to take such risks, and that the extent of this is related to self-concept problems (some part of self-concept problems is likely endogenous; but a

larger part is probably exogenous). The avoidance of risk-taking is often expressed in under-achievement (Whitmore, 1980), but may also be seen in obsessive indecision where the child perseverates in considering alternatives and outcomes to such a degree that taking an action is hindered. The avoidance of risk-taking is also likely when gifted youngsters initially encounter non-success, usually when going from high school to college, and find this experience to be devastating (Blackburn & Erickson, 1986).

EXCESSIVE SELF-CRITICISM

Being able to see possibilities and alternatives also can imply that youngsters not only may see idealistic images of what they might be, but simultaneously berate themselves because they can see how they are falling short of such an ideal (Adderholt-Elliott, 1989; Powell & Haden, 1984; Strang, 1951; Whitmore, 1980; Webb et al., 1982). The intensity, combined with the idealism, magnifies the amount of self-evaluation, often leading to excessive and inappropriate self-criticism. This pattern often is the foundation for one kind of depression that gifted children are likely to experience, where the depression is really anger and disappointment at oneself because of high self-expectancies (Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Webb et al., 1982).

MULTIPOTENTIALITY

As most gifted children approach adolescence, they typically become aware that they have advanced capabilities in several areas. Many of these children enjoy tremendously this multipotentiality, and are involved in diverse activities to an almost frantic degree. While this is seldom a problem for the child, such level of activity may create problems for the family (as noted below). For the individual, however, problems may arise when decisions need to be made about career selection (Kerr, 1985). Since time is limited in any person's life, one cannot engage in all activities that one is interested in. By choosing one career path, other alternatives are essentially negated. The result can be decisional anxiety or existential depression (Webb et al., 1982). Kerr (1981, 1991) concluded that multipotentiality was the most frequent cause of gifted students' difficulties in career development.

EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION

The intense idealism and multiple career concerns of older gifted children is not, they discover, widely shared by others their age. It is often this discovery and this idealism that prompts gifted children—especially highly gifted—to spend substantial amounts of personal time and energy searching for life's meaning as it relates to them. Career options, self-satisfaction, consistency

of beliefs and behaviors, persistence and real value to humanity—all become important concerns. The recognition that time and space limits the development of one's potential (i.e., one cannot be all that one could be simply because there is not enough time nor space) is combined with realization of the transience of one's efforts (Hayes & Sloat, 1986b; Piechowski, 1991). The result often is that the gifted youngster feels angry at fate, questions the meaning and worth of life's existence, and experiences notable existential depression (Webb et al., 1982). Particularly is this likely if the youngster's cognitive developmental stage is still "dualistic," seeing the world in terms of absolutes of right and wrong or good and evil (Kerr, 1991), and thus the youngster is searching for absolutes about life.

HANDICAPPED GIFTED

Physical handicaps can likewise prompt endogenous social and emotional difficulties for gifted children. The child's intellect may be quite high, but because of motor difficulties such as cerebral palsy the potential cannot be expressed. Or the child may have a co-existing potential handicap such as significant visual or hearing impairment. Even the abilities of gifted children without visible physical handicaps are not uniform in ability areas. At the extreme, one can find a gifted child who is learning disabled in one or more areas.

A phenomenon often seen in such children is that they tend to under-estimate their cognitive abilities. Children who are gifted, but disabled, tend to evaluate themselves based more on what they are unable to do, rather than on their substantial abilities (Whitmore & Maker, 1985). Gifted children with physical and learning disability conditions of various kinds also often elicit exogenous responses from parents and professionals that can be handicapping to them.

Exogenous Problems

Although little clarifying research exists, it is this author's opinion that the majority of social and emotional problems experienced by gifted children are exogenous in origin. That is, the characteristics of gifted children exist in the context of the interaction of the child with the child's family, school setting, and/or culture in general, and these characteristics may, or may not, fit with that environmental context.

The lack of understanding or support for gifted children, and indeed the actual ambivalence or hostility, create significant problems for gifted children (Webb et al., 1982; Webb & Kleine, 1993). The different behaviors valued as gifted by different cultures or sub-cultures likewise may negatively influence certain talents while enhancing others (Mistry & Rogoff, 1985). Some of the more commonly occurring exogenous problem areas and patterns are as follows.

EDUCATIONAL CONFORMITY VS INDIVIDUALISM

The gifted child is, by definition, unusual as compared with the typical developmental template—at least in cognitive abilities—and requires different educational experiences (Kleine & Webb, 1992). Educational settings, however, are generally established to use task-expectancies based on age-norms, and the children are grouped by age for educational instruction. Thus, the cognitively gifted child is unlikely to fit the curriculum, depending on the rigidity of the age-groupings and on the presence or absence of flexibility in the instruction regarding individual differences among learners (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985). The child, then, has a dilemma: "If I maximize my individual abilities and learn at the most appropriate pace for me, then I am likely to be seen as non-conformist. If I conform to the expectancies for the average child, then I am bored, dishonest with myself, and handicapping my future development." Underachievement is most often the result.

Similarly, underachievement may result from school environments that are insufficiently challenging. Such schools may value good grades and performance, and the gifted children may feel positive about these schools. Careless, incomplete, disorganized, poor quality and procrastinated work may result, however, because the school environment has not taught the challenging process required for achievement (Rimm, 1991).

Probably the largest body of literature concerning gifted children (e.g., Feldhusen, 1985) concerns their educational needs, and what adaptations could or should be made to the "regular" curriculum in order to accommodate the gifted child's needs. Except for self-contained programs or schools, these adaptations represent compromises as a part of societal ambivalence about gifted children. That is, the attitude exists that gifted children should develop their abilities, but that they also should fit in with others. Even in self-contained classes and schools which do not practice age-grouping, however, problems may occur depending on the extent of variations of levels and types of abilities, as well as the social concerns that may arise from certain combinations of chronological ages (e.g., adolescent and pre-adolescent children) being grouped together.

EXPECTANCIES BY OTHERS

Closely related to the dilemma of educational conformity vs individualism is the larger dimension of expectancies that others often have of gifted children. In fact, it is likely that the ambivalence about gifted children is simply a reflection of the ambivalence in expectations by society at large concerning education in general (Kleine & Webb, 1992; Webb & Kleine, 1993).

This issue of meeting the expectancies of others vs individualism is an enduring one in the life span of the gifted child, and is displayed in many arenas (Piechowski, 1991). This issue is seen at school, at home, with peers, and in society at large. Whitmore

(1979) listed nine behaviors that adults often find to be problems regarding gifted youngsters: not listening, dominating, tuning out, argumentativeness, refusal to comply with instructions, teasing or ridiculing, excessive competitiveness, desire to control others, and messiness with personal things and work. All of these imply some cultural or familial norm or tradition to which the child is expected to adhere.

However, gifted children—particularly the more creative ones—often are non-conformist. Whenever a person is non-conformist—that is, violates or challenges a tradition, ritual, role or expectancy—that person very often prompts discomfort in those around. The non-conformist is no longer predictable; the non-conformer is challenging the status quo (Webb et al., 1982). The more different (e.g., in creativity or intellect) the child is, the more likely that child is to be seen as non-conformist and thus more likely to experience criticism or rejection by others.

In some areas (e.g., sports) such non-conformity may be valued. However, in most modern societies there is an ambivalence about exceptionality in intellect or creativity. That is, on the one hand the societies value the products of such exceptional individuals, but on the other hand tend to pressure them to conform and feel uncomfortable with apparent lack of control over such individuals. Variations of the difficulties in conformity versus individualism may be found in several different areas.

PEER RELATIONS

Who is a peer for a gifted child? Often gifted children need several different peer groups because their interests are so varied. Because of their advanced levels of ability, often gifted children gravitate toward older children or adults in their search for peers (Webb et al., 1982). Or, if no suitable peers are immediately available, the gifted child may choose to find peers by reading books (Halsted, 1988), rather than engage in unsatisfactory boring interactions with those who happen to be around. However, to do so may be considered non-conformist by those around.

The pressures toward conformity vary within cultures as well as across cultures. For example, gifted girls, minority group children, certain religious group members, or the unusually creative child seem particularly likely to experience pressures toward conformity in peer relations (Colangelo & LaFrenz, 1981; Kerr, 1985; Piirto, 1992). Career decisions in particular are influenced by the role expectancies of those in the environment. To continually attempt to reconcile the conflict between fitting in and being an individual can be quite stressful.

DEPRESSION

Depression is usually being angry at oneself (primarily endogenous) or being angry at a situation over which

one has little or no control (primarily exogenous) (Webb et al., 1982). The two, however, are often related.

As noted earlier, the anger at oneself is generally endogenous. That is, the gifted child is able to perceive personal shortcomings equally as well as perceiving personal possibilities. In fact, however, the anger at oneself may also have an exogenous component. In some families a tradition exists of continual evaluation and criticism of performance—one's own and others. In such an environment, any natural propensity by the child to self-evaluate will likely be inflated. The possibility of clinical or sub-clinical depression will be increased in such situations, as well as academic underachievement. The characteristic most consistently found among underachieving children is such low self-esteem (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Fine & Pitts, 1980; Whitmore, 1980).

Exogenous depression may also stem from helpless anger at situations over which one feels no control (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978), and low self-esteem may be closely related to a poor sense of personal control over one's own life (Rimm, 1991). In general, when the environment (e.g., home, school, friends) is not supportive of one's needs, and one feels trapped, the result is typically depression. The educational misplacement of gifted children is likely to result in them being in situations which do not meet their needs, but over which they have little or no control. Similarly, if suitable peers are unavailable, the gifted youngster may feel as though he or she is in living in a world that is in slow motion.

FAMILY RELATIONS

Families are particularly influential in developing—or hindering—social and emotional competencies. Numerous authors have emphasized the obvious—namely that parents are extremely important (perhaps the most important) factors in enhancing—or diminishing—the development of achievement, creativity and eminence (Albert, 1978; Bloom, 1985; Dacey, 1989; Goertzel, Goertzel & Goertzel, 1978; Kleine & Webb, 1992; Little & Scott, 1990; Sanborn, 1979; Silverman, 1991). Family child-rearing patterns represent particular family traditions; however, cultural expectancies about child-rearing are expressed through the family as well. It is in the family, then, that several exogenous problems for gifted children may occur. Some of the more common are as follows.

POWER STRUGGLES

Most parents—particularly those with high aspirations—have definite ideas about the level of achievement or areas of competence that they view as being important for their child to attain. Intense parental aspirations, when combined with the intensity of the gifted child, can lead to major power struggles, with the resulting passive-aggressiveness by the youngster

being a major cause of underachievement (Rimm, 1991; Webb et al., 1982). Fathers in particular tend to perceive giftedness in terms of achievement (Silverman, 1986) and appear to be more likely to become involved in power struggles concerning achievement.

ENMESHMENT OR CONFLUENCE

As Miller (1981) noted, some parents of gifted children become emotionally enmeshed with their children in a different fashion. These parents narcissistically attempt to live out their own aspirations and wished-for achievements through their highly able child, and they become overly involved in the child's life. Instead of a power struggle, the child accedes to the parental over-involvement. This pattern can lead to the gifted child having a poorly differentiated sense of self-identity as distinct from that of the parent.

MISTAKING THE ABILITIES FOR THE CHILD

This problem often is embedded within the two problems noted above, and are part of the enmeshment or the power struggles. The child's unusual abilities may be what is emphasized by the parents—particularly fathers (Silverman, 1991), and the child's feelings or sense of person are denigrated. Such an over-emphasis on achievement within the family environment prompts the child toward perfectionism and superficial relations with other people, for the child, too, generally comes to internalize the emphasis on the importance of accomplishments rather than on the inherent worth as a person (Foster, 1985). To be sure, there are highly achieving persons who feel good about themselves, who are neither perfectionistic nor superficial. Such persons seem to have come from families which emphasized and modeled achievement, but balanced it with concerns for personal worth (Bloom, 1985; Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; Mackinnon, 1962).

SIBLING RELATIONS

When one child in the family is labeled as gifted—and most often that is the first-born child (Borson, 1973; Cornell, 1984; Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970), the other children in the family may view themselves as non-gifted. Gifted children often hold high status in the family (Cornell, 1983); parents often feel closer to and prouder of the child who is labeled gifted, sometimes generating adjustment problems in siblings not yet identified as gifted (Cornell, 1983, 1984, 1989; Grenier, 1985; Silverman, 1991). Despite the "either-or" thinking that siblings may engage in, there are indications that when one child in a family is gifted, the siblings are likely to be close in intelligence (Silverman, 1988). Thus, it becomes important to evaluate siblings to see if they, too, might warrant being considered as gifted. Otherwise, there is substantial likelihood of underachievement by the unlabeled, but equally bright, siblings (Webb et al., 1982).

Sibling rivalry seems more likely if the second-born child is labeled as gifted but the first-born is not (Tuttle, 1990). Whereas first-born children identified as gifted generally enjoyed a close sibling relationship, second-born children labeled as gifted experienced more problems in sibling relationships. However, as the difference in siblings' IQs increases, there is some indication that the competition among the siblings is less and the sibling relations more harmonious (Ballering & Koch, 1984).

PARENTAL UNDERSTANDING

Family problems do not occur because parents consciously decide to create difficulties for their gifted children. If problems occur, it is most often because the parents either (a) lack information about gifted children or lack support for appropriate parenting, or (b) are attempting to cope with their own unresolved problems (which may have to do with their own experiences with being gifted).

Despite conventional beliefs, parents often overlook or underplay signs of precocious intellectual development in their children (Ginsberg & Harrison, 1977; Rogers, 1986; Silverman, 1991; Webb et al., 1982). These parents—particularly fathers—often fail to recognize that their child is gifted (Dembinski & Mauser, 1978; Dickinson, 1970; Webb & DeVries, 1993), though they may recognize their child as different from other children (Webb et al., 1982). Most parents, particularly of younger children, attempt to apply guidelines and norms derived from children of average abilities or which emphasize minimally expected developmental criteria (Ross, 1964; Sebring, 1983; Webb & Kleine, 1992). Parental puzzlement and frustration often results.

Sometimes parents' own unresolved issues with giftedness contribute to family problems. Commonalities of heredity and environment usually (though not always) result in gifted children having gifted parents (Albert, 1978; Mackinnon, 1962; Silverman, 1991; Silverman & Kearney, 1989). However, most parents are unaware of how bright they are or how it affects their lives. The intensity, impatience, and high expectancies that characterize these parents, if not mediated by self-understanding, can create an environment of misery for those within the family.

CHANCE AND LOCATION FACTORS

As Tannenbaum (1983) noted, whether a child's unusual abilities become noticed, supported or valued often will depend on the time and place of the child's life. Cultural and familial support will likely be present if the child's unusual behaviors are ones that are valued at that time and place in history, but may well be thwarted in a different location or historical period. Such a lack of support can cause various social or emotional problems, or can exacerbate those problems noted previously.

Approaches to Preventing or Ameliorating Problems

Gifted children are not immune to problems simply because of their unusual abilities, though it does appear that their capabilities often allow them to experience fewer major social and emotional difficulties (Janos & Robinson, 1985). Ironically, though, the advanced ability to adapt or adjust may result, itself, in some problems such as underachievement or excessive conformity (Kerr, 1985).

Accurate statistics on the extent of social and emotional problems are lacking in large part because of the previously noted flaws in the identification of gifted children in studies of such areas, as well as because such studies generally have not controlled for the varying cultural/familial factors that lead to exogenous problems. Suffice it to say that, whether endogenous or exogenous, substantial numbers of gifted children do experience social and emotional problems at some point in their lives, and these problems can be significant ones. Further, problems of a gifted child usually affect the entire family.

Preventive Guidance Approaches

Instead of assuming that gifted children are afflicted with unique social or emotional pathology, it is more sensible to assume an approach that emphasizes enhancement of potential even when considering endogenous problems. The best and most effective approach, therefore, is one of preventive guidance.

INCLUDE PARENTS

It is important to recognize that parenting is more important than teaching in preventing or ameliorating social or emotional problems. Not that teaching is unimportant; it is just that parenting is more important since teaching—no matter how excellent or supportive—can seldom counteract inappropriate parenting. Supportive family environments, on the other hand, can most often counteract potential damage if a child has poor school experiences.

If preventive guidance approaches are to be successful, particular emphasis must be placed on helping parents to gain information. But surprisingly few efforts are made to include parents, and indeed parents are not infrequently the subject of many criticisms by educational professionals (Kleine & Webb, 1992). Some state associations for gifted exclude parents, or permit their participation only on a very limited basis, as though giving them more information or involving them jointly would be a detriment.

FOCUS ON PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

It is generally accepted that social and behavioral problems are best prevented if parents are involved when the children are young. In particular it is necessary

to help parents understand the characteristics of gifted children that may make these children seem different or difficult to parent. Such an approach would help achieve a better alignment of expectations between the home and the school, and would promote more consistency in approaches to the child. Currently, however, parents are not involved in most communities until the child is well into school. Since most gifted children are not identified as gifted until second or third grade, or even later (Webb et al., 1982), efforts to involve parents of gifted children typically do not occur until children reach these grades.

EDUCATE AND INVOLVE PEDIATRIC PROFESSIONALS

Extremely few efforts are made to assist young gifted children or their parents. Partly this is because of the difficulties in accurately identifying young gifted children (Webb & Kleine, 1993), but also partly it is because professionals (such as pediatricians and psychologists) who work with parents of young gifted children have received little relevant training about gifted children, and therefore are unable to provide much assistance to these parents (Kleine & Webb, 1992; Webb & Kleine, 1993). Clearly an emphasis is needed on helping the relevant caregivers, such as pediatricians, nurses, psychologists, day-care centers, etc., with regard to young gifted children and their parents, which further implies that these professionals should receive education about the characteristics of gifted children and implications for their adjustment (Hayden, 1985). Associations for parents and teachers of gifted children should make concentrated efforts to invite such other professionals to attend and participate in their state and local meetings, and in continuing education programs.

"USER-FRIENDLY" SCHOOLS

If parents are to become more appropriately involved with the schools (and this is even more important when the child has unusual cognitive abilities), then the schools must take a far more "user-friendly" and proactive stance toward parents of gifted children (Karnes & Marquardt, 1991a,b; Kleine & Webb, 1992). When gifted children come from an ethnic minority, such reaching out by educational professionals is even more necessary. Parents from groups which are disadvantaged are far less likely than other parents to become actively involved in their child's school activities or to establish a partnership with school personnel. The societal disadvantages experienced by such families simultaneously put them more at risk for being unable to provide social and emotional support that the gifted child will need.

EDUCATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

From ages 6-18, the gifted child spends an extremely high proportion of his or her life in school. To the extent that the school curriculum is designed around,

and focused upon, the average or below average child, frustration for the gifted child and negative attitudes toward school are likely to occur. To the extent that the school incorporates flexibly paced educational options for gifted children based on the child's individual needs, the frustration and negative attitudes are far less likely to occur.

Seven such flexibly paced educational options have been delineated as relatively easy ones to implement in most school settings (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985). They are: early entrance; grade skipping; advanced level courses; compacted courses; continuous progress in the regular classroom; concurrent enrollment in advanced classes; and credit by examination. Mentorships have also been shown to allow flexible educational options that can prevent social and emotional problems (Reilly, 1992). Because gifted children are, by definition, exceptional, they require different educational experiences. If they do not receive such experiences, there may be clear emotional consequences as noted previously. The advantages of such flexible educational options primarily stem from their being based on competence and demonstrated ability, rather than on arbitrary age groupings.

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

One particularly effective approach has been the establishment of guided discussion groups for parents of gifted children (Webb et al., 1982). These groups, which meet once each week for ten weeks, allow parents to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of their children as well as understanding of the cultural and educational milieu in which they and their children function.

Parents of gifted children typically have few opportunities to talk to other parents of gifted children. Through such groups, parents get opportunities to "swap parenting recipes" and child-rearing experiences with parents of other gifted children. These experiences help to normalize many behaviors and provide a sense of perspective, as well as to give many specific and concrete behavioral suggestions for parenting and educating gifted children. Whereas parents of other children often have informal opportunities to discuss child-rearing with other parents, it is far more exceptional for parents of gifted children to have such a resource. Most parents of gifted children report that parents of less able children have difficulty understanding the parenting experiences they describe because of the advanced levels and intensity of their gifted children.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

Parents of gifted children often are avid readers themselves, and turn to books for assistance in parenting and educational decisions. Unfortunately, books concerning gifted children are not particularly well represented in our public or school libraries, nor are they actively

marketed by the publishers. Fortunately, there are some books for parental guidance (e.g., Rimm, 1986, 1990; Walker, 1991; Webb et al., 1982) as well as for gifted children themselves (Galbraith, 1983, 1984; Halsted, 1988). Some books promote a sense of humor and perspective (e.g., Watts, 1989, 1992).

SUMMER CAMPS AND OTHER GROUP EXPERIENCES

One of the most notable benefits from a social and emotional viewpoint of summer camps, Saturday enrichment programs, Governor's Institutes, etc., is the feeling of having peers with whom one can relate, as well as having more appropriate curricular experiences (Feldhusen, 1991). The feeling of being accepted while being authentic is powerful. Such supplementary program services are able to fill in many missing educational and interpersonal experiences.

CAREER GUIDANCE

The multipotentiality of gifted youngsters virtually mandates that they receive career guidance. College planning must begin earlier than for most other youngsters (Berger, 1989; Reilly, 1990). Career and higher education guidance assume even greater importance if the gifted youngster is female or a minority group member (Kerr, 1991).

Advocacy Approaches

Perhaps some will question why advocacy approaches would be listed as a major avenue for addressing social and emotional needs of gifted children. Perhaps such inclusion will become more evident upon reflection.

CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT

As noted previously, the largest proportion of social and emotional difficulties results from the cultural ambivalence or hostility toward gifted children, particularly if these children are creatively non-traditional. It becomes very important, then, to change societal attitudes through advocacy.

Enabling legislation is needed to allow educational systems to be more responsive to gifted children and their parents, and parents of gifted children need guidelines for pursuing due process and mediation (Karnes & Marquardt, 1991a,b). Changes in attitudes are needed to overcome the cultural ambivalence as well as to achieve more support and acceptance for gifted youngsters in developing their abilities.

ADVOCACY AS A ROLE MODEL

Advocacy, itself, provides a model of challenging traditions—the status quo. As George Bernard Shaw wrote: "The reasonable man adapts to the world around him.

The unreasonable man expects the world to adapt itself to him. Therefore all progress is made by unreasonable men." Gifted children need—and will continue to need—role models who are "reasonably unreasonable" and who will continually advocate for excellence in various fields. Such role models help to prevent the "learned helplessness" or the cynical withdrawal and depression that otherwise might result. Minority gifted children need such advocacy in particular since often they are in a "double minority"—that is, gifted and Hispanic or gifted and African-American, etc.

Counseling and Psychotherapy Approaches

As noted previously, most counselors, psychologists and primary health care professionals have little, if any, training in assessing gifted children or in assisting such children and their families with emotional or interpersonal difficulties. In fact, some studies have indicated that these professionals have distinctly negative feelings toward gifted children (Shore et al., 1991), while others suggest that these professionals simply believe that "a bright mind will find its own way" (Webb et al., 1982). Further, most such professionals have been trained in a pathology model, rather than an enhancement of human potential model, and tend to focus only on clear dysfunctions compared with the norm rather than seeing the failure to reach potential might likewise be a dysfunction.

SERVICES UNDER A DIFFERENT LABEL

Many needs and problems of gifted children and adults are served by counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists, but the situations and problems are mislabeled or labeled in a fashion that is only partially accurate. That is, behaviors that are characteristic of gifted children or adults may be interpreted as being symptomatic of some other condition. For example, the seeing of numerous possibilities in situations would likely be classified as obsessive behavior. The intensity and daydreaming of a bored gifted youngster might be labeled as an attention deficit disorder. The existential depression might be labeled correctly, but not attributed to the person's brightness. Interpersonal withdrawal could be due to the felt lack of peers by a gifted youngster. The clownish classroom behavior of a gifted child who is educationally misplaced might be incorrectly diagnosed as an undersocialized conduct disorder behavior pattern.

ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

Sometimes formal psychological assessments are needed. This may be because of the need for a differential diagnosis, or it may be because the parents or school want a "second opinion." It becomes particularly important for professionals doing such assessment to become educated about gifted children. For example, on projective personality tests gifted children often give

responses that might appear pathological, but really are simply a reflection of their vivid imagination combined with their intensity (Kleine & Webb, 1993). Unless mental health professionals are aware of this anomaly, many gifted children will be misdiagnosed as having severe emotional problems.

Out-of-level testing likewise may be needed since so many gifted children reach the ceiling on many subscales of most standardized tests of cognitive ability. This unusual assessment approach is the only current procedure which allows estimates of extremely high abilities. And gifted children show a great deal more intra-test scatter than do other children (Webb & Kleine, 1993). That is, there is substantially greater variability across abilities within a gifted child than among children of average or less ability level. Such variability can prompt inappropriate conclusions of learning disability or of other disorders.

TREATMENT APPROACHES

Treatment interventions generally are quite effective with gifted children and their families. Their conceptual quickness apparently allows them to more quickly grasp and apply therapeutic suggestions. Relationship and insight-oriented approaches appear particularly effective since they go along with the cognitive strengths of the gifted child. That is not to demean behavioral or strategic approaches; they, too, may be helpful. Particularly is there evidence, for example, that rational-emotive therapy approaches are effective in helping gifted youngsters learn to manage their "self-talk" that underlies their feelings of excessive stress, or of perfectionism or depression (Webb et al., 1982).

However, many gifted children have a particular need to feel understood and to have a relationship with the treating professional. In addition, most gifted children are searching for some cognitive framework through which they might understand, much in the way that the personality theorist Prescott Lecky (1945) stated that humans had an inborn drive to search for consistency.

Family therapy may also be advisable as well, for gifted children regularly have a keen impact on families. As one mother described, "Having a gifted child in the family doesn't change the family's life-style; it destroys it!" Family therapy is a particularly effective approach to issues of enmeshment or confluence, or where parents have "parentified" the gifted youngsters by giving them decision-power than is excessive.

Group therapy is often difficult with gifted youngsters in middle school because of their consuming concern with peer relations and peer evaluations, and is more effective with youngsters in elementary grades as well as those in high school. The issue of peer relations will be similar in these groups, but seems more overwhelming for youngsters in middle school grades. The high school students also often will have existential and career issues in addition.

Dual-diagnosed gifted children are a particular challenge—for example gifted and attention-deficit disorder. All of the usual problems of attention-deficit disorder exist, but are combined with the intensity and other characteristics of a gifted child. Often in such cases the knowledge concerning treatment of the pathology diagnosis must take precedence, but the treatment will move much more quickly and in unusual directions because of the mental agility of the child involved.

Conclusions

Despite the imprecision of the terms and concepts used to describe gifted, talented, creative children, current knowledge suggests that gifted children are at risk for certain kinds of social and emotional difficulties because of their personal characteristics. The larger risk for gifted children, however, appears to stem from contextual factors. Because of this, it appears important to distinguish between endogenous and exogenous causes for social and emotional problems of gifted children.

Preventive guidance approaches that involve parents appear to be the most important in nurturing the social and emotional needs of gifted children. Advocacy approaches are a key element as well both in prevention and in amelioration of problems for gifted children because they can impact upon the environmental context. Counseling and therapeutic approaches, including psychological assessment, are necessary, and substantially more efforts are needed in involving these and other health professionals.

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Nurturing the Moral Development of the Gifted

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Introduction

In the empirical and theoretical literature on the gifted, attention has focused primarily on thinking abilities or talents, and only in recent research has there been an increased interest in personality and social factors. The importance of moral development in gifted subjects is self-evident, because morality is at the intersection of cognition and action, and its positive development plays an important role in the equilibrium of individuals and society. Morality, in fact, is generally viewed as the set of basic guide lines for determining how decisions about action and how the resolution of conflicts among different interests/points of view are to be settled. Since morality concerns judgments about rightness of behavior, it is based on cognitive factors (analysis of behaviors and their consequences, discussion of normative assumptions) and is also guided by motivational and affective factors (motives for following assumptions in action, and capacity to act consequently). In this review, three sets of considerations on the development of morality are presented:

(1) moral behavior is based on specific cognitive abilities of rational analysis and discussion of actions concerning rights, duties and consequences (about life, affects, well-being of self and others);

(2) moral behavior has roots in affect/emotion and on control and integration of drives and needs (in terms of empathy, care for others, task commitment); and

(3) moral behavior needs to be nurtured by specific education which concerns both the cognitive and the emotional aspects.

Even if some psychologists (for instance, Aronfreed, 1968; Mischel & Mischel, 1976) view cognition as concerning only moral judgment (or verbal moral expressions, determined by cognitive factors), and affect and emotion concerning moral behavior, both are involved in judgment and in action, although with different weight. In fact, behavior is influenced by categorization of events and situations and by selection of relevant information, while moral judgment is partly pervaded by affective factors, emotional experience, attitudes, and values.

History of the Problem

In recent years a great deal of research has examined the development of moral judgment in general, based on the classical studies of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969). However, there has been little work which has examined the relationship between moral judgment and moral behavior, little research on intervention strategies for enhancing these relations, and practically no research on these issues with respect to giftedness. Research on the social development of the gifted has mostly examined topics such as adjustment, popularity, leadership, or problems in interacting with friends. Only a few studies are devoted to altruistic or prosocial behavior, or to moral development. Therefore, we are often obliged to infer the moral characteristics of the gifted from the most intelligent subjects in studies examining other topics, and only in those cases where separate data for such subjects are reported. Cognitive developmental studies of moral development have argued for the existence of a sequence of stages in judgment about the nature of rules (both in play and in interpersonal behavior), rightness of actions, and distributive and retributive justice. Piaget (1932) defined three such stages as egocentric, realistic-heteronomous and autonomous, stating that reciprocity, consideration of the intentions of agents, and reference to the functional aims of rules, are the discriminating features of autonomous morality. Piaget studied the development of concepts of "rule" and "law" by analyzing children's play behavior (especially social games, such as skittles or marbles), and by discussing game rules with the children themselves, to test their conceptions and the relationship between practice and conscious reflection on rules. He noted that children develop from egocentric behavior to respect for rules and, between 6-7 and 10-11, they became gradually aware that rules are not unchangeable, are not based on an absolute respect due to adults or to God, but may be modified through consensus in a reciprocal, cooperative perspective. Thus, they develop from a "moral realism" based on the respect for adults and authority to a "moral autonomy" based on cooperation

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