Nurturing Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Children

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Introduction

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 promotes certain problem-solving abilities in various areas, and these problem-solving abilities most often include such related areas as foresight, retaining ability, and 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 capable 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 arrest, as 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, & Tolias, 1982).

Even so, subsequent voices sometimes differed. Hollingsworth (1936, 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 "optimium 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 Tolias (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.

Definition 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, McCool, & 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 track. Overall, children referred by home or other hand-CHILDREN as "creative." As a result, studies concerning the extent to which talented or creative children—as contrasted with academically outstanding—were more prone to emotional problems or more often anecdotally and less well organized (Piirto, 1992).

In the last few decades, research has been given to reconceptualizing the concepts of "intelligence" and "giftedness" and 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 defined as though it were synonymous with intelligence test scores and/or academic achievement test scores or educational achievements (Webb & Kluck, 1993).

Recent investigations have raised strong doubts as to the adequacy of IQ tests to measure "intelligence," because these are the most assets convergent, culturally bound thinking rather than divergent, creative and innovative thinking. We have stressed the most salient conceptualization is that of Gardner (1983) who posited the notion of "multiple intelligences" and delineated 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. Most intelligence and achievement tests currently used in educational and psychological settings.

Social-emotional intelligence is primarily a g (general) factor or a combination of g (specific) factors occurred far earlier in this century (Sattler, 1988); Gardner himself has been the most prominent of these mental traits are fostered and meant toward public understanding. With the emphasis on multiple intelligences, gifted, talented and creative children appear increasingly to have been constrained as essentially one group, where the constituents members may vary greatly in the areas of high ability as well as the extent of their socioemotional development. Despite these limitations, research to date on social and emotional difficulties generally have not been distinguished between these types of gifted individuals, even though several persons have expressed the opinion that "giftedness never carries a negative label." Thinking youngster's were more at risk for social problems, as well as perhaps emotional difficulties (e.g., Jackman & Hechler, 1987; Tien, 1987).

In considering social and emotional needs of gifted children, it is 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 difficulties is derived from children who showed unusual aptitude primarily in academic areas; children with high potential (to use Gardner's terms) 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: (a) those authors who believe 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; Hay, 1986; Slos, 1989a; Delisle, 1986; Kaplan, 1983; Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Silverman, 1991). The other group of authors (e.g., Colangelo & Covington, 1987; Schonert & 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, 1980; Short, 1980; Ward, 1993).

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 programs, are typically functioning well in school, which then generally implies also that they are not experiencing major social or emotional difficulties in their environment. Thus, not unlikely to limit the representativeness of the sample of the gifted child's behavior (Colangelo & Detmam, 1983) and would exclude gifted children who are academically underachieving because of social or emotional problems. The gifted children also may not being supported educationally in special programs for gifted children. By contrast, those authors who find consistent difficulties and other "institutional" problems have often researched data on gifted children and have indicated that social and emotional problems may be a sample bias as well in studies of such nature as so as to prompt an overestimate of the incidence of social and emotional problems (Piirto, 1987).

It would appear that both views have at least partial validity. Gifted children able to function very well in school settings such that they can be identified as such are likely also to be functioning generally well in other areas of their lives. Gifted children who 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. Other hand, high potential gifted children who have not been identified and are not in school programs appear to be more prone for certain social and emotional problems (e.g., Ballenger & 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 controlling gifted 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 caught the same problems. The following discussion describes key dimensions that appear to be important in considering the nature of some common problems with gifted children, as well as to some of the more common reasons why 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), Martyn and Rogoff (1984), Tannenbaum (1985) and others have pointed out, different cultures define giftedness in different ways; and different cultural values are valued in various cultures. In addition to the cultural attitudes that very define the human abilities as being valued as "gifted", there are other covert attitudes that devalue gifted. It appears that most—perhaps all—cultures have ambivalence about certain individuals possessing certain traits and abilities. Thus, not only must the gifted child's characteristics and needs be considered, but also the cultural context.

To a large degree, the definition of what is considered a gifted child are the same as those of any other human, and generally these children have the same developmental stages as other children. Therefore, little about the "giftedness" is low socioeconomic status, drugs, including alcohol, minority group status, etc. (Gerald, 1992). To this extent that such needs and challenges are met by positive and supportive responses from their environment, they are less likely. However, social and emotional problems are more likely to the extent that the home or school meets these needs and challenges with hindrances such as harsh, inconsistent punishment, over-conformity to societal expectations, family disorganization, 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 cultural 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—endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous are those that are arise—or are caused—primarily because of the behavior of the child with the environmental setting (e.g., family or the cultural milieu). Exogenous problems are those that arise primarily from within the individual, and in an initially regardless of environment; that is, endogenous problems stem from the very nature of the 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 are often considered to be strengths. However, as Clark (1992), Seago (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 more likely as exogenous problems from the interaction of the child's attributes and capacities and the various life-styles 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 regarded as endogenous or within 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquires and retains information quickly.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inquisitive attitude, intellectual curiosity; intrinsic motivation;</td>
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<tr>
<td>searching for significance.</td>
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<td>Ability to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize; enjoys problem-solving and</td>
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<td>intellectual activity.</td>
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<td>Can see cause-effect relations.</td>
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<td>Love of truth, equity and fair play.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoys organizing things and people into structure and order;</td>
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<tr>
<td>seeks to systematize.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large vocabulary and facile verbal proficiency; broad information in advanced</td>
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<tr>
<td>areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks critically; has high expectations; is self-critical and evaluates others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keen observer; willing to consider the unusual; open to new experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative and inventive; likes new ways of doing things.</td>
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<td>Intense concentration; long attention span in areas of interest;</td>
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<tr>
<td>goal-directed behavior; persistence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity, empathy for others; desire to be accepted by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High energy, alertness; eagerness; periods of intense efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diverse interests and abilities; versatility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong sense of humor.</td>
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<td>Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seago (1974).</td>
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TABLE 2
Characteristics of Gifted Children Associated with Endogenous Difficulties

| Drive to use one's abilities                                                  |
| Drive to succeed, to search for consistency, to excel                         |
| Ability to see possibilities and alternatives                                 |
| Emotional intensity (frustration)                                             |
| Concern with social and moral issues (idealism)                              |
| Different rates 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 DYSFUNCTION
Motor skills, particularly fine-motor, often lag behind a child's cognitive conceptual abilities, particularly in pre-school and grades one to three (Gardner, 1983; Sebanc, 1983; Webb & Klein, 1989). 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 dysynchrony is the lag of judgment, usually behind intellect (Trowell, 1980; Webb et al., 1982). Significant stress in the lives of gifted youngsters occurs when they attempt to deal with advanced abstract and conceptual 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 & Klein, 1993). Advanced reasoning abilities do not necessarily help in weighing the emotional implications.

Internal dysynchrony can likewise occur between the emotions and intellect of a gifted youngster, or within areas of emotions. Such differences in Dabrowski's (1991) descriptions of Dabrowski's theories appear to be most relevant. Dabrowski's concept of development 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) imaginative, 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 Pielowski (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 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 in the search for consistency, and may experience "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 innumerable 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; Rooper, 1988; Takacs, 1980; Webb et al., 1982, 1983) 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 inducements when the child perseveres in considering alternatives and outcomes to such a degree that taking any action is rendered impossible. The absence of risk-taking may also likely when gifted youngsters initially encounter non-success, usually when going from high school to college or attempting to be devasitating (Blackburn & Erickson, 1986).

EXCESSIVE SELF-CRITICISM

Being able to see possibilities and alternatives also can imply that youths not only may see realistic situations, but might be, but simultaneously judge them themselves because they can see how they are falling short. Indeed, in such situations, the intensification of ‘Irene’ and Haden, 1984; Strang, 1951; Whitmore, 1980; Webb et al., 1982). The intensity, combined with the idealism, exaggeration, and self-criticism, often leading to excessive and inappropriate self-criticism. This pattern often is the foundation for one kind of depression that is called perfectionism, where the depression is really anger and disappointment at oneself because of high self-expectations (Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Webb et al., 1982).

MULTIPOTENTIALITY

As most gifted children approach adolescence, they typically become aware that they have developed capabilities in several areas. Many of these children enjoy competition, and their pursuits 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 give in all activities that one is interested in. Choosing one career path, other alternatives are essentially negated. The result can be decisional anxiety or existential depression (Webb et al., 1982). 1991). This suggests 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 are a likely, widespread, and shared by others of their age. It is often this discovery and this idealism that prompts gifted persons—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 social expectations or educational set

EDUCATIONAL CONFORMITY VS INDIVIDUALISM

The gifted child is, by definition, unusual as compared to the typical developmental template—at least in cognitive abilities—and requires different educational experiences. Although gifted children do tend to be more talkative and energetic in the classroom (Hayes & Sloat, 1988; Pechowski, 1991), the result often is that the gifted youngster feels angry at the adults who are so preoccupied with their work. Thus, the gifted youngsters feel estranged 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 a part of the child’s potential is potentially not be expressed. Or the child may have a co-existing physical 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 underestimate their abilities, more specifically, are 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 different kinds also often exhibit exogenous responses, and adaptations that could 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 his/her setting, and also culture in general, and these characteristics may, or may not, fit with that environmental context.

A lack of support for gifted children, and indeed the actual ambivalence or hostility, create significant problems for gifted children (Webb et al., 1982). The constant feelings of “out of the loop,” being valued as gifted by different cultures or subcultures within the school often influence students’ self-worth. Anxiety toward others (Mistry & Roffel, 1985). Some of the more commonly occurring exogenous problem areas and patterns are as follows.

PEER RELATIONS

Who is a peer for a gifted child? Often gifted children need several different peer groups because their interests are so different. Often, their advanced levels of ability, adults in their search for peers (Webb et al., 1982). Of course, if the child is receiving gifted or advanced placement, the gifted child may choose to find peers by reading books (Halsted, 1988), rather than engage in unsatisfactory boring interactions that happen to 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 conformance vs individualism is the larger dimension of expectations that others often have of gifted children. In fact, the lack of information about gifted children is simply a reflection of the ambivalence in expectations by society at large concerning education in general. The problem is particularly acute, because much of the literature appears to stress the importance of cultural-educational differences in unique settings while enhancing others (Mistry & Roffel, 1985). Some of the more commonly occurring exogenous problem areas and patterns are as follows.

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). However, are often related.

As noted earlier, the anger at oneself is generally endogenous. That is, the gifted child is able to perceive possible failures as personally important as well as personal possibilities. In fact, however, the anger at oneself is often expressed by their child by self-evaluation will be likely 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, 1986; Whitmore, 1988).

delayed 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) of one's own nature, and one feels trapped, the result is typically depression. The educational misplacement of gifted children is likely to result in 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 younger 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' behavior is extremely important (perhaps the most important) factors in enhancing—or diminishing—the development of achievement, creativity and emotion competence (Alpert, 1978; Bloom, 1985; Dacey, 1989; Goetzl, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978; Klein & Webb, 1992; Little, 1989; Santorno, 1979; Silverman, 1983). Family child-rearing patterns represent particular family traditions; however, cultural expectations about child-rearing are not necessarily different. It is 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 strong ideas about the level of achievement or areas of competence that they view as being important for their child to attain. Intense parental aspiration, when combined with the intensity of the gifted child, can lead to major power struggles, with the resulting passive-aggressiveness by the younger being a major cause of underachievement (Rimm, 1991; Webb et al., 1981). These children identified 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 so focused on their educational level or their child is a different fashion. These parents narcissistically attempt to live out their own aspirations and wishes 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 belief that 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 the focus on 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 achievement-oriented parents (Patton, 1967), who are neither perfectionistic nor superficial. Such persons seem to have come from families which emphasized and modeled achievement. Commonalties of personal worth (Bloom, 1985; Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; Mackinnon, 1962).

SIBLINGS RELATIONS

When one child in the family is labeled as gifted—and most often that is the first-born child (Boroson, 1977; Cornell, 1984; Rosenberg, 1987; Silverman, 1979, 1983)—then other children in the family may view themselves as non-gifted. Gifted children, often hold high status in the family (Cornell, 1983; particularly when feel closer to and prouder of the child who is labeled gifted, sometimes generalized to other siblings. TheGifted Report concludes that when one child in a family is gifted, the siblings are likely to be close in intelligence (Silverman, 1988). Thus, it becomes extremely important to be aware of possible sibling differences in the sibling relationship. It is unlawful to prevent the child's sibling from performing unreasonably. The Gifted Report concludes that the Gifted Report concludes that when one child in a family is gifted, the siblings are likely to be close in intelligence (Silverman, 1988). Thus, it becomes extremely important to be aware of possible sibling differences in the sibling relationship. It is unlawful to prevent the child's sibling from performing unreasonably.

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. But this is not always the case. Children may have different location or historical period. Such a lack of support can cause various emotional problems, or can exacerbate those problems noted previously.

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 giftedness in terms of achievement (Silverman, 1986) and appear to be more likely to become involved in power struggles concerning achievement.

PARENTING UNDERSTANDABLE

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' expectations are too high; gifted children or lack support for appropriate parenting, or (b) are attempting to cope with their own unresolved problems (which may include to do with their own experiences with being gifted).

Despite conventional beliefs, parents often overlook or underestimate the intellectual developmental increases 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; Silverman & Klein, 1992). Parental puzzlement and frustration often results.

Sometimes parents' own unresolved issues with giftedness contribute. Concerns about the gifted child's normality and social behavior and environmental factors on the child's socialization environment (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.

APPROACHES TO PREVENTING OR AMELIORATING PROBLEMS

Gifted children are not immune to problems simply because of their unusual abilities, though it does appear that many children's capabilities often allow them to experience fewer major social problems (James & Robinson, 1985). Ironically, though, the advanced ability to adapt or adjust may lead to certain 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 experience social and academic difficulties that do not 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 approach the topic as if it were a potential and not an actual problem 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 regarding teaching social or emotional problems. Not that teaching is unimportant; it is just that parenting is more important since it impacts the specific matter more than the specific. Most seldom counteract inappropriate parenting. Supportive family environments, on the other hand, can most often counteract potential damage if a child has poor school experiences.

Preventive guidance approaches are to be successful, particular emphasis must be placed on helping parents to gain information. But surprisingly few efforts are made by educators to convince parents that it is not infrequently the subject of many criticisms by educational professionals (Klein & 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 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 and 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., 1987), many 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 identifying young gifted children (Webb & Kleine, 1993), but also partly it is because professionals (such as pediatricians and psychologists) who work with young children have not herself received relatively little relevant training about gifted children, and therefore are unable to provide much assistance to these parents (Klein & Webb, 1992; Klein & Kleine, 1993). Clearly an emphasis is needed on helping the home-school interface, such as pediatricians, nurses, psychology, daycare 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 in their child's education, it is important that the school help the children understand and map the world. This requires an understanding 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 discriminated against may be less likely as parents or teachers to become actively involved in their child's school activities or to establish a partnership with school personnel. These parents may be reluctant to become involved by such family 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 gifted children are very likely to occur. To the extent that the school incorporates flexibly paced educational options for gifted children based upon the child's individual needs, the frustration and negative attitudes for gifted children are far less likely to occur.

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 educational consequences as noted previously. The advantages of such flexible educational options primarily derive from 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 an understanding of the current state of educational milieu in which they and their children function.

In gifted of gifted children typically have few opportunities to talk to other parents of gifted children. Through such groups, parents get opportunities to "vent," compare notes, and get desperately needed support from parents of other gifted children. These experiences help to form many behaviors and provide a sense of perspective, as well as to give many parents a chance to construct behavioral suggestions for parenting and educating gifted children. Wherever possible, and if other parents 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 of others. Changes in attitudes are needed to overcome the advanced levels and intensity of their gifted children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parents of gifted children are often avid readers themselves, and turn to books for assistance in parenting and educational decisions. Unfortunately, books concerning gifted children are not only a resource for parents, but represent our public or school libraries, nor are they actively marketed by the publishers. Fortunately, there are some books for parent guidance (e.g., Rimm, 1986, 1990; Webb, 1982) as well as some books 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 in a peer group or in a curriculum which is perceived as stimulating can fill in many missing educational and interpersonal experiences.

CAREER GUIDANCE

The multipotentiality of gifted youngsters virtually mandates that they receive career guidance. College planning may be of primary importance for most older youths (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 guidance and support 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 to him." 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 models can represent the "learned helplessness" or the cynical withdrawal and depression that otherwise might result. Minority gifted children need role models whom they see 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 working with gifted children and their families. Such professionals can have unrealistic and unhelpful feelings toward gifted children (Shore et al., 1991), while others suggest that these professionals should simply stem from a more positive reevaluation of the construct of what they mean by "gifted." (Webb et al., 1982). Further, most such professionals have been trained in the early "stage model" of a human potential model, and tend to focus only on clear dysfunctions compared with the norm rather than social 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 often partially accurate. That is, behaviors that are characteristic of gifted children or adults may be interpreted as being symptomatic of some other condition. It is important that the 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 gift. The teacher's disappointment could be due to the felt lack of peers by a gifted youngster. The clownish classroom behavior of a gifted child who is educationally handicapped might be misdiagnosed 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 the child want a "second opinion." It becomes particularly important for professionals doing such assessment to become educated about gifted children. For example, on projective personally tests gifted children often give...
Dual-diagnosed gifted children are a particular chal-
lenge—this is a group of children who are known to be at risk for several reasons.

Implications for Practice

1. Educators need to recognize the unique needs of gifted children who are also at risk for mental health problems.

2. interventions need to be developed that address both the academic and social-emotional needs of these children.

3. Further research is needed to better understand the predictors of mental health problems in gifted children.

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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 students is self-evident, because morality is at the intersection of cognition and emotion. Developmental perspectives play 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 or 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, 1990; Minne, 1985; Ornela, 1990) 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 situation 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 nothing has been said 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 hide and seek) 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 of the unpredictability of other's actions, which are not based on an absolute respect due to adults or to God, but may be modified through an understanding of 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...