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The following points are made:

1. To my knowledge there are no mental health problems which distinguish the gifted child from the non-gifted. However, there may be conditions which place the gifted child more at risk than the non-gifted. By the same token these conditions may give the gifted child better resources to combat potential or control mental health problems.

2. For example, over the years research, especially since Terman, has shown that the gifted child is both psychologically and physically a healthier child than his or her non-gifted peers.

3. Along with this, the personality and behavioral characteristics of gifted children match very closely those characteristics that define within clinical writings good ego strength and psychological development. Moreover, when we describe the gifted child we often use some of the same terms which describe good patients in and candidates for psychotherapy.

4. This leads us to believe that if a gifted child is prone to psychological problems, he or she is also more likely to have stronger recuperative powers and be a much better candidate for therapeutic intervention than the non-gifted child.

5. There are several problems in development that may occur to gifted children but these are not problems that occur only to gifted children.

Among the gifted/talented, and especially those exceptionally so, those who are more at risk are the children whose parents have the view that by virtue of being so gifted/talented, the child "has it made". This view can be recognized as a variation of "genius will out". The potential dangers in each are high expectations coupled with little or no assistance or encouragement. And, often some envy. Furthermore, there is too little realization or acknowledgement that for the development of any child, gifted or not, encouragements and
assistance are essential by parents and/or educators and other third parties (Albert, 1973; Bloom, 1982). The belief that these children have it made or their "genius" will put overlooks the paramount fact that the child is still a child and needs assistance.

Somewhat related to the above is a second phenomenon that can put the gifted/talented child at risk. This has to do with the early forashadowing and foreclosing of their gifts/talents. The gifted child, especially the exceptionally gifted, can be put under pressure to select and set out very early upon a career. This is well-intentioned (usually) and may work in Math/Science, or music, but those whose gifts are more broad gauged, need, I believe, a variety of widely ranging early experiences within and without educational settings and potential careers.

Other than these potential problems, gifted/talented children show with other children two other potentials for being at risk but perhaps more so. These are (1) underachievement, and (2) far more severe, the extremely narcissistic involvement of parents (and at times teachers) to the extent that the emotional and cognitive development of the gifted child is unsurped, ill served and made into an object for the parent's own self aggrandizement and need. This is described in some detail in Alice Miller's The Drama of the Gifted Child (1983). It is a severe developmental problem and yet it does not always lead to no achievement but often to a series of achievements which are barren of any satisfaction and enjoyment for the gifted child/adult.

7. A model is briefly proposed which helps me explain the degree of developmental tension and early history disturbances that a gifted/talented child might undergo in achieving different degrees of creativeness and eminence.

8. This model states that there are five discernible levels of cognitive development: (1) Giftedness or talent itself, (2) giftedness which is transformed into a creative potential, (3) this level of creative potential, when enacted in a career, usually leads to some degree of effectiveness and creativeness but not to a great amount of either (MacKinnon, 1960; Nichols, 1972). The amount of effectiveness is more evident than the creativeness at this level. (4) A level and direction of creativity which is clearly noticeably higher than that of the individual's same sex, age, educational and socioeconomic peers. This level of creativeness can and often leads to some degree of what I will term moderate eminence usually within the lifetime of the person. (5) World-class performance. This level of achievement is extremely infrequent and unpredictable. From my review of the literature it is my impression that it is often accompanied by a great deal of tension and even psychopathology.
Whether or not the psychopathology is parallel, integral, or otherwise unlinked to the achievement of world-class eminence is not clear; there are biographical and autobiographical data which supports all three conditions or relationships.

9. Most of the information we have regarding mental health problems within the young gifted population and among eminent persons come from individuals involved in non-scientific interests or careers. The paper speaks of this in terms of the data suggesting that the kind of developmental crises and stresses that gifted children may undergo may differ in terms of whether or not their gifts lie in the math/science areas or in non-science areas. Our model of creativity may be too limited to accommodate development in all areas of giftedness (Albert, 1980).

Moreover, our major model for explaining mental health problems is primarily linked to a psychoanalytic (conflict-dynamic) model. This model, derived and successful in explaining problems in the development among non-scientists, has little to say about the development or the problems of scientists. However, this model is very powerful at explaining underachievement. We point out that perhaps the best psychological model for understanding the underachiever and his family is a psychoanalytic model which is predicated upon the assumption that all children go through childhood neurosis; therefore mental health is seen as something one recaptures in their development. It is in the nature of the psychoanalytic (dynamic-conflict) model that it can deal well conceptually and therapeutically with profound disturbances within the early child-parent relationships; this makes it appropriate to conceptualizing and intervening in early underachievement.

10. The main thrust of underachievement appears to lie in a disturbed early parent-child relationship, especially with the same sex parent. Underachievement in terms of its psychodynamics has many of the same developmental processes and parent-child characteristics that psychoneurosis has. And this leads me to believe that underachievement is primarily a symptom and consequence of a psychoneurotic disturbance, and should be treated as such. This is a warning to those persons who wish to treat underachievement as either a psychometric fallacy or an issue in pedagogy.

Underachievement is also characterized by much ambivalence on the part of parents and child, anxiety over latent hostility, and can be viewed as the child's effort to retaliate for slights and other psychic wounds. Because of this, underachievement can best be seen as an effort on the part of the child to strike out against one or both parents which at the same time puts the child at risk in terms of loss of love, a loss of esteem and poor educational experiences.
12. We go on to point out that the relationships and the personalities describing underachievers and their parents are the opposite to those used to describe good academic achievers and their parents. We think of them, therefore, as opposites if one another; what one set of parents does well the other set does poorly, especially in terms of their expectations and disciplines.

13. In terms of stimulation, we point out that the parents of the underachievers may paradoxically overstimulate the child's self concern and confusions of identity while at the same time understimulating his or her cognitive and educational development. On the other hand, the parents of achieving children have a good record of giving constant, primarily verbal and symbolic stimulation to their child, in terms of the kind of self-image that they support and the child's educational efforts.

14. We next ask whether or not there are sensitive periods in the gifted child's development in which creativeness and underachievement are likely to get under way and consolidate. Both appear to occur within the same age period: 0-10-12 years of age, i.e., up to puberty. It is pointed out that among eminent scientists their early interests (and in some cases insights) occur and crystalize within the first ten to twelve years (Hudson, 1968; Roe, 1952; Taylor, 1963), after which there are modifications in terms of their educational and career experiences.

15. This suggests that for scientists (and perhaps non-scientists) there is a sensitive developmental period which is more broad than we (and Psychoanalysis) usually believe. However, this sensitive period is also a period in which the child may be at their greatest risk because underachievement occurs and becomes consolidated within the same early period.

I take a conservative view of this sensitive period by saying that the first 15 years appear to be critical for acquiring the requisite personality dispositions and laying the groundwork for a good education both of which are critical in the development of the requisite cognitive skills and personality dispositions leading to noticeable creativity and high achievement.

16. Next we point out that the psychoanalytic model is a disaster conceptually for understanding sound, steady cognitive development, the shift from early giftedness to later effectiveness and moderate creativeness.

The model that gives good conceptual and experiential grounds for understanding the development of effectiveness and moderate creativity is one which has grown in the last twenty years within the writings of Bowlby, Erikson, Winnicott and others - primarily ego psychologists.
(Hamilton, 1973; Steinberg, 1984). This model makes early cognitive development and exploration and the extension of one's gifts a natural outcome of good early attachments and the child's responsiveness to novelty within a secure environment. This model also offers grounds for believing that moderate creativity and good mental health are synonymous developmental outcomes.

17. The paper moves on to a discussion of the role of psychopathology in creativity. I suggest that psychopathology may have, but does not inevitably have, a link with world-class creativity and the attainment of eminence. The evidence - primarily non-empirical - suggests that this is likely to be true across the board, for world-class scientists and non-scientists. However, we feel that great achievements also can occur without great psychopathology which makes the matter more complicated.

The issue of the relationship between extreme psychopathology and world-class achievement is far more complicated than any model we now have can deal with. I believe that it is more likely that the relationship is interactive rather than causative, that the selection of known "great" problems and the efforts to achieve greatness inevitably bring with them great risks in terms of one's identity and worth as well as one's historical and social significance which world-class performers appear to be quite aware of. These efforts may or may not lead to psychopathology. They can lead as well to stronger, more and/or better contained ego and identity development.

18. The paper ends with discussion of some results of my own longitudinal study of two samples of exceptionally gifted boys one in math/science, the other with exceptionally high IQs. This material has led me to believe that mental illness is very infrequent among such youth and that while the numbers are not large where there are psychological and family tensions most of my subjects' creativeness and ego development have not been stunted. We go on to speak of a third group made up of members of both samples who are robust, healthy, gregarious, verbal, insightful. My speculations lead me to believe that this group for the most part will have highly effective and moderately eminent careers but that none of these boys will be either developmental disasters or world beaters. Their life histories will show sound cognitive and personality development and the transformation of early giftedness into effectiveness and moderate creativeness.