The Trauma of the Gifted Child

Cynthia S. Mallatt-Grow

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Clinical

Psychology April 14, 2019

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Dedication

To the sensitive and intense who suffer.

To all who have felt misunderstood, out-of-sync,

who are chronically told "You're just too (fill in the blank)," and "Get over it already!"

who have grown up wondering,

"What is wrong with me?"

May you understand and honor your "normalcy," gather good and loyal friends in life who "get"

you, find serenity and fiery purpose in making your part of the world or the world-at-large better, and firmly establish your place of comfort and safety where you are able to nurture and appreciate your soul and your journey.

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to discover the unique characteristics and emotional needs of gifted children (and by inference gifted teens and adults) to better understand their personality and emotional vulnerabilities that might possibly predispose them to trauma. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to discover the intersection between the common characteristics of giftedness, frequency of trauma, and effective and efficient models of trauma recovery. This writer discovered an alarming research gap indicating the need for further serious study regarding the effects of trauma on gifted children. We hope this dissertation facilitates greater understanding for parents, friends, professionals in the areas of education, medicine, and mental health, and the public in general regarding the unique personality characteristics and emotional

needs of gifted children who are not better-than, but simply different, and how to judiciously identify and resolve trauma so painful setbacks to living their fullest potential may be healed and roadblocks removed, allowing them to live fuller, more satisfying lives and possibly bring urgently needed options and benefits to society and our planet.

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The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this:

A human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive.

To him…

a touch is a blow,

a sound is a noise,

a misfortune is a tragedy,

a joy is an ecstasy,

a friend is a lover,

a lover is a god,

and failure is death.

Add to this cruelly delicate organism the overpowering necessity to create, create, create—so that without the creating of music or poetry or books or buildings or something of meaning, his very breath is cut off from him. He must create, must pour out creation. By some strange, unknown, inward urgency he is not really alive unless he is creating.

Pearl S. Buck

1892 – 1973

1932 Pulitzer Prize for Literature

1938 Nobel Prize in Literature

Figure 1. The truly creative mind. Pearl Buck's analysis of the creative mind. Adapted from *Pearl S. Buck: A Biography. Vol. 2: Her Philosophy as Expressed in her Letters,* by T. F. Harris, in consultation with P. S. Buck, 1971, p. 217. Copyright 1971 by The John Day Company.

Chapter 1: Nature of the Study

Chapter Overview

The aim of this dissertation is to provide an in-depth analysis of the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted personality. Just as there are general characteristics that describe those at the lower end of the intelligent quotient bell curve, there are general characteristics that describe those at the upper end of the intelligent quotient bell curve as well. However, in historical research literature and currently in the world at large, the emotional needs and characteristics of those who are considered gifted, especially gifted children, have received little focus, which is much deserved to more fully understand this population. Therefore, this dissertation is a comprehensive review and analysis of literature (CoRAL) that encompasses the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted child, a theoretical exploration of how a gifted child may be predisposed to experiencing trauma, and finally, an analysis of how eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy may efficiently and effectively mitigate trauma for those who are gifted.

Inherent in a CoRAL are strengths and weaknesses, which are addressed in this chapter. One of the primary weaknesses in a CoRAL is the author's own subjective bias in choosing, presenting, and interpreting the research. This bias is addressed in this CoRAL by providing justification for the use of this method of research in understanding how trauma affects the gifted child, which will be found throughout this dissertation. The narrative review format of a CoRAL was chosen

due to the preponderance of literature on the academic needs of the gifted, and the comparative scarcity of research and emphasis on their emotional needs and characteristics. This dissertation will provide a synthesis of the relevant peer-reviewed, empirically based, and psychologically relevant materials on the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted

personality, as well as an interpretation of the most significant findings and how they apply to trauma resolution.

In Chapter 1, definitions of giftedness will be explored, followed by presenting several theories and characteristics of giftedness, the definition of trauma, and a general exploration of EMDR.

Background of the Problem

Historically, the definition of giftedness and the identification of gifted children have been narrowly understood and limited to only those individuals who attained a high IQ score on the Stanford-Binet Individual Test of Intelligence (1916) developed and published for the United States by Terman (1925). Prior to that time, the idea that intelligence could be quantified was noticeably absent (Tannenbaum, 1983). During the better part of the 20th century, intelligence was defined solely according to the constructs measured by the Stanford-Binet (Stanley, George, & Solano, 1975).

More than an IQ Score

However, midcentury and beyond, concern rose among educators about this narrow definition and identification process of gifted individuals based on their observations in the classroom that giftedness was expressed by more than just an IQ score—also seen were characteristics that included abilities such as creativity, leadership, and exceptionality in performing arts and specific academic domains (Gardner, 1993; Webb et al., 2005; Witty,

Conant, & Strang, 1959). Witty (1951) also broadened the definition of giftedness to include the consistent remarkable performance by any individual in a valued human activity, and then introduced the concept of a more varied, multidimensional approach to giftedness (Witty et al., 1959).

There remained much disagreement among experts in defining and identifying what it means to be gifted. Complicated and confounding issues exist, such as whether it is a requirement that gifted individuals should have high ability in multiple areas; whether all gifted individuals should be creative and/or talented as well as academically gifted; or whether a learning-disabled individual can also be considered gifted. In addition, Kaufman and Sternberg (2008) offered four issues to consider in identifying giftedness: (a) it is a label and nothing more; (b) can and should the label be applied generally across broad domains or specifically to one or two domains; (c) depending on global location and historical timeline, concepts and definitions of what it means to be gifted change; and (d) the idea of giftedness can be based on a pragmatic theory (an implicit concept) or on rigorous research (an explicit concept).

Sternberg (2017) purported that identifying the gifted by IQ is not only outmoded but limiting, supported by three important observations: (a) contemporary understanding and definitions of intelligence are much more encompassing than narrower historical conceptualizations; (b) early 1900s thought limited intelligence to inherited genetic characteristics, but current science defies this limitation; and (c) there is obviously much more to giftedness than IQ, which is supported by virtually every contemporary theory.

Because the definition and identification of giftedness has been controversial, most criteria and definitions of giftedness continue to identify only the top 3-5% of children (Marland, 1972; Streznewski, 1999). Indeed, Sternberg (2017) stated, “So merely testing well helps one advance

through a funnel in which poor testers get stuck" (p. 156). Moreover, Sternberg observed that historically IQ-based measurements represented to some extent socioeconomic status and therefore continued to raise up even further those already born into privilege.

Streznewski (1999) identified those she chose to include in her research by personality characteristics such as mental speed, sense of humor, drive, sophistication of thought processes, and sensitivity rather than a number that assessed IQ. Based on her benchmark study of 100 gifted adults ranging in ages from 18 to 90 over a 10-year period, Streznewski (1999) concluded:

> My suspicion was confirmed that a great many talented people are being underutilized, or even wasted by society. The happy and successful gifted people in [my] study are proof that such waste can be prevented...For too long society has believed that if you aren't president of General Motors, you aren't gifted…We don't pay enough attention to trying to teach people who are highly intelligent how to cope with their lives in the adult world… The implications of what these grown-up smart kids tell us about themselves are threefold. First, it is obvious that many gifted people lack even basic knowledge about their own nature. Knowledge of how and why gifted persons function as they do can lead to greater utilization of their gifts for the benefit of all. Second, a gifted person must not be studied as an isolated instance, but as a member of a family, as student in school, a worker within some larger setting, a participator in human relationships and a citizen in a society. The need for change is the third implication of what these valuable individuals can tell us. We cannot afford to waste our human resources. We need to forget the stereotypes and learn the true nature of gifted persons. (pp. viii-x)

Federal Definition

A benchmark study called the *Marland Report* (Marland, 1972) provided a three-pronged "Federal Definition" of giftedness. It stated:

- Gifted individuals must be identified by a professionally qualified person.

- Giftedness included those who have outstanding abilities with actual or potential high performance in intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual/performing arts, and/or psychomotor ability.

- Gifted individuals should receive differentiated educational programs and services beyond the norm in order to realize their potential contributions to self and society.

This report also provided the first national account on the status of gifted children in the United States. One of its most substantial conclusions was that gifted children are indeed disadvantaged and can suffer psychological injury and long-term damage to their functional abilities "…which is equal to or greater than the similar deprivation suffered by any other population with *special needs* [emphasis added] served by the Office of Education" (pp. xi-xii).

Since the publication of the *Marland Report* (Marland, 1972), broader definitions of giftedness have been more widely accepted, which include specific traits, task commitment, cognitive abilities, psychomotor ability, creativity, achievement motivation, and leadership potential (Feldhusen, 1986; Lubinski et al., 2001; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 1998; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Winner, 2000). Based on the above Federal definition, and for the purpose of this discussion, it is important to explicitly state at the outset that the term "gifted" used throughout this document is not limited to academic or intellectual ability, but includes those who are exceptionally creative, talented, and who show extraordinary leadership ability.

Untapped Natural Resource

It is interesting to note that implicit within the context of the federal definition is the acknowledgment of the importance of gifted individuals actualizing their potential not only for

their own sakes, but for the sake of what they may offer to society. It is logical then to deduce that gifted individuals whose progress is slowed or those who become blocked from achieving their potential can be considered at risk not only for the sake of their own interpersonal growth, but also for the contributions they could have otherwise extended to society.

As this discussion of trauma and the gifted child is pursued in this document, it is important to state early on that not every gifted individual has dire problems or mental health issues. In fact, Streznewski (1999) found that many emerged from major universities and made tremendous contributions to society. However, she also discovered that a large number of gifted adults were frustrated and found it very difficult to cope in the adult world. She stated, "…*all* [emphasis added] of the interviewees felt 'different' at a young age…the problems and pleasures of being gifted do not change, only the context in which they are experienced as one grows older" (p. viii).

No Distinct Categories

To describe unique individuals as gifted, talented, highly creative, and outstanding leaders might suggest these are distinct categories, but this is without merit. One common characteristic inherent in those categorical portrayals is gifted individuals' acute drive and obsession for their talent domain(s) that produces high achievement unless social or emotional factors interfere (Winner, 2000). The social and emotional characteristics of giftedness as well as factors in the form of "trauma" that may interfere with this inherent drive to achieve are precisely the foci of this comprehensive literature review. Along with the controversy inherent in identifying and serving gifted children and adolescents is found an historical emphasis on academic concerns and opportunities versus their emotional characteristics and needs.

This dissertation hopes to address the historical imbalance by concentrating on the emotional

needs and characteristics of the gifted, examining perhaps a predisposition toward experiencing trauma due to certain personality characteristics and needs, and remedying these effects specifically by the application of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, which is a highly efficient, scientific, and evidenced based trauma treatment

demonstrating over 30 years of research. The void in the literature regarding the potential predisposition of the gifted experiencing trauma in conjunction with the application of EMDR therapy will be addressed in this comprehensive literature review.

Background on Emotional Needs and Characteristics of the Gifted

To set the stage for understanding some of the unique characteristics, existential struggles, and emotional needs inherent in being gifted, the following developmental theory, which is not based on chronological human development, is central to this discussion.

Kazimierz Dabrowski

As he considered the complexity of human experience, Polish psychiatrist, psychologist, and social reformer Kazimierz Dabrowski (1964) identified a broad, general developmental theory called the "theory of positive disintegration" that grew out of his childhood experiences during WWI followed by his work as a psychologist during and after WWII, in which he witnessed the extremes of negative and positive human behavior ranging from acts of horrific barbarism to compassion and selfless bravery. Observing this range of behavior prompted Dabrowski to create his theory of five levels of moral, emotional, and personality development: (a) primary integration, (b) unilevel disintegration, (c) multilevel disintegration, (d) directed multilevel disintegration, and (e) secondary integration.

Dabrowski (1964) described Positive Disintegration as an essential and many-times highly conflicted inner process of one's personality structure coming apart in order to be replaced by

higher level personality structure(s). Later in his work, specifically with gifted individuals, Dabrowski (1972) identified five personality characteristics that have direct implications on the social and emotional development and needs of the gifted that he termed *overexcitabilities*. He defined these as *higher than average responsiveness to stimuli* [emphasis

added] manifested by either psychomotor, sensual, emotional, imaginational, or intellectual excitability" (p. 303). Dabrowski's theory and each overexcitability will be elucidated for the reader in Chapter 3.

A 1979 interview in Warsaw by Zbigniew Bierzanaski, translated into English by Ewa Hyzy-Strzelecka (1994), reported that Dabrowski said he was fighting for those who are oppressed:

> They are the ones who are not shrewd, who are rather delicate, who aren't able to fight for their own interests, who aren't pushy or demanding, but who are industrious, have deep feelings, are often wise yet unsophisticated. I think about those who don't press their claims, who aren't vulgar or aggressive, and who often suffer.
>
> I have in mind another group of people too: neurotics and psychoneurotics, *those who aren't mentally ill* [emphasis added] but are gentle, emotionally quite sensitive, who are never brutal but often inhibited, who take things deeply into their hearts, and who withdraw into themselves rather than retaliate. I consider these people to be humiliated and harmed because nobody takes care of them, or, if anyone does, it is only because these unfortunates are deemed overexcitable, eccentric, and without resources. Not fending for oneself isn't necessarily a sign of lack of intelligence or ability to function, but very often

is a sign of sensitivity and gentleness, which leads to the inability to contend with anyone about anything.

The correlation between the highly talented and psychoneurosis and neurosis is very high. Almost 97 percent of the highly creative suffer from

different kinds of overexcitabilities, neuroses, and psychoneuroses. *So neurotics and psychoneurotics are a mine of social treasure. If their emotionality, talents, interests, and sensitivity were discovered at an early age, society and science would profit* [emphasis added]. (pp. 87-88)

Dabrowski was asked to identify those whom he considered sensitive. He stated, "They are the ones who can't indifferently pass by human misery, humiliation, harm, sickness, loneliness, inhumanity, and barbarism" (Hyzy-Strelecka, 1994, p. 89). For the purpose of this discussion, then, the term *sensitivity* in this document will include, but is not limited to, aspects of gentleness, empathy, a sacrificial nature, inhibition, nonretaliation, and an inclination to withdraw or feel hurt more easily and/or frequently than others.

In Dabrowski's (1964) view of post-World War II, most of society began living in the moment, determined to compete for the best, use others as tools, and consume the finest. As a society, Dabrowski observed the failure of the majority and those in power to develop a positive, humanistic value system that would care for those who were sensitive, poor, or in misery, being ruled instead by the priority of carpe diem: get rich, have nice cars, travel, consume and fill life with more and more things, protect yourself and your family, gain power and notoriety through competition. Thus, the majority agreed to and permitted the development of a negative, dispassionate hierarchy of values and forgot about the path of developing one's humanity. Dabrowski concluded this landmark interview by stating that while in the company of those who are calloused and unfeeling, those who are sensitive, who feel the burden of societal negativity

must find the moral courage to move society toward a more compassionate hierarchy of values: "They have to work out a way to combine their own sensitivity, their gentleness, sacrificial nature, and empathy—with *heroism!*" (p. 92).

Other Notable Researchers

In addition to Dabrowski's work, a landmark effort by Neihart, Reis, Robinson, and Moon (2002) to update and clarify the social and emotional needs of gifted children provided a comprehensive summary of the best research at that time. Many of the social intensity and emotional issues of the gifted concerned acceleration, peer pressure and social acceptance, asynchronous development, sensitivity, affect regulation, perfectionism, existential depression, needs of the twice exceptional (gifted who also have learning disabilities), gender and gender identity differences, individual and racial identity, socioeconomic status, parenting practices, counseling/career counseling needs, delinquency, as well as underachievement. Cross (2002) stated that even though there may not be a common, inherent vulnerability per se associated with giftedness, that in fact, the emotional and social needs are, "…often unrecognized and unmet, with predictable negative consequences" (p. xii).

As keynote speaker in Hong Kong at the Eleventh World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children, Linda Silverman (1995) stated:

> While others look upon the gifted as being advantaged in a race for personal gain, the experience of being different in cultures that value sameness, coupled with acute awareness of the pain and suffering in the world, make the gifted feel distinctly disadvantaged. Gifted children don't see themselves as winners of the competition, but bearers of the burden to make this a better world for all. *They only actualize their potential when they discover a unique role for themselves,*

which requires their particular gifts [emphasis added] (p. 1)

Gifted children who have a supportive environment and find their unique passions and roles at an early age are certainly fortunate. However, achieving autonomy and self-

actualization can be fraught with pain and difficulty for the gifted, many of whom are naturally sensitive, and especially for those who grow up in a harsh, abusive, or brutal environment. Silverman (1993) offered the following insight into the experience of being gifted:

> Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. *The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable* [emphasis added] and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (p. 3)

The concern this dissertation addresses, then, is how to best and most efficiently help those children (and adults) who are gifted and vulnerable resolve and heal emotional wounding, which would then facilitate self-fulfillment through actualizing their highest potential for their own and society's betterment.

To that end, this author will review scientific literature on the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy for the treatment of trauma.

Background on Trauma and EMDR

Generally, trauma has been defined in dictionary terms as any experience that causes physical and/or psychological pain or injury ("Trauma," 2017a); severe shock caused by physical or

emotional injury ("Trauma," 2017b); and a wound to living tissue; severe mental or emotional stress or upset ("Trauma," 2017c). According to the World Health Organization (1996), the

International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), an extreme form of trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), falls into the category "F43.1," and states:

> This [PTSD] arises as a delayed and/or protracted response to a stressful event or situation (either short- or long-lasting) of an exceptionally threatening or catastrophic nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone (e.g. natural or man-made disaster, combat, serious accident, witnessing the violent death of others, or being the victim of torture, terrorism, rape, or other crime). *Predisposing factors such as personality traits* [emphasis added] (e.g. compulsive, asthenic) or previous history of neurotic illness *may lower the threshold for the development of the syndrome or aggravate its course* [emphasis added], but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to explain its occurrence. This disorder should not generally be diagnosed unless there is evidence that it arose within 6 months of a traumatic event of exceptional severity.
>
> A "probable" diagnosis might still be possible if the delay between the event and the onset was longer than 6 months, provided that the clinical manifestations are typical and no alternative identification of the disorder (e.g. as an anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder or depressive episode) is plausible. In addition to evidence of trauma, there must be a repetitive, intrusive recollection or re-enactment of the event in memories, daytime imagery, or dreams. Conspicuous emotional detachment, numbing of feeling, and avoidance of stimuli that might arouse recollection of the trauma are often present but are not essential

for the diagnosis. The autonomic disturbances, mood disorder, and behavioural

abnormalities all contribute to the diagnosis but are not of prime importance. (pp. 120-121)

Subclinical Trauma

Clinical definitions and diagnoses of trauma and PTSD remain debatable among clinicians. According to Boals and Schuettler (2009), moderately high levels of PTSD were associated with nontraumatic, stressful events, implying standard definitions should be broadened. In other words, an individual's emotional responses to events demand more clinical focus than the events themselves.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy

EMDR therapy specifically addresses and reprocesses distressing experiences on a continuum of trauma ranging from "Little-t" trauma to "Big-T" trauma, all the way to full-blown posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Luft (2016) defined "Little-t" trauma as: "… responses to common life difficulties such as divorce or unemployment, that usually brings out irrational cognitions and inadequate ability to cope with certain events" (Abstract). Francine Shapiro (2012) reported that "Big-T" trauma included events most individuals recognize as catastrophic, such as car accidents, natural disasters, and abuse (emotional, sexual, physical). She stated,

> Working with millions of people, we have found in EMDR therapy that a primary cause of disturbing, out-of-control responses are the experiences that have been stored in the brain as *unprocessed* memories. Memories that have been processed naturally, or with [EMDR] therapist assistance, are transformed into learning experiences so that the disturbing emotions, beliefs, and physical sensations are no longer held in our memory networks.

> Therefore, the ones that we're looking for, the ones that are *hot* [emphasis added], the ones that are negative, can be a single event, such as a major trauma that would form the basis for PTSD—*or they can be more common events* [emphasis added] from childhood such as being bullied, being made fun of, falling off a bicycle, hearing your parents argue, finding out that a friend betrayed you, being rejected by some boyfriend, not being invited to a party—and the list goes on. Whatever it might be, those negative events, if they're stored and still hot, can have a negative effect on the present. (pp. 71-72)

Scientifically based. For more than 25 years, EMDR therapy has been used to effectively treat trauma with significant effectiveness and efficiency, and positive results have been achieved in as little as three sessions with symptom reduction maintained at 90-day follow-up (Wilson, Becker, & Tinker, 1995). There are now over 20 scientifically controlled studies that demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of EMDR therapy in reducing and/or eliminating symptoms of trauma and other distressing life experiences.

Globally accepted. Furthermore, many organizations around the world, including the World Health Organization, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the American Psychiatric Association, recognize EMDR therapy as an effective trauma treatment (Shapiro, 2012, pp. 315-317). Yet, there seems to be an absence of academic literature that attempts to understand and explore how EMDR therapy might support the emotional needs and sensitivities of gifted individuals.

A professional who is skilled in EMDR therapy, and who understands the unique challenges and sensitivities inherent in the gifted personality that may predispose this population

to trauma, would be in a unique position to address the heart of the problem via EMDR therapy,

thus restoring a gifted individual's focus, ability, and drive toward greater self-actualization.

Theoretical Framework Addressing Trauma and the Gifted Personality The emotional experience of being gifted will be explored from the broad developmental perspective of Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration and a discussion of Dabrowski's "overexcitabilities." Also, scientific research and anecdotal writings that highlight what is means to be gifted will be included in this review.

EMDR therapy then will be considered regarding its effectiveness and efficiency in healing trauma, and how it may be applied to gifted individuals whose emotional needs and characteristics may predispose them to feeling traumatized by life experiences that may not impact the typical person to the degree felt by those who are gifted.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are addressed here so the reader may understand important concepts within this dissertation. Many of these terms will be further elucidated in Chapter 3. *Abreactive.* "The expression and emotional discharge of unconscious material (as a repressed idea or emotion) by verbalization especially in the presence of a therapist" ("Abreactive," 2017).

Adaptive resolution. A process associated with EMDR therapy by which the brain converts isolated, unprocessed traumatic memories and emotional disturbance via bilateral stimulation into functional memory connections, thus allowing an individual to learn from the experience by choosing what is useful, and releasing the rest (Shapiro, 2012).

Anhedonia. The absence of pleasure from the performance of acts that would normally be pleasurable ("Anhedonia," n.d.).

Asynchronous development. "…Refers to the uneven rates of cognitive, emotional, and physical development found in gifted children," which produces vulnerability in gifted

individuals due to lack of synchrony (Clark, 2002, p. 27).

Bilateral stimulation of the brain. Used in EMDR and described as noninvasive, alternating, bilateral stimulation in which compelled focused attention crosses the brain midline in an orienting response that induces a REM-like state, which forces cortical integration of trauma memories (Sokolov, 1990).

Comorbid. A state of existing simultaneously with and usually independently of another medical condition ("Comorbid," 2017).

Developmental potential. Dabrowski (1972) believed everyone is born with an innate capacity he called developmental potential, which he defined as:

> ...[a] constitutional endowment which determines the character and extent of mental growth possible for a given individual. The developmental potential can be assessed on the basis of the following components: psychic overexcitability, special abilities and talents, and autonomous factors (notably the Third factor). (p. 293)

Comprised of dynamisms and overexcitabilities, Dabrowski theorized that the higher one's developmental potential, the more likely an individual would realize his or her personality ideal (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008).

Disintegration. The initial phase in the overall process of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration, during which a psychological crisis state occurs, is considered by Dabrowski to be positive and necessary. During disintegration, an individual experiences intense depression and anxieties, and primitive processes designed to fulfill basic biopsychosocial needs become entirely disrupted in preparation for the second phase of reintegration at a higher level, which

transcends biopsychosocial determinism, ultimately leading to individual autonomy (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008; see also Reintegration)

Dynamisms. Assumed inherent in everyone, and are defined as "…instincts, drives, and intellectual processes combined with emotions" (Dabrowski, 1972, p. 294). Some examples of such inner forces are creative imagination, degree of insight, tendency toward perfectionism, and/or the ability of controlling/reshaping one's mental cognitions (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008).

Episodic memory. The part of memory responsible for storing contextual, spatial, and temporal aspects of an experience (McClelland, McNaughton, & O'Reilly, 1995; Squire, 1992).

Explicit memory. Contains two parts: *episodic memory* (see above) and *semantic memory*, which involves storage of knowledge and facts). Explicit memory is also referred to as declarative memory (McClelland et al., 1995; Squire, 1992).

First factor. Dabrowski believed that most people live their lives based on self-interested decisions stemming from biological impulses (Tiller, 1996) that stem from one's hereditary endowment. Dabrowski defines the First Factor as "…innate constitutional characteristics and potentialities of the organism" (p. 14), which were permanent psychic changes created during pregnancy, birth, or soon thereafter that influence personality development throughout life (see also *Second* and *Third Factors*).

Flashback. A recurring, intensely vivid mental image of a past traumatic experience ("Flashback," n.d.).

Gifted/giftedness. The definition of what it means to be gifted varies from state to state and is usually based on performance. According to Webb, Gore, Amend, and deVries (2007), most definitions are derivatives of the 1972 U.S. Department of Education *Marland Report*,

stated below, which many times is referred to as the "Federal Definition," and is limited to identifying the top 3-5% of children based on performance:

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, and visual, performing arts, and psychomotor ability. (p. 2)

Additionally, the National Organization for Gifted Children (2008) cites the definition found in the "No Child Left Behind Act" (2004), which states that gifted children are those ...who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (para. 1)

In contrast to the strictly performance-based definitions above, Barbara Clark (2002) defined giftedness as a label with biological roots that is given to those who demonstrate high intelligence, and

> …indicates an advanced and accelerated development of functions within the brain. Such development may express itself in high levels of cognitive, affective, physical, intuitive, or a combination of abilities, such as academic aptitude,

> insight and innovation, creative behavior, leadership, personal and interpersonal skill, visual and performing arts, or a combination thereof. (p. 26)

Silverman (1993) offered the following definition of giftedness explained by the Columbus Group:

> Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. *The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable* [emphasis added] and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (p. 3)

Hierarchy of values. A vertical, prioritized arrangement of emotional reactions that produce a personality ideal critical to an individual's autonomy and personality development. One's personality ideal then becomes the goal upon which all decisions and choices are based (Mendaglio, 2008).

Hippocampal complex. The area of the brain that is perpetually required for episodic memory storage and retrieval. However, its role in semantic memory storage and retrieval was found to be temporary and even nonessential (Nadel & Moscovitch, 1997, 1998). *Intelligence.* Many definitions of intelligence range from fixed, to interactive, to emotional intelligence. Additionally, many definitions rely on assessment via a standard IQ test; however, Clark (2002) offered a more comprehensive definition: "Intelligence is the aggregate of an individual's cognitive, affective, physical, and intuitive functioning" (p. 26). Clark further stated that intelligence is affected by the interaction between an individual's genetics and environmental opportunities, which either inhibits or enhances intelligence during life.

"Large T" trauma. (Also referred to as "Big T" trauma.) Significant events such as war, natural disasters, death, or any event that triggers an acute stress response or results in

debilitating psychological damage (van der Kolk, 2002b; see also "Small t" Trauma).

Memory. Briefly, any remnant of experience in the brain that influences subsequent behavior (Nadel, Ryan, Hayes, Gilboa, & Moscovitch, 2003).

Memory consolidation. Referred to in EMDR therapy as the process by which an initially unstable memory is transformed into a more enduring form, after which it is stored in a different part of the brain than its initial encoding site (Byrne, n.d.).

Memory networks. The foundation of human behavior, perception, and attitudes, through which current perceptions are automatically linked with associated, previously established memory networks (Buchanon, 2007; Shapiro, 2001).

Meta-analysis. "A quantitative statistical analysis of several separate but similar experiments or studies in order to test the pooled data for statistical significance" ("Meta analysis," 2017).

Multipotentiality. A long-standing concept in research literature on counseling the gifted that refers to "…any individual who, when provided with appropriate environments, can select and develop any number of competencies to a high level" (Fredrickson, 1979, p. 268). Plucker (2013) defined multipotentiality as "…the idea that a person can have high levels of potential to excel in several difference areas" (p. 80). Multipotentiality can produce problems such as trouble deciding on a career, feeling pressured to seek a high-status or high-paying career, the necessity of making long-term commitments to training or education even though confused about a career path, priorities (family vs. education), and predisposition toward perfectionism giving rise to the conflict of finding the perfect career (Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1994).

Overexcitabilities. A term coined by Kazimierz Dabrowski (1972) to mean an exaggerated stimulus response. Overexcitabilities (OE) are described as enhanced channels of

experience that allow an individual to receive and process unusually large amounts of environmental stimuli (Gallagher, 1986; Piechowski, 1979). OEs refer to five areas: psychomotor, emotional, sensory, intellectual, and imaginational.

Personality. According to Dabrowski (1972), personality is defined as "a self-aware, self chosen, self-affirmed, and self-determined unity of essential individual psychic qualities. Personality as defined here appears at the level of secondary integration" (p. 301). Additionally, Dabrowski elucidated how the personality is formed:

> Intense psychoneurotic processes are especially characteristic of accelerated development in its course towards the formation of personality. According to our theory accelerated psychic development is actually impossible without transition through processes of nervousness and psychoneuroses, without external and internal conflicts, without maladjustment to actual conditions in order to achieve adjustment to a higher level of values (to what "ought to be"), and without conflicts with lower level realities as a result of spontaneous or deliberate choice to strengthen the bond with reality of higher level. (p. 220)

Personality ideal. One's personality ideal is critical to an individual's autonomy and personality development and is the goal upon which all decisions and choices are based. The personality ideal is developed from a hierarchy of values, which is a vertical arrangement of emotional reactions produced by the process of positive disintegration (Mendaglio, 2008).

Phalanges. Defined as "…a number of distal bones called the phalanges which form the skeleton of the fingers and toes, or digits" ("Phalanges," n.d.). The term also refers to a form of

therapy called Tapping Alternate Phalanges (TAP), which was compared to EMDR in a study by Wilsonn, (1996).

Psychoneurosis. Upon seeking the definition for psychoneurosis, many definitions found online stated the word had been shortened to neurosis:

> Neurosis: a relatively mild mental illness that is not caused by organic disease, involving symptoms of stress (depression, anxiety, obsessive behavior, hypochondria), but not a radical loss of touch with reality…or in non-technical use [it means] excessive and irrational anxiety or obsession. ("Psychoneurosis," 2015).

Though the word "psychoneurosis" or "neurosis" may carry pathological connotations, it is of vital import for the reader to note that Dabrowski's (1972) original usage inherent in his Theory of Positive Disintegration adds a positive growth dimension rarely appreciated in current psychology:

> Psychoneuroses, especially those of a higher level, provide an opportunity to "take one's life in one's own hands." They are expressive of a drive for psychic autonomy, especially moral autonomy, through transformation of a more or less primitively integrated structure. This is a process in which the individual himself becomes an active agent in his disintegration, and even breakdown. Thus, the person finds a "cure" for himself, not in the sense of a rehabilitation, but rather in the sense of reaching a higher level than the one at which he was prior to disintegration. This occurs through a process of an education of oneself and of an inner psychic transformation.

> One of the main mechanisms of this process is a continual sense of looking into oneself as if from outside, followed by a conscious affirmation or negation of conditions and values in both the internal and external environments.

> Through the constant creation of himself, though the development of the inner psychic milieu and development of discriminating power with respect to both the inner and outer milieus—an individual goes through ever higher levels of "neuroses" and at the same time through ever higher levels of universal development of his personality. (p. 4)
>
> The propensity for changing one's internal environment and the ability to influence positively the external environment indicates the capacity of the individual to develop. Almost as a rule, these factors are related to increased mental excitability, depressions, dissatisfaction with oneself, feelings of inferiority and guilt, states of anxiety, inhibitions, and ambivalences—all symptoms which the psychiatrist tends to label psychoneurotic. Given a definition of mental health as the development of the personality, we can say that all individuals who present active development in the direction of a higher level of personality (including most psychoneurotic patients) are mentally healthy. (Dabrowski, 1964, p. 112)

Thus, according to Dabrowski (1972), psychoneuroses are intense depressions and anxieties that are not considered pathological, but a positive experience and key part of personality creation.

Positive disintegration. Positive disintegration is a means of developing one's own unique character, and it contains two experiences: (a) disintegration of primitive processes that are designed to acquire fulfillment of basic biological and social needs, and (b) functionally

reintegrating at a higher level that transcends biological and social determinism to eventually become autonomous (Piechowski, 1974).

Positive regression. Positive regression is Dabrowski's term for temporarily reverting to

an earlier period in life or complete isolation from all activity to prevent psychological disorders to allow preparation for releasing creative potential, or to access and develop autonomy. Dabrowski stated that positive regression is found most frequently in those with emotional and imaginational overexcitabilties, which provides these sensitive individuals with the energy required for transformational work (Dabrowski, 1972).

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a response to an exceptionally threatening or catastrophic event or series of events. It is characterized by the following symptom cluster: (a) reexperiencing (i.e., nightmares, flashbacks); (b) avoidance (i.e., not thinking about the trauma, or avoiding the place or similar places where the trauma occurred); (c) restricted affect (i.e., feeling numb or dissociated); and (d) hyperarousal (i.e., exaggerated startle response, feelings of panic; Asmundson et al., 2000; King, Leskin, King, & Weathers, 1998). The International Classification of Diseases-10 (ICD-10) lists PTSD (43.1) under Acute Stress Reactions (43.0). In addition to the above symptoms, the ICD-10 adds anhedonia (loss of pleasure), isolating or detaching from others, fear, insomnia, anxiety, depression, and possibly suicidal ideation and/or completion. PTSD can occur in the form of acute, delayed, and/or chronic (World Health Organization, 1992).

Processing speed. The time between receiving information and acting on it. Faster processing speed means more efficient thinking and learning. Slow or poor processing speed is not related to intelligence. One does not necessarily predict the other. Processing information

more slowly means that some tasks will be more difficult than others. An individual can be highly intelligent yet have slow processing speed (Cognifit, 2017).

Rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM (NREM) sleep. REM sleep is characterized by an active brain in a paralyzed body (muscle atonia) during which time the brain processes

nontraumatic experiences. REM sleep produces such effects as muscle twitches, bursts of rapid eye movements, and often cardio-respiratory irregularities, all of which are associated with dreaming. NREM sleep is characterized by a continuum of sleep depth, with the least arousal in Stage 1 to the most arousal in Stage 4. During NREM the body remained moveable yet with little mental activity, usually fragmented (Carskadon & Dement, 2011).

Reintegration. This is the second phase of the overall process of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration whereby an individual creates a hierarchy of values, which is a prioritized arrangement of emotional reactions that produce a personality ideal, pivotal in forming individual autonomy. One's personality ideal then becomes the goal upon which all decisions and choices are based (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008; see also Disintegration).

Saccade. A rapid intermittent eye movement compelled while awake similar to the process that occurs during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, whereby the eyes fix on one point after another in the visual field ("Saccade," 2017).

Second factor. Comprised of external influences, including social (e.g., individuals and groups), as well as nuclear/extended family, social institutions (e.g., academic, religious), and cultural influences that range from local to global. Dabrowski believed most people do not examine or question social convention, but simply comply. Factor 1 faculties (an individual's innate psyche) combine with Factor 2 characteristics and circumstances, and this alchemy then produces either a stronger or weaker psychological constitution in an individual (Tiller, 1996).

Semantic memory. The part of memory that stores knowledge and facts (McClelland et al., 1995; Squire, 1992).

"Small t" trauma. (Also referred to as "Little t" trauma.) Relatively minor experiences that trigger inadequate coping skills (van der Kolk, 2002ac; see also "Large T" Trauma.)

Talent/talented. These are terms "…often used in relation to areas of performance, such as art, music, dance, or sports" (Clark, 2002, p. 69).

Talent development. A planned process of learning enrichment both at home and at school in which those who excel are supported in the development of their maximum potential "…in a variety of forms and expressions and will result in increased numbers of individuals operating or performing at the level of giftedness" (Clark, 2002, p. 26).

Theory of positive disintegration (TPD). Posited by Dabrowski (1972), TPD is a broad, general developmental theory containing five levels of moral, emotional, and personality development based on the extremes of negative and positive human behavior Dabrowski witnessed during wartime Europe. The five levels are: Primary Integration, Unilevel Disintegration, Multilevel Disintegration, Directed Multilevel Disintegration, and Secondary Integration.

Third factor. The third factor is defined as the ability to evolve one's personality beyond self-centered instincts and blind adherence to social convention by making conscious choices based on affirming or negating particular beliefs, cognitions, moods, reactions, feelings, values, trends, and behaviors that lead to one's personality ideal (Mendaglio, 2008).

Touchstone memories. "The earliest remembered events that may be causing current symptoms and problems" (Shapiro, 2012, p. 307).

Traumatic memories. Memories and their corresponding emotions that remain unprocessed and trapped in the brain's right hemisphere. When traumatic memories are trapped, learning is blocked because traumatic memories are prevented from connecting to previously established, stored memory networks. When learning is blocked, current psychological and interrelated somatic symptoms appear due to inadequate processing of distressing experiences that are

encoded in the brain in state-specific, dysfunctional form (Shapiro, 1995, 2001, 2007).

Working memory. Information retained that is quickly available and suitable for performing any mental task like problem solving, decision making, language production or comprehension, or other thoughts (Cowan, 1988, 1995).

Overview of Remaining Chapters

This comprehensive literature review will contain four additional chapters. While Chapter 1 provides background information on the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted and EMDR therapy for expedient trauma recovery, Chapter 2 describes how the research literature on these topics was obtained. Chapter 3 presents important research findings and concepts necessary to understand giftedness, EMDR therapy, and the interface between the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted and trauma recovery via EMDR therapy. Chapter 3 also highlights key themes and limitations in the existing research. Chapter 4 provides the centerpiece of the CoRAL dissertation by answering the research questions stated below. And lastly, Chapter 5 presents the author's conclusions regarding the review, recommendations for clinical application, and implications for future research. While the first three chapters provide background information and main research findings on the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted personality as well as EMDR therapy as an effective and efficient therapy for trauma, the final two chapters of this CoRAL explain and integrate the findings. The

ultimate aim is to address the problem statement by discovering solutions to the research questions. The objective, problem statement, and research questions are as follows:

Problem Statement

What are the unique emotional characteristics and needs of gifted individuals that may predispose them to trauma, and how may EMDR therapy effectively and efficiently mediate

trauma resolution?

Research Questions

1. What are the unique personality characteristics, challenges, and emotional needs of gifted children?

2. How might the unique personality characteristics and emotional needs of gifted children predispose them to trauma?

3. What is eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy and how might it effectively and efficiently facilitate trauma recovery for gifted children?

Objective Application of Results

The objectives of this comprehensive review of literature are two-fold:

- Demonstrate the potential curative relationship between personality needs and sensitivities of the gifted, and EMDR therapy.

- Examine how engaging in EMDR therapy may release traumatized gifted children to unblock their full potential, providing opportunity for greater personal fulfillment and potential benefit to society.

The information in this CoRAL will be particularly beneficial to families of gifted children, medical and mental health professionals who counsel the gifted and their families, educators who work with the gifted in academic settings, and gifted adults.

Chapter 2: Methods

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 exists to provide the reader with the process of how the literature was discovered, reviewed, organized, and evaluated. Therefore, Chapter 2 is of vital importance in creating and maintaining a visual depiction of the integrity inherent in the literature review process for this CoRAL. Beginning with the author's choice of search criteria used to obtain relevant literature and research, a visual description is presented, followed by the author's organization method and process of evaluation for potential contributions in answering the three

research questions.

Finally, justification for the inclusion of the body of research and literature is provided to the reader throughout the chapter. Complete transparency through all steps in the literature review process is made apparent for two primary reasons: to address the issue of the author's subjective view of the literature, and to support the reader's own critical analysis when interpreting the author's conclusions.

Search Plan

Relevant research literature was obtained through a search of the EBSCOhost and WorldCat.org databases procured via the library website of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. EBSCOhost contains over 25 databases from various fields of study; however, this author selected literature from the fields of psychology and neurobiology by specifically searching PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Proquest, ERIC, Medline with Full Text, Military and Government Collection, and PsycBOOKS. Additional relevant research was obtained through WorldCat.org, which contains a worldwide database of research.

The author limited review of all databases to only full-text, peer-reviewed, English journal articles as well as books written in English; however, when full-text articles were unavailable, this author sought the assistance of the research librarian and SFX (a database of full-text journal articles). As a last resort, a Google title search or a search via scholar.google.com was initiated in pursuit of a particular peer-reviewed article or applicable book. This author cites several research abstracts when a chosen journal article was unable to be procured, and rare books written in the early 20th century are cited that were obtained for review from within local university collections as well as online.

Boolean/Phrase Search

Using the search term “gifted,” the initial Boolean/phrase search in EBSCOhost produced over 12,300 scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. Upon browsing a fair sampling of these articles, this author discovered some of interest that were added to an archive for further review; however, the majority of literature from the sampling seemed to be related to allied fields such as learning environments, mathematics, sciences, technology, engineering, and management, and other academic fields, which had little bearing on the research questions in this study.

In an effort to acquire literature more focused on the emotional needs and characteristics of giftedness and the effects of trauma, this author began pairing forms and concepts of the word “gifted” (i.e., giftedness, high achievers, high achievement, high intelligence and IQ) with concepts such as “emotional needs,” “socialization,” “trauma,” and so on, which considerably narrowed the field of articles to be reviewed, and allowed this author to choose articles more closely aligned with the research questions.

An added feature in the EBSCOhost search fields that allowed narrowing the research results even further was the option of using the “Select a Field” drop down menu that contained

such delimeters as, “Title,” “Author,” “Subjects, or “Word in a Major Subject Heading,” which provided the option of discovering key words in a specific domain. Additionally, a second EBSCOhost menu provides options to choose “And,” “Or,” and “Not,” which allows one to determine the relationship between or among search terms.

To narrow results further, EBSCOhost also allows the searcher to use quotations around specific phrases (i.e., “emotional needs of gifted,” “characteristics of gifted,” “trauma and gifted” to search for each complete phrase), or the use of an asterisk combined with stems of key words (i.e., trauma* producing results for trauma, traumatizing, traumatized, traumatic, and so on). This author used all of the options described above, including “gift*” AND “trauma*” linking the two

stems together, as well as a combination of the options or other modified concepts. From the WorldCat.org database, a Boolean search was conducted using the following delimiters: gifted personality; peer-reviewed only; 2013-2017; and English.

Additional Boolean Searches

As this author continued searching databases and reading the research, new ideas, concepts, and results synergized with material already reviewed, and pursuit of the latest research became imperative, resulting in hundreds of new Boolean searches during the time utilized in producing this manuscript. Several foundational works were discovered in this process, and although it is impossible to list all the inner workings of these searches, several examples are presented below.

Procedures

In searching historical literature, a major limitation was its circumscribed focus on the academic side of giftedness, debating such issues as the pros and cons of grade advancement, the effects of heredity versus environment, appropriate fit of academic subject matter with gifted

student aptitude, whether or not to limit identifying giftedness to an IQ score, the appropriateness of associating the concept of giftedness with an elitist attitude due to the belief that every child is gifted in their own unique way—to name a few of the most prominent controversies in academia. To find research with a focus on the psychological and emotional aspects of giftedness, the author conducted a Boolean/phrase search using combinations of the terms and phrases "emotional needs of gifted," and "personality characteristics of gifted" in the abstract section, which produced the highest quantity of both historical and current research. **Notable Researchers**

While conducting the literature search for this CoRAL, the author noted occasional

repetition of the names of certain researchers or research groups whose contributions were significant and discussed in multiple articles and books. This encouragement motivated the author to search for some of these landmark works to discover how they influenced the understanding and direction of research in their respective subject areas. For example, while reading the book *Living with Intensity* (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009), this author discovered the works of two preeminent, prolific researchers in the area of giftedness and human potential: Michael Piechowski (1974, 1979, 1986, 1991, 2003, 2008) and Kazimierz Dabrowski (1964, 1966, 1967, 1972, 1996), who also partnered with other researchers in creating pivotal works that have significantly influenced the domain of giftedness (Dabrowski et al., 1970, 1973, 1977; Piechowski et al., 1984, 1985, 1995).

Organizing the Research

Subsequent to gathering hundreds of research articles, both hard copy and as PDF files, this author methodically divided the PDF files according to general topics via their titles, which she then placed into corresponding electronic file folders. Hard copies were divided into stacks

according to the same general topics. Then the author meticulously read each article and specific book and/or book chapter paying particular attention to key areas. These key areas were again organized according to sub-topics so named on electronic file folders, which were then placed into electronic files on the author's laptop under the general topic area. Applicable hard copy information was also tagged with color-coded flags according to subtopic. When the author discovered PDF subject matter pertaining to any of the key areas, that information would be cut and pasted into a word document, which would be saved with a short title describing the topic, which would then be filed in the appropriate subtopic folder, which would then be filed in the appropriate general topic electronic file.

When this author obtained additional research articles or books produced by new Boolean searches, every article or book underwent the same analytical and organizational process. Though tedious and time-consuming, this attention to detail was proven to be a valuable aid in discovering notable trends, consistent themes, new concepts, limitations, similarities, differences, and the particular research gap this dissertation addresses. For example, out of hundreds of research articles, books, and book chapters reviewed, this author found it rather extraordinary that only one article paired giftedness with EMDR therapy to address trauma recovery, which seemed to be a side-note to the researchers' main subject matter (Bae, Kim, & Park, 2008). Topic areas will be addressed in more detail in the literature review found in Chapter Three. **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the search plan and process of organizing and reviewing the existing research literature contained in this CoRAL. This process was described in detail in order to give the reader a window into the meticulous process of deciding which articles to include; how information was extracted from each study, book, or book chapter; and

subsequently how this information was synthesized into a comprehensive and cohesive discourse. This review method was made as transparent as possible, and though the process was somewhat laborious and perhaps inefficient, it more easily facilitated the author and reviewer's ability to detect gaps in the literature. This procurement and organizational method also highlighted topic areas for future theoretical application discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3: A Review of Related Literature

Chapter Overview

Chapter 3 presents important research findings and concepts necessary to understand the

surprising lack of connection and research between the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted and the necessity for trauma recovery, specifically via eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy due to its characteristic efficiency and long-term therapeutic gains validated by over 25 years of research. Chapter 3 also highlights key themes and limitations in the existing research.

Additionally, this chapter will review and evaluate historical and current literature on the unique characteristics, challenges, and emotional needs of the gifted personality, as well as the theory of and research on the therapeutic model of EMDR. Initial focus will be on giftedness and the gifted, including statistics, history, general personality characteristics, challenges, controversies, and the exploration of a possible predisposition toward experiencing trauma based on this population's propensity toward intensity and sensitivity.

Chapter 3 will review and evaluate important historical and more recent research findings and concepts necessary to understand the emotional needs and characteristics of the gifted and the necessity for trauma recovery specifically via EMDR therapy due to its characteristic effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term therapeutic gains verified by over 25 years of controlled research. Chapter 3 will also emphasize key themes and limitations in existing research. The focus will be on the gifted/talented personality, including statistics, history, general personality characteristics, challenges, and potential propensity toward experiencing trauma due to this population's intense sensitivity.

Moreover, the literature on EMDR will be evaluated with regard to its founder and history, its efficiency, effectiveness, the adaptive information processing (AIP) model foundational to EMDR therapy, and the process by which therapeutic gain is achieved. The remaining portion of the chapter will present peer-reviewed research on therapeutic applications

of EMDR and explore how EMDR therapy might relate to therapeutic treatment for trauma in the gifted and why it is necessary. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an evaluative summary.

Review of Existing Research Literature on the Gifted Personality

In searching the vast amount of literature specifically on the development of intelligence as a measurable and useful standard, this author reviewed countless articles and books. Although it was simply impossible to include each article and book on this subject in this work, the author has chosen to begin this discourse with two reviewers of historical literature, as well as several important researchers and their landmark contributions to illustrate the development of the concept of "giftedness."

History of Giftedness – Landmark Works and Researchers

The first reviewer (Grinder, 1985) divided interest in giftedness into three domains: giftedness and divinity, giftedness and neuroses, and giftedness and testing. As early as the Greco-Roman era, giftedness was understood as being endowed by God, inspired by the muses. Then, produced by the Renaissance emphasis on science, humanism, and focus on the individual, giftedness was thought to be the result of neuroses, or nervous instability. Grinder's third domain, testing, was borne from the increase in compulsory education along with rising immigration into the United States. The second reviewer, Tannenbaum (1958), noted that the scientific inquiry into imminence began in the Victorian era with Darwin and Mendel's research

into species variations, and Francis Galton's (Darwin's cousin) investigation into how individuals differ.

Francis Galton. The term "gifted" was used first by Francis Galton (1822-1911), a British psychologist, in his landmark work, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and*

Consequence (1869), in which he referred to exceptionally talented adults as gifted. Galton is most noted for scientifically gathering data about the families of gifted British men in areas such as literature, art, music, science, and politics. During his lifetime, Galton produced over 340 papers and books. He created statistical concepts still used today (e.g., correlation and regression toward the mean), and was the first to use statistics to analyze the inheritance of intelligence and human differences via questionnaires and surveys. Galton noticed that giftedness seemed to travel through generations, and therefore, he established giftedness as an inherited biological trait. A limitation in his work was that the family members he studied shared similar socioeconomic status and opportunity. Galton therefore believed that children could inherit from their parents the potential to grow into gifted adults, and thus coined the term, *gifted children*.

It should be noted that Galton was instrumental in the formulation of "eugenics," which endeavored to improve humanity and prevent degradation of genetic potential. Galton argued that, like livestock, humanity could be improved by breeding via intentional selection. His goal for eugenics was to encourage reproduction among the more eminent and discourage the birthrate of the unfit, and by doing so the eventual result would be a race of highly gifted people. Moreover, Galton was instrumental in popularizing this notion among the scientists and intellectuals of his day. Although Galton's focus on the scientific method of inquiry laid the foundation for 20th-century exploration of giftedness, he has been soundly criticized for his views on racial differences and socioeconomic class (Gregory, 2004).

Lewis Terman. In his landmark work, *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925), Lewis Terman (1877–1956) expanded on Galton's view of giftedness and coined the concept of "high intelligence." Terman is also known for publishing the *Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale* in 1916. Alfred Binet and Theordore Simon from France created the original version of

this intelligence test and subsequent revisions were released in 1937 and 1960 (Sears, 1957). Additionally, in the early 1920s Terman began a fascinating long-term study of 1,000 children with IQs measuring 140 and higher. Terman stated that the "…twofold purpose of the project was, first of all, to find what traits characterize children of high IQ, and secondly, to follow them for as many years as possible to see what kind of adults they might become" (Terman, 1954, p. 223).

Terman and his colleagues (Cox, 1926; Terman, 1925; Terman, Burks, & Jensen, 1935; Terman & Oden, 1947, 1959) concluded that gifted children are healthier, higher achievers in school, and better adjusted than typical children, thus contradicting historical beliefs giftedness and neuroses were correlated. Furthermore, Terman's study indicated that adulthood success was the result of a combination of internal and environmental factors, though Terman, similar to Galton, placed more importance on the hereditary component of giftedness. Terman's research became the new knowledge about giftedness; thus, gifted students were expected to have a better self-image, be more emotionally mature, and more socially adept and accepted than average students. Confirmation upheld Terman's findings in several studies, and this belief held for nearly four decades (Gallagher & Crowder, 1957; Subotnik, Karp, & Morgan, 1989).

However, further analysis by Gallagher (1990) revealed multiple flaws in Terman's study. First, *selective bias*—Terman chose the youngest in the class, those who scored well on a group test, and those who were nominated by their teacher. Therefore, they performed very well

on the individually administered Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales. Additionally, the families of the gifted children in Terman's study received at minimum annual, and sometimes more frequent, educational planning, peer guidance, and help with family concerns, which helped to synergize the social, emotional, and educational functioning of these children.

Second, *high socioeconomic status*—Terman's chosen children came from families of high educational attainment and economic success, such as successful businessmen, esteemed physicians, attorneys, scientists, and other leaders in their chosen fields. Thus, these families were able to provide their children with not only an enriched environment, but emotional acceptance and social status.

And third, *results presented as "averages"*—Terman presented his results in averages, as was the norm for group data. However, as with averages there are always statistical outliers. If averaged results indicate that as a group, gifted children are better adjusted, there are always exceptions. In sum, the intellectual and educational needs of these children were identified and properly served, and they felt accepted among their teachers and peers. These factors led Terman to choose children who were already functioning intellectually, academically, socially, and emotionally at reasonable levels.

Willings (1985) raised a valid concern about providing appropriate counseling services that addressed the unique emotional characteristics inherent in these gifted outliers who may be underestimated by educational personnel precisely because they are gifted and "different" from most children. In fact, Coleman (1980), discovered that about 20% of Terman's subjects demonstrated significant underachievement or emotional problems.

Leta Hollingworth. While assessing the potential to be gifted, Leta Hollingworth (1886– 1939) validated Terman's findings that giftedness was influenced by internal and external

factors—not only genetics, but also a nurturing home and rich educational environment. Her monumental book on gifted education, *Gifted Children, Their Nature and Nurture* (1926), initiated the consistent use of the term "gifted" among intelligence researchers and educators to refer to children with high potential. Hollingworth's view in particular, included an inherent

understanding that childhood potential must be nurtured in order for it to be developed and maintained into adulthood (Bainbridge, 2014).

The research conducted by Hollingworth (1931) concluded that as a child's IQ scores increased so did difficulty in social adjustment. Of special import was her conclusion that particular difficulties would arise when adult intelligence was combined with childish emotions in a child's body. In Hollingworth's address to the 1931 First International Congress on Mental Hygiene in Washington, DC, she revealed that gifted children have "…certain special problems of adjustment, observed in the case study of these children, which arise primarily from the very fact that they are gifted" (p. 5). Among these problems are lack of challenge in school, difficulty relating to peers with whom they have few interests in common, identifying and developing enjoyable leisure activities, learning when to argue or conform, and early awareness of difficult and challenging philosophical, religious, and moral issues. Hollingworth also discovered that gifted girls had issues of balancing social obligations and opportunities with their personal preferences and interests.

Paul Witty. Influenced by Hollingworth and Terman, Paul Witty (1898–1976) partially replicated Terman's longitudinal research. Witty (1930) studied a total of 100 children, 50 of whom had an IQ of 140 and above, and 50 in a control group with an IQ between 90 to 110, who were matched with the first group of 50 on gender, age, and race. In addition to IQ, Witty was interested in measuring nonintellectual characteristics of these children and noted his acute

disappointment with the lack of adequate assessment tools for specialized aptitudes, domain talents, and social and moral traits, all of which relied on measures of school honesty and parent/teacher reports of excellence in school subjects.

In his follow-up study with the original 100 children, Witty (1958) reexamined the same

variables and concluded that his research supported Terman's findings, which was not surprising since both Terman and Witty selected similar variables in children whose IQ was 140 or above. However, it is noted that Witty refused to take sides on the long-standing "nature versus nurture" debate about which influenced giftedness development more by taking a moderate stance in which he purported that giftedness cannot be so narrowly defined, and that in addition to one's inherent abilities, any definition of giftedness must include an individual's drive and opportunity, as well as a favorable environment (Witty & Lehman, 1927). Witty's actual definition of giftedness included any individual "…whose performance in a valuable line of human activity is consistently or repeatedly remarkable" (Witty, 1958, p. 55).

Martin Jenkins. A mentee of Paul Witty, and cocollaborator with Witty on studies involving giftedness in African American children was Martin Jenkins (1904–1978). The son of an engineer, Jenkins received his doctorate from Northwestern University in 1935, upon the completion of his dissertation on 103 high-ability African American children living in Chicago's South Side. Subsequent to searching seven public schools, which were still segregated in the 1930s, and using screening methods similar to Terman, Jenkins and Witty (1934) published a study involving 26 African American students in Grades 3 to 8. Their sample came from homes that were socioeconomically somewhat above average compared to other Chicago African American families. Results indicated that these children were uniformly high achieving, and all were three grades more advanced than the norms for same-age peers.

Additionally, a 9-year-old girl with an IQ of 200 was discovered in this sampling, and a study, "The Case of 'B'—A Gifted Negro Girl," was published the following year as evidence that highly gifted children existed among those who had lives substantially dissimilar from White peers in the current environment of racism (Witty & Jenkins, 1935). It is interesting to

note that Terman found 15 children, and Hollingworth found 17 children with IQs of 180 and above, and African American children, as well as other non-White children, remained conspicuously absent in their respective samples. As Jenkins (1943) eloquently illustrated at the time,

> These cases bring into sharp focus the limitations which our society places on the development of the highly gifted Negro…a culture in which racial inferiority of the Negro is a basic assumption. Consequently, [these children] will experience throughout their lives, educational, social and occupational restrictions, which must inevitably affect achievement and motivation. (p. 165)

Historical Perception of Giftedness as Elitism, Racism, and Social Construct In the 1930s, empirical research revealed various positive characteristics found in those who were gifted, including creativity, integrity, and originality, which most likely added to the public perception that inherent in giftedness is a homogenous cluster of reliable and enviable positive characteristics unavailable to the average person (Hollingworth, 1930; Witty, 1939). Furthermore, the abbreviated overview above of key theorists, intelligence testing, and research may afford the reader a clearer understanding of how Western culture came to equate the concept of giftedness with two mainstream biases: elitism and racism—both devised to maintain power. Western thought also supported the idea that being identified as gifted was meaningless and merely a social construct correlated with socioeconomic status and opportunity

(George, 1992; Margolin, 1993, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 1994). With such stigma attached to giftedness, perhaps this is why Swiatck (1995) found that for both genders, highly gifted students were most likely to use denial as a way to cope with the social consequences of being gifted.

According to Silverman (1993), Webb (1993), and Winner (2000), historical research has

been limited in scope to the academic and intellectual capacities of gifted children and teens. Hollingworth (1926) concluded that if giftedness is ascertained only in terms of academic achievement and intellectual capacity, then certainly the opportunities for achievement afforded by higher socioeconomic status offers a greater chance of success in life. However, giftedness can also be understood as advanced personal development, and is seen in those who demonstrate precocious abilities at a younger age than their peers regardless of race, culture, or socioeconomic status (Mendaglio, 2008).

Furthermore, and of greatest import for the reader's understanding about the connection between the personality characteristics, the internal experience of giftedness, and the subjective experience of trauma, is the idea that supporting and encouraging those who are gifted involves recognizing their unique personality characteristics and needs (Silverman, 1993; Webb, 1993; Winner, 2000), and is a matter of social justice and equity, so aptly described by Scott, Scott, and Longmire (2014):

> We emphasize that meeting the needs of G&T [gifted and talented] students is a fundamental issue of social justice as opposed to elitism, and we advocate for equity not equality…we highlight the need for leaders to interrogate prevailing assumptions about the capacity of G&T students to be successful without specialized programming and instruction. Leaders must take action within their sphere of influence to more effectively

> support these at-risk individuals, otherwise leaders risk reinforcing the pursuit of mediocrity rather than equity. (p. 270)

The Importance of Kazimierz Dabrowski, MD, PhD (1902-1980)

Within the bulk of historical literature reviewed for this dissertation pertaining to giftedness, one theorist and researcher was noticeably absent: Kazimierz Dabrowski, and his

theory of positive disintegration (TPD). Although Dabrowski's TPD is a universal model of emotional, moral, and personality development (Piechowski, 2014), using this theory as a context in which to understand the unique qualities and characteristics of giftedness is foundational to addressing these unique needs in familial, educational, and therapeutic settings. Dabrowsky began his work in the 1930s; however, his body of work remained obscure until Michael Piechowski (1979) introduced Dabrowski's theory and research into the study of giftedness in North America. The strength of Dabrowski's theory is in the favorable integration of psychopathology into personality development, and its weakness concerns its loose conceptual definitions (Aronson, 1964).

According to O'Connor (2002), many gifted children have experienced high levels of sensitivity and emotional intensity that have put them at odds with their peers, parents, and teachers and caused these sensitive, intense individuals to question their own normalcy. Piechowski (1997) suggested a high likelihood that this insecurity would continue into adulthood, with many gifted adults still feeling pressured to be "normal" and questioning their future possibilities, potential, and whether they would ever achieve their personality ideal.

This phenomenon, and additional issues explored in Dabrowski's TPD, has led others to contend that Dabrowski's work more fully explained and addressed many inherent characteristics and issues common among those who are gifted (e.g., Kolata, 1987; Silverman,

1993; Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997; Webb, 1993; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). In fact, Dabrowsky's theory was the first to place intelligence secondary to emotions, which has been accepted in psychology as a phenomenon in personality development only since the 1990s (Piechowski, 1997).

Moreover, since the introduction of Dabrowski by Piechowski in 1979, Dabrowski's

work has surfaced in peer reviewed publications on giftedness and become increasingly influential among those who study giftedness, as well as those who advocate for and educate gifted individuals (e.g., Miller, 1981; Miller, Silverman, & Falk, 1994; Piechowski, 1978, 1986, 2002, 2003, 2008; Piechowski & Colangelo, 2006; Silverman, 1993). Mendaglio (2008) stated that although TPD remains generally undiscovered by education and psychology in North America, it is very well known in North American gifted education circles and among the gifted due to its ability to explain gifted emotional development and a wide range of issues related to giftedness. Mendaglio further purports that TPD has been the main catalyst driving the study of giftedness since 1988.

Dabrowsky's developmental theory. Rather than a chronological age-stage description of human development, such as Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968) that was commonly accepted among psychological theorists at the time, Dabrowsky depicted human development on a hierarchical continuum called *multilevelness*. Multilevelness is described as influential instincts, conflicts, and emotions experienced as one moves from a primitive level to more advanced, higher functionality. For example, conflict in its most elemental form might be experienced as frustration of basic needs, while a higher level might be produced by failure to achieve certain personal or social values. Emotionally, a low form of joy might be the product of a full belly, while a higher level would perhaps result from

seeing a beautiful sunset. Dabrowski believed that human beings share lower instincts like sexual impulse and self-preservation with animals, but higher attributes such as creativity, self actualization, and enlightenment are uniquely human (Mendaglio, 2008).

Whereas modern psychology and psychiatry view the experience and products of inner conflict more in terms of pathology, as described by their diagnostic manual (American

Psychiatric Association, 2013), TPD assumes that transitioning from a lower to higher level of functioning can only be experienced via a state of inner conflict, which Dabrowski considered a positive element of mental health (Mendaglio, 2008).

Dabrowski's TPD describes five levels of human development applicable to all human beings (Piechowski, 1974). Each of level of human development contains identity characteristics and multiple options that contribute to developmental potential (Tiller, 2006).

Levels of positive disintegration. TPD is briefly outlined in the figure below:

Level	Stage	Major Characteristics & Influences
I	Primary Integration	External forces produce an individual who views others as objects, who is selfish, egocentric, concerned only with survival/self-protection, and reliant on impulsiveness and heredity; there is no internal growth/awareness/conflict; a crisis may produce a breakdown called unilevel disintegration.
II	Unilevel Disintegration	An experience of inner fragmentation (many selves) with an external locus of control; submits to and absorbs group values and beliefs that are relative and to which he feels ambivalent. Levels I and II represent second factor, unilevel dynamisms in which an individual has fluctuating mood shifts, feels inferior to others, changes course and decisions based on social opinion. Low developmental potential without vertical tension may lead to negative disintegration or reintegration into Level I. However, a crisis at this level may precipitate spontaneous upward multilevel disintegration.
III	Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration	Multilevel processes begin in Level III. A strong vertical incongruence develops in which an individual begins to sense morality and conflict between what is and what

		could/ought to be (the ideal) that compels him/her to begin a positive maladjustment process of internal transformation; involves emotionally charged, critical evaluation of self, others and the world that includes anger/self-loathing at undesirable traits; shame and guilt that influence reaching one's developmental potential. A crisis at this level may lead to directed multilevel

		disintegration or reintegration at a lower level.
IV	Directed Organized Multilevel Disintegration	Advanced multilevel development; subject-object relationship with self develops that produces critical evaluation of goals and motivation; executive power of intention and choice (third factor) becomes conscious; movement toward self-actualization with ever-increasing responsibility for others and greater congruency between action and idealism therefore vertical tension is released; empathy for self and others increases; inner restructuring prevents reintegration at lower levels thus freedom from lower-level drives and motivation; confidence, motivation, self-regulation, and program of change develops that leads to autonomy.
V	Secondary Integration	Highly advanced multilevel development; achieves personal ideal, harmony, inner peace motivated by authenticity, autonomy, and empathy for human suffering; profound depth of consciousness; connection with and trust of a force greater than self; engages in small or large-scale work on behalf humanity; may achieve inner peace.

Figure 2. Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. "It is important to keep in mind that levels are abstract categories that were codified for the purposes of research. With the exception of Level I, each outlines the nature of the developmental process taking place" (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 21). Adapted from *Living With Intensity: Understanding the Sensitivity, Excitability, and Emotional Development of Gifted Children, Adolescents, and Adults,* by S. Daniels and M. Piechowski, 2009, pp. 20–21. Copyright 2009 by Great Potential Press. Adapted from *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration,* by S. Mendaglio, 2008, pp. 64–66. Copyright 2008 by Great Potential Press.

Rather than personality being determined chronologically, in Dabrowski's theory personality is created continuously via *positive disintegration* as a means of developing one's own unique character.

According to Mendaglio (2008), positive disintegration contains two internal experiences: (a) *disintegration* of primitive processes that are designed to acquire fulfillment of basic biological and social needs, and (b) *reintegration* at a higher level that transcends

biological and social determinism to an individual becoming autonomous. A disintegration phase

is characterized by "crises," and is indicative of positive developmental potential. These crises are experienced as strong anxieties and depressions, called *psychoneuroses* which "…depict syndromes and processes that are the expressions of individuals' internal and external conflict" (p. 33).

Additionally, psychoneuroses lead to fragmentation or dissolution of an individual's mental focus and organization (Piechowski, 1974). However, Dabrowski saw a clear distinction between psychoneuroses and neuroses:

> Neuroses, he believed are rooted in psychophysiological or psychosomatic disorders, i.e., in bodily organs or systems that do not show any sign of physical malfunction. Psychoneuroses, on the other hand, depict syndromes and processes that are expressions of individuals' internal and external conflict. (Mendaglio, 2008, p. 33)

Examples of psychoneuroses might be feelings of shame, guilt, inferiority, or self dissatisfaction, and as stated above, depression and strong anxieties, which were not considered mental conditions that need remedying. Indeed, Dabrowski believed those to be positive, though painful, attributes. He further believed psychoneuroses to be the foundational components of positive disintegration, and insisted that psychoneurotic, and even some psychotic symptoms provided the catalyst that initiated transitioning from lower to higher development (Dabrowski, 1972).

> Intense psychoneurotic processes are especially characteristic of accelerated development in its course towards the formation of personality. According to our theory, accelerated psychic development is actually impossible without transition through processes of nervousness and psychoneuroses, without external and internal conflicts, without

> maladjustment to actual conditions in order to achieve adjustment to a higher level of

> values (to what "ought to be"), and without conflicts with lower level realities as a result of spontaneous or deliberate choice to strengthen the bond with reality of higher level. (Dabrowski, 1972, p. 220)

Thus, in addressing the nature of the human developmental process, Dabrowski postulated that individuality is birthed via bouts of anxiety, depression, hypersensitivity, and confusion as one struggled to enter higher levels of awareness, mental control, experiential openness, empathy, and personal responsibility.

> In referring to the phenomenon of psychological disintegration, Dabrowski (1964) stated: The disintegration process, through loosening and even fragmenting the internal psychic environment, through conflicts within the internal environment and with the external environment…all of which are usually regarded as negative…is the ground for the birth and development of a higher psychic structure. The effect of disintegration on the structure of the personality is influenced by such factors as heredity, social environment, and the stresses of life. (pp. 5-6)

Dabrowski further stated this process may involve the realization that one's social environment is incompatible with one's inner imperatives and a growing awareness of a more altruistic set of values, thus the former social environment must be rejected (Dabrowski, 1972). Though fraught with much internal conflict, Dabrowski saw this developmental process as positive not only in its end result, but also in the experience itself:

> In TPD, development is equated with becoming truly human, a state accomplished by individuals who struggle to make sense of themselves and society. In the process, they transform themselves from self-serving human animals to altruistic human beings.

> In essence, he [Dabrowski] taught his patients that their experiencing of intense

> negative emotions was a sign of their development—something to celebrate, not remediate. Specifically, patients were taught to reframe commonly held beliefs about negative emotions and to move from the view that they are symptoms to be eliminated, and instead seeing the negative emotions as harbingers of growth and development. Such conceptual reframing is a hallmark of TPD. (Mendaglio, 2008, p. 15)

Additionally, Dabrowski reframed the experience of temporarily retreating to an earlier period in life or engaging in complete isolation from all activity in order to prevent psychological disorders as a requirement to travel from a negative or pathological state to one of mental health. He called this retreat *positive regression,* which is like a "time out" from daily life to allow preparation for releasing creative potential, or to access and develop autonomy.

Furthermore, Dabrowski stated the disintegration/positive regressive phenomenon was found most frequently in those with emotional and imaginational overexcitabilties (elucidated further in this chapter), which provided these sensitive individuals with the energy required for transformational work (Dabrowski, 1972). All five of Dabrowski's overexcitabilities will be explored later in this chapter.

The factors. Based upon his personal observation, Dabrowski believed that most people lived their lives by decisions rooted in self-interest and biological impulses—defined as the *first factor*, and/or those who live with unexamined compliance to social convention—called the *second factor.* Additionally, Dabrowski described individuals who began to critically analyze and evaluate their lives, and who became more individualized and autonomous—this ability he called the *third factor.* This group chose an autonomous developmental process over a conventional, unconscious life (negative adjustment), and they moved into developing a value

structure through critical analysis (positive adjustment) through which all of life circumstances

were seen and decisions made (Dabrowski, 1964; Tiller, 1996).

More specifically, Dabrowski believed that the process of disintegration (negative adjustment) and reintegration (positive adjustment) is how an individual rose above animal instincts and social convention, achieves personality, and becomes truly human (Mendaglio, 2008). Following the crisis state of disintegration, then, an individual begins the second phase of positive disintegration, the *reintegration phase*. Reintegration initiates the process of creating a *hierarchy of values*, which is a prioritized arrangement of *emotional reactions* that produce a *personality ideal,* which is pivotal in forming individual autonomy and critical to personality development in that one's personality ideal then becomes the goal upon which all decisions and choices are based.

Thus, from emotional reactions experienced during a psychological crisis, the individual creates a value hierarchy that establishes a personality ideal from which he or she examines their own essence. Upon this examination, the individual shapes his or her personality existentially choosing (or not) to rise to a higher level of personality by emphasizing those aspects of essence and emotionality he or she would like to increase and deemphasizing aspects that are less representative of the ideal self. Dabrowski theorized that the higher one's developmental potential the better chance one has of realizing autonomy and one's personality ideal (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008).

The third factor ability of moving into autonomy based on one's hierarchy of values is influenced by an individual's constitutional endowment called *developmental potential*, which is a pattern of genetic factors, expressed through interaction with one's environment that consists of three main features: (a) special abilities and talents (like athletic or unique musical ability);

(b) a persistent, strong drive to achieve individual autonomy; and (c) the five forms of

overexcitability (Aronson, 1964; Tiller, 2006). Thus, Dabrowski's concept of developmental potential is a combination of *dynamisims* and *overexcitabilities.*

Dynamisms are further depicted as emotions combined with autonomous internal forces assumed inherent and normally distributed in any population. These would be forces such as insight, creative imagination, tendency toward perfectionism, the ability of controlling or reshaping one's mental cognitions, and other such characteristics leading to greater degrees of autonomy (Mendaglio, 2008).

Dabrowski's overexcitabilities. Overexcitabilities (OE) were described as high reactivity of the central nervous system that created an intense emotional life. Dabrowski (1972) used the phrase *psychic overexcitability* to mean an internal supranormal stimulus response. Piechowski (1991) noted that Dabrowski emphasized an intensity of mental activity that surpassed ordinary effect. Overexcitabilities were explained as enhanced channels of experience (Piechowski, 1979) that allowed an individual to receive and process unusually large amounts of environmental stimuli (Gallagher, 1986).

This author would like to emphasize that Ewa Hyzy (2010), faculty member at Medical University of Lodz in Poland, believed the Polish term *nadwrazliwosc* (p. 4), which is most often translated as "overexcitability," was more accurately translated as "hyperexcitability" and is much preferred because "over" had negative connotations Dabrowski did not intend. Nevertheless, the prefix "over" remained most used in research literature on Dabrowski and his theory.

The following chart summarizes Dabrowski's OEs:

Type	Definition	Characteristics

Psychomotor	Energy surplus due to enhanced excitability of the neuromuscular system. *Emotional tension expressed through psychomotor activity.*	May be prone to behavioral and/or motor hyperactivity. Most likely demonstrates high achievement, rapid and/or compulsive speech, may reveal potential for self-mutilation, impulsiveness, restlessness, and/or competitiveness.
Sensual	Heightened ability to experience sensory/ aesthetic pleasure. *Emotional tension expressed through heightened sensual activity and forms.*	Most likely displays increased need for tactile experiences, delights in beauty, tendency to overeat, appreciation for aesthetics and drama, enhanced sensory sensitivity (disdains clothing tags, scratchy clothing, fluorescent lights, irritating sounds), seeks increased comfort and luxury needs, searches for variety in company and sexual experiences, increased need for companionship and attention, increased sensitivity to and dislike of loneliness, may enjoy superficial relationships and being the center of attention.
Imaginational	Capacity to visualize events very well. *Emotional tension expressed through vivid imagination.*	May have unique impressions and may draw uncommon inferences among ideas, demonstrates intuitiveness and heightened consciousness, ability to learn from retrospection and prospection; verbal expressions contain rich images and metaphors, displays animated and vivid imagination, may confuse truth with fantasy or fiction in dream life due to intense fantasy and imaginational world.
Intellectual	Intensified activity of the mind. *Emotional tension expressed through intellectual pursuits.*	My exhibit deep respect for logic and linear thought, intolerance for errors and/or imprecise thinking; heightened analytical and observational abilities, tendency to ask probing questions persistently, displays a preoccupation with analysis of complex theoretical problems or thoughts, demonstrates intense concentration, voracious search for knowledge; most associated with intellectual giftedness along with emotional overexcitability.
Emotional	Function of experiencing emotional relationships.	Most likely has a strong affective memory and precocious interest in death; internalizes emotions of others and may have difficulty separating

	Tension/strength of emotions and relationships provide foundation for positive disintegration.	personal emotions from others' emotions (heightened sensitivity), uncommon fears, anxieties, and/or tendency toward depression and feelings of loneliness; timidity and/or shyness as well as enthusiasm; strong attachments to relationships, places, and/or living things; increased security needs and concern for others; prefers exclusive relationships even with friends; difficulty adjusting to change; profound sense of personal and social justice and responsibility that leads to heightened compassion and compulsion to right perceived wrongs.

Figure 3. Dabrowski's five overexcitabilities. Adapted from *Living With Intensity: Understanding the Sensitivity, Excitability, and Emotional Development of Gifted Children, Adolescents, and Adults,* by S. Daniels and M. Piechowski, 2009, pp. 36–55. Copyright 2009 by Great Potential Press. Adapted from *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration,* by S. Mendaglio, 2008, p. 160. Copyright 2008 by Great Potential Press.

An individual may experience one or more of these enhanced channels of overexcitabilities, influencing the intensity of personal experience (Gross, Rinn, & Jamieson, 2007; Piechowski, 1974; Tiller, 2006). Additionally, one's principle overexcitability determined an individual's response style to internal and external stimuli (Piechowski, 1974). Many researchers discovered a direct relationship between the presence of overexcitabilities and reaching one's true, autonomous potential (Bouchard, 2004; Dabrowski, 1964; Piechowski, 1974, 1979; Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985; Piechowski & Miller, 1995).

Briefly in sum, beneficial developmental potential is indicated by crises in which psychoneuroses arise that lead to positive disintegration (the first phase) of personality development when disintegration of one's mental organization occurs. Beginning reintegration (the second phase) initiates the creation of a hierarchy of values based on one's emotional reactions during the crises. These emotional reactions also lead an individual to create a

hierarchy of values representing a personality ideal vital to the process of both personality development and becoming autonomous over the course of one's lifetime. The impetus for this metamorphosis, briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, is produced by a force Dabrowski

identified as the *third factor*—the inherent human ability to become authentic and autonomous, to evolve one's personality beyond instincts and external circumstances by making conscious choices to either affirm or negate beliefs, cognitions, moods, reactions, feelings, values, trends, and behaviors that lead to one's personality ideal.

Personality Characteristics, Emotional Needs, and Issues of the Gifted Coleman and Cross (2000) stated that for decades, research in giftedness has been relatively inert, producing small gains to the body of knowledge already collected; therefore, to fully appreciate the social-emotional development inherent in giftedness he concludes, "…we need to understand more closely the *personal experience* of persons who are gifted" (p. 208, italics added).

Intensity, sensitivity, and self-esteem. For many children, and adults later identified as gifted, the characteristics of intensity, persistence, and concentration appeared early in life and have long been accepted as signs of higher intelligence (Kolata, 1987; Silverman, 1993; Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997; Webb, 1993; Webb et al., 1982). As Beljan et al. (2006) aptly described:

> Gifted children—and gifted adults—often are extremely intense, whether in their emotional response, intellectual pursuits, sibling rivalry, or power struggles with authority figures. They are often impatient both with themselves and with others. The intensity also often manifests itself in heightened motor activity and physical restlessness. (p. 83)

In addition to intensity, gifted individuals were very often acutely sensitive to their tactile and sensory environments (e.g., noise, clutter, scratchy clothing, the sound of air conditioners,

ticking clocks, fluorescent lights); their own and other's emotions (may cry when seeing others cry or while watching something sad on television); had difficulty with taste, smells, and textures

of foods (often "picky" and preferred that different foods not touch each other on the plate); and so on. Others treated them with disdain and frequently accused them of being too sensitive, too intense, or too moody, or just "too much" (Beljan et al., 2006; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009).

Gifted education leaders have more recently noticed that highly intelligent children and adults display heightened responses to stimuli due to innate intensities (Bouchet & Falk, 2001; Lind, 2001; Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997). One such study analyzed the relationship between self esteem development in gifted adolescents and the expression of overexcitabilities (Gross et al., 2007), and broadly concluded, that the degree to which overexcitabilities are socially accepted affected gifted adolescents' self-concepts. Piechowski and Colangelo (1984) reported that overexcitabilities were not valued socially, but perceived negatively by peers, parents, siblings, and teachers of gifted students who were less accepting of the manifestations of overexcitabilities due to lack of knowledge and understanding. Universally, gifted students felt out-of-synch, ostracized, and even embarrassed because of differences they perceived between themselves and their peers (Colangelo, 1984; Piechowski, 1992; Silverman, 1995). Emotionally, many gifted lived with acute intensity, a bizarre or sophisticated sense of humor, and emotional sensitivity that produced complicated and painful social interaction (Kline & Meckstroth, 1985).

Aron (1996) reported that being sensitive was associated with an increased vulnerability to overstimulation, and that about 20% of the population was born with a sensitive nervous system that made them more aware of subtleties in their environment. Additionally, sensitivity was found to be a double-edged sword that brought advantage or left one feeling completely overwhelmed with a nervous system exhausted by highly stimulating environments of sights and

sounds.

> Definitions of "sensitive" not only include environmental sensitivity but being: …highly responsive or susceptible; especially easily hurt or damaged; delicately aware of the attitudes and feelings of others; excessively or abnormally susceptible or delicate; particularly receptive to sense impressions; and capable of being physically stimulated or excited by external agents. ("Sensitive," n.d.)

Mendaglio (1995) put forth a definition of sensitivity that included the concepts of intense emotional experience, perspective taking, empathy, and self-awareness. He further stated that for gifted individuals, the personal experience of sensitivity is most likely not expressed directly to others. Research revealed that the quality of being sensitive/hypersensitive incorporates all human emotional states and was one of the first and most frequently mentioned aspects of being gifted (Aron, 1996; Lovecky, 1993; Mendaglio, 1995; Perino & Perino, 1981; Walker, 1991; Webb et al., 1982).

Other descriptive characteristics in sensitivity included feeling vulnerable, fragile, empathetic and socially responsive (Shavinina, 1999). According to Piechowski (1991) and Silverman (1993), research has strongly suggested that gifted students were more sensitive than other students. Inner characteristics included being personally and morally sensitive, emotionally sensitive, and extremely compassionate (Edmunds & Edmunds, 2005; Monks, Heller, & Passow, 2000). A solid correlation between emotional intensity and intellect was identified, and the conclusion has been drawn that gifted individuals are likely at risk of being highly sensitive (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977).

For gifted individuals, these behaviors were not pathological, but normal, borne of an

innate drive to question, understand, search, and cope, seeing boundless alternatives and

possibilities simultaneously and being idealistic about social justice and morality. As a result, these brilliant individuals were more prone to anxiety and depression. More recently, the acute experience of heightened intensity and sensitivity in the gifted was becoming more accepted among their families, researchers, and educators (Beljan et al., 2006); however, along with the intensities and sensitivities was the risk that some children and adults would be misdiagnosed (Webb et al., 2005), further elucidated in this document.

Additional studies have shown that higher levels of intensity and sensitivity of gifted individuals have compromised their response to stressors (Lovecky, 1992). Stressors included cyberbullying (Smith, Dempsey, Jackson, Olenchak, & Gaa, 2012); teasing and bullying due to talents and interests (Peterson & Ray, 2006); stressful interactions due to asynchronous development and intensity (Neihart, 2001); feeling isolated (Plucker & Levy, 2001); feeling innately different or stigmatized (Coleman & Cross, 2001); experiencing indifference from significant others (Peterson, 2001); bouts of rage and violence (Cross, 2001); fear of failure and marked anxiety about the future (Peterson, 1990); increased anxiety and insomnia (Harrison & van Haneghan, 2011); persistent self-criticism, fear of mistakes, and internal/external expectation of perfection (Nugent, 2000; Schuler, 2001).

One might assume that individuals with enhanced sensitivity would be popular and socially adept. However, Porath (2000) discovered in her research that even though sensitive gifted children had a deeper understanding of the social domain, this understanding did not necessarily transfer to interaction with others. Porath found, based on teachers' observations, that social acceptance and behavioral conduct were rated "low" for these individuals in spite of deep sensitivity toward others.

Kerr, Colangelo, and Gaeth's (1988) study of 184 gifted students (N = 81 males; N = 103 females) ranging in age from 15–17, regarding how they felt about being gifted, resulted in general topics. They found the following:

- The meaning of giftedness: Regardless of gender, 64% viewed giftedness or talent as performance-based that required effort, rather than as an inherent trait (36%).

- Advantages of being gifted: Thirty-three percent stated the main advantage was personal (greater personal harmony, self-confidence, and growth); 29% claimed a social advantage; and 37% reported an academic advantage.

- Disadvantages of being gifted: Five percent believed the most disadvantageous aspects of being gifted were personal; 5% believed the worst were academic; and an overwhelming 90% believed the worst were social, with more females believing social aspects were the most negative.

- Affirmation of giftedness: Consistent with Colangelo and Brower (1987a, 1987b; as cited in Kerr et al. [1998]), 9%), rejected the label of gifted, while 91% accepted it as accurate. Regardless of gender, it was no surprise to these students when they were labeled gifted.

- Effects of the gifted label: Regardless of gender, when they perceived themselves, only 2% viewed being gifted as negative, 19% were neutral, and 79% were positive. When thinking about how others viewed them or the effect they had on others, 52% felt neutral, 5% felt positive, and 43% were negative. These results indicated that self-perception of giftedness was mainly positive, but their effect on others or how others perceived them was mostly unclear or negative.

Therefore, the authors concluded:

- Being gifted was perceived as having a positive effect on self, but a negative or vague effect on others.

- Giftedness was seen as a positive aspect of oneself in terms of personal growth and academics but was perceived as having strong negative social ramifications.

- The label "gifted" affirmed what gifted students already knew.

- Gender differences indicated that gifted females were particularly vigilant and cautious about social consequences, and felt them more strongly than males, which confirmed Kerr's (1985) findings (as cited in Kerr et al., 1988), that girls and women experienced profound sensitivity and inner conflict about socializing with others.

Mendaglio (1995) and other researchers pointed out that many gifted children experience high

levels of sensitivity and emotional intensity that cause them to question their own normalcy, and these personality characteristics likely put them at odds with peers, parents, and teachers (Aron, 1996; Dabrowski, 1994; Edmunds & Noel, 2003; Lovecky, 1993; O'Connor, 2002; Perino & Perino, 1981; Robinson, Zigler, & Gallagher, 2000; Shavinia, 1999; Walker, 1991; Webb et al., 1982).

During middle childhood, peer supportiveness, and group belonging, and identification became of primary import. Both research results and observations during this time confirmed that children were more willing to become part of, conform to, and defend a group; display behaviors and attitudes accepted by their group; and exclude those who did not belong to the group (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron, & Marques, 2003; Dunham & Emory, 2014; Nesdale, 2007; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Studies showed that peer rejection is associated with such emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, loneliness, depression, and general unhappiness (Sandstrom & Zakriski, 2004), and that children who felt rejected were highly likely to be less task-oriented, more socially withdrawn, less successful in social interactions and play, more aggressive and disruptive, less socially competent, and experienced a higher number of negative encounters with teachers (Coje, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Mendaglio, 1995; Porath, 2000). Additionally, rejected children who withdrew and isolated were less likely to be successful in joining and playing with peers and showed less proficiency or competent performance on cognitive tasks such as noticing and understanding peer social cues and comprehending expected social behavior (Jones, Abbey, & Cumberland, 1998; Nelson & Crick, 1999).

Gross et al., (2007) conducted a study with 248 gifted adolescents between sixth and 10th grades and found that emotional stability subscale scores were negatively correlated with

intellectual, imaginational, and emotional overexcitabilities. Of significant importance were

Piechowski's (1997) findings that suggested a high likelihood that the emotional insecurity experienced by gifted children and teens continued into adulthood, with many gifted adults still feeling pressure to be "normal" and questioning their future possibilities, potential, and whether they would ever achieve their personality ideal.

Already feeling different from their peers, Edmunds and Edmunds (2004) found that being sensitive made life arduous, even excruciating, which was especially perilous during preadolescence and adolescence. Nesdale (2008) and Nesdale, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Roxburgh (2014) confirmed that children as young as 6-years old know when they were being accepted or rejected, and that rejection significantly impacted social relationships.

Additionally, chronic rejection produced anxiety, withdrawal, loneliness, anger, distorted thoughts, retribution, and aggressiveness. Jealousy over superior ability by peers even among the gifted provided potent reason to discount or conceal abilities, which often had long-term detrimental effects on self-concept, particularly for adolescent girls (Kerr, 1985; Noble, 1989; Silverman, 1993). To this point, Swiatik (1995) was interested in the social experience of highly gifted adolescents and conducted a factor-analytic study that revealed the following coping skills: denial of giftedness, engaging in popularity and conformity, and seeking peer acceptance. Swiatik found "…no gender differences in the strategies…[and] the most highly gifted students were those most likely to deny being gifted" (p. 155).

Therefore, gifted children and adults, especially girls and women (Kerr, 1985; as cited in Kerr et al., 1988), were most likely predisposed to even greater and more profound emotional and social injury due to their heightened sensitivity. And yet, research also revealed that intense sensitivity, considered by many as pathological, was exactly the required catalyst for higher

levels of moral development, which was essential for positive disintegration—and the precise

quality that produced imminence and great achievement (Dabrowski, 1972; Hyzy, 2010). In cultures like Japan, Sweden, and China, shy and sensitive children were found to be the most popular among friends and playmates (Chen, French, & Schneider, 2006). However, in Western society, being perceived as sensitive was most often considered a character flaw and something to overcome (Aron, 1996; Silverman, 1993). Aron (1996) stated, "As an [gifted] adult, it has probably been harder to find the right career and relationships and generally to feel self-worth and self-confidence" (p. xiv).

Complex processing, asynchronous development, and heightened morality. Tolan (1994) contended that any definition of giftedness must be broadened to include understanding of inherently remarkable mental processing. This characteristic very often led gifted individuals and those around them to assume this difference in mental processing was outside the norm and a deficit, illness, or character defect (Alvarado, 1989; Lovecky, 1986). When investigating the efficiency of the central nervous system and processing speed, it was discovered that high speed information processing was associated with high intelligence (Fink & Neubauer, 2001; Luciano et al., 2005). Similarly, additional research supported information processing speed as one of the biological foundations of superior intelligence and influenced variations in intellectual giftedness (Osmon & Jackson, 2002; Rabbitt et al., 2007).

Cognitively, Clark (2002) described an elevated quantity and retentiveness of information; superior comprehension and synthesis; and unusual ability to evaluate self and others, think creatively, see diverse relationships, generate unique ideas and solutions, and be determinedly goal oriented. Additional research established that greater accuracy, shorter reaction times, and shorter data inspection times were demonstrated between intellectually gifted

and nongifted children (Cohn, Carlson, & Jensen, 1985; Grudnik & Kranzler, 2001), and

established a direct correlation between reaction times and task complexity (Kranzler, Whang, & Jensen, 1994; Duan, Dan, & Shi, 2013).

According to Luciano et al. (2005) highly intelligent individuals used cognitive strategies or were better able to focus on repetition, which optimized information processing speed. This speed also increased slowly with age and neural synapse changes (Kail, 2000; Myerson, Hale, Wagstaff, Poon, & Smith, 1990).

For gifted individuals this important, unique, and completely normal complex mental processing is also explained by the concept of asynchronous development (Tolan, 1994):

> Throughout childhood asynchronous individuals reach noticeable and clearly defined developmental milestones and acquire various skills earlier than other children. But the difference is not mere precocity, not just 'getting there sooner.' The child who deals with abstract concepts early brings those concepts to bear on all later experience. This different, more complex way of processing experience creates *essentially different experience* [emphasis added]. The result is that the differences, far from shrinking as the child develops, are likely to grow larger. A child whose cognitive development is within the normal rather than the gifted range will not catch up with the gifted child any more than a younger sibling will catch up in age with an older sibling. The developmental trajectory diverges early and does not come back to norms. (para. 1)

There was a widely-held expectation that the abilities of average children developed evenly in all areas of learning and experience (i.e., social development, intellectual prowess, fine/gross motor skills, etc.). However, generalizing the concept of synchronous development to

giftedness produced the expectation that a highly precocious 5-year-old with the intellect of a young teen also had the coordination, emotional maturity, and social skills of a young teen.

However, there was little evidentiary support for synchronicity among the gifted (Baum & Olenchek, 2002; Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Silverman, 2002).

In fact, research supported asynchronous development in multiple areas of those who were gifted, such as intellectual, emotional, social, and physical domains. For example, the 5-year-old mentioned above may have had the intellect of fourteen year-old, but gross motor skills/coordination of a 7-year-old, the social skills and fine motor skills of a 4-year-old, and the emotional maturity of a 3-year-old, which would most likely have caused severe academic and social challenges if educators and parents expected that gifted child to have synchronous development typically found among chronologically same-age children in the average population (Baum & Olenchek, 2002; Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Delisle, 1990; Roedell, 1984; Silverman, 2002). According to Linda Silverman (1997):

> The construct of giftedness as asynchrony has a strong theoretical foundation in the works of Hollingworth, Terrassier, Dabrowski, and Vygotsky. It is a child-centered perspective that can guide parenting, teaching, and counseling of gifted children. Asynchrony comprises uneven development, complexity, intensity, heightened awareness, risk of social alienation, and vulnerability. It is not a source of envy any more than its mirror image, retardation. When giftedness is equated with potential for success in adult life, it engenders backlash from those who believe that they are denied equal opportunity in the competition for fame and fortune. *Asynchrony is not a competitive concept: More asynchrony is not better* [emphasis added]. Giftedness as asynchrony offers both an understanding of the inner experience of gifted individuals throughout the

> life span and a sound framework for responding to the developmental differences of this group. (p. 1)

In addition to complex mental processing and asynchronous development, it was especially important to note that early intelligence researchers had long confirmed the relationship between high intelligence, a heightened sense of morality, and advanced development (Hollingworth, 1926; Piaget, 1932; Silverman, 1994; Terman, 1925; Wechsler, 1950). Additionally, Kagan (1984) found that emotions were the bedrock of morality and the development of moral standards.

According to multiple researchers, the process of mutual attunement between the child and primary caregiver produced the emotion and felt experience of mutual empathy. This combined with the child's experience of feeling understood and having effect on the parent lead to identity formation (Ainsworth, 1969; Gilligan & Wiggins, 1987; Stern, 1985). Hoffman (1994) reported that the child's experience of empathy from the primary caregiver was crucial in the development of moral understanding. He explained that altruistic behavior was the result of explanations to the child about the probable causes of others' suffering and disappointment, especially when explanations were combined with deep, empathetic emotions.

Many gifted children experienced early sensitivity to and preoccupation with moral justice as demonstrated by identification of their own pain, developed from mutual empathy between the child and primary caregiver. Thus, they felt extraordinary empathy and compassion for the pain of others, intense concern about global social justice, including advanced understanding and clarity about moral issues, as well as strong idealism (Galbraith, 1984; Roeper, 1988, 1991, 1995; Silverman, 1993, 1994; Terman, 1925).

In fact, Silverman (1994) proposed that an essential characteristic of giftedness was advanced moral sensitivity, with a direct relationship between moral sensitivity, asychronicity, and vulnerability. Young gifted children especially, who had not developed the coping skills to

confront highly charged emotional content, most likely suffered overwhelming and intense pain when they expressed worry about global problems and felt confused by reluctant parental responses when their children wanted to give away all the household food to the poor who suffered hunger. Gross (1993) found that when compared to same age peers, research comprised of children with an IQ 160 and higher were highly advanced in areas of moral responsibility for self and others, which included a sense of fairness and justice.

Idealism, disillusionment, existential depression, and suicide. Webb (2013) stated, "…Brighter people with inquiring minds are not only more likely to be idealists but also are more likely to become disillusioned" (p. 4). Webb also revealed that, in general, family life for most children was safe, emotionally comfortable, and predictably consistent, unless they grew up in the pain and chaos of an abusive or neglectful family. However, as most children matured, they came to realize their parent(s) did not have all the answers, were not infallible, and that society had many confusing and arbitrary values, rules, and inconsistencies. Webb described the relationship between giftedness and disillusionment:

> Bright people tend to be more intense, sensitive, idealistic, and concerned with fairness, and they are quick to see inconsistencies and absurdities in the values and behaviors of others. They are able to see issues on a larger and more universal scale, along with the complexities and implications of those issues. Their sensitivity and idealism make them more likely to ask themselves difficult questions about the nature and purpose of their lives and the lives of those around

> them. Even at young ages, these children may ask, "If God created everything, why did He create mean people and allow evil into the world?" or "Why did my friend, who was a good person, die when he was only seven years old?" One

> colleague told me how he still remembers being kicked out of catechism classes because he asked too many challenging questions about the dogma. These are not idle questions; these children focus on issues of fairness, wonder how they should live their lives, and want to know the rules of life and of the universe. (p. 13)

It was of little reassurance and comfort to these children to hear that when they grew up, they could make a difference in society or the world.

Hollingworth (1942) discovered that the higher the IQ in children, the earlier they thirsted for an explanation of the universe. In fact, by the age of 6, those with an IQ of 180 and above craved a logical philosophical explanation for life and death, and bright children in general became idealistic much earlier than their peers. Piechowski (1986) pointed out that gifted individuals faced overwhelming disappointment in what they perceived was a wide chasm between the ideal and what they lacked within themselves.

Fiedler (1997) reported that affective development of the gifted was atypical due to increased sensitivity to others' feelings and expectations, idealism, ambitious standards applied not only toward themselves but others, dealing with emotional intensity, as well as apprehension about social justice issues. Moreover, due to having overexcitabilities, especially heightened sensitivity and empathy, gifted children tended to feel intense pain even when they observed the anger of others, and therefore felt targeted, from which they were confronted with the decision to never to express their own anger to anyone.

However, Fiedler (1997) explained the Self was developed via the act of questioning the difference between one's idealistic goals and the ability to feel immediate, intense anger. Acknowledgement of anger permitted Self growth; however, if anger was repressed the Self would most likely wither or become stunted or diminished. Additionally, feeling or addressing

inner anger was difficult and/or impossible if the Self was chronically abdicated for the desires and emotions of others.

Webb (2009) pointed out that traumatic events such as divorce, death of a loved one, job loss, a geographical move, and so on, often lead to existential depression, otherwise generally recognized as "falling apart," in which an individual pointedly realized lack of control over life and life's transient nature. Existential depression involved questions about the meaning of life and behavior. For some, existential depression occurred spontaneously stemming from their own unique perception of life, thoughts about their place in the world, the meaning of life, and the world itself. Although it was a crisis, not all gifted individuals experienced existential depression, but for those who did, it represented a painful opportunity to learn and grow, as previously highlighted by Dabrowski's (1972) theory of positive disintegration.

Various researchers discovered that gifted individuals have adaptation challenges. Even though giftedness potentially bestowed the ability to recognize and integrate relationships and knowledge across disciplines, the ability to anticipate the future and imagine future alternatives also provided a greater capacity to feel depressed by what one saw. Therefore, it was not surprising that researchers discovered a high probability among gifted individuals toward experiencing spontaneous existential depression more frequently than others as an expression of their mental and emotional abilities and interactions. The more intense, sensitive, and idealistic gifted individuals were, the more absurdities and inconsistencies were obvious to them in the