

scription of the "good patient." His list included "to be dull, harmless, and inconspicuous; to evade responsibility, minimize stress, ignore others, to retain the right to behave unpredictably, and to have a certain 'diplomatic immunity.'" With such long-term patients, it has always been difficult to determine if the reasons for lack of significant improvement or recovery are due to "the residual effects of the illness or institutionalization, socialization in the patient role, lack of rehabilitation, reduced economic opportunities, reduced social status, side-effects of medication, lack of staff expectations, or loss of hope" (4). These questions remain unanswered by the Iowa team.

It should be noted that the viewpoint that these authors reflect stems from 100 years of beliefs in the field of psychiatry about poor outcome in schizophrenia and better outcome in affective disorders. Further, their experience with outcome of psychosis, before "effective treatment," has reinforced their entire epistemological outlook of the possibilities. Such experience colors and shapes a very pessimistic view of the range of outcomes possible for these patients.

Therefore, readers need to remember that the entire slant of the book, and the interpretation of the data, discounts the newer eras of atypical antipsychotics, rehabilitation, peer and family movements, assertive community care, and integrated systems. Nevertheless, the book represents a significant historical documentation that advanced our understanding of these disorders at the time the study occurred.

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## Gifted Children: Myths and Realities

by Ellen Winner, Ph.D.; New York City, BasicBooks, 1996, 449 pages, \$28

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Individuals with exceptional abilities have inspired curiosity, awe, admiration, envy, and misunderstanding. In *Gifted Children: Myths and Realities*, Dr. Ellen Winner sets a benchmark for understanding exceptional abilities in children, separating fact from fiction and proposing a course for further inquiries into these phenomena.

The author organizes her comprehensive discussion of the topic around nine popular "myths" and "realities" about gifted children, which proves to be an effective technique. Each myth represents a common misunderstanding of uncommon abilities. She develops the reality disputing the myth through analysis of well-documented research, detailed case studies, and proposition of a theoretical framework consistent with current knowledge.

Winner defines the term "giftedness" as prodigious ability in any domain of activity. She asserts that the distinction between "gifted," referring to academic ability, and "talented," referring to artistic or other ability, has no validity. Giftedness and exceptional IQ are not synonymous because intelligence is but one domain, and not a prerequisite for all exceptional ability. Gifted children have precocious ability, learn in qualitatively different ways from normal children, and have an intense motivation for mastery in the domain of their giftedness. The author demonstrates that "global giftedness" is a myth. It is far more common for exceptional abilities to be clearly defined and domain specific.

Of particular interest to mental health professionals is the excellent chapter challenging the myth that gifted individuals are glowing with psychological health. Giftedness has a strong potential for complicating emotional development. It is interesting to

consider that there is no recognition of giftedness in the emotional domain. The author provides poignant case studies and compelling data on the emotional costs of being very different, even if that difference is an extraordinary ability highly valued by others.

The chapter on the biology of giftedness is more speculative than conclusive, reflecting our current understanding of neurogenesis and brain function. Winner wisely sticks to the middle ground in the nature versus nurture controversy inherent in any discussion of human behavior. She supports the theory that giftedness is the product of atypical neurological function manifest in exceptional ability within an adequately supportive psychosocial environment. No evidence supports the notion that all children are gifted and fail to deliver on that potential solely because of environment.

Winner is an outspoken critic of the quality of normative education in general and special education for the gifted in particular. Longitudinal studies show that most gifted children will not go on to become eminent adults in their domain of giftedness. The author attributes this finding in part to the failure of social systems to recognize, nurture, and develop exceptional abilities. She proposes educational alternatives for that subset of profoundly gifted children who are as ill served by normative education as their peers with developmental disabilities.

*Gifted Children* is one of those unusual books that delivers both comprehensive discussion and conceptual clarity. The list of references is encyclopedic, and the notes supplementing the primary text are especially interesting and informative. This book should be a valuable resource for mental health professionals working with children, educators, and parents. The author's scientific and humanistic approach renders a complex and sometimes confusing body of information into a concise, scholarly treatise that remains interesting and readable.

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