ENVIRONMENTAL CATALYSTS WITHIN THE DMGT

François Gagné, Ph.D.
Honorary Professor of Psychology
Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada
© 2012, Author

TWO IMPORTANT CATALYSTS

THE ‘E’ COMPONENT

ENVIRONMENTAL (E)

- MILIEU (EM)
- SOCIAL dimension
- INDIVIDUALS (EI)
- PSYCHOLOGICAL dimension
- PROVISIONS (EP)
- EDUCATIONAL dimension

MILIEU (EM)
- Physical culture, social treaties
INDIVIDUALS (EI)
- Parents, family peers, teachers, mentors
PROVISIONS (EP)
- Enriched curricula, pedagogy, teaching
Administrative grouping, acceleration
THE ‘EM’ SUB-COMPONENT

- Levels: International, National, State, Local
  - Geographic issues (EMG)
    - Rural vs. Urban
  - Economic issues (EME)
    - Per capita income
  - Social issues (EMS)
    - Elitism
    - Advocacy groups
  - Cultural & ethnic issues (EMC)
    - Ideologies and values

THE ‘EM’ SUB-COMPONENT

- Political (EMP)
  - Party values
- Educational (EMD)
  - Policies concerning gifted education
  - Teacher training or affectation policies
- Family structure (EMF)
  - Family SES (Educ. – Occup. – Income)
  - Two parents vs. single parent
  - Family size (number of siblings)

THE ‘EI’ SUB-COMPONENT

- Family dynamics (EIF)
  - Parenting styles (strict vs. laissez-faire)
  - Parental support and supervision
  - Sibling dynamics
  - Extended family dynamics
- Teacher(s) dynamics (EIT)
  - “Teachers’ attitudes and behavior toward gifted students or toward specific children”
  - Changes from one year to the nest
  - “Teachers’ attitudes toward specific provisions (e.g., grouping)
THE ‘EI’ SUB-COMPONENT

- School dynamics (EIS)
  - Principal’s attitudes and behavior toward the gifted
  - Interactions among faculty members over provisions
- Peer dynamics (EIP)
  - Popularity of GIFTA students
  - Harassment, bullying of gifted
  - Peer group affiliation
- Models (EIM)
  - Influence of public figures (e.g.,)
  - Models’ influence

THE ‘EP’ SUB-COMPONENT

- Curriculum & Pedagogy (EPC)
  - Type (4 Ds) & frequency of enrichment in reg. classroom
  - Type (4 Ds) of enrichment in special classes.
- Ability grouping (EPG)
  - Honors’ classes, cluster groups, etc.
  - Special schools
- Accelerative enrichment (EPA)
  - Early entrance to school
  - Grade skipping, etc.
Three Types of Genotype -> Environment Effects

- **PASSIVE** effect:
  - The parental genotype "colors" family environment.

- **REACTIVE/EVOCATIVE** effect:
  - Child’s genotype modifies environmental reactions.

- **ACTIVE** effect (niche building):
  - Children begin early to select the stimuli that best conform to their natural abilities and temperament.

Their impact of the life span

- **PASSIVE** effect:
  - It slowly wanes during childhood, replaced by 'active'.

- **REACTIVE/EVOCATIVE** effect:
  - It remains more or less constant over the lifetime.

- **ACTIVE** effect (niche building):
  - It begins early, and increases with age, becoming the main agent before puberty.

PASSIVE EFFECT
Our early environment has been designed in part by our parents' genetic predispositions, either their natural abilities or personal proclivities.

Our own genetically influenced characteristics (abilities or temperament) influence the behavior of people in our immediate environment.

Our own genetically influenced characteristics (abilities or temperament) progressively construct our 'significant' environment.
THE REIGN OF NURTURE

- It dates from the birth of the Social Sciences
- Ubiquitous in lay parlance & the media
  - Underachievement? T ↔ P
  - Media analysis of serial killers: A search for E.
- Given front page by science popularizers
  - Gladwell’s “Outliers”
  - Colvin’s “Talent is overrated”.
- THE “norm” in the Social Sciences
  - Labeled the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM);
  - Or “The Nurture Assumption” in Harris’ bestseller;
  - Or “The Blank Slate” by Steven Pinker.

WHY REJECT NATURE’S ROLE?

- The non-visibility of nature’s action.
- An unacceptable determinism negating free will.
- The hidden specter of eugenics.
- An unacceptable admission of limited power of social intervention.

THE RECENT REHABILITATION OF NATURE

- Always in the “common sense” background
  - Recall the “he/she is a born…”
  - The second child epiphany
- Immense progress in genetics
  - The Genome project, and beyond
  - Weekly discoveries of specific genetic influences
- The rapid growth of behavioral genetics
  - The reinterpretation of autism
  - The Minnesota study of twins
HOW DOES TALENT EMERGE?

- “Without a cello, instruction, and family support, Yo Yo Ma could never have become an eminent cello player.”
- Alternatives:
  - Without exceptional natural abilities...
  - Without a passion for music...
  - Without a fascination for the cello...
  - Without thousands of hours of practice...
  - Without strong will power and perseverance...

THE PROS OF A TONED-DOWN NURTURE

- It respects current scientific knowledge.
- It renders unto Nature what belongs to Nature, especially its impact on Nurture!
- It empowers the individual (IC).
- It relieves parents/teachers of unjustified guilt.
  - (e.g., the psychoanalytic interpretation of Autism)

Thanks for your attention
THAT’S ALL...FOR NOW!