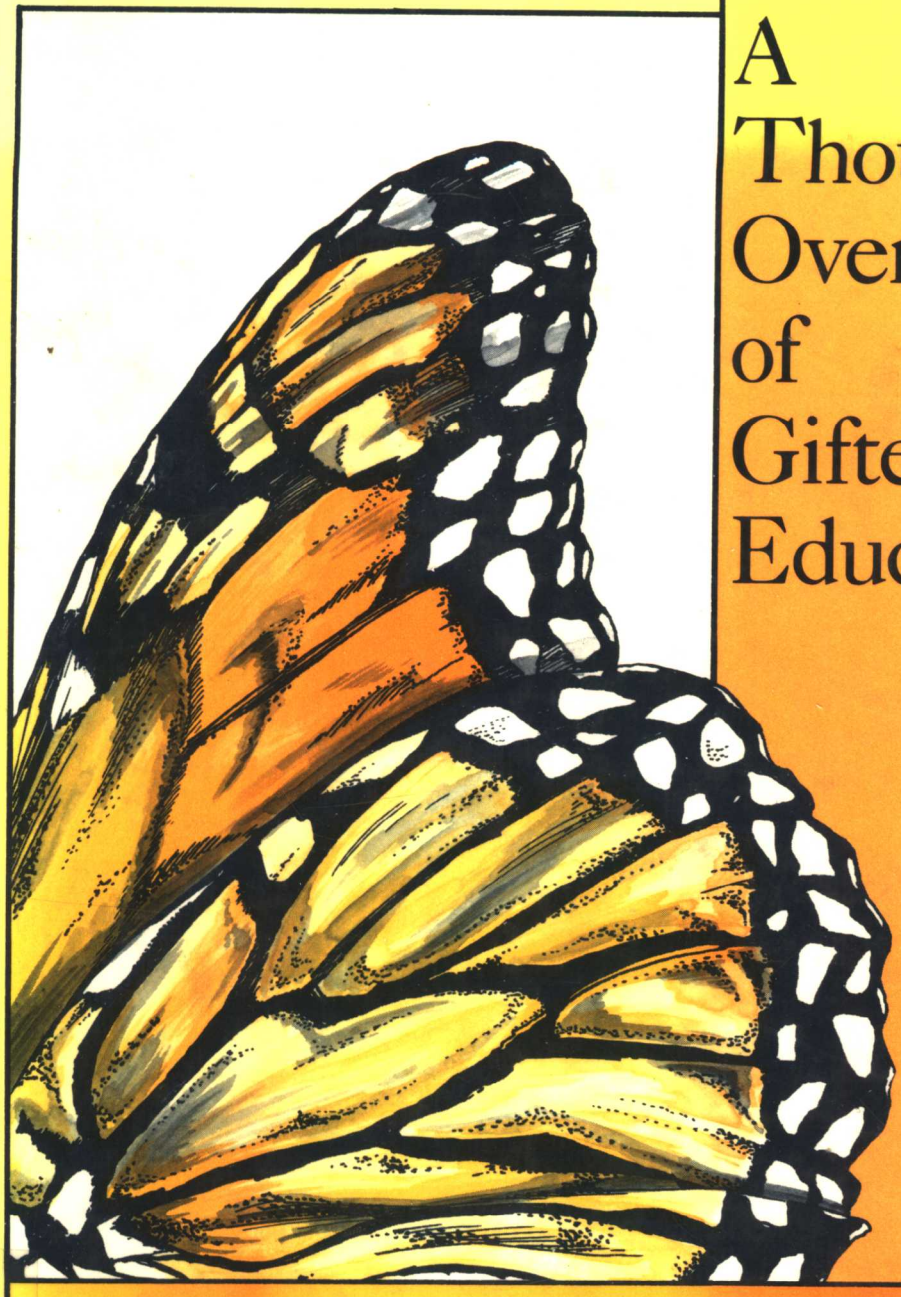

A Thoughtful Overview of Gifted Education

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To all the bright, talented children and young people
around the world who deserve rich learning
opportunities in order to grow in thought and experience.

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Foreword

The authors of this book are very forthright in their approach. In gifted education texts this is quite unusual. Most such books either embrace a single point of view or take an "either-or" approach, arguing the advantages and disadvantages of two opposing points of view. For so long, we have been afraid of conflict, yet we have much evidence that disagreement improves a group, a school, a curriculum, a family, an aircrew, a discipline.

At or near the beginning of each chapter, we hear parents, teachers, or children expressing divergent opinions about the issues for that chapter. The divergent opinions expressed are real—you find them in every school, every community, every professional group. The authors deal with these differences creatively, citing their rich experiences, information, and research findings until they reach a satisfying conclusion.

Divergent views provide the motivation for creative thinking, and the behavioral variability involved in reactions to divergence provides the possibility of discovering a uniquely useful solution. Creativity may always have its roots in unconscious forces. This seems so contradictory to what we have been taught that we fail to believe that there are potentially positive, creative values in varying views and disagreement.

I stumbled upon my first insights about the creative and productive potentialities of divergent views and disagreement while involved in research dealing with the training of combat aircrews for survival in emergencies and extreme conditions. In decision-making experiments, I found that aircrews that experienced disagreements made superior decisions and excelled in problem solving. These crews also did better jobs of surviving in the realistically simulated situations of survival training. Furthermore, much to everyone's surprise, these crews compiled better combat records on almost every criteria of combat effectiveness than did their more agreeing, harmonious peers.

I think the presentation of conflicts in this book has the following facilitative effects:

1. Such varying approaches create feelings of uncertainty and curiosity. This, in turn, increases the reader's accuracy of observation, problem solving, and creativeness. Doubtless it had the same effect on the authors as they worked through the issues.

2. Posing these divergent opinions at the beginning of each chapter has forced the authors to enlarge their own data base and improve their perspective-taking skills.

3. I marvelled at the effect taking different perspectives had on me. It convinced me anew that this was a powerful strategy for increasing learning.

I agree with the authors when they say that gifted education may be at the crossroads. I join them in challenging the reader to join in the search for meaning and purpose of gifted education. Many gifted, talented, and creative people have contributed many innovative programs, methods, and practices and have tested them. Outside of gifted education these programs and ideas would not have had a chance of adoption and survival. Now that these programs and practices have succeeded, they may be adopted and flourish in the education of all children. All children may have a better chance to grow.

E. Paul Torrance
Athens, Georgia
August 2, 1988

Preface

This book is an attempt to provide an overview of the field of study of gifted education. The authors have been actively involved in the development of gifted programs for both public and private schools. Judy Eby has been a gifted program coordinator and teacher in two Illinois school districts from 1978 to 1985. She is presently an assistant professor of education at De Paul University in Chicago. Joan Smutny, editor of the Illinois Council for the Gifted Journal, teaches graduate courses in gifted education and directs the Center for Gifted at the National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois. She has initiated and directs a number of summer and weekend gifted programs for preprimary through high school students throughout the Chicago metropolitan area.

The point of view held and expressed by the authors can best be described as humanistic. Our educational psychology and philosophy is very closely allied to that of Abraham Maslow, who observed:

> Must we rest content with a definition of intelligence that is derived from what is the case, rather than what should be the case? The whole concept of IQ has nothing to do with wisdom; it is a purely technological concept. For example, Goering had a high IQ but was in a very real sense a stupid man. He was certainly a vicious man. I do not think there is any great harm in separating out the specific concept of high IQ. The only trouble is that in a psychology that limits itself so, the more important subjects—wisdom, knowledge, insight, understanding, common sense, good judgment—are neglected in favor of the IQ because it is technologically more satisfactory. For the humanist, of course, it is a highly irritating concept. (p. 285)[1]

In this book, then, we describe "what is the case": the prevailing notion of gifted education which, in our view, is more technological and mechanistic than humanistic, relying as it does upon definitions of giftedness in terms of IQ or achievement test scores. We then acquaint the reader with our vision of "what could be the case": a more humane and democratic approach to gifted education that defines giftedness in terms of a wide range of talents and gifted behaviors.

It is our aim, in this text, to provide parents, teachers, and administrators with a current knowledge base about this field of study. We also hope to generate diverse responses with provocative questions about the many issues involved in gifted education. We present a wide range of alternative procedures that can be used to establish a new gifted program or to redesign an existing program to meet the unique needs of a specific community. Finally, we present a comprehensive look at ways to evaluate a gifted program so that it continually grows and evolves into a flexible but consistent, and essentially humanistic, educational program for the benefit of its clients.

SPECIAL NOTE TO THE READER REGARDING USE OF THE TERM "GIFTED CHILD"

We have chosen to minimize the use of the term "gifted child" in this book, except in historical contexts or in citations of works written by other authors.

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[1]Maslow, A. *Motivation and Personality*. Revised ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Our reason for this is that the term is not well defined and is used by people to mean different things. While some use it to mean a child with a special talent or gift in a wide variety of talent areas, others use it to mean a child with a certain IQ or other standardized test score.

Moreover, we believe that children themselves do not understand this term and are often confused by it. Children who are labeled "gifted" may feel set apart from their peers; they may feel guilt and fear when they don't live up to the label. While their parents may relish the label at first, they may find it difficult to explain to other children in the family. Such a label also causes enormous difficulties in school programs when either a child's performance or the criteria for selection change and the child's eligibility for the program changes. It is difficult to explain to parents why a child who was labeled "gifted" in an earlier grade or in a different school district isn't "gifted" anymore.

Finally, in our view, one effect of labeling a small minority of children "gifted" is that we are also unwittingly labeling the remaining children in the family or school "nongifted." For these reasons, we believe that an important aspect of planning for an appropriately challenging, healthy and supportive academically enriched or accelerated program is to eliminate the use of the label "gifted child." As you will read in this book, we suggest substituting terms which describe the particular talents or achievements of a child, such as "artistically talented" or "a student with unusual ability in math and science."

Judy W. Eby
Joan F. Smutny
July 10, 1988

Contents

CHAPTER 1

A Historical Overview of Gifted Education

Near the end of the school year four first grade teachers are meeting with Mrs. Elkin, the district's gifted consultant, to nominate students for the district's gifted program, which begins at the second grade. There are 100 first grade students. The gifted program, partially funded by the state, is designed to serve the top 5 percent of these students. As the discussion proceeds, different opinions are expressed about the nature of giftedness.

TEACHER A: I have brought my list of six nominees for the gifted program. They are all the students in my top reading group.

TEACHER B: Well, you're lucky. I don't have a single gifted child in my room this year. Some may be good in one area, but none of my students are gifted across the board.

TEACHER C: The three students I want to nominate are not necessarily in my top academic groups, but they are very energetic, creative kids with lots of ideas to share.

TEACHER D: Here's my list of 15 names. I think most of my students are gifted in something and deserve a chance to be in the program.

MRS. ELKIN: I'll look at these nominees, but they must all have achievement and ability tests to determine their final eligibility. The recommended students who score above the 95th percentile will be selected for the program.

TEACHER A: My students will do fine on those tests.

TEACHER B: I do have two students in my room with test scores in the 99th percentile, but I would never consider them for the program. They are showoffs and seldom finish the work I give them to do.

TEACHER C: My students will have difficulty scoring high enough on those tests to be in the program. But they ought to be in it. They ask for harder work, and they already write and produce their own plays.

TEACHER D: Those tests are biased and unfair. The kinds of activities you do in the gifted program are suitable for all kids, and I want my class included.

MRS. ELKIN: We have this discussion every year. It makes my job very difficult. I wish we could find a way to settle these issues once and for all.

TEACHER C: What are the district guidelines about selection?

TEACHER D: Yes, what is the district's definition of giftedness?

MRS. ELKIN: The district defines gifted children as those who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate above-average performance in academic or creative work.

TEACHER A: Well, my six students demonstrate above-average work in reading.

TEACHER B: And none of mine do, not even the two high scorers.

TEACHER C: Wait a minute, my three students are all way above average in creative work.

TEACHER D: And my 15 students all have the *potential* to demonstrate

above-average work. They just need a program that will develop their potential.

These teachers are in conflict over the meaning of the terms "giftedness" or "gifted children." Each teacher represents an opinion held by many educators. Some, like Teacher A, believe that gifted children are those who read early and have excellent comprehension skills. Others, like Teacher B, believe that to be gifted, a child must excel in all or many talent areas. Educators represented by Teacher C believe that creative children are gifted despite their average test scores. Still others, like Teacher D, believe that all children are potentially gifted and deserve equal opportunities for enriched programming.

Consider what would happen if these teachers switched classes. If Teacher A had the class assigned to Teacher B, would the top reading group in that class be nominated? Who would be recommended if Teacher C had Teacher B's class?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Which teacher best represents your point of view on this issue?
2. What are the difficulties faced by Mrs. Elkin?
3. In a school district, who should decide which children are selected for a gifted program?
4. What criteria should be used in the selection process?
5. If you were in Mrs. Elkin's position, what would you do next?

CAN WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "GIFTED" AND "NONGIFTED" CHILDREN?

Most definitions attempt to define or distinguish the "gifted child" from all other children. This is easy in some cases. There *are* children who stand out quite clearly from their peers. Some teach themselves to read at age 3, compute equations in their heads before kindergarten, and express such mature and abstract ideas about the nature of the world and human relations that adults are charmed and surprised.

In school, these readily identifiable children devour books and worksheets, asking for more and harder work, while others are just getting started with their assignments. Gifted programs with an academic emphasis were designed for children like these.

Other readily identifiable children amaze us with their prodigious accomplishments in talent areas such as art and music. These children need and deserve special opportunities in their talent fields in order to ensure that their special gifts are fully developed.

The difficulties emerge when schools attempt to identify gifted or talented children who are not quite so readily visible or apparent. It is believed that there are many children who have enormous undiscovered potential to develop valuable tal-

ents and gifts. Educators with a concern for their social welfare wish to identify and aid gifted children because of their importance as a national resource. Developmentalists wish to find and assist these children to reach their full potential in order to enhance the child's own quality of life.

Distinguishing potentially gifted children from the rest of the school population causes conflicts as illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. Teachers have differing opinions and values about giftedness. School districts and the communities they serve also have widely disparate values and attitudes about who is gifted. They seek help from state and federal agencies and they look to university researchers with expertise in gifted education to provide clear, usable definitions and procedures for identifying and serving their gifted students. They find, instead, that the policies are incomplete, the principles are conflicting, and that the experts disagree.

In 1972, a federal task force to study gifted education was formed and directed by the then U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sydney Marland, in response to a congressional mandate that gifted and talented children should benefit from federally legislated funds. The document produced by this committee became known as the Marland Report. It included the following definition:

> 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/or 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, singly or in combination:
>
> 1. general intellectual ability
> 2. specific academic aptitude
> 3. creative or productive thinking
> 4. leadership ability
> 5. visual and performing arts
> 6. psychomotor ability
>
> It can be assumed that utilization of these criteria for identification of the gifted and talented will encompass a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population (Marland 1972, p. x)

In the decade that followed this report, many state offices of education and local educational agencies attempted to use this definition as the basis for identification procedures and program development. As a result, programs were developed with somewhat more uniform goals, but the identification procedures varied widely.

Consider the definition carefully. Each sentence appears to expand the conception of who is gifted and talented. It includes both children with "demonstrated achievement" and those with "potential ability" in any of the six designated categories. This definition clearly states that the population of gifted and talented children is expected to exceed a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population, yet educational agencies around the country tend to interpret 5 percent as a maximum number of students served because of scarce resources.

The U.S. Congress altered the definition in the Marland Report several times in subsequent laws. In 1981, gifted and talented children were defined as:

> Children who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership capacity, or specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities. (P.L. 97-35, the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act, 1981)

This statement is much more general than the Marland Report definition, but includes many of the same components. The category of psychomotor ability has been deleted because it was thought that existing sports programs meet the need for extracurricular offerings to develop such talents. The other five categories are maintained much as originally stated. The discussion of percentages of populations has also been deleted, leaving these decisions to local educational agencies.

THE CURRENT SCENE IN GIFTED EDUCATION

In the mid-1970s, school districts began to implement gifted programs based upon the Marland Report definition. A few attempted to serve children in all six talent categories, but most selected one or two categories as the basis for their programming. The most difficult task they faced was to locate appropriate ways of measuring each of the different abilities. The second most difficult dilemma was faced in terms of the numbers of children to be served. The definition implies that there should be six different strands to the program, each serving a percentage of the school population. But it was not clear whether each strand should include 3 to 5 percent of the school population or whether the total program should aim for that quota.

Local school districts looked to their state education agencies for funding and for guidelines for interpreting the Marland Report definition. The states that mandate or reimburse local districts for gifted programming interpreted the definition to mean that a program should contain a total of 5 percent of the school population. At least, they indicated that the state funding would be held to that level.

Many school districts complied by developing identification procedures that resulted in the selection of approximately 5 percent of their school populations. But there is wide variety in this matter. Some school districts provide substantial funding on their own and include many more than 5 percent of their populations in widely diversified gifted programs, while others limit the numbers to a strict percentage or quota.

After a decade of program initiatives in response to the Marland Report, a nationwide study was undertaken by the Sid W. Richardson Foundation to develop an accurate national picture of what is actually happening nationally in gifted programming. The methods, results, and recommendations of the Richardson Study are fully described in *Educating Able Learners* (Cox, Daniel, and Boston 1985).

Briefly, the Richardson Study discovered that gifted programs differ consider-

ably in quality, in program offerings, in structure, and in identification procedures. Teacher recommendations, achievement tests, and IQ tests were the most frequently used means of identification, but criteria such as tests used and cutoff scores employed varied from school to school. The most typical program offering reported was a "part-time special class" for selected students that meets for part of the school day. But goals and objectives of these part-time special classes were diverse.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the history of civilization attempts have been made to select the most promising individuals and provide them with appropriately rich and challenging experiences to suit their talents. In historical perspective, the term "gifted" has been applied as an adjective to describe a specific type of talent or ability (e.g., Renoir was considered to be a gifted artist, Mozart a gifted musician, and Brontë a gifted writer). It was in twentieth-century America that the term "gifted" was used in a more general sense to describe "gifted children."

The Nature vs. Nurture Controversy

Events before this century and in other countries have contributed to the evolution of our ideas about the nature of giftedness. The most important and most hotly debated issue has been whether giftedness is a result of nature or of nurture; or, in modern terms, of heredity or environment. As you read the following history, note the interplay between the proponents of each side of the nature vs. nurture debate. Note especially that they all use the term "intelligence" but each defines the term quite differently. Read this material critically and analytically, identifying the ideas and theories that ring true with your own experience and values. Follow up on the references provided in the text to find out more about the specifics on each side of the issue, for this is an unfinished debate, and you may be called upon to add your own opinion to the fray at some point in your career.

Charles Darwin (1859) may have started this long-lasting debate by asserting that some individuals were the "fittest" or most superior of each species. In the late 1800s Darwin's cousin, Sir Francis Galton, focused his own study of intelligence upon similar assumptions and came to the conclusion that intelligence is wholly determined by heredity. Galton described intelligence as a function of sensory acuity because he believed that "the only information that reaches us concerning outward events appears to pass through the avenue of our senses; and the more perceptible our senses are of difference, the larger the field upon which our judgment and intellect can act" (1907, p. 19). He defended his position in his study of the hereditary links among eminent men of his time, which he described in his influential book, *Hereditary Genius* (1972; originally published in 1869). Galton's work was unchallenged for many years and led to a firmly established belief that an individual's intelligence is genetically determined at birth.

A French psychologist, Alfred Binet, offered the first significant counterargument to this view. He believed that intelligence was "educable" (1969). His most

significant contribution to the field was a scale or test that he devised to distinguish between normal and "dull" students in Parisian schools. It is important to note that this scale was not developed to identify bright children, but only to identify the dull students in the Parisian school system.

After considering many sorts of measures, Binet inductively established a series of 30 practical tasks and ranked them in order of increasing difficulty. The scale included such tasks as following a lighted match with one's eyes, unwrapping and eating a piece of candy, tying shoe laces, identifying a 4-cm line as longer than a 3-cm line, naming the points of a compass, and recalling digits and sentences. These tasks reflected Binet's conception of intelligence as the use of a variety of mental functions such as attention, memory, and discrimination accompanied by practical judgment or good sense (Fancher 1985, p. 74). On the basis of experimentation (using his own children as part of the norming sample), Binet determined the "mental age" at which most children could accomplish each task. He was then able to compare the responses of an unknown test subject with his scale and determine whether the subject was in the normal or dull range of human intelligence.

Binet believed that with appropriate education or training, an individual could learn to accomplish these tasks and thus raise his or her "mental age." But despite Binet's strongly held view that intelligence is developed as a result of environmental influences, his scale became the basis of the most widely accepted theory of hereditary and fixed intelligence in the twentieth century.

This turnabout occurred after Binet's death and in the following manner. Louis Terman, an American teacher and principal, was interested in studying the differences between bright and dull children. At Clark University in the early 1900s, he studied for his Ph.D. under G. Stanley Hall, who had been a student of Sir Francis Galton. Galton's theory of hereditary genius influenced Terman, who became a strong proponent of this point of view.

After graduating in 1905, Terman went to work at Stanford University. In 1910, he acquired English translations of Binet's scales for research purposes. He adapted and altered the Binet tasks to fit American subjects, and named the new scale the Stanford Revision of the Binet Scale, which soon became known as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test.

In 1916, Terman incorporated a new method of calculating the score on the test, by calculating the ratio between the mental and chronological age and multiplying the result by 100 to get rid of decimals. The resulting "Intelligence Quotient" or IQ is represented by the following formula:

$$IQ = \frac{\text{Mental age}}{\text{Chronological age}} \times 100$$

Terman's intelligence test and method of scoring was rapidly and widely accepted as the best measure of intelligence available throughout the United States. It was so well respected that, as other tests were developed, they were validated by correlating them with the Stanford-Binet. Terman was a highly respected and prominent psychologist throughout his long career, and is one of the most highly regarded contributors to the field of gifted education as well.

Studies of Gifted Children

Terman believed that the Stanford-Binet test measures innate, unchanging ability or aptitude, and that youngsters who scored well on his test would become the future leaders of our society. Based on his research and norming studies, he concluded that a score of 130 and above is a mark of "giftedness," while an IQ of 150 and above signifies "genius" (Feldman 1979, p. 660).

To investigate whether intellectually precocious children grow up to be eminent, Terman initiated one of the longest and largest longitudinal studies ever undertaken. In the early 1920s, Terman and his associates tested California schoolchildren to find a sample of 1500 boys and girls with IQs above 140. Background data were collected, and follow-up studies were conducted by Terman himself in 1929, 1950, and 1955, and after his death by his associates in 1960 and 1972.

Ninety percent of the sample entered college and 70 percent graduated. In 1960, at the height of their professional lives, it was determined that *on the average,* the Termites, as they jokingly refer to themselves, have led generally satisfying and successful lives. A high proportion of them achieved distinction in their careers in science, law, banking, and business. The 800 men in the sample had published 67 books, over 1400 scientific journal articles, and over 200 short stories and plays. They had more than 150 patents to their credit. The sample contains one noted science-fiction author, an Oscar-winning motion picture director, and some department heads at universities (Fancher 1985, p. 144).

The women in the study who had careers outside the home achieved more than a chance share of professional citations and awards. The majority of the women, however, became housewives and reported that they suffered acutely from lack of intellectual fulfillment in their lives.

In assessing Terman's work and his contribution to the field of gifted education, Morris Stein (1986) notes that "Terman's motivation, determination, and persistence in following his subjects and the quality of contact he maintained with them is most impressive. In this regard, Terman is a model to be emulated" (p. xxi). But Stein also points out that the samples in the study were not randomly selected, but were all children of middle-class Caucasian families. This significant fact leads to a debate about whether the Stanford-Binet and other similar tests are biased against economically disadvantaged and culturally different children.

Guilford's Structure of the Intellect

The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test filled a vacuum in the testing of individual differences in ability. A single number, the IQ score, was thought by many to define an individual's intelligence better than any other means available. But in the 1930s, University of Chicago psychologist L. L. Thurstone challenged the single-score concept of intelligence. In his view, the IQ score was useful in predicting verbal academic achievement, but failed to predict success in other, less verbal and less academic endeavors. Thurstone proposed instead that intelligence consists of seven distinct "Primary Mental Abilities," which he called Verbal Comprehension, Word Fluency, Number Facility, Spatial Visualization, Associative Memory, Perceptual Speed, and Reasoning. He believed that each of these factors represents a largely