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Highlighting the bright side

*Research report providing more insight into the positive aspects of work
conflicts in the workplace of gifted adults*

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Samenvatting

Inleiding: Uit de literatuur en ervaring is gebleken dat hoogbegaafde volwassenen regelmatig problemen hebben op het werk, waaronder arbeidsconflicten, en mede daardoor soms onvoldoende functioneren op het werk. Intelligentie kan hierbij een rol spelen. Het is bekend dat hoogbegaafde volwassenen veel kunnen bijdragen aan het werk zoals bijvoorbeeld het oplossen van complexe problemen, mede door hun hoog niveau van functioneren. Echter zijn er verschillen tussen hoogbegaafde volwassenen en niet hoogbegaafde volwassenen in denken en werken, wat kan leiden tot een arbeidsconflict. Dit conflict kan leiden tot verzuim op het werk van hoogbegaafde volwassenen vanwege de vele negatieve aspecten, die een uitwerking kunnen hebben op zowel het werk als in de privésfeer. Hoogbegaafde volwassenen kunnen een zeer grote waarde voor een bedrijf of organisatie zijn, vooral als hun talenten worden erkend en hun bijdragen als positief worden beschouwd. Helaas zien we dat als er arbeidsconflicten zijn, deze de positieve bijdragen verhinderen. Het is daarom belangrijk om meer inzicht te krijgen in de positieve aspecten van (arbeids)conflicten om zo problemen in het functioneren en ontslag te voorkomen. Deze algemene kennis is van grote waarde voor de organisatie maar ook voor hoogbegaafde en niet hoogbegaafde volwassenen. In dit exploratieve onderzoek wordt gekeken naar de positieve aspecten van arbeidsconflicten die hoogbegaafde en niet hoogbegaafde volwassenen naar voren brengen en of hierin verschillen zijn.

Methode: Er is gebruik gemaakt van een kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethode. De gegevens zijn verzameld met behulp van een digitale enquête die zowel gesloten als open vragen bevatte. In totaal werden 89 ingevulde enquêtes gebruikt voor het onderzoek. De volgende drie hoofdthema's van arbeidsconflicten werden gedefinieerd op basis van de open antwoorden, gegeven in de enquête: (1) persoonlijke thema's, (2) werkgerelateerde thema's en (3) procesgerelateerde thema's. Deze hoofdthema's werden verder verdeeld in subthema's. De deelnemers werden verdeeld in twee groepen (hoogbegaafd en niet-hoogbegaafd), maar tijdens de groeipindelung werd een derde groep waargenomen. Deze derde groep voldeed niet aan de criteria van de andere twee groepen en werd daarom gedefinieerd als 'hoogbegaafd voelend'.

Resultaten: Met betrekking tot de persoonlijke thema's bleek dat het subthema 'zelfvertrouwen' in de eerste plaats werd genoemd door zowel hoogbegaafden als niet-hoogbegaafden, maar dat het subthema 'zelfkennis' vaker werd genoemd door de hoogbegaafd voelende. Bij de werkgerelateerde thema's was het opmerkelijk dat alleen het subthema 'vertrouwen' werd genoemd door de hoogbegaafde volwassenen, terwijl dit niet genoemd werd door de andere twee groepen. Bij de analyse van de procesgerelateerde thema's werd er veel variatie geobserveerd tussen alle groepen. Hoogbegaafd voelende volwassenen en niet-hoogbegaafde volwassenen brachten de subthema's 'resultaat' en 'focus' naar voren, terwijl hoogbegaafde volwassenen de enige zijn die 'perspectief' noemen als positief aspect van een arbeidsconflict.

Conclusie: Uit het onderzoek is gebleken dat de volgende aspecten van een conflict als positief worden ervaren: zelfkennis en zelfvertrouwen, standvastigheid, vertrouwen in de werkrelatie, erkenning, breder perspectief, behaalde resultaat en toegenomen focus. In de resultaten is naar voren gekomen dat weinig variatie is binnen de persoonlijke thema's, maar een grote variatie binnen de werkgerelateerde thema's. Daarnaast was het opmerkelijk dat er een groot verschil was tussen de procesgerelateerde thema's. Deze resultaten geven dus aan dat de verschillende groepen anders tegen de uitkomsten van arbeidsconflicten aan kijken. Op het moment dat er gesproken wordt over een arbeidsconflict is het belangrijk om het persoonlijke profiel (hoogbegaafd, hoogbegaafd voelend of niet-hoogbegaafd) in gedachten te houden, om zo tot het beste resultaat van het conflict te komen, namelijk geen verzuim, ontslag en weer een optimale samenwerking.

Abstract

Introduction: It is evident from literature that gifted adults regularly have problems at work, including labor disputes, sometimes leading to malfunctioning at work. Intelligence can be a causing factor of this. It is known that gifted adults can contribute to the work by solving complex problems, partly due to their high level of functioning. However, there are differences between gifted and non-gifted adults in thinking and working, which can lead to a labor conflict. This conflict can lead to absenteeism at work of gifted adults, because the fact that many negative aspects may have an impact on both the work and private environment. Gifted adults may have a high value for a company or organization, especially if their talents are recognized and their contributions are considered as positive. Unfortunately, we see that if there are labor disputes, those positive aspects are not fully accomplished. Therefore, it is important to gain more insight into the positive aspects of (labor) conflicts to overcome inadequate functioning and redundancies. This general knowledge would be of great value to the organization, but also for gifted and non-gifted adults. Therefore, the aim of this research was to explore which positive aspects of work conflicts gifted and non-gifted adults often mention and whether they show differences in which positive outcomes they experience.

Method: A qualitative research method was conducted. Data was collected using a survey containing closed and open questions. In total, 89 questionnaires were used. Three main themes of work conflicts were defined based on the survey responses: (1) personal themes, (2) work-related themes and (3) process-related themes. Sub-themes were defined subsequently. Participants were initially divided into two groups (gifted versus non-gifted adults), but during group defining a third group was observed. This third group did not meet the criteria for the other two groups and was therefore defined 'feeling gifted adults'.

Results: Concerning the personal themes it was found that the sub-theme 'self-confidence' is primarily mentioned by both gifted and non-gifted adults, while the feeling gifted adults are more likely to mention the sub-theme 'self-knowledge' as a positive aspect of work conflicts. For the work-related themes it is remarkable that only the gifted adults mention the sub-theme 'trust' as a positive aspect of work conflicts, while the feeling gifted and non-gifted adults do not mention it at all. Analysis of the process-related theme showed variation between all groups in the mentioning of sub-themes. Feeling gifted and non-gifted adults seem to pay more attention to the sub-themes 'result' and 'focus', whereas gifted adults are the only ones referring to 'perspective'.

Conclusion: This research found that the following aspects of work conflicts are evaluated as being positive: self-knowledge and self-confidence, fortitude, trust in the work relation, recognition, broader perspective, result achieved and increased level of focus. Results indicate low variation of personal themes between the three groups regarding positive aspects of work conflict. In contrast, work-related themes show high variation between all groups. Thirdly, a striking variation was found in the process-related theme of work conflicts. These results indicate that gifted adults, feeling gifted adults and non-gifted adults perceive the outcome of work conflicts differently. When speaking about work conflicts, the personal profile (gifted, feeling-gifted and non-gifted) should be kept in mind. This data could enhance the discussion about and analysis of work conflicts, leading to a more efficient work process and more communication within the work environment.

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Introduction

Work conflicts and gifted adults

It has been found that gifted adults sometimes function inadequately at work, which could be related to their high intelligence (Nauta & Corten, 2002). Gifted adults may experience a conflict more rapidly, and perhaps more intensely (Van der Waal, Nauta & Lindhout, 2013). In addition, the work environment seems to be an important factor for gifted adults. Difficulties at work may occur when the work environment is not conducive to the needs and characteristics of a gifted person (Nauta & Corten, 2002). Van der Waal, Nauta and Lindhout (2013) found that it is difficult to understand in which atmosphere a labor dispute had initially risen, but in their research conflicts concerning gifted adults almost always start in the same way. Gifted employees had insights that they wanted to share with their supervisor, mostly related to job or organizational aspects. They believed their insight might help improve the organization and for them, a different opinion was quite impossible based on the facts. They were very certain they were right and this mostly had a workplace conflict as result. These conflicts sometimes turned in to long term emotional conflicts, while they started out as a conflict about a work-related issue.

Nauta and Corten (2002) compared a number of characteristic statements from both gifted employees and non-gifted employees. Most of the statements are related to adaptation and communication problems at work, for example: I'm easily distracted (employee) versus lack of perseverance and discipline (work environment). Thus, a problem can be viewed from different perspectives. Discrepancies between these perspectives can result in unhappy feelings and work-related conflicts. Being aware of someone's giftedness may lead to more happiness in life, because better connections with others will originate (Van der Waal, Nauta & Lindhout, 2013).

If gifted employees learn to develop themselves according to their motivation and interests and if their talents are acknowledged, many work-related conflicts may be resolved and gifted adults can be of great value for organizations. It is known that gifted adults are able to help solve complex issues, due to their high level functioning (Bil & Peters, 2001). However, many gifted adults express themselves very ineffectively; too intensely and too passionately and they will therefore end up in conflicts (Van der Waal, Nauta & Lindhout, 2013). In order to make good use of their gift, it is important that their contributions are considered to be positive (Nauta & Ronner, 2008).

However, for many gifted adults, choosing a suitable career path can be a big challenge (Karnes & Oehler-Stinnett, 1986). This can be even more complicated if someone is capable of success across various areas, due to multiple strengths and interests. Even though it is challenging for gifted adults to find a suitable career, research shows that these adults are significantly more satisfied with their jobs than non-gifted adults (Rinn & Bishop, 2015). However, when conflicts at work occur, consequences in private life, health and income were considerable (Van der Waal, Nauta & Lidhout, 2013). Regarding to factors that led to job satisfaction among gifted adults, the following factors seem to be important: the job is connected with their interests, they can take advantage of their skills, predispositions and expertise, they can display their talent for creative thinking and they can be independent in their thinking and activity (Rinn & Bishop, 2015). It also seems to be important that work is a source of pleasure and that the atmosphere in the team is good (Delisle & Squires, 1989). Research of Persson (2009) shows that gifted

adults reported high job satisfaction when they were business owners or in positions of leadership that allowed autonomy. His study included 287 members of Mensa, who all were defined as gifted adults. Mensa is an international high IQ society for gifted people who score in the top two percent of the population on a valid intelligence test.

Giftedness

Definition

There is no official definition of giftedness. The result of a valid IQ test is often used as a way to determine whether someone is gifted, because it is an easy method that seems to be objective (McIntosh et al., 2012). According to this method, gifted adults have an IQ score that lies in the upper two percent of society.

Even though an official definition of giftedness does not exist, some have suggested a more subjective way to define giftedness. In 2011, Subotnik et al. suggested the following definition of giftedness, quoted: *'Giftedness reflects the values of society, is typically manifested in actual outcomes, especially in adulthood, is specific to domains of endeavor, is the result of the coalescing of biological, pedagogical, psychological, and psychosocial factors and is relative not just to the ordinary but to the extraordinary'*. Also different kinds of intelligences are defined. Gardner (1999) distinguishes the following: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical, bodily, naturalistic, emotional and intrapersonal. Regarding this definition, giftedness refers to actual exceptional outcomes in different domains. However, not all gifted individuals exploit their capabilities and achieve potential outcomes (Rinn & Bishop, 2015). Usual IQ tests do not seem to predict performance adequately. Research shows that not only intelligence, but also gained knowledge and skills, determines actual outcomes. Besides this, the environment seems to be an important factor in the development of a gifted person (Mönks & Span, 1985).

Characteristics of gifted people

As discussed above, many definitions of giftedness exist and unfortunately, many misconceptions exist concerning what giftedness actually is. This is the reason that in 2007, a Delphi study looked into the characteristics of giftedness (Van Kooijman, 2008). The outcome of this study is illustrated in Figure 1. Twenty experts came to the following positive description of giftedness: *'A gifted individual is a quick and clever thinker, who is able to deal with complex matters. An individual who is autonomous, curious and passionate. A sensitive and emotionally rich person, who is living intensely. He or she is a person who enjoys being creative'* (Van Kooijman, 2008).

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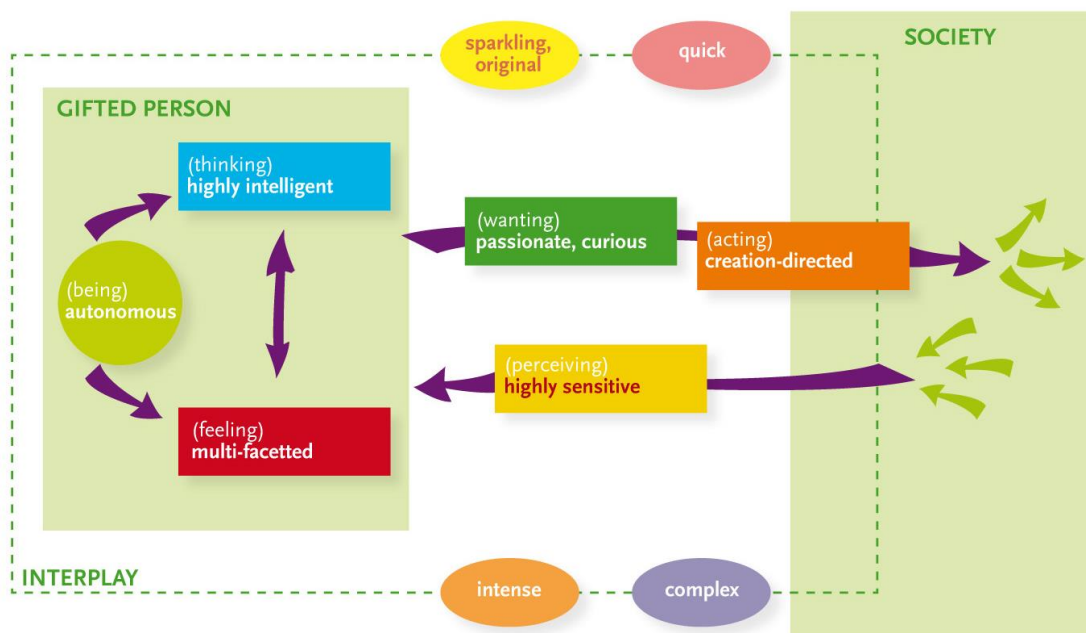


Figure 1: The Delphi-model of giftedness. A schematic visualization of the model of giftedness in adults. Adapted from: M.B.G.M. Kooijman – van Thiel (ed.). *Highly Gifted. Obvious? On Identity and Image of Gifted Persons.* OYA Productions, 2008

Although many factors influence the development of both gifted and non-gifted adults, other research also defines characteristics of gifted adults. Commonly mentioned characteristics are: higher speed of thinking, high sensitivity, introversion, strong emotional development, greater creativity, independence, perfectionism and a fear of failure and under-performing (Nauta & Corten, 2002).

Lovecky (1986) defined five traits of gifted people that produce potential interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict: divergence, excitability, sensitivity, perceptivity and entelechy. The behavioral manifestations of these traits can vary among people; it is this behavior that makes these traits significant. Conflicts are often caused when others interpret behavior associated with these traits as negative or undesirable. As will be described below, these behaviors can impede the work process and/or progress, result in lack of communication or create distant relationships with co-workers.

The traits can be described as follows:

- Divergence: a preference for unusual, original and creative responses. These people are innovative and are often able to find creative solutions for complex problems. A negative aspect of this trait is that these people often hold on to their own ideas and beliefs and may therefore have problems with compromising.
- Excitability: this trait is characterized by a person's high levels of energy, emotional reactivity and high nervous system arousal. Productivity and risk taking are the main advantages, while boredom and lack of satisfaction are mentioned as disadvantages.
- Sensitivity: they think with their feelings. They are willing to help others and show great empathy. However, it is possible that others may not have feelings as deep as the gifted, resulting in less personal stories to be shared.

- **Perceptivity:** the ability to view several aspects of a situation simultaneously, to understand several layers of self within another, and to see quickly to the core of an issue. These people know exactly what they need in life. They can also assess the motivation of others. Others may feel threatened or vulnerable, leading to difficulties in interpersonal relationships.
- **Entelechy:** the goal to become all the self is capable of being. When close to someone with this trait, hope and motivation to achieve self-actualization are experienced. They encourage others to express feelings. The negative aspect of this trait is that others are often not able to offer a similar level of intimacy.

The abovementioned traits can result in both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. It is important for gifted people to learn about their traits/gifts and how to use them as optimal as possible, for example in work conflicts.

The primary feature of gifted people is a difference in intellectual competencies; they do not meet the expectations for their age and circumstances. Manaster and Powell (1983) use two theoretical assumptions to describe the characteristics of gifted adolescents. The first notion is that all people want to fit in. In order to achieve this, people might engage in extraordinary behavior, which could only be understood in the context of their own beliefs. The second assumption is related to the first one: people want to know where they stand and how they fit in. Gifted adolescents show difficulties in social interactions that are needed in order to know which role one should take.

According to the article by Manaster and Powell (1983), gifted adolescents have a problem with fitting in, caused by a difference in cognitive stage, related development and/or the quality and variety of their talents. One of the most apparent characteristics of gifted adolescents is that they get easily bored, because they are able to achieve tasks with easy and great understanding. In addition, they often have multiple talents that they are unaware of, they strive for success and perfection, they are unaware of their deficiencies in other areas and they are distant from the peer group, as they feel different. The lack of social skills and inability to determine their social role contributes to feeling out of place. This could result in feelings of anxiety and insecurity, as well as in psychological problems such as a burn out.

Although this seems to be the case for gifted adolescents, gifted adults might face similar problems.

[Aim and research question](#)

Although characteristics and social-emotional needs of gifted children are studied extensively, as represented in reviews by Brody & Mills (1997), Lovecky (1992) and many others, research concerning gifted adults is limited. The quality of the available research is moderate, because unclear definitions of giftedness are used, limited participants are included and most of them do not include control groups. Therefore, there remains a lack of research into gifted adults that provides us with an integrated understanding of what giftedness means or looks like during adulthood (Rinn & Bishop, 2015).

Many questions remain unanswered, especially concerning work conflicts. It is important to know *how* conflicts are initiated, *how* people, both the gifted and their co-workers, perceive these conflicts and *what* the outcomes are of these conflicts. In some work environments more attention is now being paid to gifted employees, but still not much is known about

characteristics of giftedness and its significance for the work situation (Nauta & Ronner, 2008). Because of the lack of research, an explorative research will be of great value to gain global information about work conflicts concerning gifted adults.

This research will focus on themes that emerge, regarding aspects of work conflicts. To gain valuable information, this research also examines if there is a difference between these themes for gifted and non-gifted adults and between males and females. Research shows that women report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than men. However, no distinction between gifted and non-gifted employees is made (Zou, Bain & Company, 2015). Therefore it is interesting to find out if there is a difference between males and females, regarding work conflicts' themes.

It is known that gifted adults can positively contribute to work processes through their characteristics, provided that their contributions are also considered to be positive (Nauta & Ronner, 2008). However, only the negative aspects are often highlighted during work conflicts.¹ This leads to a negative atmosphere in the workplace: people avoid the conflict and do not discuss it. When the conflict persists, it can escalate, so that it is too late to resolve it. Consequently, such a conflict can lead to absenteeism at work, which illustrates the devastating effect of work conflicts on individuals. Highlighting the positive aspects of work conflicts might show the possible value of work conflicts for both gifted and non-gifted individuals and the organization. This in turn will, as opposed to focusing on the negative aspects of work conflicts, result in a positive atmosphere in the workplace and encourage people to discuss work conflicts. As a consequence, organizations are able to prevent escalation of work conflicts and might learn strategies about how to prevent certain recurring work conflicts. Therefore, the focus of our research will be on the positive aspects of work conflicts.

We hope to explore differences and similarities between gifted and non-gifted people, which could be of relevance for future research on work conflicts. By shedding light on the positive aspects of work conflicts we hope to make people aware of the benefit of having both gifted and non-gifted adults in the work environment. The result of this can be highly valued for both gifted and non-gifted adults, concerning their work satisfaction and overall wellbeing. High levels of work satisfaction occur if work is a source of pleasure and that if the atmosphere in the team is good (Delisle & Squires, 1989). When positive aspects of work conflicts are known, this can positively stimulate the atmosphere at work.

Our aim is to investigate which positive outcomes gifted and non-gifted adults often mention and whether they show differences in which positive aspects they experience. Therefore we have formulated the following research question: *'What are the positive aspects of work conflicts in the workplace of gifted and non-gifted adults?'*

In order to answer the research question, the following sub-questions are formulated:

1. *Which themes emerge from gifted and non-gifted adults, regarding the positive aspects of work conflicts?*
2. *Are there differences in those themes between gifted and non-gifted adults?*
3. *Are there differences in those themes between males and females?*

¹ Verbal communication with I.J. van der Waal, workplace mediator

Method

In order to answer the main question of this research ‘What are the positive aspects of work conflicts with gifted and non-gifted adults?’ a qualitative research method was used. In the present study, a survey design containing both closed and open questions was applied. This design provides the possibility to generate new ideas and insights.

Data collection

Every member of Mensa received an online questionnaire. In addition, friends and family of the researchers were asked to complete the same questionnaire. Participants were able to fill in the questionnaire between 23rd of December 2015 and the 16th of April 2016. The online questionnaire was designed by the Gifted Adults Foundation (IHBV) and was sent in the context of explorative research from the IHBV into the positive aspects of work conflicts with gifted adults.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consisted out of the following four closed questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

2. What is your age?
 - *Participant was able to fill in an age ranging between 0 and 110*

3. Are you gifted?
 - *Participant was able to check one or more of the following options:*
 - Yes, my IQ is tested and the score is above 130
 - Yes, I am a member of Mensa or another gifted institute
 - Yes, I am a fast and smart thinker and can handle complex cases. I am an autonomous, sensitive, emotional and intense living person. Furthermore, I like to create new things (Delphi-model).
 - I am not a gifted person
 - I do not know whether I am gifted or not

4. How often have you experienced that important conflicts in life had positive aspects?
 - Never
 - Sometimes
 - Often

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of seven open questions. In this part the participant was asked to describe (1) positive aspects before, during and after a conflict and (2) his/her role in this conflict in three different situations (work, education and private). From this part we have only included responses about the work situation to our data, since the aim of our study is to find positive aspects of work conflicts.

Groups in the study

Based on the third closed question (see data collection), the participants were divided into two groups. During group defining, researchers observed a third group which did not meet the criteria of gifted and non-gifted groups. This third group mentioned that they feel gifted based on the Delphi model, but do not indicate that their IQ has been tested. From a scientific point of view, we decided to only consider people to be ‘gifted’ based on the outcome of their IQ test (score >130; this is also a requirement for membership of Mensa). This means that the people who only *feel* gifted cannot be included in this group. However, since they explicitly mention that they feel gifted, they cannot be included in the non-gifted group either. Therefore, a third group was created, called: feeling gifted.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria of each group are depicted in Table 1. A schematic overview of our selection process is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria of three different groups; gifted adults, feeling gifted and non-gifted.

Group	IQ >130 and/or member of gifted institute	Mentions feeling like the Delphi model	Not gifted and/or doesn't know whether he/she is gifted or not
Gifted	Yes	Yes and no	No
Feeling gifted	No	Yes	No
Non-gifted	No	No	Yes

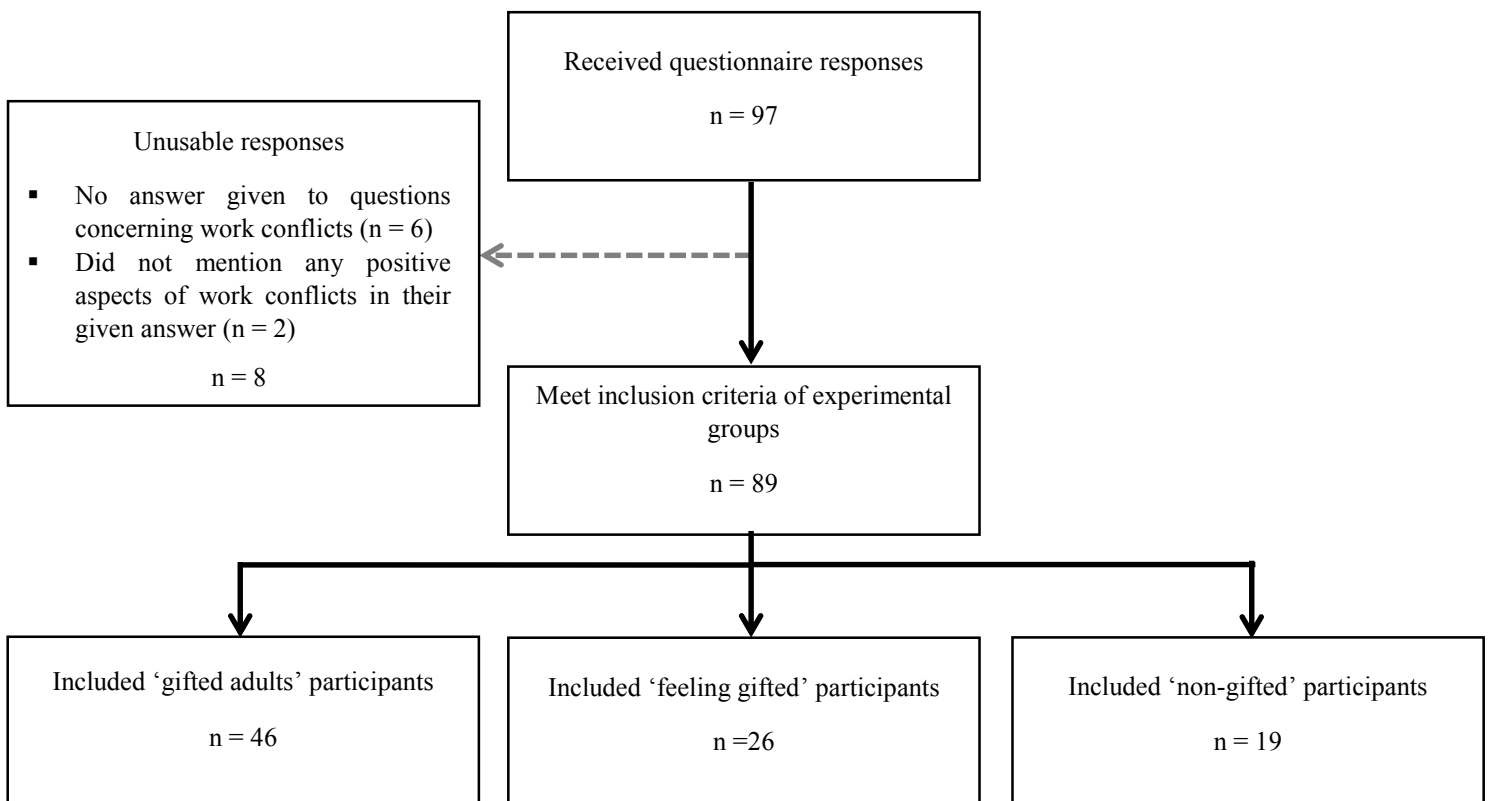


Figure 2: Schematic flow chart of participant deviation into different groups.

Data-analysis

Definition of themes

In order to answer the first sub-question ‘*which themes emerge, regarding the positive aspects of work conflicts?*’ the researchers have individually written down recurring themes in the answers of the participants. In consultation, they decided to adopt the following three main themes: (1) personal themes, (2) work-related themes and (3) process-related themes. Those themes are consisting of two or three different sub-themes, which are further described in the Results section of this report.

Theme scoring

The researchers came together and scored all the themes that were emerging in the answers of the participants. Themes were scored 0 if not applicable or 1 if the theme was applicable. Each individual participant had to score for at least one theme, but the participant could also score for more than one theme. If the participant did not score any of the described themes, the participant was excluded from the study and was classified as an unusable response. This was the case for six participants who did not fill in anything regarding the questions about work conflicts, and for two participants who did not mention any positive aspects in their response (see Figure 2).

After scoring the themes, the percentage was calculated of each theme that the participants had indicated as positive aspect of his/her conflict. This value was used for statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis

Statistics were performed using GraphPad Prism 5. To see whether age did significantly differ between groups a one-way ANOVA, followed by post-hoc Bonferroni test was used. To test whether there is a relation between a theme and being gifted, feeling gifted or non-gifted people, a chi-square test was used.

Interview

In order to get another perspective of positive aspects of work conflicts in the workplace of gifted adults, a qualitative interview was taken with a professional. From her work experience, our respondent could give us more insight into the perspective from managers and organizations regarding giftedness. Her opinion was asked about the position of giftedness in organizations and about possible positive aspects of work conflicts with gifted adults for managers and the organization. Subsequently, her opinion was asked about our current results about the positive aspects of work conflicts experienced by gifted, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults. The interview was recorded and afterwards, the complete interview has been transcribed. Consequently, the interview is summarized in English and reported at the end of the Results section of this research report.

Results

Definition of themes

The researchers have made three different groups of main themes based on recurring themes in the participant's responses, as described previously (see definition of themes). In order to be able to distinguish the main themes more specifically, the three different main themes were divided into two or three different sub-themes. An overview of the total scored sub-themes per group and the results of the statistical analyses are presented in appendix I and II.

Personal themes

Personal themes refer to the fact that the participant has experienced positive aspects that are related to his/her self. The theme was divided into three different sub-themes:

- *Self-confidence*: the participant describes trust in his/her self, he/she is relying on his/her own forces towards his/her job and possible obstacles.
Cited answer from data, illustrating self-confidence: *'Receiving compliments and other forms of appreciation from my supervisor, made me feel very confident.'*
- *Self-knowledge*: the participant describes to have knowledge of his/her self, aware of self.
Cited answer from data, illustrating self-knowledge: *'Led to more self-knowledge and eventually more joy.'*
- *Fortitude*: the participant is persevering and unfaltering.
Cited answer from data, illustrating fortitude: *'I knew I was right.'*

Work-related themes

Work-related themes refer to the fact that the participant has experienced positive aspects that are related to work-related processes. In other words, the conflict has led to better work relations. We have divided this group into two different sub-themes:

- *Trust*: the participant indicates that there is belief in one's confidence.
Cited answer from data, illustrating trust: *'I experienced that my supervisor held trust in me and that I could fit expectations.'*
- *Recognition*: the participant indicates that he/she is feeling affirmation and appreciation.
Cited answer from data, illustrating recognition: *'I felt appreciated, which resulted in enthusiasm in my work.'*

Process-related themes

Process-related themes are referring to the fact that the participant is indicating positive aspects that are related to work and the command of the boss. This group is divided into three different sub-themes:

- *Broader perspective*: the participant is indicating that he/she was able to think more extensive, leading to prospect in the process.
Cited answer from data, illustrating broader perspective: *'Discovering new ways.'*
- *Result*: the participant is indicating that a solution has been found in the process or project.
Cited answers from data, illustrating result:
'I got the chance to be autonomous and had possibilities to develop new solutions.'
'Finding a solution together, and together you come out of it stronger.'

- *Focus*: the participant is indicating that the conflict has led to more focus in the project. Cited answer from data, illustrating focus: ‘*I tried to focus on my work, held in mind that I was making right decisions concerning my activities.*’

Details participants

In total, 97 people had completely filled in the questionnaire. 89 of those met all the inclusion criteria. The gifted people group consists of 46 participants, the feeling gifted group of 24 participants and the non-gifted group of 19 participants. Details of the participants are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of included participants (n = 89)

Participant characteristics	Gifted adults (n = 46)	Feeling gifted (n = 24)	Non-gifted (n = 19)	Total (n = 89)
Sex				
Female	24 (52%)	19 (79%)	10 (53%)	53 (60%)
Male	22 (48%)	5 (21%)	9 (47%)	36 (40%)
Age (yr ± SD)	45.52 ± 1.59	46.46 ± 2.51	39.21 ± 4.19	

Analysis of themes

Personal themes

Personal themes refer to the fact that the participant has experienced positive aspects that are related to his/her self. The results are indicating the percentage of participants that scored, i.e. mentioned the sub-theme (see Figure 4).

It is remarkable that the sub-theme of self-confidence is primarily mentioned by both gifted and non-gifted adults (29% and 35% respectively), while the feeling gifted are more likely to mention ‘self-knowledge’ (35%) rather than ‘self-confidence’ (19%) as a positive aspect of work conflicts. Furthermore, the sub-theme ‘fortitude’ is mentioned less by all three groups. Gifted and feeling gifted adults seem to mention this slightly more than non-gifted adults, however, this was not significant.

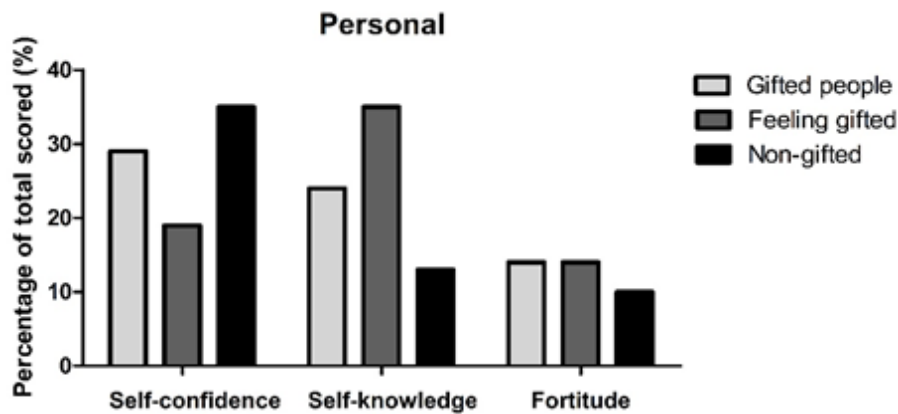


Figure 4: Overview of personal themes: self-confidence, self-knowledge and fortitude. Bars indicate the percentage of people that mentioned the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

The ratio between males and females of the participants that mentioned the personal sub-themes, are shown in Figure 5. Regarding these themes in gifted adults, differences were particularly found in the sub-theme ‘fortitude’; males tend to indicate ‘fortitude’ more often than females. In the group of feeling gifted and non-gifted adults, females seem to bring up ‘fortitude’ more often than males.

Conspicuously, in the non-gifted group, a difference was found between males and females regarding the sub-theme of ‘self-confidence’, which was brought up more often by males than by females. In addition, no differences were found between males and females in the feeling gifted group concerning personal themes.



Figure 5: Overview of personal themes: self-confidence, self-knowledge and fortitude. Differences are made between male (white bar) and female (grey bar). Each graph indicates a group (gifted people, feeling gifted and non-gifted). Bars indicate the percentage of male/female that mentioned the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

Work-related themes

Work-related themes refer to the fact that the participant has experienced positive aspects that are related to work-related processes. In other words, the conflict has led to better work relations. The results are indicating the percentage of participants that mentioned the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict regarding to work-related themes (see Figure 6).

Regarding work-related themes, a striking difference was found between the three groups. Gifted adults tend to mention both ‘trust’ and ‘recognition’ as a positive aspect of work conflicts

(7% and 8% respectively). In contrast, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults do not mention ‘trust’ at all, but they only indicate ‘recognition’ as a positive aspect of work conflicts. Regarding ‘recognition’, a large difference was found between the three groups: feeling gifted adults bring up ‘recognition’ more often (19%) than gifted and non-gifted adults (8% and 6% respectively).



Figure 6: Overview of work-related themes: trust and recognition. Bars indicate the percentage of people that has indicated the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

Remarkably, an obvious difference is found between males and females in all three groups (see Figure 7). In the group of gifted adults, males seem to indicate both sub-themes more than females. Conspicuously, in the groups of feeling gifted and non-gifted adults, only females brought up work-related sub-themes.



Figure 7: Overview of work-related themes: trust and recognition. Differences are made between male (white bar) and female (grey bar). Each graph indicates a group (gifted people, feeling gifted and non-gifted). Bars indicate the percentage of male/female that has indicated the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

Process-related themes

Process-related themes refer to the fact that the participant is indicating positive aspects that are related to work and the command of the boss. The results are indicating the percentage of participants that mentioned the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict regarding to process-related themes (see Figure 8).

Concerning process-related themes, sub-themes are found to vary in all groups. While gifted adults mention ‘perspective’ as a positive aspect of work conflicts (9%), feeling gifted and non-gifted adults do not indicate this sub-theme at all. Remarkably, non-gifted adults strongly mention ‘result’ and ‘focus’ as positive aspects (12% and 26% respectively), compared to feeling gifted (2% and 12% respectively) and gifted people (both 4%).

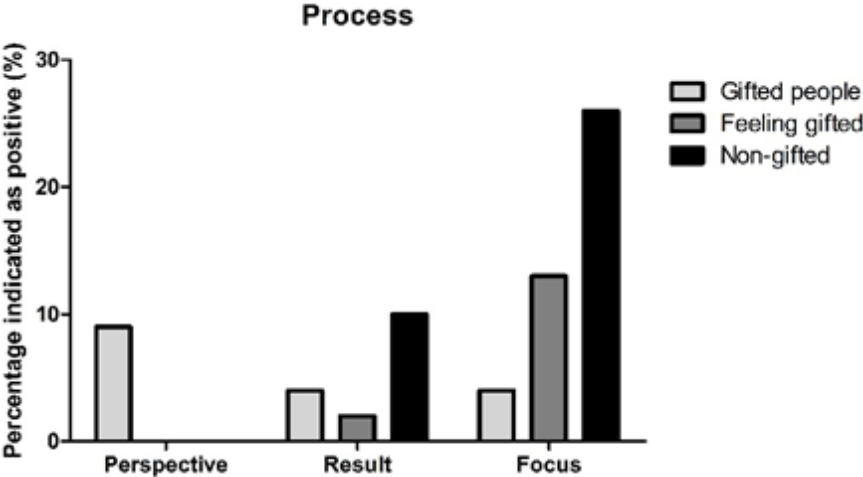


Figure 8: Overview of process-related themes: perspective, result and focus. Bars indicate the percentage of people that has indicated the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

Some obvious differences were found between males and females in indicating process-related themes as a positive aspect of work conflicts (see Figure 9). In the group of gifted adults, all process-related sub-themes were mentioned more often by males compared to females. However, in the feeling gifted group, only females indicated process-related sub-themes. Non-gifted individuals showed a variation: slightly more females than males indicated ‘result’ as a positive aspect, while ‘focus’ was mentioned more often by males.

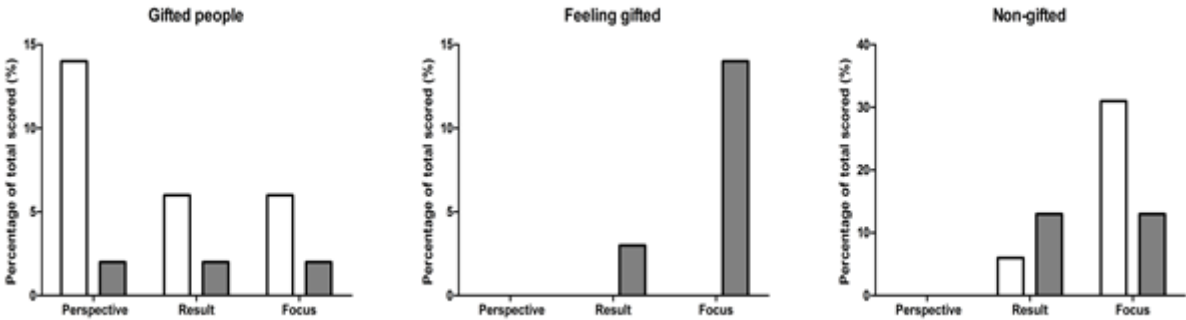


Figure 9: Overview of process-related themes: perspective, result and focus. Differences are made between male (white bar) and female (grey bar). Each graph indicated a group (gifted people, feeling gifted and non-gifted). Bars indicate the percentage of male/female that has indicated the subject concerned as positive aspect of his/her conflict.

Interview – summary

The position of giftedness in organizations

Our respondent thinks it is remarkable that, as far as she knows, the knowledge of giftedness in supervisors and organizations is very limited. In her opinion, (people in) organizations do not even have a definition of giftedness; it is mostly seen as something that has to do with annoying behaviour and stubborn people. It points to the image of not only supervisors, but also organizations in general, that they do not know what giftedness means and how they recognize it. You may say that if supervisors would be able to recognize it in the first place, they could look at it from a different perspective. Unfortunately, this is rare.

Our respondent's idea is that for about the last 10 years, education is more focused on phenomena like giftedness, so it is being acknowledged. However, it takes about 15 years before these people have to deal with organizations, so nowadays, the awareness of giftedness in organizations is still at a very early stage. Very little employees bring it up, for example by 'I can act a little strange or difficult or be demanding sometimes', but there is almost no employee that literally says that he/she is gifted. More than that, there is something like a taboo against it in our environment. On the other hand, people seem to think like 'who do you think you are?'

Thus, according to our respondent, giftedness is not really a topic yet in organizations. She mentions she once had a coach candidate, a PhD student, who had all characteristics of giftedness. This student was considered to be an annoying factor in the research group, because she could do two promotions and other projects simultaneously. This led to more incomprehension than to advantages of her giftedness. According to our respondent, we may not be ready for seeing the advantages: nowadays, supervisors do not recognize and acknowledge the gifted employee and try to change the employee's behaviour instead. The topic of giftedness does not really play a role among supervisors, so the positive aspects might not be experienced as well.

Positive aspects of work conflicts with gifted people for supervisors and organizations

From the perspective of our respondent as trainer and coach, the behaviour of a gifted person is positive, but she can imagine that a supervisor experiences this as very negative: a gifted person can really trigger the style of leadership. For example, when you have a gifted employee who is fast, autonomous et cetera, it may be a positive aspect that the supervisor is forced to think about his/her own performance; it makes him/her aware about his/her own incompetence. As a consequence, the supervisor may think about how he/she can deal with this in a better way. Subsequently, after a conflict, acknowledgement of the added value of the gifted person can be a positive aspect. Thus, this can be experienced when the supervisor looks at his/her own development and how he/she can improve it, but this requires the supervisor's ability to be reflective and critical.

Another positive aspect that our respondent brought up is that the supervisor learns to work with diversity among employees. Probably every supervisor wants some differences between his/her employees, but when the differences become too big, the supervisor can experience problems. Because of the conflict, the supervisor may become familiar with the value of diversity in a team of employees, including gifted and non-gifted individuals.

Regarding the unfamiliarity with giftedness, a positive aspect of a work conflict can be that the supervisor becomes more familiar with the different aspects of a gifted employee.

Discussion about current results with respect to positive aspects of work conflicts

Regarding personal themes, our respondent can imagine that 'self-confidence' is mentioned less in the (feeling) gifted group than in the non-gifted group, because basically, many conflicts have already taken place. These people have always been an 'outsider'.

Furthermore, our respondent mentions that it is quite weird that there is such a small difference in the subtheme of 'fortitude', because this is seen as a characteristic of gifted people. However, based on her own experience, she thinks that the results might be different when younger people are included.

Concerning work-related themes, she supposes that feeling gifted adults have indicated 'recognition' more than the other groups. Feeling gifted adults do not have a 'label', and a supervisor might be able to recognize that the person is extra intelligent, without putting a label to it. In contrast, when you name someone 'gifted', it is possible that doors are already closed.

In our respondent's opinion, it seems weird that 'focus' had such a low score among gifted participants compared to 'perspective' regarding the process-related themes. She thinks it is remarkable that gifted adults mainly mentioned 'perspective', and both 'result' and 'focus' had a lower score, while in the feeling gifted and non-gifted adults 'result' and primarily 'focus' was mentioned. She can imagine our explanation, which points that a gifted adult is in the need of perspective in order to function anyway.

Discussion

This explorative research was conducted to provide more insight into the positive aspects of work conflicts in the workplace of gifted and non-gifted adults. Topics that emerged as positive aspects upon asking gifted, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults about work conflicts, could be distinguished in three main themes: personal, work-related and process-related themes. Among personal themes, self-confidence, self-knowledge and fortitude were recognized as sub-themes. Regarding work-related themes, the sub-themes trust and recognition emerged. In the process-related themes, a distinction could be made between perspective, result and focus as sub-themes.

Concerning positive aspects in general, it was remarkable that personal themes were mentioned the most, followed by process-related themes and work-related themes as last.

Regarding positive aspects of work conflicts, the results show that a low variation exists in personal themes, which are mentioned by gifted, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults. We have observed slight differences between the sub-themes 'self-confidence' and 'self-knowledge': feeling gifted adults primarily mention self-knowledge, while non-gifted and gifted adults mainly discuss self-confidence. Males and females do not differ remarkably in theme scoring within the personal themes. In contrast, work-related themes show high variation between all three groups. Interestingly, 'trust' is only mentioned by gifted people and not at all by feeling gifted and non-gifted adults. Furthermore, feeling gifted adults often mention 'recognition' as a positive aspect. Of note, this was only reported by female participants. A remarkable variation was found regarding process-related themes. Feeling gifted and non-gifted adults seem to pay more attention to the sub-themes 'result' and 'focus', whereas gifted adults are the only ones referring to 'perspective'. Notably, only females of the feeling gifted participants point out process-related themes. In contrast, more gifted males than gifted females mention process-related themes. This pattern is reversed in the non-gifted group.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that gifted, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults perceive the positive outcome of a work conflict differently. It is possible that these differences are caused by a difference between characteristics and behaviour of these groups. For example, with regard to the interesting pattern concerning process-related themes, gifted people seem to be more focused on a broader perspective and work independently. This can be due to the fact that gifted adults apply creative thinking in their work (Rinn & Bishop, 2015). In contrast, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults might work with focus on the end result, set by their supervisor. It might be possible that the supervisor is not used to deal with the way gifted adults work, since gifted adults in the workplace are most probably represented by a lower number compared to non-gifted adults. This might be a cause for work conflicts.

It is striking that feeling gifted adults primarily focused on 'self-knowledge' rather than 'self-confidence', as compared to both gifted and primarily non-gifted adults. The reason that non-gifted adults have a higher overall score on self-confidence, might be that they have less conflicts anyway, compared to both gifted and feeling gifted adults. For the (feeling) gifted groups, basically, more conflicts might have already taken place because of their (feeling) giftedness. Since the number of conflicts has not been investigated in the current research, this would be an interesting subject for further research.

The observed difference between gifted and feeling gifted adults brings up a lot of possible explanations and questions. On the one hand, gifted adults have been tested for their intelligence and as a consequence they have been labelled as 'gifted'. This label might distance gifted adults from the bigger non-gifted group, i.e. they might feel as if they are a misfit or a separate population of people, also known as 'outsiders'. Being occupied with feeling this way could result in a low level of confidence, thus that they have more to gain in this field during work conflicts, as shown by our results. On the other hand, it is possible that gifted adults have the feeling that there is a 'name' for them and their talents after being 'labelled'. This could by itself already result in a higher self-confidence, which can be further reinforced during work conflicts. In addition, the feeling gifted people did not get tested (yet), so they are part of the 'regular people' group and therefore do not feel like an outsider. They possibly 'feel' more intelligent and better than others, which might result in an increased level of confidence. As these 'feeling gifted' people already feel special and confident they have more to gain in the field of self-knowledge, as shown by our results. In contrast, it is also possible that the feeling gifted people feel as if they are an 'outsider' anyway, as they do not belong to both the 'gifted people' and the 'regular people' group. This might by itself result in a decreased level of self-confidence in feeling gifted adults.

One way to interpret the above-mentioned explanations is that the difference in confidence is a result of the labelling by the test. However, it is also possible that those who feel less confident decide to get tested. This is a chicken-and-egg debate. So, what is/are the reason(s) people decide to get their possible giftedness tested? Is it because they experience difficulties in daily life? Or is it because they are convinced of their giftedness? Another possible reason could be that they lack confidence and hope to gain more assurance by knowing they are gifted. The latter would suggest that the differences we have found are caused by a lack of self-confidence in those who decide to get tested and are ultimately classified as 'gifted'.

Concerning work-related themes, it is remarkable that feeling gifted adults have a high score on the subtheme 'recognition'. It came up in the conversation with our interviewee that this could be a result of feeling gifted adults not having a 'label', of whom the supervisor is able to recognize that this feeling gifted person is very intelligent, without adhering a label to it. In contrast, when you label someone as 'gifted', it is possible that there is already a distance between the gifted and other people.

In addition, we found a remarkable difference when looking at the subtheme 'trust'. Gifted adults were the only ones who mentioned 'trust' in their responses. We have discussed this finding with a group of Mensa members, who suggested that the difference could be caused by a characteristic of gifted adults. It seems that gifted adults are more focused on the tasks at hand, rather than salary, results or competing with others. This also relates to the finding that gifted adults mention 'recognition' less often than feeling gifted adults. Another explanation is that gifted adults might struggle with being different than others. They might interpret trust as a form of acceptance; the conflict and its outcome made them feel as being part of the team. Finally, increased levels of trust – possibly leading to a better work relationship – might result in increased levels of self-confidence and acceptance for those who are gifted.

However, on this point, attention needs to be paid to the fact that work-related themes were mentioned less frequently as a positive aspect of work conflicts than personal themes. The large variation we found between the groups regarding work-related themes might be due to this low frequency. Therefore, the reliability of these themes might be questioned. To provide more

insight in positive aspects of work-related themes, concerning trust and recognition by colleagues and supervisors, further research needs to be conducted. This research should explicitly focus on trust and recognition as work-related sub-themes.

Knowledge about the characteristics and background of the participants is limited in the current study. Although the participants did indicate whether they were gifted or not, we were not able to check whether they actually made an IQ test or what type of IQ test they have done to determine their intelligence. It is known that IQ scores differ between different IQ tests, meaning that some of the participants in the 'gifted adults' group might not meet our criteria of being 'gifted'.

Every single participant was involved in a different work conflict. As the phrase 'work conflict' was not specifically defined in the questionnaire, people could have interpreted it differently. For example, some may have thought about a work conflict in which they had a lot of discussions with colleagues or their boss, while others might describe a work conflict that was intrapersonal, like not being able to solve the problem at hand due to the lack of specific skills. Also, as we have questioned how gifted and non-gifted adults perceive the same work conflict, rather than two different ones, we are unable to draw solid conclusions about the differences between positive outcomes these two groups focus on. However, this research included many different types of work conflicts and therefore we can assume that all groups have discussed similar types of work conflicts.

For further research, it would be ideal to focus on a large group of people that were involved in the same work conflict and investigate specifically how all of those people perceived the outcome of that situation. However, most work conflicts involve only a small number of people. In cases of large conflicts, only just a few individuals will be dominant in the work conflict, while the contribution of the majority is minimal. It would therefore be better to suggest looking into the different types of work conflicts, e.g. one-on-one conflicts with a boss or supervisor, group discussions concerning a work project or miscommunication between colleagues. This type of research will provide more insight into possible differences in mentioned themes between different types of work conflicts.

Next to the positive aspects of work conflicts with gifted people from the perspective of employees, work conflicts can also have positive aspects for supervisors and organizations that work with gifted employees. As mentioned by our interviewee, supervisors might learn from conflicts with gifted adults by getting more familiar with different aspects and traits of a gifted employee. Since the topic of giftedness seems to be quite unfamiliar in the workplace, this might already be a significant step forward. Supervisors can learn from these conflicts because they are forced to think about their own functioning and incompetence and how he/she can deal with the situation in a better way. By reflecting on their own development, supervisors might be able to recognize and acknowledge the added value of a gifted employee and supervisor is able to learn to work with a huge diversity among his/her employees.

Results from our study might contribute to the discussion and analysis of work conflicts, leading to a more efficient work process and increased communication within the work environment. It has formed a basis for future research regarding the positive outcomes of work conflicts. As noted, our research has raised many questions about differences between gifted, feeling gifted and non-gifted adults in relation to the perception of work conflict outcomes. First of all, during

our analysis we came across the group of ‘feeling gifted’ adults – a group that has not been studied in detail yet. The results indicate that feeling gifted adults are indeed a separate group of people with different perceptions of work conflict outcomes and would therefore be an interesting group to investigate.

Future research could focus on the used themes separately, thereby making sure to include a sufficient number of people in order to receive enough data to draw conclusions. We are also interested in how different people perceive certain types of work conflicts in which they have been involved. Discussion of differences between males and females was limited, so it would be interesting to look into this further and see how male gifted adults and female gifted adults differ. Experiences with positive aspects of work conflicts could differ between younger and elderly, separation of those groups will reveal more insights. Our current study included gifted people with a mean age of 45 and 46 years old, but according to our interviewee, scoring of the themes might be different when younger people are included, who might already be recognized as being gifted in their education.

Finally, of interest is to see how managers and bosses react to work conflicts that involve gifted adults and to find out whether discrepancies exist. The same is true for non-gifted and feeling gifted adults compared to their bosses and managers. This field of study could focus on whether hierarchy influences the perception of work conflicts, especially regarding the positive aspects of work conflicts.

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Appendix

I. Overview of mentioned themes in %, per group

Female	24 (52%)	19 (79%)	10 (53%)	53 (60%)
Male	22 (48%)	5 (21%)	9 (47%)	36 (40%)

Theme	Personal		Work-related			Process-related		
	Self-confidence	Self-knowledge	Fortitude	Trust	Recognition	Perspective	Results	Focus
Gifted (n=46)	29%	24%	14%	7%	8%	9%	4%	4%
Female (n=24)	34%	29%	22%	5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Male (n=22)	24%	20%	8%	8%	12%	14%	6%	6%
Feeling gifted (n=24)	19%	35%	14%	0%	19%	0%	2%	12%
Female (n=19)	19%	32%	11%	0%	22%	0%	3%	14%
Male (n=5)	2%	9%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-gifted (n=19)	35%	13%	10%	0%	6%	0%	12%	26%
Female (n=10)	25%	13%	13%	0%	13%	0%	13%	13%
Male (n=9)	44%	13%	6%	0%	0%	0%	6%	31%

II. Overview of statistical analysis (chi-square tests between the three groups per subtheme)

Theme	Personal		Work-related			Process-related		
	Self-confidence	Self-knowledge	Fortitude	Trust	Recognition	Perspective	Results	Focus
Gifted	29%	24%	14%	7%	8%	9%	4%	4%
Feeling gifted	19%	35%	14%	0%	19%	0%	2%	12%
Non-gifted	35%	13%	10%	0%	6%	0%	12%	26%
<i>P value</i>	*	**	<i>n.s.</i>	***	**	***	*	***

* P<0.05

** P<0.01

*** P<0.001