

Ok one more background detail that I forgot; I have the eccentric personality as described by David Weeks in his book.

But to continue: Glibness/ superficial charm is an interesting question for me.

When I was a child, what stuck out about me to many adults was how quiet I was, how I didn't cause any trouble and wasn't rowdy. This was around ages 5 to 8. I would be at the houses of adults, and I would quietly watch tv or play games, and I would be polite when asked about wanting food and things like that. I guess you would say that I was an "easy" child, compared to other boys.

During those same ages, I would display unpleasant behaviors at home. My mother's sister was about 7 years to 9 years older than me, and when we played with toys together, I would sometimes use swear words, like the "f word". I might act as if my action figures were saying these things.

I moved into a trailer park at age 8 or 9, after my mom remarried. The children there perceived me as different, and my whole life I have felt that I am different than others. This was probably more pronounced as a child and as a young adult, this feeling of being different. The other kids were extremely impressed with me, and they also looked down on me. The impressed part had to do with my being perceived as a "genius". This was due to how much I knew in the classroom and how much I knew elsewhere. I showed signs, all of the time, of being exceptionally bright. It was something where the other kids and adults never had time to doubt. It was so apparent, that I was intellectually gifted in a way that wasn't common. They were also impressed with me because of my extreme talent in playing video games. I was the master of almost every video game that I put my hands on, and any time we rented or bought a new game and there was some level that no one could get past, I'd be the first to conquer it. I would beat the adults at video games, just like I beat them at games like checkers.

They however looked down on me for my physical frailty, my lack of athletic ability, my exaggerated fear response, where I was overly scared of heights, loud noises, and being physically hurt or injured, and my oversensitivity to pain. I seemed to be a weakling and to be very far behind and kind of dumb when it came to sports or physical play. This was from ages 8 and on. All of this played a role.

In middle school, I was the class clown. This was partly due to my personality and a motivation to be popular and well liked was also part of this on many occasions. I would break the rules and get into trouble, for the sake of laughs from the other kids, and I also often got a kick myself out of some of my mischief.

It was in middle school that a strange pair of behavior patterns would first become apparent, or at least they were apparent to anyone who knew how I acted from one setting to the next. At school, I would be very disrespectful to the teachers. I would be a very mean kid in general, at

school. Then at places like my stepdad's mom's house, I would be the epitome of a good child. I was respectful and had manners and would generally impress any adult that stopped by. Note that my stepdad's mom was a very kind lady who spoiled me. One thing that often impressed the adults was how much I knew and understood about things they cared about, like political issues or history or the Bible. I would sometimes do math for them that they didn't know how to do. I would often be able to teach them things. A frequent impression, among the adults, from the time I was very young and throughout my childhood, was that I was not like a child. Instead, talking to me was like talking to a miniature adult. I think that a big part of this was that I wasn't around other children, and didn't have an opportunity to be tempted into mischief, when at her house.

I would also be a little angel at my paternal grandfather's house. My grandfather's wife would make it a special point to the other children that would come by, that they needed to emulate my manners and study their Bible the way that I study my Bible. It was like I was ahead of the curve on how to be a respectable and responsible child, in her eyes. I came across as extremely impressive on all counts.

The other children that would come by would not tempt me into mischief, at least not excessive mischief like that I engaged in at school. I can't remember me and the children that I met and played with at my grandfather's house ever do anything that would get us in trouble, but I'm sure that I told them jokes that my grandfather and his wife wouldn't have approved of, and I probably acted in other ways that were not very fitting with my perfect child image.

My grandfather seemed to have a more nuanced take, although he was extremely impressed with me as well. Everyone in my family could tell how impressed he was with me, but he would also make comments about all of the things I had in common with my father. Like I was addicted to video games, and he was addicted to pinball as a child, and that I liked to "lay around" just like my dad did.

Note that when I say the other kids didn't tempt me into mischief, I'm not saying that it was a passive process for me, to get into mischief as a child. I would be one of the kids to come up with a bright idea to do something wrong, very often, when me and other children would get into trouble. I did it to impress other kids sometimes, but I also got a kick out of some of my shenanigans. I thought it was fun. With me and some of my friends, there would be this mutual quality where we were little angels when by ourselves but put us together and we are like dynamite and a nightmare, and some of our mischief at ages 11 through 14 was enough to get the police involved.

My grandfather was larger than life to me, for all that he taught me. He made me feel loved in a way that not many in my family did. He constantly taught me about how to do right, and he had a particular emphasis on being honest and having a work ethic. It was like his preoccupation was teaching me to do right, and within that was a particularly intense preoccupation on those two things, being honest and working hard.

For all of this, I was kind of motivated to be my best self, when I stayed with my grandfather. I think that the fact that I had structure instead of chaos and dysfunction also played a role. It was like that I had a place to flourish. And yet, another part of it, was that this just came to me, in a way. It was a fairly natural way of being, to be polite, well mannered, respectful, and to be a generally very impressive child to adults. It was like a mode of being that I could slide into, pretty much automatically. I will say that there were certain teachers that I would be disrespectful to that I probably would have had trouble going into this mode of being polite, respectful, etc. it was like there was no cue for me to be that child, or that the context had been set such that I didn't know how to change gears. I will get into my late teens and adulthood behavior next, in reference to this item. One more thing that I will add is that I was quite articulate as a child, and that I could make interpretations of the Bible that adults would agree with, or even find enlightening. I seemed to have a way with words, to some degree, in some contexts. From ages 12 through 15 however, among my peers, I much more often came across as a "spaz" or hyperactive. I seemed to lack social skills, often, with kids who were my age. It was more complex than someone bringing me food and me saying "thank you" and then properly cleaning up after myself when I'm done.

It was like I didn't know how to act, and I was increasingly more obviously behind the curve in life.

Based on this account of my childhood, what insights or feedback do you have

ChatGPT

Thank you for sharing such a detailed account of your childhood. It's evident that you've spent time reflecting on your behavior and experiences. Here's what I gather based on what you've written:

1. **Dual Behavior Patterns:** Your behavior showcases clear contrasts, presenting as both the well-behaved, intellectually gifted child around some adults and the mischievous, rebellious child in other settings. This duality could arise from various factors:
 - **Environmental Contexts:** Your behavior seems context-sensitive. Around nurturing figures like your grandfather or at your stepdad's mom's house, where structure and positive reinforcement were available, you naturally gravitated towards being a model child. However, in environments where such positive reinforcement was absent or where mischief was incentivized (like school), your behavior leaned towards rebellion.
 - **Social Dynamics with Peers:** Your motivation to fit in and be liked by your peers might have been a significant factor in your behavior at school. This resonates with many young individuals who, at times, will act out of character to fit in or impress friends.

2. **Intellectual Capacity vs. Social Skills:** Being intellectually gifted doesn't necessarily equate to having strong social skills, especially among peers. It's not uncommon for highly intelligent children to struggle socially. They may have advanced cognitive abilities but may not be on the same emotional or social developmental trajectory as their peers.
3. **Seeking Validation:** Your need to showcase your intellect and knowledge might have been a way to seek validation, especially in environments where you felt "different." Excelling in areas like academics and video games gave you a sense of achievement and made you stand out in a positive light.
4. **Role Models and Mentors:** Your grandfather appears to have played a pivotal role in shaping your values and behaviors. His emphasis on honesty and hard work is likely deeply ingrained in you. Mentors and role models can significantly influence a child's development, and it's clear that your grandfather's teachings have left a lasting impact.
5. **Influence of Family Dynamics:** It's noteworthy how family members compared you to your father. Family dynamics and intergenerational patterns can heavily influence how children perceive themselves and how they behave. Sometimes children will emulate behaviors, while at other times, they might act in opposition to them.
6. **Eccentric Personality:** David Weeks describes eccentrics as nonconformists, driven by curiosity, with a distinct array of behaviors. Your description of your childhood, the way you stood out, your in-depth reflections, and your varied behaviors fit well within this definition. Eccentrics often don't neatly fit into societal boxes, which can make them feel "different."

To sum up, childhood is a complex time where individuals grapple with finding their identity, fitting in socially, and navigating different environments. Your experiences, while unique to you, also echo the challenges many face during these formative years. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into your current self and help guide future self-explorations.

Ok, that was a wonderful analysis. If you recall, we were evaluating my account of my childhood, the way that I behaved towards others, and their impressions of me, for how much is this consistent with a personality trait of glibness/superficial charm, as that trait is understood in reference to the PCL-R

Certainly! The PCL-R, or the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, lists glibness/superficial charm as one of its criteria to assess psychopathy. Typically, this refers to a tendency to be smooth-talking, insincere, and shallow in interactions, often using charm or wit to manipulate others for one's benefit.

Based on your account:

1. **Intellectual Conversations with Adults**: Your ability to converse with adults in a mature and insightful manner, even as a child, may give a semblance of charm. You were able to impress adults and were often seen as a "miniature adult." While this could be seen as a form of charm, it doesn't necessarily mean it was glib or superficial.

2. **Duality in Behavior**: The marked contrast between your behavior at school and in domestic environments with certain family members could be perceived as a form of adaptability. You showcased different facets of your personality based on the environment. However, whether this duality was manipulative (a key component of glibness) is less clear.

3. **Seeking Approval and Fitting In**: Your efforts to fit in at school, especially through mischievous acts, indicates a desire for social validation. The charm associated with glibness often serves the purpose of manipulation or gaining something. While you did act to get laughs or approval, it's not evident that these actions were driven by manipulative intent.

4. **Eccentric Personality**: As mentioned before, your described eccentric personality does suggest you possess unique and diverse behavioral traits. Glibness/superficial charm, in the context of the PCL-R, is a manipulative charm, but eccentric personalities may naturally stand out without any manipulative intent.

5. **Genuine Relationships**: It's important to consider the genuine, positive relationships you've had, particularly with your grandfather. Your behavior around him was influenced by genuine affection, respect, and a desire to adhere to the values he instilled in you. This doesn't align with the insincerity typically associated with glibness.

To sum it up, while there are aspects of your childhood behavior that showcase adaptability and an ability to charm or impress others, it doesn't strongly align with the glibness/superficial charm as defined by the PCL-R. The PCL-R's definition emphasizes insincerity and manipulation, which aren't dominant themes in your shared account.