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## **FAMILY OF THE TALENTED AS AN INTRA- AND INTERACTIONAL STRUCTURAL AND DYNAMIC DESIGN**

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**Summary:** *Studying the family and its impact on the child's development has long social and historical continuation or with other words, it has always been a priory and primary interest of different authors. Concerning the gifted and the talented the impact of the family structure and the dynamics of their development are new fields of research organized in specific forms. In the study of this complex issue of talented and gifted children, studying the family is the third focusing set of interest after studying the characteristics and personality of gifted children, their discovery and the work with them, as well as the characteristics of the teacher itself. This type of intensity of interest is a result of the universal conclusion that family, as a bio-social micro group is responsible for creating the total treatment of the gifted children. Studying the literature that is focused on the impact of various family determinants on the development and encouraging the talent, we got to a conclusion that the authors' interest has multidimensional course that streams from one family attribute to another inside its complex functioning.*

*We'll enumerate some family performances that are studied by different authors to establish their interest in the development of the talent, which is the light motif of our research.*

*Wide range of interests about psychological structure of family refers to: a quality stimulus in the early development of children and the importance of this in the future achievements of the gifted children (Freeman 1991), dominant type of communication in the family (Butterworth, 1984; Turkin, 1977), the order of giving birth (Zajonc 1976), motivation about power and leadership (Olszewski, Kulieka & Willis, 1987), studying the needed psychological space for children (Shmukler 1985), intensity of the given directions to the family about individual achievement (Bloom 1995; Winner 1996), family warmth, care and the level of aspiration (Csikzentmihaly 1993), the rules for optimal family influence (Winner 1996), complexity of the family (Cox's study 1959), stability and instability of the family (Winner 1996), inadequate characteristics of gifted and talented children (George 1992), perfectionism of the gifted and talented children (Csikzentmihaly 1993, Ferbezer 2003), emotional self regulation and control over impulses (Goleman 1996), social, emotional and intellectual characteristics of children and their needs within the family (Clark 1983), interaction between mothers and children that has a strong impact on children's development (Stofer 1990), socio-economical status, interaction among family members and the influence of family dynamics over each family member (Albert & Ranko 1986), collaboration among brothers and sisters (Wallace 1990), type of teachers and their characteristics (Krnjajic 1997, 2002), systems of values and attitudes towards education (Ericsson 1990; Sosniak 1990; Albert & Ranko 1985), collaboration and taking part in the club activities for gifted and talented children (Blazic, A. 1985), parents' attitudes and their evaluation how gifted are their children*

(Blazic, M. 2004), collaboration between the parents and school advice services (Bezic 2006) etc.

*This work tries to get deeper into the core of family intra and interaction puzzle and the identification of possible dominant family profile which create, support and affirm the talent of its children. Therefore, we wanted to bring them in a correlation bound by which we came to some knowledge that refers to the question "Which type of family leads towards affirming the talent of gifted children". Our aim was to check out our results that are in correlation with the results that are scientifically verified in our region and abroad. It is possible to come across to some difficulties that refer to the quality of collected data, realization of the methodological procedure in general, the way of understanding and the description of the results, because of their specific nature, the final evaluation of the results as well as some other relevant experiences. At the end, we have to admit because of the specific interrelation of different family variables which determine the development of the talent; this issue needs longitudinal and interdisciplinary research.*

**Key words:** structure and dynamics of the family, family variables, intra and interaction family puzzle;

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## **Introduction**

The family has very powerful effects on the developing child, impacting attitudes, beliefs, opportunities, habits, and personality traits. The family plays a critical role in determining who a child becomes and what he or she accomplishes. For a child with talent, the influence of the family can be the determining factor as to whether the ability is developed to a high level or not. We all know individuals who are very accomplished and successful despite less than advantageous family circumstances or even truly awful ones and similarly, individuals with seemingly loving and supportive families who do not live up to their potential.

One of the main tasks of parents is to provide an emotionally secure base from which the child can venture forth into the world. The essential challenge for parents of gifted children is to support the children's unusual development and to advocate effectively for appropriate programs. At the same time, they must do so in a way that allows the children to take increasing responsibility for and satisfaction from their own development. Gifted children can have difficulties when their families have been unable to achieve an optimal balance between supportive nurturing and high expectation. In these situations, parents can benefit from help in learning how to modify the home environment.

## **Research Approaches**

Researchers have demonstrated that parents are quite good at identifying exceptional development in toddlers, preschool children and school age children (Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst & Guerin 1994, Gross, 1993, Roedell, Jackson & Robinson, 1980). In addition parents play a vital role in the overall development of gifted children and in the development of their particular gifts. Parents of gifted children have an opportunity to influence their children by providing exposure to complex language (Hart & Risley, 1995), by offering stimulating experiences inside and outside the home (Gottfried et al., 1994), and by providing unusual support for talent development (Bloom, 1983). What is less obvious is the degree to which the children themselves propel their parents into the provision of exceptional opportunities. In one remarkable longitudinal study, the gifted children themselves were observed to make more requests of their parents and to respond with greater enthusiasm to their increased opportunities (Gottfried et al, 1994). The researchers discussed in detail the ways in which gifted children themselves play a major role in their own development.

Generally speaking, parents of gifted and talented children should simply do what all parents need to do - respond consistently to their children's individual needs and interests whilst staying flexible as their children's needs change over time. It follows that many of the ideas below are applicable to all children, gifted or not.

Try to:

- Provide your child with lots of opportunities to learn and try new things.
- Make sure that your child has some things to do that he or she finds challenging, as well as some that he or she likes and can do easily.
- Encourage your child to participate in a broad range of educational and recreational activities.
- Support your child with both their successes and failures.
- Help your child to develop skills needed to relate to friends who may not be gifted and talented.
- Talk with your child about his or her particular talents, what it means to be gifted, and ways to deal with any difficulties that may arise.

- Teach and encourage the social skills that will enable your child to fit comfortably in his social world. Being gifted is not an excuse for bad behaviour.

Try not to:

- Push or place undue pressure on your child.
- 'Show-off' your child or talk a lot about him or her in public.
- Expect your child to be gifted and talented in all areas of his or her development.
- Be too 'bossy' in your parenting.
- Forget that your gifted child is still a child, and has all the normal needs of children, including the need for love, support, stability, routine and fun.

### **Theoretical and Practical Discussion**

#### ***What Families Can Do at Home***

Children's talents should be developed as early as possible so they can achieve their full potential. Parents don't need to be very educated themselves--or have a great deal of money, or even time--to help their children learn and improve their ability to think and communicate. Here are some things to do at home:

- Set high academic goals for your children. Tell them that success is possible, that they will benefit later in life from doing well in school, and that families and their teachers expect them to do well. Help them develop a sense of pride in their identity, both personal and cultural.
- Talk to and play with your children. Have conversations about current events, what's happening in the neighborhood, and what you all did during the day. As you go through your daily routine, explain what you are doing and why. Encourage your children to ask questions that you can answer or help them answer. Make up stories together. Read to them, play games, and do puzzles together.
- Ask your children to pay attention to the way people speak on the radio and TV. Talk about why learning to use good English speech patterns will help them in school and later in life.

- Pay attention to what your children like to do, such as a hobby, drawing, or working with numbers. Help them develop those skills or find out where in the community they can participate in learning enrichment activities. Start early; Head Start and other preschool programs can give your children many advantages.
- Take your children to places where they can learn. Find out about story times at the library and bookstores, and about children's events at museums and community centers. Check out free books and games at the library.
- Take a parenting course in the community or at school that teaches how to develop children's talents.
- Find a mentor in your family or community who can help your children develop their talents and serve as a role model for academic achievement.
- Find out about early talent identification programs so that when your children begin preschool or school they will receive an education that challenges them. Also find out about local community or religious preschools and after-school enrichment programs.
- Set up a quiet study space for your children and help them with their homework, or find them an after-school program that provides a place for studying without distractions.

### ***How Families Can Work with Schools***

All parents are partners in their children's education, and all parents have a place in their children's school, regardless of their own education or economic status. Parents should also know that their children can get a good education in public schools, but they may need to help school people understand how their children's talents can best be developed. Here are some ways for parents to work with schools:

- Ask the school to provide training in recognizing signs of talent and intelligence in children. Some schools give out a "parent nomination form" so parents can check off ways that their children are gifted.
- Find out about enrichment programs for gifted students and tell the school about all your children's talents and why you think your children should be placed in such a program.

- Lobby the school for early and bias-free assessment of children's talent and intelligence. *All* the abilities of *all* children should be considered.
- Pay attention to the curriculum and instruction in your children's gifted program to be sure it is successful with their learning style. Some schools distribute a newsletter about their special programs to keep parents informed; ask your school to do this, or even volunteer to help produce it.
- Be sure that your children are given the support they need to be retained in the program. Ask for enrichment or tutoring if you children aren't doing well in a gifted program.
- Ask for--or help create--a support system for parents. It can include workshops and dissemination of information about ways to help develop children's talent at home, and about enrichment materials for use at home and ways to get them at minimum cost.

#### ***What Programs are Most Successful with Gifted Multicultural Students***

Children with many different learning styles, educational backgrounds, and academic and social skills participate in programs for specially talented students. The following curriculum and teaching strategies are especially effective in multicultural gifted programs. Parents can work with schools to make sure that their children's education includes them:

- An orientation toward achievement and success, and high expectations.
- One-to-one teaching and small learning groups of students.
- Mentoring by adults or older gifted students.
- Special attention to development of communication skills, particularly for bilingual students and those who speak non-standard English.
- A multicultural focus and instruction based on the children's experience.
- Use of community resources.

It is clear from the research literature on talent development and creativity that families play a very important role in the realization of promise and potential (Bloom, 1985). At the most fundamental level, parents provide the resources to support talent development, including their money for lessons, instruments,

equipment, and outside-of-school educational opportunities, as well as their time spent on arranging lessons, searching out programs, driving, and monitoring practices. Some talent domains, particularly those typically not dealt with in schools, (e.g., ice skating, gymnastics, music) require a great deal of disposable parental resources of both types.

Parents espouse values conducive to talent development (Olszewski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 1987). These may include the importance of finding and developing one's abilities, achievement at the highest levels possible, independent thought and individual expression, active-recreational pursuits, and cultural and intellectual pursuits (Olszewski et al.). Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) asserted that families have systems of cognitive coding and patterns of explanations for events or circumstances that affect and determine children's values and attitudes (e.g., "get an education and find a fulfilling career to avoid poverty" versus "get a stable job and save your money").

Parents enact their values (Olszewski et al., 1987). They can demonstrate a love of work and learning. They model independent learning outside of structured or traditional activities and settings. They also model personality dispositions that are essential to talent development such as risk taking and coping with setbacks and failures. They demonstrate that success requires a great deal of hard work and sustained effort over long periods of time.

Another very important role for parents is helping their talented children build social networks that can give them emotional support for their abilities and talent development activities (Subotnik & Olszewski-Kubilius, 1997). Social networks consist of the people within a child's life and their interconnections. Size, memberships, and degree of interconnectedness among members affects the extent to which social networks are psychologically and physically supportive of an individual. The social world of the child begins with the family; but, over time, as higher levels of talent development are achieved, it expands to include teachers, coaches, mentors, and a wider scope of peers. Participation in special activities, such as competitions or after-school and summer programs, can augment and populate social networks with peers who provide specific emotional support for achievement in the talent domain. Friends and companions who are also involved in the talent field can be essential to sustaining commitment during critical times (Subotnik & Olszewski-Kubilius).

Research studies of creative eminent adults yield retrospective accounts of family environments characterized by stress, trauma, conflict, and dysfunction. Research on high-IQ individuals--most of whom do not end up being eminent, but are highly productive, competent, well-adjusted individuals--find families that are intact and happy, with normal and moderate levels of stress (Olszewski-Kubilius, 1997). What can we glean from these different profiles of families of gifted individuals? Can we reconcile the pictures of tumultuous families with relatively peaceful, connected families into an understanding of the family's role in talent development? The answer lies in the realization that the effect of the family is complex and multifaceted. Different mixtures of family variables may, in fact, yield different outcomes for children that are more or less supportive of creativity, scholastic achievement, talent development, and general mental health.

### **Conclusion**

Studies suggest that an important family-environment factor is the degree to which the family creates an atmosphere where children are free to develop a unique identity and have their own individual thoughts and express them freely. Individuals who come from such families are more likely to be very creative, as well as highly competent, in their work. Such families foster creativity and intellectual risk taking. The circumstances within homes and families that create environments conducive to the development of independent identities and thought are many and varied. They include anything that results in a reduction in parent-child identification, an "emotional space" between parent and child, lower levels of parental monitoring of children, and less conventional socialization of children by parents. Circumstances cited in the literature that create this "space" include both negative ones, such as imbalanced parental or difficult family relationships, as well as more benign, typical circumstances such as parents who are less involved with children because they have interests or careers (Ochse, 1993; Olszewski-Kubilius, 1997). These conditions are thought to result in children being more independent, autonomous, and less sex-stereotyped. They also cause children to retreat from interpersonal relationships at home (if very difficult circumstances exist) or contribute to the development of a preference for time alone (if more benign circumstances exist), resulting in more time and opportunity

for both practice and skill acquisition in the talent area and a rich internal fantasy life (Ochse, 1993; Simonton, 1992).

On the other hand, in families where members are emotionally close and parents are very involved in their children's lives, strong psychological identifications occur between parents and children, and children internalize parental values and expectations regarding achievement. Through this process, children can also acquire very strong motivations to achieve, both to please significant others and to enact their own acquired values.

A second family-environment factor that appears to play an important role in creating the motivation for high levels of achievement is stress or challenge. Stress is a broad concept that is difficult to define. It may be a highly individualized experience--what is very stressful or challenging for one person may be only moderately so for another. Researchers have speculated on the role of stress in engendering powerful motivations to succeed, specifically on how individuals may strive to achieve in order to acquire admiration and affection from others and compensate for unmet or unfulfilled psychological needs, to ameliorate rejection, or to prove that they are worthwhile (Ochse, 1993). "A stressful setting can become the catalyst for potentially talented individuals to meet their deficiency needs for attention, love, and approval through D (deficiency)-creative efforts providing self-expression and rewards" (Rhodes, 1997, p. 260).

Therefore, parenting styles that help a child to find his or her own identity, rather than prescribe it, allow for open expression of ideas and independent thought; reduce parent-child identification, but not necessarily affiliation or affection; and provide support in the presence of challenges, which aids in the development of talent and creativity and good mental health. Parents need to establish and maintain bonds with children, but also allow them autonomy, independence, and psychological and emotional space. They can be very involved in their child's achievement, directly and actively supporting it, but not overly invested in it emotionally or psychologically.

Parents also help children to succeed by allowing them to experience and cope with challenges and difficulties in their lives. Parents should not shield or try to protect children from risks or hard work. Parents also need to allow children to experience the tensions and stress that arise from challenging ideas and high expectations to live up to one's potential. They can support the development of

coping strategies for stress, such as a rich internal fantasy life, use of time alone to decompress and rejuvenate, expression of emotions via creative work, active use of leisure time, and other ways that help children gain control over their circumstances.

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