

# Parent Competence in Families with Gifted Children

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*This study examined parent influence as perceived by gifted junior high school students and their parents. Ninety-three adolescents reported on 171 parents; self-reports were provided by 172 parents. Both generations were administered parallel versions of the Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory which identifies (a) aspects of parenthood that are satisfying, (b) ways in which parents successfully perform their role, (c) the scope of teaching expected of parents, (d) problems with the obligations of parenting, (e) child behaviors which are upsetting to parents, and (f) information parents need to function more effectively. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine the effects of generation of respondent, gender of parent, and child school performance on parent effectiveness. Analyses revealed significant main effects for all three independent variables. Interaction effects emerged for school performance and parent gender. Implications are considered for planning parent education programs.*

Many parents believe their role is more stressful during a child's junior high school years than at any other time (Carnegie, 1990; Sebald, 1993). The anxiety comes from knowing that important physical, emotional, and social changes occur in early adolescence. Parents also worry that teenagers might experiment with drugs, sexual activity, and crime. It is generally acknowledged that growing up calls for consulting with a broader range of advisors and making more decisions. But when teenagers see immature peers as their main source of advice, the risk of poor judgment is bound to rise (Cobb, 1992).

Junior high students experience stressful changes in the classroom too: They have more teachers to satisfy, their lessons require

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higher level thinking, homework assignments increase, and competition is more intense. These pressures combine to create friction and sometimes alienation between parents and adolescents (Small & Eastman, 1991). A generation ago parents commonly expected grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even neighbors to help raise the children, but this support system is no longer widely available. Instead, high rates of mobility, maternal employment, marital separation, and divorce have left many parents on their own and wondering how to succeed (Hewlett, 1991; Louv, 1990; Smolek, 1993; Stacey, 1990).

Parent education is often recommended as an effective way to improve family functioning. But standard parent programs focus on the needs of average children and thus cannot satisfy mothers and fathers of the gifted who face uncommon problems. For example, gifted students more often than their peers feel deprived of academic challenge in the classroom and quit school in greater numbers than the proportion they represent in the general population (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; Mansnerus, 1992; Whitmore, 1990). They are misunderstood at home too when relatives rely on age or grade-level norms to establish expectations for them (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991).

Parents wish they were better prepared to respond when their gifted child complains about boredom at school or seeks suggestions for handling disagreements with teachers or classmates. Gifted children also need parents to be their advocates so they have adequate opportunities to learn at a reasonable pace. This objective requires parents to carefully monitor lessons and use diplomacy in negotiating with teachers and administrators (Feldhusen & Kroll, 1985; Little & Scott, 1990; Strom, Johnson, Strom, & Strom, 1992). Parents want a congenial relationship with educators and wish to avoid subjecting their children to unreasonable pressure. The struggle to attain these worthy goals deserves educational support.

In this study the strengths and needs of parents of gifted junior high students were assessed. Parent and child impressions were used to identify aspects of parent success, detect realms of behavior in which parents needed to improve, and determine considerations for building parent curricula that meet the needs of these families.

## **Method**

### *Subjects*

Ninety-three junior high school students (12–14 years of age) and their parents in a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona, represented the gifted

population. The 49 boys and 44 girls who evaluated 171 of their parents in this study had been identified as gifted by school district criteria requiring them to score at least 130 on the Otis-Lennon or the WISC-R measures of intelligence. Alternately, students could qualify for the gifted program by performing at the 96th percentile in reading or mathematics concepts on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. A majority (92%) of the students were Anglos and slightly less than half (45%) came from families having only one or two children. In addition to being categorized as gifted, the academic achievement of each student was requested. Most of them (68%) had records of outstanding school performance, 27% were above average, and 3% were average or below average. Academic achievement information was not provided by one parent and three adolescents (2%).

Of the 172 parents who completed a self-evaluation, 48 percent were fathers and 52 percent were mothers. Most of the men and women were Anglos, 92%, and had completed more than a high school education (71%). Data from the families revealed that 94 percent were from two-parent households and 83 percent of them had annual incomes of \$30,000 or more. Almost all of the fathers, 93%, and 34 percent of the mothers reported full-time employment.

### *Assessment*

Perceived parent effectiveness was evaluated by using the Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory (Strom, 1985, 1987; Strom & Coolege, 1984). This two-generational instrument was sent to families in the school district who were identified as having a gifted child. A stamped and separate return envelope was included for each generation. The school principal's letter explained that the results from this study would be used to formulate a curriculum specifically for parents of gifted adolescents. Parents were informed they would also benefit immediately from a personal profile mailed to them that would interpret their responses in comparison with group responses expressed by the other participating families. Answers provided by individual adolescents were treated as confidential and excluded from the parent profiles. A follow-up contact with nonrespondents was made one week, three weeks, and seven weeks after the potential subjects were invited to submit inventories. An overall family response rate of 74% was attained.

The purpose of the Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory, referred to as PSNI, is to help mothers and fathers of 10-18 year-olds recognize their personal strengths and identify realms of behavior in which further growth is needed. Parallel forms of the inventory are

administered to parents and children. A readability level of grade 4.5 is required to self-administer the child version (Raygor, 1989). The reason for using two-generational evaluation is that parents can make better decisions regarding self-improvement when the views of children are known and taken into account. Certainly mothers and fathers are better qualified than anyone else to identify the demands that are placed on them. However, when parents serve as the only source of perception about their competence, some assets and deficiencies are likely to be overlooked. A broader view of family interaction offers a more complete picture of parent success.

The PSNI was drawn from an analysis of open-ended responses provided by 3,000 parents, teachers, and children (Strom, 1985; Strom & Cooledge, 1984). In the present study, a Likert-type format was used to gain responses for the 60 items which are divided equally into six subscales focusing on separate dimensions of parent development. Respectively, these subscales identify aspects of parenthood that are satisfying, ways parents successfully perform their role, the scope of teaching that is expected of parents, problems related to the obligations of helping children grow up, behaviors of children that upset parents, and information which parents need to function more effectively. Three subscales (satisfaction, success, and teaching) are combined to form an overall strength index known as parent potentials. The remainder subscales (difficulty, frustration, and information needs) represent an overall need index called parent concerns. Together the six subscales and two overall indexes provide helpful insights for planning group and individual parent curricula.

Parent and child versions of the inventory are scored in the same manner by assigning a numerical value of 4, 3, 2, or 1 to each of the 60 responses. Responses most indicative of parent strengths are valued 4, with diminishing values assigned to other answers on the basis of their distance from the best response. Scoring may begin from the left or the right as shown by this example from the child version:

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>Item 1.</i>	My parent likes to discuss feelings and ideas with me.	4	3	2	1
<i>Item 33.</i>	It's difficult for my parent to find time to be with me.	1	2	3	4

The best indicator of parent strength for Item 1 is ALWAYS while a response of NEVER reflects parent strength for item 33. Both responses would be valued 4. Persons who circled other answers

would receive the lower values as shown. After values have been assigned to responses, subtotals are determined for each subscale and index score.

A mean score of 2.5 for any of the six subscales is the point of differentiation between favorable and unfavorable responses. Mean scores from 2.5 to 3.0 are considered slightly favorable and those exceeding 3.0 are highly favorable indicators of parent strength in the designated area. Subscale scores below 2.5 are judged unfavorable and reveal areas of need for further growth by the parents.

Reliability and validity reviews for the inventory have involved 900 families representing diverse ethnic backgrounds; from rural and urban settings; and children with a broad range of abilities including normal achievement, mentally retarded, and the deaf (Strom & McCalla, 1988; Strom, Collinsworth, Strom, & Griswold, 1990; Strom, Jones, & Daniels, 1988). Reliability checks for the potentials and concerns indexes in previous studies have been high, ranging from .88 to .96. Similarly, alpha coefficients in this study were high for potentials, .95, and for concerns, .94.

### *Analyses*

Descriptive data analyses yielded mean scores for each of the PSNI subscales. Multivariate analysis of variance tests were performed to determine how perceived parent effectiveness is influenced by generation of respondent, gender of parent, and school performance of the child. Dependent variables were the six scales of the PSNI.

In the full model, MANOVA main effects and first-order interaction effects were tested. Additional MANOVA procedures were executed using a single independent variable model to detect differences between levels of the independent variables. Univariate *F*-tests were utilized to locate the subscales contributing to the variation in scores. Contrasts between parent and child based on parent gender were examined by *t*-tests.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Data Analyses*

Table 1 presents mean scores for subscales as well as potentials and concerns indexes for parent and children groups based on academic achievement. Both of the generations assigned parents favorable scores for most items. Mothers and fathers identified teaching as their

Table 1  
 Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 171 Parents and 90 Gifted Children by School Performance

Variable	Parents						Child											
	Outstanding <sup>a</sup>			Above Average <sup>b</sup>			Average <sup>c</sup>			Outstanding <sup>d</sup>			Above Average <sup>e</sup>			Average <sup>f</sup>		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
SAT	3.29	.31		3.15	.38		2.83	.37		3.25	.39		2.99	.48		2.54	.34	
SUC	3.14	.35		3.06	.38		2.78	.50		3.37	.51		3.16	.50		2.74	.63	
TCH	3.40	.39		3.37	.42		3.32	.39		3.41	.51		3.32	.51		3.00	.59	
POT	3.27	.30		3.19	.33		2.98	.30		3.34	.42		3.16	.47		2.76	.50	
DIF	3.21	.40		3.06	.37		2.72	.46		3.32	.46		3.13	.52		2.88	.63	
FRU	3.17	.39		2.92	.42		2.47	.30		3.26	.43		3.03	.56		2.62	.56	
INF	2.91	.51		2.72	.51		2.20	.66		3.29	.53		3.13	.60		3.04	.57	
CON	3.10	.37		2.90	.38		2.46	.46		3.29	.43		3.10	.50		2.85	.67	

<sup>a</sup>  $\eta^2 = .118$ . <sup>b</sup>  $\eta^2 = .47$ . <sup>c</sup>  $\eta^2 = .6$ . <sup>d</sup>  $\eta^2 = .63$ . <sup>e</sup>  $\eta^2 = .24$ . <sup>f</sup>  $\eta^2 = .3$ .

most prominent strength regardless of child academic achievement level. They perceived information needs as their greatest limitation, with parents of average-achieving children scoring themselves in the unfavorable range. Sons and daughters confirmed that parents did a good job of teaching but did not observe as high a level of satisfaction as parents reported. On the other hand, adolescents credited parents with demonstrating significantly greater success, coping more effectively with difficulties and frustrations, and being better informed about sons and daughters than was expressed by parents. Parents with children in the lowest academic level were assigned less favorable scores by themselves and their children on all six subscales. Conversely, parents of highest achieving children were scored more favorably on all six subscales.

### *Statistical Data Analysis*

The full model MANOVA was performed on responses of parents and children combined. Analyses revealed significant main effects for generation of respondent,  $F(6, 323) = 7.80, p < .001$ ; parent gender,  $F(6, 323) = 3.49, p < .01$ ; and child school performance,  $F(12, 648) = 5.05, p < .001$ . A significant interaction effect emerged for parent gender and child school performance,  $F(12, 648) = 2.47, p < .01$ .

*Generation of Respondent.* Univariate  $F$ -tests from the full model located the subscales which contributed to significant variation. Parents rated themselves higher on satisfaction with their role than children scored them,  $F(1, 382) = 5.85, p < .05$ . On the information needs subscale, parents viewed themselves less favorably than children did,  $F(1, 382) = 17.88, p < .001$ . Using a multivariate calculation with a single independent variable, similar results were determined for the satisfaction and information needs subscales. This method of analysis also revealed differences on other subscales. Children evaluated parents more positively for success,  $F(1, 341) = 13.35, p < .001$  and coping with frustration,  $F(1, 341) = 3.82, p < .05$ , than parents rated themselves.  $T$ -tests were used to assess generational differences on separate items.

*Parent Gender.* Differences according to gender of parent were located by univariate  $F$ -tests on the satisfaction and success subscales,  $p < .05$ . Mothers scored themselves higher than the fathers rated themselves. Adolescents also assigned higher ratings to mothers on these two subscales. The single variable MANOVA technique found

mothers were rated higher than fathers on teaching,  $F(1, 341) = 5.24$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Using *t*-test calculations, fathers' self-evaluations were compared to evaluations reported by their children, and mothers' self-evaluations were contrasted with scores assigned them by the teenagers.

*Fathers.* When the self-perceptions of fathers were compared to their children's perception of parent effectiveness, significant differences emerged for success,  $p < .01$ ; difficulty,  $p < .05$ ; frustration,  $p < .05$ ; and information needs,  $p < .001$ . Teenagers rated fathers more favorably on these subscales than the fathers rated themselves. Analyses of item differences between fathers and children showed 26 of 60 items were significantly different.

*Mothers.* The mothers saw themselves significantly different from the way they were rated by their children on success,  $p < .05$  and information needs,  $p < .001$ . Children evaluated mothers more favorably than mothers did on these subscales. Mothers reported themselves more satisfied with their role than was observed by children,  $p < .05$ . Significant differences between mothers and children were found for 22 of 60 items.

*Child School Performance.* Univariate *F*-tests revealed contrasts by school performance on five of the six subscales,  $p < .01$ . Parents assigned themselves higher ratings and received higher scores from children when the child's school performance was reported to be outstanding. According to single variable MANOVA calculations, the lowest scores were given parents by themselves and children for satisfaction,  $F(2, 336) = 18.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ; success,  $F(2, 336) = 8.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ; difficulty,  $F(2, 336) = 9.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ; frustration,  $F(2, 336) = 19.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and information needs,  $F(2, 336) = 6.85$ ,  $p < .001$  when the child's performance in school was average or below average.

*Interaction of Parent Gender and School Performance.* A significant interaction effect was found for parent gender and child school performance,  $F(12, 648) = 2.47$ ,  $p < .01$ . Additional analyses revealed that fathers scored in the unfavorable range, below a mean of 2.5, on five of the subscales when a child's school performance was average or below. However, fathers received their highest scores (3.70) on the teaching subscale when the child's school performance was average or below.



## Discussion

### *Parent Self-Impression*

*Satisfaction.* Parents enjoyed their role, as shown by highly favorable scores on the satisfaction subscale. They liked spending time with children, taking care of them, knowing how well they do in school, observing their self-confidence, and the way they act at this age. Parents were pleased that teenagers shared feelings with them and proud of how they accepted increased responsibility. Slightly favorable responses were given for how teenagers dealt with arguments, set goals, made decisions, and spent free time.

*Success.* Self-reports included highly favorable ratings for being able to take care of teenagers, exchange opinions with them, provide help with school work, and demonstrate a healthy lifestyle. According to parents, they are good listeners, make and keep fair rules, show how to handle money, and offer an example of how to be a responsible adult. Mothers and fathers gave themselves a slightly favorable rating for modeling conflict resolution.

*Teaching.* Parent recognition of their responsibility to teach was reflected by highly favorable scores for every item of this subscale. They believed families ought to provide education in values and morals. Their effective efforts included helping adolescents acquire a sense of right and wrong, choose personal goals, develop self-confidence, care about the feelings of other people, and use good manners. Parents also gave instruction in religion, accepting responsibility, and making decisions.

*Difficulty.* Mothers and fathers felt their behavior warranted highly favorable scores for most of these items. They expressed confidence in the way their children view drug taking, their values, ideals, and willingness to maintain communication. It was not difficult to accept the way teenagers act at this stage of development, help them get along with classmates, supervise their televising, and encourage them to pursue success at school. A slightly favorable rating was given for determining the amount of freedom to allow teenagers.

*Frustration.* Parents experienced little frustration with the prospect that their teenager might use drugs or alcohol. They felt their youngsters did not avoid important family conversations nor exhibit poor study habits. There was not much concern about the willingness of teenagers to fulfill academic obligations, their judgment in watching television, and the effort needed to establish rules for them. A

slightly favorable rating was reported for the time management practices of teenagers. In contrast, getting sons and daughters to fulfill their assigned chores was disappointing for most parents and resulted in an unfavorable rating.

*Information Needs.* Slightly favorable scores were recorded for each of the items. However, parents felt a need to improve the way they provide sex education, discuss feelings and opinions, help with career choices, and motivate efforts at school. Mothers and fathers also expressed a need to know more about the expectations of teachers, how to counter the effects of peer rejection, and current dating practices.

### *Adolescent Impressions*

Parents can improve themselves by considering the observations of adolescents. Sometimes children corroborate parent judgement, and in other cases they can enlarge perspective by disagreement. Table 2 and Table 3 show that ratings by children differed significantly from parent ratings on 29 of 60 items (48%). For these discrepant items, the adolescents rated parents higher than parents did for 22 (75%) of them. Although disparity was found within each subscale, patterns of item differences emerged within subscales. Generally parents evaluated themselves more favorably on satisfaction and teaching while their children rated them higher on success, difficulty, frustration, and information needs.

*Satisfaction.* Table 2 shows that adolescents assigned parents highly favorable scores overall. They felt parents like to go places with them, appreciate their decisions, and admire their self-confidence and willingness to set goals. Children report parents enjoy taking care of them, listening to their point of view, observing their academic achievements, and approve of how they spend free time. It is noted that for all of these items, teenagers scored their parents as significantly less satisfied than was reported by the parents.

*Success.* Table 2 reveals that adolescents saw parents as significantly more successful than parents did for taking care of them, helping with schoolwork, demonstrating money management, and showing how to behave like an adult. The adolescents agreed that parents are good at discussing their concerns, listening, maintaining fair rules, and teaching a healthy lifestyle. Parents received a slightly favorable score for resolving disagreements.

*Teaching.* Gifted adolescents confirmed the teaching strength of parents. Highly favorable scores were common. It was agreed that par-

Table 2  
 Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory Potentials Index Items  
 Which Differ Significantly for Parents and Gifted Children

Scale	Boys					Girls				
	Gifted (N = 249) <sup>1</sup>		Regular (N = 92)		Education Status	Gifted (N = 299) <sup>1</sup>		Regular (N = 118)		Education Status
	Mean	St.Dev.	Mean	St.Dev.		Mean	St.Dev.	Mean	St.Dev.	
Anxious	2.10	3.33	2.14	2.27		2.21	3.10	1.94	2.96	
Social Withdrawal	1.33	2.14	1.35	2.14		.94	1.60	1.06	1.78	
Unpopular	1.01	2.27	.72	1.54		.25	.88	.36	1.16	
Self-Destructive	.35	1.06	.27	.84		.16	.61	.20	.60	
Obsessive-Compulsive	.86	1.63	.68	1.58		NA	NA	NA	NA	
Depressed	NA	NA	NA	NA		1.09	1.08	.93	2.04	
Inattentive	5.14	7.07	4.33	6.26		2.54	4.86	2.52	4.76	
Nervous-Overactive	1.37	2.08	1.12	1.70		.71	.71	.82	1.84	
Aggressive	5.19	5.17	3.86	7.00		2.44	2.51	2.93	2.86	
Internalizing	3.66	5.40	3.71	4.03	.01	3.05	4.06	3.16	4.22	.07
Externalizing	10.53	15.25	8.30	12.19	1.75	4.67	9.41	5.57	11.33	.74
Total Problems	14.39	19.11	12.46	14.29	.87	8.13	11.67	9.25	14.31	.72

Note: Means are adjusted for covariates.

<sup>1</sup>For Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Problems: Boys Gifted N = 281 and Boys Regular N = 107; Girls Gifted N = 317 and Girls Regular N = 134.

<sup>2</sup>F-values (all non-significant) refer to main effects for education status (gifted or regular) after covarying for grade (2nd or 3rd) and minority status (minority or nonminority). Univariate F-values for clinical scales not reported because the multivariate F was not significant.

Table 3

**Parent Strengths and Needs Inventory Concerns Index Items  
Which Differ Significantly for Parents and Gifted Children**

Items by Subscale	Parents <sup>a</sup>		Children <sup>b</sup>		p <
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Parent Difficulty</i>					
It is difficult for me to make and keep fair rules for my teenager.	2.84	.62	3.04	.78	.01
It is difficult for me to deal with fears that my teenager might use drugs or alcohol.	3.34	.69	3.58	.73	.01
It is difficult for me to help my teenager do the best s/he can in school.	3.35	.64	3.63	.56	.01
It is difficult for me to help my teenager make decisions and accept responsibility.	3.26	.59	3.43	.58	.01
<i>Parent Frustration</i>					
I am frustrated trying to make and keep fair rules for my teenager.	3.00	.68	3.22	.73	.01
I am frustrated trying to help when my teenager has problems with other kids.	3.11	.63	3.28	.74	.05
I am frustrated by the way my teenager manages time.	2.81	.64	3.05	.74	.01
I am frustrated by my teenager's television habits.	3.02	.68	3.24	.74	.01
<i>Parent Information Needs</i>					
I need to know more about discussing feelings and opinions with my teenager.	2.73	.76	3.05	.87	.01
I need to know more about providing sex education at home.	3.01	.73	3.41	.77	.01
I need to know more about teenage use of drugs and alcohol.	2.90	.73	3.45	.74	.01
I need to know more about helping my teenager handle problems with other kids.	2.87	.69	3.18	.80	.01
I need to know more about helping my teenager do the best s/he can in school.	2.97	.84	3.47	.77	.01
I need to know more about helping my teenager choose a career.	2.60	.88	3.20	.82	.01
I need to know more about what my teenager's teachers expect.	2.62	.79	3.08	.88	.01
I need to know more about helping my teenager make decisions and accept responsibility.	2.73	.78	3.29	.71	.01
I need to know more about how television can be used wisely.	2.94	.81	3.29	.85	.01

<sup>a</sup> N = 172 PSNI Parent responses. <sup>b</sup> N = 171 PSNI Child responses.

ents help to make decisions, learn about religion, acquire manners, manage finances, develop self-confidence, and deal with arguments. Table 2 shows teenagers gave parents significantly lower ratings than parents did for lessons on caring about other people's feelings, choosing personal goals and values, and instilling a sense of right and wrong.

*Difficulty.* Table 3 reveals that students scored parents higher than parents did for overcoming difficulties. Highly favorable scores were obtained for approving the values of sons and daughters, discussing their opinions, helping with peer conflicts, accepting mood swings, and monitoring the use of television. Sons and daughters viewed parents as significantly more capable of managing their worries about drug and alcohol use, encouraging wise decisions, and motivating good performance in school. A slightly favorable score was given for the amount of freedom that parents allow adolescents.

*Frustration.* Adolescents consider parents more able to cope with frustration than parents do. Table 3 shows that significantly higher ratings were given for implementing fair rules, helping to get along with peers, and encouraging time management practices. Parents got highly favorable scores for tolerating the views of children, supporting their study habits, and trusting them to avoid drugs and alcohol. Both generations reported unfavorable scores for this item: "I am frustrated when my teenager puts off doing household chores." Parents seemed unable to ensure completion of household chores delegated to children.

*Information Needs.* Parents should be well informed about experiences of sons and daughters. According to Table 3, adolescents disagreed with parents on most items in this subscale. They saw parents as significantly better informed than parents estimated themselves to be for motivating academic achievement, giving sex education, assisting with career choice, and understanding teacher expectations. Adolescents felt parents do a better job than they supposed in conducting family discussions, examining moral issues, suggesting ways to overcome problems with classmates, and guiding decisions.

## Conclusion

Parents of the gifted junior high school students in this study were seen as successful by their adolescent sons, daughters, and them-

selves. A survey of parent competence revealed favorable impressions about many aspects of their behavior.

The overall favorable scores for this sample are similar to those reported for other parent populations including those with less education, lower incomes, more single care givers, and persons raising children with handicaps (Strom & McCalla, 1988; Strom et al., 1990; Strom et al., 1988). These consistent findings suggest that there are a greater number of successful parents than the public has been led to believe and that they deserve to be more frequently recognized. Persons and organizations who portray dysfunctional families as the norm in our society should be challenged to document their perspective.

A more balanced view regarding family success emerges when a two-generational assessment is used to evaluate parenting. Children have greater experience than anyone else in scrutinizing parent behavior. Their scope of observation includes uncontrived behavior and emotional events that researchers working in time-sampled conditions would fail to see. Accordingly, daughters and sons should be consulted to determine some of the things parents do well, detect unreasonable attitudes and behaviors of parents, and identify information mothers and fathers need to support adolescent development.

Parents need feedback about the result of their efforts. The gifted adolescents confirmed the parental impression that teaching is their main strength. They believe parents deserve more credit than parents feel they do for overall success, managing difficulties, coping with frustrations, and meeting information needs. When gifted children and their parents differed, the children assigned a more favorable view in over 70% of the cases.

It is helpful to be aware of the misconceptions held by sons and daughters. In this study, parents experienced significantly greater satisfaction than was perceived by their children. This disparity may relate to the ways in which parents describe their role to children. The parenting experiences they tell about usually focus on obligations, difficulties, expenses, worries, and personal sacrifices. These features of the role ought to be balanced by some expression of the pleasure, pride, wonder, and contentment that also comes with helping children grow up. Unless boys and girls get to see a long-term consistent pattern of role enjoyment by their parents, they are more likely to conclude that raising children is frustrating and burdensome.

Parents of the gifted in this investigation believe lack of information is their greatest limitation. In contrast, teenagers rated parents as being better informed on nine of ten items. When children rec-

ognize certain strengths that parents overlook, feedback supports parent confidence. However, both generations agreed that parents experience some failure. One example involved the ineffectiveness of parents in making sure teenagers did the household chores assigned to them. It is common to overlook this problem by rationalizing that an orderly home is less important today than in the past, busy schedules prevent parents from doing their own domestic tasks, and hassling children about chores is not worth the risk of undermining a good relationship. In turn, parents often decide it is easier and less time consuming to take over children's chores themselves. This pattern of behavior may contribute to a growing national problem increasingly expressed by middle-age women who contend they have too much responsibility for child care, elder care, and maintaining the home. It seems boys and girls who avoid obligations toward family members are being poorly prepared for the interdependent relationships that will be expected of them as adults.

A curriculum for parents of the gifted should make known the parent strengths identified by both generations, limitations agreed upon by the parents and adolescents, items that reflect adolescent misperceptions about parent feelings, discrepant views on ways for parents to improve, parent gender distinctions, and recommendations for building a better home-school relationship. In addition, parent concerns regarding junior high curriculum, pace of learning, and access to instructional support should serve as topics for continued dialogue with school personnel. This broad strategy acknowledges the competence of parents, encourages them to continue learning, and challenges schools to take a supportive role in family development.

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