Parenting gifted children is different from parenting “regular” children in a variety of aspects. Many parents of gifted children feel they need more information about the unique characteristics and the special needs of gifted children, and they feel they need to interact with other parents of gifted children where they can share their problems and experiences with their gifted children.

This research study tried to determine if participating in a parents’ support group for parents of gifted children had an influence on:

1. Knowledge about the unique characteristics and special needs of the gifted children.
2. Relationships between the participating parents and their gifted children.
3. Parents’ confidence toward parenting the gifted.

A survey was developed to probe the three research questions. The first three parts of the survey were designed to answer the three research questions. Two open-
ended questions that asked for elaboration about the experiences the parents had in the support groups were given only to the experimental group. The last part of the survey consisted of mostly demographic questions. Scores for the experimental group and the control group were calculated using t-tests to look for significant differences between the two groups. No significant difference was found for any of the three research questions. Reasons that might have affected the outcomes are discussed in the study. From the answers to the open-ended questions one can speculate that the support groups did help the parents in the areas that were examined in this research.
THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATING IN SUPPORT GROUPS
FOCUSING ON PARENTING GIFTED CHILDREN

A dissertation submitted to the
Kent State University College and Graduate School
of Education, Health, and Human Services
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Dalia M. Adler

December 2006
A dissertation written by

Dalia M. Adler

B.A., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 1978
M.Ed., Kent State University, 1997
Ph.D., Kent State University, 2006

Approved by

_______________________________, Director, Doctoral
James R. Delisle Dissertation Committee

_______________________________, Member, Doctoral
J. David Keller Dissertation Committee

_______________________________, Member, Doctoral
Lyle Barton Dissertation Committee

Accepted by

_______________________________, Chairperson, Department of
Awilda Hamilton Educational Foundation and
Special Services

_______________________________, Dean, College and Graduate
David A. England School of Education, Health
and Human Services
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my husband Michael, who loved, encouraged, and supported me all these years I was working toward my Ph.D. Not only was Michael supportive personally, but professionally as well, as one of his passions is gifted children and their education.

I would like to thank my three beloved gifted sons Ofer, Eyal, and Yuval who gave me the inspiration to research the gifted. They were very patient with a very busy mom, and supported me even when I missed their high school graduations and other important events in their lives because I needed to be in the U.S. during my sabbatical year (and a few summers) to work on my dissertation.

I am grateful to my loving parents Neomy and Peretz Shaked who helped me in so many ways and made it possible for me to come to the U.S. to study.

I would like to thank my sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Nava and Gideon Goren, without whose financial
help I would not have been able to start studying for my Ph.D.

Many thanks to the Barniv family who opened their hearts and home to me and let me live with them in the long summers I have been in the U.S. working on my dissertation.

I am deeply grateful to my advisor and dissertation director, Dr. Jim Delisle, who believed in me and supported me along this long journey, and who always listened and was willing to help. I truly appreciate his hard work going over all my drafts even when he was on vacations or working in other parts of the U.S.

To Dr. Dave Keller, who was a very considerate boss while I was his graduate assistant, and who was very supportive as a dissertation committee member, I give my genuine thanks.

To Dr. Lyle Barton, who was willing to step in and be a committee member toward the final stages of my dissertation.

To Dr. Herold Johnson, who was a committee member before he moved to another university, I offer thanks for his input. It improved my dissertation.
Also to all the gifted program coordinators and group facilitators who went over my surveys and helped me reach the content validity for them, and those who gave out my surveys and made sure the completed surveys got back to me so I could do this research study, I give my appreciation.

Lastly, special thanks to all the parents who took the time to answer the surveys and enabled me to write this dissertation.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPERTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SENG Model for Parents’ Support Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Research</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definitions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Gifted Children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Support Group</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for Findings and Implications</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
II. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................17

Support Groups .......................................................17

What Is a Support Group? ..............................17

Support Groups for Parents of Children With
Exceptionalities..............................................18

Support Groups for Parents of Gifted Children ...25

Parenting Gifted Children .............................25

Introduction ....................................................25

Problems Associated With Asynchronous Development
and Discipline..............................................29

Problems Associated With Peers and Siblings ....32

Problems Associated With School and Talent
Development..................................................34

Summary ........................................................41

Characteristics and Traits of Gifted Children ....43

Verbal Precocity ...............................................43

Learning and Performance ..............................45

Affective Characteristics .................................47

Fears and Worries ...........................................47

Sensitivity and Perfectionism ............................48

Summary ........................................................51
Definition of Giftedness and Identification of Gifted Children ..........................51
Identification for Special Programs ..........56

III. METHODOLOGY .....................................................58
Rationale .................................................................58
Research Design and the Research Questions ....59
Sample Selection .....................................................62
The Survey and the Analysis of the Results .......64
The Development of the Survey .......................66
Validity of the Survey ..............................................69
Summary .................................................................69

IV. RESULTS ...............................................................71
Comparisons Between the Groups .....................74
The Analysis of the Results .................................79
Analysis of the First Research Question ............80
Analysis of the Second Research Question ..........84
Analysis of the Third Research Question ............87
Summary .................................................................90

V. DISCUSSION ..........................................................93
Analysis of the First Three Parts of the Surveys ..95
Personal Observations of the Research Findings ...101
Analysis of the Answers to the Two Open-Ended Questions Given to Parents in the Experimental Group .......................................................... 103
Research Limitations ......................................................... 109
Future Research ................................................................. 111
Conclusion ............................................................................. 113
APPENDICES ........................................................................... 114
APPENDIX A. COVER LETTER AND SURVEY FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP MEMBERS .............................................. 115
APPENDIX B. COVER LETTER AND SURVEY FOR CONTROL GROUP MEMBERS ......................................................... 131
REFERENCES ........................................................................... 146
**LIST OF TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Distribution of the Participants by States</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of Participants Who Answered the Open-Ended Questions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of Families With One Gifted Child or More</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Group Statistics for Families’ Income Level</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Independent Samples Test for Families’ Income Level</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Group Statistics for Participants’ Educational Level</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Independent Samples Test for Participants’ Educational Level</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Group Statistics for the First Research Question</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Independent Samples Test for the First Research Question</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Questions That the Experimental Group Scored Higher in Part I</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Preface

Parenting gifted children has some unique challenges that are different from parenting “regular” children (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Silverman, 1993, 1997; Webb & DeVries, 1998). One of these special needs of parents of gifted children is recognizing and dealing with a dissonance between child rearing practices recommended for average children and the reality with their gifted children, who sometimes experience asynchronous development in which their intellectual skills are more advanced than their social and motor skills (Alvino, 1985; Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990; Ross, 1964; Silverman, 1993; Tannenbaum, 1992; Wright, 1990). Special educational needs include finding appropriate school placement or grade placement, maintaining relations with school personnel, coping with underachievement and lack of motivation, and finding the “golden path” between encouraging and pushing too hard. Parents need to cope with their children’s social and emotional needs, such as helping
their child improve peer relations, dealing with the emotional intensity of the gifted children, their heightened sensitivity, and in some gifted children, depression and/or perfectionism. Some families of gifted children experience increased family tension as a result of the special needs and behaviors of the gifted children (Silverman, 1993). Some parents feel inadequately prepared for parenting the gifted. For some parents the financial burden that is connected to their wish to enable their child to develop to his full potential is excessive (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Delisle, 2002a; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Parents usually share their joys and concerns about raising their children with other parents, neighbors, and family members. However, parents of gifted children often cannot share and discuss their children’s experiences with others because often others do not understand their concerns (it is hard for them to relate to the stories of these parents). Sometimes people do not believe what the parents of gifted children are telling about their experiences with their children, and think that these parents are making up the stories (Delisle, 2002a; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Thus, parents of gifted children often feel isolated and left
alone to deal with rearing their children. Some of them are concerned that they are not qualified to rear gifted children (Bridges, 1973; Congdon, 1979), whereas others hope that they can be good parents and develop the gifts their child possess. Sometimes, if their child shows advanced abilities compared to his peers (e.g., reading very early), other parents think that the parents of the gifted child are pushing the child too much, even if they are not (Delisle, 2002a).

Parents of gifted children often feel alone and unable to talk with family and friends about their parenting experiences and their children’s development (Delisle, 2002a; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Parents’ groups can provide a place for parents of gifted children to share parenting experiences (Koopmans-Dayton & Feldhusen, 1987; Silverman, 1992; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

The SENG Model for Parents’ Support Groups

Most parents’ support groups can provide both practical information and emotional support. When parents of older children share their experiences, other parents are able to foresee possible difficulties and plan strategies to avoid them. Parents’ groups can alleviate a great deal of distress
that stems from raising gifted children (Bridges, 1973; Freundlich, 1987; Olivier, Kokot, Verrynne, & Jansen, 1995).

In 1980 Dallas Egbert, who was a 17-year-old gifted adolescent, committed suicide. His parents looked for a program designed to meet the emotional needs of gifted children and their families but could not find such a program. They contacted Dr. Jim Webb who was a professor at the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Since Dr. Webb could not find such groups in existence, it was apparent that such a program was needed. SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted) was established and a model of parents’ support groups was created in 1981 (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). The mission of SENG as written in their web site is:

SENG seeks to inform gifted individuals, their families, and the professionals who work with them about the unique social and emotional needs of gifted persons. We support programs that foster in gifted individuals the mental health and social competence necessary for them to be free to choose ways to develop and express their abilities and talents fully.

(http://www.sengifted.org)
The SENG model of guided parent discussion groups tries to give the support parents of gifted children need; it is a place where they can find other parents who have similar kinds of problems, pleasures, and experiences. They can share solutions that work with some children, and they can discuss ways of rearing gifted children. Facilitators of support groups also give parents information about the characteristics and traits of gifted children.

Some of the objectives of the SENG model are: To establish an environment where parents of gifted children can interact with other parents and with the group leaders to receive support and professional advice; to increase the awareness of parents of the social emotional needs of gifted children and their families; to develop parenting skills in nurturing emotional development of the gifted children; and to provide parents with material and knowledge that will promote understanding of characteristics and traits of gifted children and programs and opportunities for them (Webb & DeVries, 1998).

According to SENG Model of parents’ support groups, the parents attend between 8 to 10 sessions. They meet once a week for an hour and a half. The groups have one facilitator
or two co-facilitators who have knowledge about parenting and about educating gifted/talented children. In each meeting they discuss a topic related to giftedness. The parents are asked to read the book: *Guiding the Gifted Child* (Webb et al., 1982). Each week they are supposed to read a chapter or two from the book on the subjects that are going to be discussed in the next group meeting. The topics that are discussed include:

- gifted identification (tests and characteristics);
- Motivation;
- Discipline;
- stress-management;
- communication of feelings;
- peer relationships;
- sibling relationships;
- tradition breaking;
- depression;
- parenting gifted children.

The SENG support groups are not therapy groups. This model is structured around bringing together interested parents of talented children in a small group. The atmosphere is non-judgmental and nurturing. The parents
themselves are often rich resources of information (Webb & DeVries, 1998). As Webb et al. (1982) said about parents’ support groups:

We provide some basic written material, noting key points relevant to the topic, encourage parents to share their common concerns, and offer professional comment, advice, discussion, and guidance. Through this approach, parents can share ideas and experiences, and learn from each other how to appreciate and encourage each child. They anticipate problems and find solutions, and, we hope, prevent difficulties from occurring. (pp. ii-iii)

Purpose of the Research

The SENG Model of support groups for parents of gifted children was created in 1981. According to the literature review that has been done for this research study (outlined in chapter 2) and an interview with Dr. Jim Webb, who was one of the team members who created this model, no research has been done yet on the effects of support groups for parents of gifted children. Research is needed on parenting the gifted and on improving the communication and relationships between the gifted children and their parents.
Given the availability of SENG support groups and similar groups for more than 20 years, it is surprising that no research on their effectiveness has yet to be conducted. However, due to personal interviews with support group participants conducted by this researcher, and participants’ responses cited in the book from Webb and DeVries (1998), it can be anticipated that parents’ support groups have positive effects on families of gifted children. This research study tried to examine the effects of participating in parents’ support groups on: (a) the way parents understand their gifted children and their special needs; (b) the way parents feel about their overall parenting abilities with their gifted children; and (c) the effects of the group discussions on the relationships between parents and their gifted children.

The Research Questions

In this research, three research questions were examined.

1. Do parents who attended support groups, designed for parents of gifted children, know more at the conclusion of the group meetings, about the unique characteristics, traits, and special needs of their
gifted children, in comparison to parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

2. Do the quality of communication and the relationships that occur between parents and their gifted children differ between parents who attended support groups, and parents of gifted children who did not attend parents’ support groups?

3. Do parents of gifted children who attended support groups express a significantly higher level of confidence in their parenting skills, than those parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

Operational Definitions

Characteristics of Gifted Children

Characteristics and special traits of gifted children included:

· Asynchronous development where intellectual skills are more advanced than social skills, affective development, and motor skills (Alvino, 1985; Congdon, 1979; Feldman, 1991; Hollingsworth, 1990; Silverman, 1993; Tannenbaum, 1992);
• Great deal of curiosity (Congdon, 1979; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993);
• Advanced problem solving skills and quick and logical thinking processes (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Silverman, 1993; Whitmore, 1985);
• Self-criticism (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Freeman, 1985; Freundlich, 1987; Whitmore, 1985);
• Keen sense of humor (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998);
• Unwillingness to accept authoritarian instructions (Hollingworth, 1926; Meckstroth, 1990; Parker, Ross, & Deutsch, 1980);
• Empathy with others (Clark, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Freundlich, 1987; Lovecky, 1993; Roeper, 1982);
• Having concerns about global problems (Johnson, 1989; Roeper, 1977; Swart, 1993).

Attendance

Only parents who attended at least 75% of the group meetings were asked to answer the survey, so it would be
possible to distinguish between the experimental group participants and the control group participants.

**Parents’ Support Group**

These support groups met once a week, in the course of two to three months. Each meeting lasted about an hour and a half, in which specific issues related to gifted children and their upbringing were discussed. The group had one or two facilitators who gave some information about the topic discussed. The majority of the meeting time was devoted to parents’ discussions about problems connected to the topics and ways to solve them.

**Communication**

Communication between parents and their gifted children included:

- listening to the child when he or she chooses to talk out his or her worries;
- encouraging the child to express feelings;
- discussing with the child alternative behaviors to dilemmas;
- helping the child develop goals and strategies for his or her achievement.
Relationships

Relationships between parents and their gifted children included:

- Sharing time and activities with the gifted child;
- Accepting the child’s effort without demanding perfection (Alvino, 1985; Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990; Sebring, 1983);
- Praising the child and/or his or her performance;
- Helping the child balance work with recreation and leisure activities; letting the child have time and space to relax and enjoy quiet “do nothing” occasions or daydream (Hollingsworth, 1990; Johnson, 1989; Sebring, 1983; Smith, 1986; Walker, 1993/94).

Method

This research was a quantitative research study. Surveys that examined the three research questions were given to a group of parents of gifted children who participated in a parents’ support group. Surveys were also given to a control group of parents of gifted children who did not participate in a parents’ support group. The surveys were given to the members of the control group to find out how the parents felt about rearing gifted children, what
they knew about the characteristics and traits of gifted children, and how they perceived the communication and relationships between themselves and their gifted children. Some general demographic information about the parents, their gifted child, and their family were also asked in the last part of the survey. The answers to the demographic questions helped in interpreting this study’s findings.

The survey that was given to the experimental group members was given at the end of the last group meeting and up to six weeks after the last group meeting. This research study examined only the short-term effects of participating in parents’ support groups. Long-term effects could be looked for in a future research study. Specifically, the study tried to examine if the group sessions caused any statistically significant changes in perceptions of the participating parents, relative to the research questions. This study tried to investigate if participating in the group helped parents understand better the unique characteristics and needs of their gifted children. The study tried to find out if one of the outcomes of the group participation was improvement in communication between parents and their gifted children and decrease in tension
between them (if it existed). Another outcome examined by this research was whether the parents who participated in the group felt more confident about their ability to rear their children.

The surveys were given to parents who participated in support groups that were structured according to the SENG Model, as described above. The control group of parents of gifted children who did not participate in a parents’ support group were given the same survey, except for two open-ended questions that were directed only for parents who participated in a parents’ support group. The groups were matched according to three criteria: parents’ educational level, families’ income, and the number of families with one gifted child and families with more than one gifted child.

Expectations for Findings and Implications

It is hoped that the findings of this dissertation will show that parents’ support groups, which are designed for parents of gifted children, helped these parents feel more confident about their ability to rear their gifted children. It is further hoped that participation in these groups gave parents information about characteristics and special needs of gifted people, helped parents understand better their
gifted children, and improved the relationships between them and their gifted children when it was needed.

Summary

In most educational systems, the emphasis is on the academic needs of children. In addition to that, though, awareness of the social and emotional needs of children with special learning needs should also take place. Likewise, opportunities for parents of children with special needs, including gifted children, to share common successes and frustrations with other parents of gifted children would be helpful. If parents felt more confident about rearing their gifted children, they might seek or even demand adequate education for them and be more able to help their gifted children fulfill their potential and have healthy social and emotional lives. A goal of this dissertation was to find out if support groups helped the parents feel that they were not alone with their problems and concerns.

The parents’ support groups may help not only the parents but also the children, in an indirect way. The group meetings can help the parents understand their children, thus enabling the parents to help the children cope with their exceptionalities. From that new understanding, a
better communication can also evolve that might decrease any
tension that existed between parents and their gifted
children.
CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Support Groups

What Is a Support Group?

Peer support groups usually have a closed membership consisting of people who share a similar life stressor (Helgeson & Gottlieb, 2000). The groups have facilitator(s) who provide information and guide the group process. The group members are engaged in mutual aid to foster improved coping and adjustment. Participants share feelings and experiences and that is expected to lead to emotional support (Helgeson & Gottlieb). Typically, people seek a support group when they find themselves in relatively novel stressful circumstances that bring with them uncertainty about feelings and ways of behaving. As a result, the participants desire contact with peers in similar circumstances. The support group compensates for deficiencies in participants’ natural networks. A support group exposes people to different ways of reacting to and coping with their stressors. Sharing experiences with peers
in the support group usually gives a sense of belonging, reduces the social and emotional isolation, and validates the participants’ needs and feelings (Helgeson & Gottlieb).

Support Groups for Parents of Children With Exceptionalities

Parents of children with exceptionalities, like visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, learning disabilities, ADHD, physical disabilities, or chronic illnesses, have special needs in coping, both physically and emotionally, with their children’s exceptionality. Support groups for parents of children with exceptionalities exist with the goal of helping these parents and their families deal with their child’s special needs. Support groups are usually aimed for parents of children with a specific exceptionality. Sharing experiences and feelings with other parents is therapeutic and a healing remedy (Atkins, 2001). Parents give each other strength as well as hope. Families, that under “normal” circumstances would not have met, form bonds of friendship, understanding, and empathy (Atkins). Parents have an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other’s experiences, to address familial concerns, and to explore their hopes, dreams, and
aspirations (Power & Dell Orto, 2004). The group can become a counterforce to the helplessness, isolation, and desperation that parents of children, with illness or disability, may experience (Power & Dell Orto).

David Luterman (1979) wrote about his experience as a facilitator of support groups designed for parents of hearing-impaired children. In his view, group experiences have some important advantages. The group as a whole is “wiser” and has more wisdom than any individual member. Members of the group will help a member in distress in a sensitive and spontaneous manner. The group serves as a self-helping experience for the parents, and it can enhance the parents’ self-esteem. At any point in time, a parent can be in a position of being a helper or the person being helped. It is easier for the parents to accept help from others, when they know that, at another time, they may be the providers of help.

The processing of information is more efficient in a group, because there are more people in a group than in an individual counseling situation. The source of the information is not solely the group leader, but the parents themselves. Some of the content emerges as a result of the
questions they ask (Luterman, 1979). Often, parents can obtain information about supports and other resources that can help their child, based on the knowledge of other group members. By using this opportunity they avoid the stress of searching themselves for information already available (Power & Dell Orto, 2004; Rosenthal, 1987).

A strong feeling that many parents of children with disabilities share is the anxiety about their ability to cope with their child’s problem, and their ability to do everything that is necessary for him or her. They feel uncertain of what to expect about their child’s development and their child’s future. Exposing parents to problems and solutions that are employed by other group members can diffuse problems before they become overwhelming (Power & Dell Orto, 2004). Many parents deal with concerns and doubts about their exceptional child’s near and far future. They worry what will happen to their child when he or she is out of the educational or occupational framework he or she is in, and what will happen in the future when the parents will no longer be able to support him or her because of illness, old age, or death (Feigin & Barak, 1991). With exceptional children, those who have brain damage, or CP with partial
paralysis, for example, parents cannot rely on their child’s ability to live an independent life. As opposed to other parents who can expect their children to get independent and lighten the physical, financial, and emotional burden, with exceptional children, these burdens are not relieved, and they worsen the parents’ concerns about the future (Feigin & Barak, 1991).

Many parents of hearing-impaired children, for example, struggle with the decision they have to make about their child’s schooling. Should the child be integrated in a regular school; should they send their child to an oral school, where he or she can learn to talk, or should the child attend a special school and communicate with sign language (Luterman, 1979).

One of the problems that parents of hearing-impaired children encounter is that it is very hard for them to share the negative feelings they have, of anger and guilt, about having a deaf child. Many people tell them they should not feel guilty or angry, but that only makes them feel guilty about having these feelings. In a support group, they can open up and get similar responses from other parents of hearing-impaired children who go through similar
experiences. Finding out that other parents have similar feelings can give a sense of relief (Luterman, 1979). Parents of exceptional children need to deal with their feelings of loss, the loss of the healthy child they hoped they would have (Feigin & Barak, 1991).

One of the stresses that parents of children with ADHD encounter is that they are blamed for their child’s misbehavior. They are subjected to the anger and frustration of people who cannot deal with the behavior of the child with the ADHD (Baker & Pisecco, 1998). Parents of children with ADHD hurt seeing their child being rejected by peers and adults in social and educational settings (Baker & Pisecco). Parents of hearing-impaired children also encounter the concern that neighborhood children do not ask their child to come and play (Atkins, 2001).

With other parents, who are in similar circumstances, parents can talk about their fear of neglecting their other children in favor of the child with illness or disability, because his or her needs are greater. Other parents can identify with them when they talk about their fear that they expect the siblings of the disabled child to behave maturely, and to accept responsibilities beyond their ages.
On the other hand, some parents might overprotect their healthy children. Other parents can understand the difficulty of not having enough time and/or energy for their spouses and their other children (Atkins, 2001, Power & Dell Orto, 2004).

In some cases, substance or alcohol abuse, by a family member, may develop or intensify, as a way to cope with the stress, changes, and losses that are associated with having a child with illness or disability. Self-defeating behaviors can be identified and addressed in a group. The group members can encourage and support these people in their efforts to cope in more positive behaviors (Power & Dell Orto, 2004).

Having a child with illness or disability may add financial pressure because of the costs that are needed in order to take care of the child. Group members can learn from others how they have handled it, and how to access resources that may help reduce the financial pressure (Power & Dell Orto, 2004).

Work performance of a parent of a child with an illness or disability may deteriorate, and as a result he or she may lose their job, or may have to compromise by taking shorter
working hours or a job they like less but which fits better their need to devote more to their child. This may add to financial pressure (Power & Dell Orto, 2004). Educational goals and career opportunities may be changed or lost because of the circumstances in which the parents find themselves. In a group, parents can hear from other parents how they have created options that meet their current needs, or address what may be possible in the future (Power & Dell Orto, 2004). Taking care of oneself, while not neglecting the individual physical and emotional wellness, can be a problem for many caregivers. Parents can talk in the group about the importance of taking care of oneself, and they can hear and sometimes observe what happens if group members neglect themselves (Power & Dell Orto, 2004).

Group members often replace the support network that other parents usually have. Family members, friends, and neighbors are many times unable or reluctant to give the support needed (Power & Dell Orto, 2004). “The group provides a safe, supportive, and comforting outlet where feelings can be expressed and problem solving can occur” (Baker & Pisecco, 1998).
Support Groups for Parents of Gifted Children

Although giftedness may seem to people as a “good” exceptionality, it does bring stress to families who find out about their child’s giftedness (Silverman, 1993). The special needs and concerns parents of gifted children have are discussed under the next topic. Parents of gifted children often feel that they cannot talk freely with family and friends about their experiences with their gifted children (Delisle, 2002a; Webb & DeVries, 1998). The SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted) Model for support groups designed for parents of gifted children was created in 1981 (see chapter 1). These parents support groups endeavor to create an environment where parents can interact with other parents of gifted children and the group facilitators to receive support and knowledge that will promote understanding of characteristics and special needs of gifted children, and ways to cope with these special traits and needs (Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Parenting Gifted Children

Introduction

Parenting any child is a challenge. Parenting gifted children adds some more challenges and can create problems
that are different from those of other parents (Clark, 1997; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; D. Coleman, 1982; Cornell, 1984; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Greenstadt, 1981; Meckstroth, 1992; Rimm, 1984, 1991; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993, 1997; Stewart, 1986; Swart, 1993; Walker, 1993/94). Having an exceptional child is not easy even if the exception is a “gift” (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; Dettmann & Colangelo, 1980; Freeman, 1985; Ross, 1964; Silverman, 1993; Walker, 1993/94). Parents must learn to cope with the dissonance between their image of a “normal” or “average” child and their own child (Ross, 1964; Sebring, 1983).

Parents of gifted children have only a few settings where they can share their experiences with their gifted child and their concerns about rearing a gifted child (Delisle, 2002a; Kearney, 1992; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Sometimes they cannot even talk freely with friends and family about these issues because people who do not have gifted children have difficulty understanding, relating to, or even believing what these parents are talking about (Delisle, 2002a; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Some feel ostracized and hesitant to share their thoughts and feelings about rearing a gifted child (Meckstroth, 1992).
Parents of gifted children do not have the standard societal models to direct their parenting techniques (Malone, 1975). Parents need information and sometimes guidance about rearing gifted and talented children (Alvino, 1985; Bridges, 1979; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; Congdon, 1979; Delisle, 1992; Dettmann & Colangelo, 1980; Fine, 1977; Koopmans-Dayton & Feldhusen, 1987; Malone, 1975; Olivier et al., 1995; Rimm, 1984; Roedell, 1986; Stewart, 1986; Webb & DeVries, 1998; Wolf & Stephens, 1984; Zorman, 1982). Very few professionals in the school system have enough information about gifted children and their education (Delisle, 1992; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Parents of gifted children often expressed the need for guidance on how to cope with their children and their special needs (Alvino, 1985; Bridges, 1973, 1979; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; Koopmans-Dayton & Feldhusen, 1987; Lubling & Zorman, 1982; Malone, 1975; Olivier et al., 1995; Rimm & Lowe, 1988; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998; Zorman, 1982). On the other hand, some of the parents hesitate to seek professional help because they feel that, compared to parents who have children with disabilities, they have nothing to complain about (Monks, Heller & Passow, 2000;
Ross, 1964). Meeting with other parents who experience themselves and their children in similar ways is very helpful. Parents find understanding and even relief, sharing common concerns and experiences with other parents of gifted children (Bridges, 1973; Clark, 1997; Koopmans-Dayton & Feldhusen, 1987; Olivier et al., 1995; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Gifted children often have special needs. Their special needs lie both in the social-emotional aspects and the intellectual aspects. Some families experience increased tension as a result of the special needs and behaviors of the gifted children (Silverman, 1993). Gifted children have characteristics and behaviors that differ from those of "regular" children (Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993; Swart, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Some of these behaviors seem strange to the parents and they wish to know if they are "normal" (Webb & DeVries, 1998). Parents need to deal with the intensity of the gifted children, their heightened sensitivity, and in some gifted children, depression and/or perfectionism. Parenting gifted children takes a lot of energy, both physical and emotional (Johnson, 1989; Lovecky, 1993; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993; Walker, 1993/94).
Parents of gifted children need to recognize and deal with a dissonance between child rearing practices recommended for an average child and the reality with their gifted child (Silverman, 1993; Swart, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Some parents of gifted children feel inadequately prepared for parenting their gifted child (Bridges, 1973; Congdon, 1979; Delisle, 2002a; Dettmann & Colangelo, 1980; Freeman, 1995; Roedell, 1986; Smith, 1986; Zorman, 1982). They sometimes feel that their child’s intellectual ability is higher than theirs and that there will come a time that they will no longer be able to assist in his or her education and nurture him or her (Bridges, 1973; Coleman, 1982; Congdon, 1979; Delisle, 2002a; Ross, 1964).

Parents of gifted children often address the following problems. The SENG parents’ support groups broadly discuss these issues.

Problems Associated With Asynchronous Development and Discipline

Many gifted children have an asynchronous development of intellectual skills and social skills, motor skills, and affective development, where intellectual skills are more advanced than the others (Alvino, 1985; Congdon, 1979;
Feldman, 1991; Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990; Roeper, 1977; Ross, 1964; Silverman, 1993; Swart, 1993; Tannenbaum, 1992; Wright, 1990). This gap in their development causes frustration both to the parents and the child (Freeman, 1985; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993). Parents need to accept that the asynchronous development is more typical than rare for gifted children (Kearney, 1992). The gifted child may not be able to deal emotionally with information he or she understands intellectually (Roeper, 1977; Swart, 1993). As Leta Hollingworth wrote: “To have the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties” (1942, p. 282). Many times parents expect their child to behave more maturely because he or she is so intelligent. Sometimes parents assign their child more responsibility, power, and freedom than he or she is capable of handling, assuming that the child’s intellectual giftedness will overcome any other weaknesses or deficiencies (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Hollingsworth, 1990; Johnson, 1989; Rimm, 1984, 1991). Gifted children often use adult-sounding words and reasoning, which can bring the parents to give them too much power, too early. This early adult status can be withdrawn
when the child enters school, or need to share power with siblings or other adults. This can lead to feelings of “depowerment,” causing adolescent rebellion, defensive dependency, or power struggles at home and at school (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Rimm, 1990, 1991; Rimm & Lowe, 1988).

Gifted children need discipline and guidance just like other children (Alvino, 1985; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Fine, 1977; Johnson, 1989). Gifted children will often not accept an arbitrary punishment and try to verbalize their way out of it. “Do it because I said so” usually does not work with gifted children even when they are relatively young. Gifted children respond better to democratic approaches than to authoritarian parenting styles (Hollingworth, 1926; Meckstroth, 1990; Parker et al., 1980). Parents should usually give a punishment that fits the “crime” and one they can explain to the child (Delisle, 1992, 2002a; Hollingworth, 1926; Silverman, 1992). Differences between parents, in the standards, limits, and expectations, can cause manipulation of one or both parents by the gifted child (Carandang, 1992; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990; Rimm & Lowe, 1988). If the parents do not agree with one another on some aspects of parenting,
their discussion about it should not be done in front of the child. If rules at home are not reinforced consistently it could teach the child that verbal manipulation will get him or her what he or she wants (Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990).

Problems Associated With Peers and Siblings

Some gifted children have problems finding friends. Age peers are not always intellectual peers. The gifted child should have time to interact with both sets of peers. The child needs to spend time with other gifted children, if possible. Gifted children often have interests on a different level from those of age peers. Some may prefer the company of older children or adults. Some gifted children prefer intellectual pursuits over social activities (Alvino, 1985; Delisle, 2002a; Johnson, 1989; Roedell, 1986; Ross, 1964; Silverman, 1993). Some gifted children think they have to deny their brightness in order to get along with their peers. Especially in their adolescent years, some gifted children will even play down their academic ability in order to be accepted by peers (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Fine, 1977; Freeman, 1995; Gross, 1992). Parents and teachers have to guide the gifted children in finding ways to be socially
accepted without hiding their talents or denying their individuality (Roedell, 1986). Even young gifted children often know that they are different and suffer from these feelings. Parents need to help them understand who they are, to appreciate their abilities and talents, and to accept who they are (Alvino, 1985; Roeper, 1977; Swart, 1993).

Sibling relations could be a source of stress for the parents of a gifted child. They need to be aware of the possibility that other siblings may feel frustrated, neglected, or inferior, even if they have similar abilities. If the gifted child is the first born in the family, younger siblings may feel they must meet the performance standards of their older sibling (Bridges, 1979; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Kearney, 1992; Rimm, 1991; Ross, 1964). In the case where the younger child is gifted, the older, less gifted children may worry about the accelerated progress of their younger sibling (Bridges, 1979; Kearney, 1992). Some parents are biased toward their more gifted child (Bridges, 1973, 1979; Sebring, 1983). Other parents feel guilty about giving more attention to the gifted child than to their other children and conflicted about his or her not participating in the usual social or athletic activities (Rimm, 1991; Ross,
1964). Some parents try to compensate the less gifted children in the family by giving more attention to them than to their gifted child (Sebring, 1983).

Parents need to teach their children and themselves to accept the differences between the siblings and to avoid comparisons. The gifted child, like any other child, must be seen as a member of the family. The interests of the other members of the family must be recognized and encouraged and should not be sacrificed to those of the child with the special talents (Bridges, 1973, 1979; Congdon, 1979; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Delisle, 1992; Meckstroth, 1992; Smith, 1986; Walker, 1993/94).

Problems Associated With School and Talent Development

Parents need to find the appropriate school placement or grade placement for their gifted child (Congdon, 1979; Silverman, 1993). For participation in most gifted programs parents have to give their consent. Sometimes they feel they do not have enough information about the specific program and about other possibilities for their child to make such a decision and they need guidance (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; Dettmann & Colangelo, 1980; Greenstadt, 1981; Malone, 1975; Ross, 1964). Some parents of gifted children hold
stereotypic views and misconceptions about gifted children (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983; Ross, 1964) that could interfere with their abilities to make the right decisions. Sometimes parents are concerned that participating in a special program might cause harm in terms of peer relations (Clark, 1997; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983).

Parents of gifted children realize many times that they need to interact more with school personnel than parents of “regular” children. Many parents of gifted children find themselves in conflict with schools because they have a different philosophy about the education of their children. Although the parents intend to benefit their children, the result can be underachievement. This can happen if the children are allied with their parents against the school. They may refuse to continue to function in the school environment because they protest that the curriculum does not provide for their learning preference (Rimm, 1991; Rimm & Lowe, 1988). On the other hand, if parents would not intervene, underachievement can occur when the curriculum and the instruction in the school fail to accommodate the needs and learning styles of their gifted child. Inappropriate education diminishes the gifted student’s
motivation, and by the end of elementary school, many highly gifted children lose almost all motivation to excel (Gross, 1992; Whitmore, 1989). Parents need to be aware that if the children do not learn, at an early age, the skills they need to develop their talent, then later in life, they will not be able to develop their talent as far as it could have been developed. Parents need to recognize and nurture their children’s talents and gifts (Davidson, Davidson, & Vanderkam, 2004).

Parents need to find the proper balance between encouraging, pushing too hard and pressuring, and understimulation (Ross, 1964; Walker, 1993/94). Some parents even deprive their child from normal childhood of play and friends in favor of organizing their lives exclusively around study and practice (Congdon, 1979; Freeman, 1985; Roedell, 1986; Tannenbaum, 1992). Parents need to allow their child time and space for daydreaming, for reflection, and for making his or her own decisions. Some of the most original ideas come during self-initiated and self-directed activities (Hollingsworth, 1990; Johnson, 1989; Sebring, 1983; Smith, 1986; Walker, 1993/94). If the child has too busy of a schedule he or she could get anxious. A balance
should be found between busy times and leisure times. Leisure activities should be allowed, just for the fun, without turning them into organized activities (Alvino, 1995; Congdon, 1979; Delisle, 1992; Roeper, 1977). Playing with other children is very important as it enhances the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of the children (Congdon, 1979). Some of the gifted children deliberately underachieve so they will be socially accepted (Gross, 1992). If parents structure their child’s time too much, it can lead to a sense of loss of self and personal autonomy (Fine, 1977; Roeper, 1977). Milgram and Hong (1997) found that leisure activities could predict future high achievement and higher satisfaction for people who chose an occupation that continued their adolescent leisure areas.

Parents need to learn to accept their child’s efforts without demanding perfection (Alvino, 1985; Fine, 1977; Hollingsworth, 1990; Sebring, 1983). They need to let their child know that mistakes are acceptable. The parents should not put too high standards that can become crippling and lead to perfectionism, to underachievement, or to emotional problems (Alvino, 1995; Fine, 1977; Freeman, 1985, 1995; Hollingsworth, 1990; Johnson, 1989; Roedell, 1986; Sebring,
1983; Swart, 1993). As Marie Capurro, who was the Director of Programs and Services at the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, said:

Parents need to create a supportive home environment where children are loved and accepted for who they are, not for what other people think they should be. They should focus on their children’s strengths and encourage them to do their best, not be the best. (Davidson et al., 2004, pp. 161-162)

Parents can positively monitor homework and encourage intrinsically interesting learning experiences. They do not need to help their child with homework on a regular basis. Rimm and Lowe (1998) found in their research that many gifted underachievers were depending on their parents’ help for accomplishing their homework. Parents need to understand that children tend to be less involved and motivated to work if they feel that the control of their learning is outside themselves. Giving them the feeling that they are competent can increase their motivation to work harder in their studies (Freeman, 2000).

Parents also need to be aware of the fact that underachievement can be caused by learning disabilities. It
is very difficult to recognize learning disabilities in gifted children because the strengths and the weaknesses can mask each other. Gifted children with learning disabilities may appear average. If parents suspect their child has learning disabilities, they should let him or her have a complete educational evaluation (Silverman, 1993).

Too much praise can cause pressure on the child, and feelings of rejection when that praise is diminished can also occur. The child may become dependent on praise and not be motivated by intrinsic reinforcement, or will not be able to judge the quality of his or her own work (Alvino, 1985; Delisle, 1992; Freeman, 2000; Rimm, 1990; Rimm & Lowe, 1988). The child may fear that the parents love him or her only because of his or her accomplishments, and if the level will ever fall, love will be withdrawn (Roedell, 1986). Some of these children may underachieve in order to “test” whether they would still be loved even if they do not achieve as high as expected (Carandang, 1992). Many gifted suicidal adolescents reported that they did get family and peer support but they perceived that the support was conditional on performance. They saw a discrepancy between their achievement and the importance of their success to
their parents, and they felt powerless to change the discrepancy (Swart, 1993).

When a gifted child has a specific talent and he or she excels in music, art, or drama, for example, the parents need to invest, both with time and money, in their child’s training. If the child’s talent is in the sciences, mathematics, or history, time and money will be also required for special summer camps, contests, special classes, or teachers. For some parents, the financial burden that is connected to their wish to enable their child to develop to his full potential is excessive. The extended time with the special talented child may limit time with other members of the family. Parents may feel guilty about their inability to provide the child with what they see as necessary intellectual stimulation or educational opportunities. Others may wonder how they can deny the child these special opportunities despite their own sacrifices and doubts whether the talent will turn to eminence (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Rimm, 1991; Ross, 1964; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993; Walker, 1993/94; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Parents of many gifted adolescents might need to deal with their child’s problem regarding higher education and
career choice decisions (Colangelo & Assouline, 2000; Monks et al., 2000). Because gifted students have many talents they can succeed in a number of different fields and they find it hard to narrow down to one career choice or field of study. Some of these students are looking for the perfect or ideal career. Some feel that their parents wish for them to find a field that has a potential of high status or high earning. Some of the choices are dependent on long-term schooling, which postpone being independent and require more investment from the parents (Colangelo & Assouline, 2000).

Summary

Parenting a gifted child is both a joy and a challenge. Parents should not give up their own lives for their child to get all he or she needs to reach his or her potential. They should not try to live through their child, and they should not expect their child to have interest and to succeed in all the areas in which they wish they could succeed (Delisle, 1992; Freeman, 1995; Roeper, 1982; Sebring, 1983; Smith, 1986; Walker, 1993/94).

Children see their parents as role models. Having personal careers that the parent values can provide an important model for children’s achievement (Rimm & Lowe,
1988). On the other hand, busy parents should not expect their gifted child to make it on his or her own. They need to find the time to be involved with their child.

There is no harm in feeling glad that the child is likely to reflect well on the parents, but that should not become the main reason for providing facilities for the child or for setting unwanted goals for the child. Parents need to communicate with their child so that they will not confuse their own needs or interests with those of their child (Bridges, 1973, 1979; Sebring, 1983). They should not use their gifted child to glorify themselves (Congdon, 1979; Roeper, 1977). Parents should not give the child the impression that he or she is important to them because of his or her outstanding abilities (Congdon, 1979; Roeper, 1982).

Research on parenting gifted children points out that several main issues are frequently brought up by parents of gifted as they seek help. These issues are associated with siblings and peers relations, discipline problems, problems associated with the education and talent development of the gifted child, and feelings of the parents toward raising gifted children.
Characteristics and Traits of Gifted Children

There is no one trait or characteristic that typifies gifted children, but it is more the combination and intensity of a few traits and characteristics that distinguish the gifted child.

Some of these traits manifest themselves very early in the gifted child’s life. Many gifted children need less sleep than other children their age (even in infancy) and they seem to have higher energy levels and unusual alertness (Congdon, 1979; Feldman, 1991; Koopmans-Dayton & Feldhusen, 1987; Lovecky, 1993; Roeper, 1977; Silverman, 1992). Gifted children may walk early and may talk early and use their verbal ability to communicate at a very young age.

Verbal Precocity

Gifted children have early and rapid language development and superior language ability (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Silverman, 1993). They acquire a large vocabulary and a lot of information at a very early age. Some of them learn to read very early. For many of them, with the verbal and conceptual skills appear also mathematical, musical and artistic skills (Davis & Rimm, 1998).
Many gifted children are very curious and they tend to ask a lot of questions (Congdon, 1979; Sebring, 1983; Silverman, 1993). Some ask unusual questions (Carandang, 1992). They start asking questions at a very early age and continue asking for a longer time than “regular” children. By asking questions the children are building up an understanding of the world around them, acquiring language, and learning how to think. By responding to the child’s questions, parents are reinforcing his or her urge to learn (Congdon, 1979).

Gifted children may also ask questions that seem to challenge parental or adult authority. This can lead to a parent-child conflict. Some adults react negatively and with authority to this behavior, but parents need to understand that the child is analyzing what they demand and does not ask the questions just for the sake of arguing (Freundlich, 1987; Sebring 1983). Parents who explain their requests and respect their children get more cooperation and respect from their children than authoritarian parents (Silverman, 1992).

In class, gifted children may ask a lot of questions because they wish to get a deeper understanding of the subject. It can become a nuisance to the teacher and to
other classmates who are not willing or who are not ready and/or able to deal with higher level of thinking, or to elaborate on the topic discussed. Sometimes gifted children tend to dominate classroom discussions (Freundlich, 1987).

Some gifted children can talk and reason like much older children. That can make parents and teachers forget that emotionally they are still young and that they should not be expected to behave like the mature child they sound like (Silverman, 1993; Swart, 1993).

Some gifted children may be able to better communicate with adults than with children their own age (Roeper, 1977). The early verbal development that incorporates advanced vocabulary and complex language structure can be a problem while trying to interact with age peers, because other children cannot always understand the gifted child (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Freundlich, 1987; Roeper, 1977).

**Learning and Performance**

The activities and games in which young gifted children like to get involved are often more sophisticated than those of other children their age (Roeper, 1977). Many gifted children like to play with older children (Feldhusen & Feldhusen, 1998).
At a young age, their intellectual development is often more advanced than their motor development. This brings on situations where they cannot carry out and perform their advanced ideas and projects (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Roeper, 1977). This kind of situation can lead to frustration that can bring some of them to give up and not practice the skill needed (Roeper, 1977). Some of them see the failure to achieve the aimed project as a personal fault rather than a result of their age and experience (Freeman, 1985).

Gifted children love to explore or examine things (Feldhusen & Feldhusen, 1998). They exhibit intense concentration, a long attention span, a lot of task commitment, and persistence in task performance. As a result, some of them hate to be interrupted and they might neglect regular assignments (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). Gifted children seek and initiate intellectual stimulation (Carandang, 1992). They are often intrinsically motivated (Clark, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Webb & DeVries, 1998). Many pursue projects and hobbies of their choice (Whitmore, 1985). They like to learn for the sake of learning rather than because they were asked to learn (Roeper, 1977; Swart, 1993). Many of them have an extremely good memory that helps
them learn. But it is important to give them opportunities to find connections in learning and not just memorize facts (Roeper, 1977). Gifted children acquire and retain information quickly. Some of them are impatient with the slow rate of the studies in class, and dislike the drill that is asked for in the regular class (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Webb & DeVries, 1998). They usually have advanced problem solving skills, superior reasoning skills, and unusual comprehension of complex, abstract ideas, and their thinking processes are quick and logical (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Silverman, 1993; Whitmore, 1985).

Affective Characteristics

Fears and Worries

Young gifted children become abstract thinkers before they can deal emotionally with the facts they discover (Roeper, 1977; Swart, 1993). This may be very frightening to them and they might need more support from the adults around them (Roeper, 1977). Gifted children often worry about world problems like world peace, energy crises, ecology, starvation in Africa, and so forth. Some of these worries are too heavy and make the gifted child feel helpless, angry, and/or depressed (Johnson, 1989; Roeper, 1977; Swart,
1993). Some of them feel compelled to stand up for their convictions. In some cases it may result in feeling isolated and lonely (Roeper, 1982). On the other hand, many of them show leadership ability and become involved in community projects (Clark, 1997).

Even at a preschool age, gifted children often develop a fear of death. Because of their intellectual understanding, they understand it is inevitable, but they are too young to deal with it emotionally. They need assurance by the adults around them and they need to feel protected. On the other hand, they need to feel that they are told the truth and it is not kept from them (Roeper, 1977).

Some gifted children will not make a commitment unless they try things out and find they can perform well. Some do not dare to try new things because they fear failure (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Roeper, 1977).

Sensitivity and Perfectionism

Many gifted children have unrealistic expectations from themselves and they tend to be perfectionists. Some are severely self-critical and feel they are failures because of their own high expectations or those of the adults around
them (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Freeman, 1985; Freundlich, 1987; Whitmore, 1985). They may fear that they are disappointing others around them. That can interfere with the desire to explore. The pressure can lead the child to poor performance so he or she can escape the pressure. The need to constantly live up to high expectations prevents the child from accepting himself or herself as a whole person with imperfections (Freeman, 1985).

Many gifted children are very competitive. Perhaps because they receive recognition for their talents, they internalize the pressure to compete, win, and achieve. The children become more competitive as they experience winning, but they also need to learn to cope with losing without quitting because no one wins forever (Rimm, 1991).

The exceptional awareness of social response toward them can increase their real or imagined social failure. Some of them appear to take criticism more to heart than average children. This can result in poor self-image and a social isolation to some degree (Freeman, 1985; Freundlich, 1987; Lovecky, 1993).
Many gifted children are able to view the other person’s point of view and they develop empathy with the feelings and rights of others (Clark, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Freundlich, 1987; Lovecky, 1993; Roeper, 1982). Starting at an early age, gifted children tend to be sensitive to values and moral issues, and seek what is just and fair (Clark, 1997).

Gifted children have a keen sense of humor and understand irony. Many of them see absurdities in situations where other children their age cannot see it. Sometimes, their humor is not understood by their peers. Some of them will use their humor to gain attention as the “class clown” (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Silverman, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998).

Gifted children often have heightened sensitivities and they take things personally and get hurt easily (Alvino, 1995; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). Many of them react more strongly to almost all stimuli (Swart, 1993). Gifted children often feel things more intensely (Lovecky, 1993). Some of them are stimulus-avoiders because they find the amount of stimulation stressful, irritable, overwhelming, and often frightening (Lovecky, 1993).
Summary

Gifted children sometimes need help in learning to accept who they are. They know they are both similar and different from other children their age. They need to value themselves as unique persons (Clark, 1997). If someone dismisses them as being just like everyone else, they know it is wrong but they still hurt from the insult to their intelligence (Delisle, 2002b). Parents and teachers can help gifted children appreciate and accept their abilities and uniqueness, and the first step in this process is understanding and appreciating these similarities and differences.

Definition of Giftedness and Identification of Gifted Children

There are different ways to define giftedness and identify gifted children. Some define giftedness merely by intelligence, referring usually to IQ above 130 as tested by standardized intelligence tests like the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Revised (WISC-R). Others suggest different definitions for giftedness.
In 1972 the U.S. Office of Education gave a definition of gifted and talented (Marland, 1972, p. 2):

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts
6. Psychomotor ability

This definition has been changed over the years and in 2001 a shorter version was given:
The term “gifted and talented,” when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.

(From the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)

The psychomotor ability was taken out of the definition because in most schools there are programs and special training for children who perform well in the sports.

Renzulli (1978, 1984) suggested that giftedness is composed of three interlocking clusters of traits: general ability, creativity, and task commitment. One has to be above average in these three clusters but not necessarily superior in all of them in order to be identified as gifted. In his opinion no single trait of these “make giftedness” but rather the interaction among them. Whitmore (1985) argued that although high task commitment can help the identification of a gifted child, its absence should not state the opposite, because many underachieving gifted
children become negative toward school and show no evidence of task commitment in their schoolwork.

Gardner (1998), on the other hand, suggested that there are multiple intelligences that are relatively autonomous faculties. The intelligences he referred to are: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalist intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence. He claimed that each person has relative strengths and weaknesses among the different types of intelligences, and that can explain different types of abilities among people who have the same IQ scores (Eby & Smutny, 1990; Gardner, 1998).

Sternberg’s (1997) triarchic definition stated that intellectual giftedness is composed of three kinds of intelligence. Analytic giftedness is the ability to divide a problem and understand its parts. These skills are usually measured by intelligence tests. Synthetic giftedness refers to creativity, insightfulness, or the ability to cope with novelty. This giftedness is hardly measured by existing tests. Practical giftedness involves applying the other two
abilities to everyday situations. Sternberg said that giftedness is viewed as a well-managed balance of the three abilities and the knowledge when to use which one.

Beyond the explicit theories of giftedness, Sternberg (1995) argued that there are implicit theories of giftedness that have the most influence on actual life and practices. He said that people use their implicit theory to determine how to identify giftedness. According to Sternberg, his Pentagonal Implicit Theory of Giftedness captures and systematizes people’s intuitions about what makes an individual gifted. The theory specifies five individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions that gifted individuals have in common. These criteria are:

1. The excellence criterion states that the gifted person is superior relative to peers in some dimension.

2. The rarity criterion states that the gifted person must possess a high level of an attribute that is uncommon relative to peers.

3. The productivity criterion states that the individual’s superior trait must lead to or potentially lead to productivity.
4. The demonstrability criterion states that the individual must be able to demonstrate the superior trait through tests that are valid assessments.

5. The value criterion states that the individual who is labeled gifted must show superior performance in an area that is valued by society.

Identification for Special Programs

In order to identify gifted children for a special program, those who are in charge of the program need to define giftedness as they understand it. The identification should be tied to the definition of giftedness. If the definition includes multiple abilities, the identification process should search for all of these abilities. The definition should also suit the program objectives (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Renzulli, 1984).

According to a research done by Cassidy and Hossler (1992), most of the states accept the federal definition of giftedness, some with minor modifications, in their formal legislation, and school districts include it in their written program plans. But about one third of the states defined giftedness in 1990 only by general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, and creative thinking.
Some even limited their identified students to those who score two standard deviations above the mean in intelligence test (Cassidy & Hossler, 1992). Some states have adopted Renzulli’s definition of giftedness. A combination of measurement devices can be used to assess children in the three aspects of Renzulli’s definition: general ability, creativity, and motivation. In most gifted programs, a high score of 130 or 140 on intelligence test will be sufficient to get a child into the program even if the formal definition of the school gifted program is different (Eby & Smutny, 1990).

There is no one absolute definition of giftedness. Social, cultural, and political factors have influence on the definition. When the definition is applied to children it only states that a child exhibits characteristics or potentials denoting evidence of giftedness, but it does not promise that this child will achieve eminence (Coleman & Cross, 2001).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

The literature review that was conducted for this research study revealed that parenting gifted children is different from parenting “regular” children in a variety of aspects. Many parents of gifted children feel they do not have the societal model for parenting, as the practice with gifted children differs in many ways from parenting “regular” children. They do not have the normal support networks like family, friends, and neighbors, as do other parents, because it is hard for other people to relate to the special experiences that parents of gifted children are encountering (Delisle, 2002a; Webb & Devries, 1998). Parents of gifted children need to deal with special educational needs their children have (Silverman, 1993). They also may need to deal with their child’s social and emotional needs that sometimes differ from those of other children (Silverman, 1993). Some parents feel inadequately prepared for parenting their gifted child (Delisle, 2002a). In some
families, having a gifted child adds tension to the family (Silverman, 1993). Many parents of gifted children feel they need more information about the unique characteristics and the special needs of gifted children. Many parents feel they need to interact with other parents of gifted children where they can share their problems and experiences with their gifted children, in a safe environment, where they are accepted and have similar needs to those of the other parents in the group.

Special support groups for parents of gifted children have existed since 1981, when the SENG Model for parents’ support groups was created. Since 1981 many SENG parents’ support groups and similar groups have been offered nationwide. It might seem unusual that these groups have existed so many years but no research study has been conducted to find out the effects that the parents’ support groups have on parenting the gifted. This research study was the first to examine the impact of such support groups.

Research Design and the Research Questions
This research study was designed to learn from parents’ responses about the effects that participating in a parents’ support group had on their confidence about their parenting
skills and on the relationships they had with their gifted children. This study is a quantitative study with an experimental research design. Although parents who participate in parents’ support groups were asked to answer two open-ended questions, the answers to these two questions were not considered as a part of the quantitative study, but were merely used to understand better the parents and the effects the group participation had on them. This research study tried to determine if participating in a parents’ support group for parents of gifted children had an influence on:

1. Knowledge about the unique characteristics and special needs of the gifted children.
2. Relationships between the participating parents and their gifted children.
3. Parents’ confidence toward parenting the gifted.

An 85-item survey with five parts was developed for this research study. A cover letter was added to the survey. The members of the experimental group received a different cover letter than the members of the control group (see Appendices A and B). The scales that were used in each item of the first three parts of the survey were Likert scales.
The fourth part consisted of two open-ended questions that were given only to parents who participated in parents’ support groups. The last part consisted of mostly demographic questions.

The first three parts of the survey were developed to examine the following research questions:

1. Do parents who attended support groups, designed for parents of gifted children, know more at the conclusion of the group meetings, about the unique characteristics, traits, and special needs of their gifted children, in comparison to parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

2. Do the quality of communication and the relationships that occur between parents and their gifted children differ between parents who attended support groups, and parents of gifted children who did not attend parents’ support groups?

3. Do parents of gifted children who attended support groups express a significantly higher level of confidence in their parenting skills, than those
parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

Sample Selection

Two groups of parents of gifted children participated in this research study. All the parents who participated in this research study did so voluntarily. There were no consequences for those who chose not to participate in the study.

The first group had 44 parents who participated voluntarily in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children. The support groups were held at the time that this research study was conducted. In each support group the recommended number of participants was between 12 and 20 parents. This intact group made it impossible to do a random sampling of parents. Group facilitators and gifted program coordinators were contacted. They gave the surveys to parents who participated in support groups conducted around the time that this research study was in process. The group facilitators were asked to give the surveys only to parents who attended at least 75% of the group meetings. If more than one family member came to the support group meetings, only one parent completed a survey, unless they
had more than one gifted child and then each parent could answer a survey regarding a different gifted child. Only parents who participated for the first time in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children were asked to participate in this research study.

The control group was composed of 33 parents of gifted children who never participated in such parents’ support groups. Efforts were made to find a control group as similar as it can be to the experimental group. The parents in the control group were contacted through gifted program coordinators or teachers who were in charge for the gifted programs their children attend. The researcher for this study tried to find parents for the control group from similar socio-economic backgrounds and parents’ education levels to those of the parents in the support groups. The two groups were also compared based on the fact that they had one or more gifted children in the family. Only one survey was given to each family in the control group.

Parents in both groups completed the same surveys. Participants in the experimental group were asked to complete the survey at the end of the last group meeting and no later than 6 weeks after the last group meeting. The
effects that were examined in this research study were the short-term effects. Another research study could be done to look for the long-term effects of the parents’ support groups. The parents in the control group answered the survey around the same time as the experimental group. Overall scores for each part of the first three parts of the survey were calculated. If the differences between the overall scores of the two groups for each part of the survey were found to be statistically significant (using t-tests), this would be the first research evidence that participating in parents’ support groups assist parents of gifted children in understanding and parenting their children.

The Survey and the Analysis of the Results

The survey was divided into five parts. Each of the first three parts of the survey was designed to examine one of the research questions. The fourth part of the survey was given only to the parents who participated in parents’ support groups. In this part the participants had two open-ended questions that were not considered for the research questions, but rather they could help understand better the impact of the group on the parents in the experimental group. The more elaborative answers might also explain more
fully the findings of this research study. The last part was composed of mostly demographic questions that were not an integral part of this research study, but were used to help match members of the research group to members of the control group. Since some people could feel threatened by answering some demographic questions, Sudman and Bradburn (1982) suggested that the demographic questions be asked at the end of the survey. The more threatening the question is (like asking about income), the closer to the end it should be asked. This way, if the respondent refuses to answer a question that is threatening to him or her, it will not affect the other questions in the survey (Dillman, 2000; Sudman & Bradburn, 1982).

Each answer to a question in the first three parts of the survey was scored according to the number given by the parents. Most of the questions were asked in a positive manner. For these questions, one point was given if the answer was “1” and five points were given if the answer was “5”. Reverse scores were given to the questions that were negatively phrased (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004; Rumrill & Cook, 2001). In this way, answers did not “cancel” each other but they were counted in the same direction and
added up to a total score. All the questions in each of the three relevant parts of the survey were summed to a total score that represented the answer to one research question. No individual question would offer a complete “picture,” but collectively, the questions might serve to answer the research questions. Analogous to one dot not making a picture, many dots are needed to get a full image. Like that picture, all the questions in one section of the questionnaire might together answer each research question.

A t-test was conducted for each research question using the total score of the relevant part of the questionnaire. The t-test is a statistical technique that is designed to test the significance of the difference between two samples’ means, typically an experimental group and a comparison group (Rumrill & Cook, 2001).

Differences significant at the probability value of \( p < .05 \) confidence level was set as the criterion for determining if the differences were due to group participation and not merely to chance.

The Development of the Survey

The first part of the survey tried to answer the first research question in this research study: to help find out
how much parents of gifted children know about the characteristics of gifted children and their special needs. The parents were asked to rate to what extent each of these characteristics existed in their gifted child. Some of the questions were taken from scales that were developed by Renzulli (Davis & Rimm, 1998) for rating behavioral characteristics of superior students. Other questions were taken from “Things My Child Likes To Do,” a checklist developed by Delisle (1992) for parents. Some questions were taken from the “Parent Nomination Form” that was developed by the Staff of the Gifted and Talented Section, in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (Davis & Rimm, 1998). Some questions were taken from characteristic charts about gifted children (Alvino, 1985; Clark, 1997; Coleman, 1982; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Silverman, 1992, 1993; Webb & DeVries, 1998; Whitmore, 1985). A few of the questions on this study’s survey were exactly the same as the questions in these documents, but other questions were modified for clarity. Some of the questions were composed specifically for this study according to the characteristics of gifted children that
were found in the literature review completed for this research study.

The second part of the survey tried to answer the second research question about the relationship between the parents and their gifted child. Many of the questions in the second part of the survey were taken from a list of parents' responses that was developed by Hayes and Levitt (1982) to help parents recognize stresses in their child and lead them to help their child develop the resources to resolve the stresses he or she confronts. The items in this list were found relevant to this research study because they explore the relationships between parents and their child.

In the literature review that was conducted for this research study, it was found that parents encounter some problems and dilemmas, regarding their parenting skills, when they find out their child is gifted. Therefore the survey was designed to find out to what extent the parents of gifted children feel they personally encountered these issues. This research study tried to find out if there was a difference between parents who participated in a support group and those who have not as related to their concerns in raising a gifted child.
The questions in the third part of the survey addressed the third research question about parenting skills. These questions were composed specifically for this research study based on what was found in the literature review.

Validity of the Survey

Validity is a construct that tries to determine if the survey measures what it purports to measure (Rumrill & Cook, 2001). The validity for this research study is a content validity that was achieved by sending the survey to five scholars who work with parents’ support groups for parents of gifted children and/or are gifted program coordinators. Two of these individuals also give training workshops for potential parent group facilitators. These experts reviewed the survey in order to determine if the items in each part of the survey answered one of the research questions (Rumrill & Cook, 2001). Changes in the survey were made, according to the experts’ input.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine whether participating in support groups for parents of gifted children helped them feel more confident in parenting their
gifted child(ren), gave them more knowledge about the characteristics of gifted children and their special needs, and improved the relationship between gifted children and their parents.

A survey was developed to probe the three research questions. The survey was examined by five scholars in the field of gifted education for content validity. Likert scales were used for each item in the survey, and the scores in each part of the survey were combined to one score that represents the answer for one research question. Scores for the experimental group and the control group were calculated using t-tests to look for significant differences between the two groups.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research study was designed to determine if participating in a parents’ support group, designed for parents of gifted children, had an influence on:

1. Knowledge about the unique characteristics and special needs of the gifted children.

2. Relationships between the participating parents and their gifted children.

3. Parents’ confidence toward parenting the gifted.

Two groups of parents of gifted children participated in this research study. The experimental group was composed of 44 parents of gifted children who participated voluntarily in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children. Group facilitators were asked to give the surveys only to parents who attended at least 75% of the group meetings. If more than one family member attended the group meetings, the group facilitators were asked to give surveys to only one family member who participated in the group, unless the parents had more than one gifted child, and then each parent could complete a survey regarding a
different gifted child. Another prerequisite was that only parents who participated for the first time in parents' support groups designed for parents of gifted children were asked to complete the survey. Participants in the support group were asked to complete the survey at the end of the last group meeting, yet no later than 6 weeks after the last group meeting.

The control group was composed of 33 parents of gifted children who never participated in such a parents' support group. The parents in the control group were contacted through gifted program coordinators or teachers who were in charge of the special programs that gifted child attend. Only one survey was given to each family in the control group. The parents in the control group answered the survey around the same time the experimental group answered them.

Efforts were made to find participants from different parts of the country. The distribution of the participants by the states they lived is shown in Table 1.

Parents in both groups completed the same surveys. The only difference between the surveys was an addition of two open-ended questions that were given only to the
Table 1

*Distribution of the Participants by States*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Participants in Experimental Group</th>
<th>Number of Participants in Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

experimental group (the fourth part of the experimental group’s survey). In this part, the participants had two open-ended questions that were not considered for the research questions, but might be used to better understand the impact of the group on the parents. The more elaborative answers also helped in explaining the findings of this research study. Table 2 shows the number of participants who answered the open-ended questions in a positive manner, in a negative manner, or did not answer at all. The answers to
Table 2

Number of Participants Who Answered the Open-Ended Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>Answered in a Positive Manner</th>
<th>Answered in a negative Manner</th>
<th>Did not Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In what ways did the support group help you to better understand your gifted child?</td>
<td>39 (88.6%)</td>
<td>2 (4.5%)</td>
<td>3 (6.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you learn about giftedness – your child’s or your own – as a result of the participation in the support group?</td>
<td>35 (79.5%)</td>
<td>2 (4.5%)</td>
<td>7 (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the open-ended questions are discussed broadly in the fifth chapter.

Comparisons Between the Groups

Efforts were made to find a control group as similar as it could be to the experimental group. The similarity of the groups was looked for according to the answers the parents gave in the last part of the survey, which was composed of demographic questions. The groups were compared by the number of gifted children in the families that took part in the research. In both groups about one half of the families had only one gifted child and the other half of the families
had more than one gifted child. The distribution of the families is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Families With One Gifted Child or More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of families with one gifted child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another comparison was done regarding the families’ income level, while the last question compared the highest educational level completed by the parent who answered the survey. Each of the questions regarding income and educational level had specific categories from which to choose. These categories were then coded. A t-test was conducted to see if there was a significant difference between the groups regarding each of these aspects. Differences significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level was set as the criterion for determining that the differences were not due to chance.
For each of these comparisons there are two tables (Tables 4 and 5, and Tables 6 and 7) that represent the statistical results.

Table 4

*Group Statistics for Families’ Income Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

*Independent Samples Test for Families’ Income Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed no significant differences in the income of the families between the two groups. The mean value that was found for the families’ income was 4.05 for the experimental group and 4.57 for the control group. The
code "4" was given to an income of $75,000-$99,999, and code "5" was given to an income of $100,000-$149,999. Both groups had a much higher mean income level than the average income in the U.S.

The comparison of participants’ educational levels showed no significant differences in the highest educational level of the respondents between the two groups. The mean educational level for the experimental group was 5.02, and for the control group it was 4.69. The code “4” was given to a Bachelor’s degree and the code “5” was given to “some graduate work.” The average educational level of both groups was beyond a Bachelor’s degree (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Independent Samples Test for Participants’ Educational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the experimental and the control groups were found to be statistically similar, it was also determined from the demographic part of the survey that both groups do not represent the general United States population in relation to family income, educational level, and marital status. Some of the demographic characteristics of the participants in both groups are presented in Table 8.

The demographic characteristics shown in Table 8 and the income level and educational level shown before, indicated that the participants did not represent the general population in the United States.
Table 8

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (91%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33 (100%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (91%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33 (100%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 (93%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33 (100%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Analysis of the Results

Each of the first three parts of the survey was developed to examine one of the following research questions:

1. Do parents who attended support groups, designed for parents of gifted children, know more at the conclusion of the group meetings, about the unique characteristics, traits, and special needs of their gifted children, in comparison to parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

2. Do the quality of communication and the relationships that occur between parents and their
Do gifted children differ between parents who attended support groups, and parents of gifted children who did not attend parents’ support groups?

3. Do parents of gifted children who attended support groups express a significantly higher level of confidence in their parenting skills, than those parents of gifted children who did not attend such parents’ support groups?

Analysis of the First Research Question

The first part of the survey was composed of 28 questions. Each of the questions described a specific characteristic or trait that can be found in gifted children. The parent had to evaluate how his or her gifted child exhibited this trait in comparison to “typical” children. The scales that were used in each item of the first part of the survey were Likert scales. The answers were given the numbers “1” to “5”. As all the questions in this part of the survey were asked in a positive manner, each answer got the same number of points as the parent answered the question. For each survey, all 28 results were summed to a total score that represented the answer to the first research question.
A t-test was conducted using the total score. Differences significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level was set as the criterion for determining if any differences were due to group participation and not merely to chance. The results did not find a significant difference between the two groups (see Tables 9 and 10). Tables 9 and 10 represent the comparison of the first research question between the two groups.

Table 9

*Group Statistics for the First Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUM FIRST</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>116.42</td>
<td>10.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>113.85</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

*Independent Samples Test for the First Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM FIRST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As no significant difference was found, a one-tailed t-test was calculated for each of the 28 questions in the first part of the survey. This procedure was done to see if there were any specific characteristics or traits on which the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. Out of the 28 characteristics, only 8 were found having significantly higher scores given by the experimental group (see Table 11). The t value should exceed 1.66 in order to be statistically significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level.

The first five questions for which the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group related to whether the gifted child manifested particular gifted characteristics. The last three questions where significant differences were found between the groups dealt with the asynchronous development of gifted children and asked the parents if their child’s intellectual abilities were more developed than his or her motor skills, his or her social skills, and/or his or her emotional skills. These results are further discussed in chapter 5.
Table 11

Questions That the Experimental Group Scored Higher in Part I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Has a great deal of curiosity.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Asks a lot of questions.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tries to discover the how and why of things; wants to know what makes things (or people) &quot;tick.&quot;</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Gets easily bored with routine tasks.</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Attends to aesthetic characteristics of things, like walking on a street and reacting to the architectural features of the buildings, or the beauty or ugliness he or she sees in a bridge.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her motor skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her social skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her emotional skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents in the control group scored significantly higher on two characteristics: The child recalls facts quickly, $t(75) = -1.96, p < .05$ (question number 6); and the
child has a long attention span on most tasks, \( t(75) = -2.66, p < .05 \) (question number 16).

**Analysis of the Second Research Question**

The second part of the survey was designed to learn about the relationships between the participating parents and their gifted children. This part of the survey was composed of 22 questions. As very few parents answered the last two questions (regarding having other children who are not gifted), and most of the parents answered “N/A” to the sixth question (which related to getting high grades at the gifted class), answers to these three questions were eliminated from the analysis. One parent in the control group forgot to answer a whole page in this part of the survey, so the whole part of this parent’s survey was not used.

In the second part of the survey some of the questions were asked in a positive manner and were scored according to the number given by the parents. Other questions, that were negatively phrased, were given reverse scores. For each survey all 20 results were summed to a total score that represented the answer to the second research question.
A t-test was conducted using the total score. Differences significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level was set as the criterion for determining if the differences were due to group participation and not merely to chance. The results did not find a significant difference between the two groups (see Tables 12 and 13). Table 12 and 13 represent the comparison of the second research question between the two groups.

Table 12

*Group Statistics for the Second Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECOND Experimental</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75.03</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76.11</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

*Independent Samples Test for the Second Research Question*

$t$-test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUM</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>$Df$</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECOND</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As no significant difference was found, a one-tailed t-test was calculated for each of the 19 questions in the second part of the survey. This procedure was done to see if there were any specific attributes or behaviors on which the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. Out of the 19 questions, only one was found to have a significantly higher score given by the experimental group, whereas two were found to have significantly higher scores given by the control group (see Tables 14 and 15). The t value should exceed 1.66 in order to be statistically significant at the probability value of \( p < .05 \) confidence level.

Table 14

**Questions That the Control Group Scored Higher in Part II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To what extent do you encourage your child to share feelings and to display affection?</td>
<td>-1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>To what extent do you let your child have time and space to relax and enjoy quiet, &quot;do nothing&quot; occasions or daydream?</td>
<td>-1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15

The Question That the Experimental Group Scored Higher in Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(Negatively phrased)</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent do you expect your gifted child to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>get only A’s in the regular class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outcome for this question means that the parents in the control group expected their child to get only A’s more than the parents in the experimental group. The outcomes to this part of the survey are analyzed in Chapter 5.

Analysis of the Third Research Question

The third part of the survey attempted to determine parents’ confidence toward parenting their gifted children. This part of the survey was composed of 13 questions. In this part of the survey, some of the questions were asked in a positive manner and were scored according to the number given by the parents. Other questions, that were negatively phrased, were given reverse scores. For each survey all 13 results were summed to a total score that represented the answer to the third research question.
A t-test was conducted using the total score. Differences significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level was set as the criterion for determining if the differences were due to group participation and not merely to chance. The results did not find a significant difference between the two groups (see Tables 16 and 17). Tables 16 and 17 represent the comparison of the third research question between the two groups.

Table 16

*Group Statistics for the Third Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUM THIRD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44.73</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43.77</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

*Independent Samples Test for the Third Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUM THIRD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THIRD</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As no significant difference was found, a one-tailed t-test was calculated for each of the 13 questions in the third part of the survey. This procedure was done to see if there were any specific attributes or behaviors on which the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group.

Out of the 13 questions, only 2 were found having significantly higher scores given by the experimental group while one was found having significantly higher score given by the control group (see Tables 18 and 19). The t value should exceed 1.66 in order to be statistically significant at the probability value of \( p < .05 \) confidence level.

Table 18

Questions That the Experimental Group Scored Higher in Part III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have read books or articles about gifted children.</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None 1 or 2 3-5 6-10 more than 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(Negatively phrased) I am not sure that I find the “golden path” between encouraging my child and pushing him or her too much.</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19

Questions That the Control Group Scored Higher in Part III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>The Question</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>(Negatively phrased) I wish I could help my gifted child have more friends and be more socially accepted.</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only significant differences between the groups were that the parents in the experimental group had read more books or articles about gifted children (question number 2), and that they felt more confident that they have found the “golden path” between encouraging their gifted child and pushing him or her too much (question number 9). From the only question on which the control group scored significantly higher one can conclude that the parents in the experimental group wished significantly more that they could help their gifted child have more friends and be more socially accepted (the question was negatively phrased). An analysis of the finding is done in chapter 5.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if participating in support groups designed for parents of
gifted children gave the parents more knowledge about the characteristics and traits of gifted children and their special needs, improved the relationship between gifted children and their parents, and helped the parents feel more confident in parenting their gifted child(ren).

Two groups of parents of gifted children participated in this research study. The experimental group was composed of 44 parents of gifted children who participated in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children. The control group was composed of 33 parents of gifted children who never participated in such a parents’ support group. The groups were compared according to three criteria: the number of gifted children in the families that took part in the research (one gifted child in the family, or more than one), the families’ income level, and the highest educational level completed by the parent who answered the survey. The groups were found to be similar according to all three criteria.

A survey was developed to probe the three research questions. The first three parts of the survey were designed to answer the three research questions. The fourth part, which was given only to the experimental group, consisted of
two open-ended questions that asked for elaboration about the experiences the parents had in the support groups. The last part of the survey consisted of mostly demographic questions. A Likert scale design was used for each item in the first three parts of the survey. The scores in each of the three parts of the survey were combined to one score that represented the answer for one research question. Scores for the experimental group and the control group were calculated using t-tests to look for significant differences between the two groups. There was no significant difference found for any of the three research questions.

In order to determine if there were any specific attributes for which the experimental group scored higher than the control group, one-tailed t-tests were calculated for each of the items in the first three parts of the survey. From the 60 questions that were compared, the experimental group scored significantly higher in only 11 questions. The control group scored significantly higher in three questions.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Parenting gifted children has some unique challenges that are different from parenting “regular” children. Parents usually share their joys and concerns about raising their children with other parents, neighbors, and family members. Parents of gifted children do not have the standard societal models to direct their parenting techniques (Malone, 1975). They often feel that they cannot talk freely with family and friends about their experiences with their gifted children because it is hard for other people to relate to the special experiences that parents of gifted children are encountering (Delisle, 2002a; Webb & Devries, 1998). Parents’ support groups, which are designed for parents of gifted children, can provide a place for these parents to share parenting experiences. It is a place where they can find other parents who have similar kinds of problems, pleasures, and experiences. They can share solutions that work with some children and they can discuss ways of rearing gifted children. Facilitators of support
groups also give parents information about the characteristics and traits of gifted children.

This research study tried to determine if participating in a parents’ support group for parents of gifted children had an influence on: (a) the way parents understood their gifted children and their special needs; (b) the relationships between parents and their gifted children; and (c) the way parents felt about their overall parenting abilities with their gifted children.

Two groups of parents of gifted children participated in this research study. The experimental group was composed of 44 parents of gifted children who participated in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children. The control group was composed of 33 parents of gifted children who have never participated in such a parents’ support group.

A survey that had five parts was developed for this research study. The surveys that were given to both groups were almost identical. The first three parts of the survey were developed to examine the three research questions. The fourth part consisted of two open-ended questions that were given only to parents who participated in parents’ support
groups. These questions were not considered for the research questions, but they could rather help understand better the impact of the group on the parents. The last part was composed of mostly demographic questions that were not an integral part of this research study. These questions were used to help match members of the experimental group to members of the control group.

Content validity for this research study was achieved by sending the survey to five scholars who work with parents’ support groups for parents of gifted children and/or are gifted program coordinators. These experts reviewed the survey in order to determine if the items in each part of the survey addressed one of the research questions. Changes in the survey were made according to these experts’ input.

Analysis of the First Three Parts of the Surveys

The first part of the survey was composed of 28 questions. Each of the questions described a specific characteristic or trait that can be found in gifted children. For each survey, all 28 results were summed to a total score that represented the answer to the first research question. A t-test was conducted using the total
score. Differences significant at the probability value of $p < .05$ confidence level was set as the criterion for determining if the differences were due to group participation and not merely to chance. The results did not find a significant difference between the two groups. As no significant difference was found, a one-tailed t-test was calculated for each of the 28 questions in the first part of the survey, in order to find out if there were any specific characteristics or traits where the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. Out of the 28 characteristics, only 8 were found having significantly higher scores given by the experimental group (see Table 11). Significant differences were found in the last three questions of the first part of the survey. These questions dealt with the asynchronous development of gifted children and asked the parents if their child’s intellectual abilities were more developed than his or her motor skills, social skills, and/or emotional skills. The asynchronous development of gifted children is discussed in the book *Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers* (Webb et al., 1982, pp. 15-17), which is usually used as the resource book for SENG parents’
support groups. Asynchronous development is discussed in the groups, which might explain the reason that the parents in the experimental group were more aware to these characteristics than parents in the control group. Other gifted characteristics on which the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group were stating that the gifted child:

- has a great deal of curiosity;
- asks a lot of questions;
- tries to discover the how and why of things, wants to know what makes things (or people) “tick”;  
- gets easily bored with routine tasks;
- attends to aesthetic characteristics of things.

It is hard to know why these traits scored significantly higher and others did not, but it could be that these traits were given more attention while the groups discussed the special characteristics and traits of gifted children.

The second part of the survey tried to discover the relationships between the participating parents and their gifted children. This part of the survey was composed of 22 questions, but only 19 of them were analyzed, as most of the parents did not answer the other three questions that
were not applicable for them. The results of the 19 questions were summed to a total score that represented the answer to the second research question. A t-test was conducted using the total score. The results did not find a significant difference between the two groups. When t-tests were done separately to each of the 19 questions, it was found that on most of the questions the control group scored higher than the experimental group (although not statistically significant). The only question where the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group found that the parents in the experimental group expect their gifted children to get only A’s in the regular class less than the parents in the control group. Perfectionism is one of the topics that is discussed in the parents’ support groups and that might be the reason for this outcome.

The control group scored significantly higher on two questions. From these two questions it was found that parents in the control group encouraged their children to share feelings and display affection more than the parents in the experimental group. They also let their children have time and space to relax and enjoy quiet, “do nothing”
occasions or daydream, more than the parents of the
experimental group. As discussed later in this chapter, the
parents of the control group have more experience raising
gifted children. This could be a reason why these parents
are more aware of their children’s needs to relax and to
share feelings.

The third part of the survey tried to discover the
ways parents felt about their overall parenting abilities
with their gifted children. This part of the survey was
composed of 13 questions. The results of the 13 questions
were summed to a total score that represented the answer to
the third research question. A t-test was conducted using
the total score. The results did not find a significant
difference between the two groups. After conducting t-tests
to each of the questions separately, the only significant
differences between the groups were that the parents in the
experimental group have read more books or articles about
gifted children, and they felt more confident that they can
find the “golden path” between encouraging their gifted
child and pushing him or her too much. As mentioned before,
one of the topics discussed in the parents’ support group
is perfectionism and that might be the reason these parents
are more aware of the problem of pushing gifted children too much. Sources for material concerning gifted children are given in the support groups, which might be the reason that these parents have read more about gifted children than the parents in the control group. On the other hand, the parents in the experimental group wished significantly more than the parents of the control group that they could help their gifted child have more friends and be more socially accepted.

Most of the parents in the control group received the surveys from the same gifted coordinators or group facilitators who gave the surveys to parents in the experimental group. One may wonder if perhaps the parents who chose to participate in the support groups were those who felt more insecure about their relationships with gifted children, and about their parenting skills. It might be that the parents in the control group did feel better about their relationships with their gifted children than the parents in the experimental group. It could be speculated that one of the reasons why these parents did not join the parents’ support group is because they did not feel they needed it.
Personal Observations of the Research Findings

When I tried to look for reasons for the lack of statistically significant results between the groups, I searched the demographic part of the survey. Differences between the groups were found when the birth order of the gifted child was looked upon, as shown in Table 20.

Table 20

*Birth Order of the Gifted Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child is not the first gifted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child in the family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is not the oldest, but</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the older child was not identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as gifted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is the first born or the</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only child in the family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maybe the fact that about one third of the control group had more than one gifted child, and the child they were answering the survey about was not their first gifted child, means that they had more experience dealing with gifted children and that was why they felt more confident.
and secure about their relationships with their gifted children, and about their parenting skills.

Another fact that was found in the demographic part of the survey was that the average age of the children differed between the control and the experimental group. The average age of the child in the experimental group was 8.7 years, whereas the average age of the gifted children in the control group was 10.6 years (the difference here was statistically significant, \( t(75) = -3.31, p < .05 \)). This difference strengthened the conclusion that the parents in the control group had more experience rearing gifted children. That might be a part of the reason why these parents did not choose to participate in a parents’ support group, and why the parents who were a part of the experimental group did not score higher regarding the three research questions. Helgeson and Gottlieb (2000) wrote that, typically, people seek a support group when they find themselves in relatively novel stressful circumstances that bring with them uncertainty about feelings and ways of behaving.

Another reason for the outcome of the second and the third research questions as not significant might be that
the meetings with the support group made the parents who participated in the group think and reflect about their relationships with their gifted children. Also, because the surveys were given to most parents at the last group meeting and to others no later than six weeks after the last group meeting, the parents might not have had enough time to think everything over and change some things they would have liked to change. Perhaps the parents were planning to make changes, but did not yet have the time to implement them. Future research, which is discussed later in this chapter, should look at the long-term effects of participating in parents’ support groups.

Analysis of the Answers to the Two Open-Ended Questions Given to Parents in the Experimental Group

Although no significant differences were found between the groups regarding the three research questions, parents who participated in the parents’ support groups did find the group meetings helpful. The fourth part of the survey consisted of two open-ended questions that were given only to the parents in the experimental group. These two questions asked the parents what they have learned about giftedness in the support group and in what ways the
support group helped them to better understand their gifted child. As shown in Table 2, most of the parents in the experimental group found the group meetings to be beneficial to them. A few issues were mentioned in many of the parents’ reactions. One of the main issues that parents brought up was finding other parents who went through similar experiences. Some representative comments follow:

“I was greatly relieved to hear about other people’s children who sounded like mine. I had previously felt like an alien.”

“It was great to be able to interact with other parents who have similar issues.”

“I realized I was not alone in having difficulties in understanding and dealing with my child.”

“Prior to attending this support group I/we felt alone, isolated, fearful, mistreated, etc. The information I received, the knowledge I have gained very well may have prevented a break-down.”

These parents’ reactions were consistent with what was found in the literature review for this research study, that parents’ groups can alleviate a great deal of distress
that is stemming from raising gifted children (Bridges, 1973; Freundlich, 1987; Olivier et al., 1995).

The first research question looked for knowledge about the characteristics, traits, and special needs of gifted children. These are some of the parents’ responses of what they have learned about giftedness in the support group:

“Getting to know various traits of giftedness, both ‘positive’ and ‘negative.’”

“It provided information and resources that I would otherwise not have known.”

“Provided insight into unique characteristics and issues of gifted children . . . was particularly helpful.”

“I learned that his abilities and behavior are not atypical.”

“Many of his irritating behaviors are just ways in which giftedness manifests itself.”

“Understand why she is the way she is; see things from her perspective.”

“I understand much better how gifted children think and feel.”
Parenting skills were the topic of the third research question. Parents who participated in the support groups felt they have learned parenting techniques as expressed in the following excerpts:

“I learned basic parenting tips that help parents deal with some typical behaviors.”

“I realized my frustrations in dealing with my child’s behavior are directly correlated to her giftedness and the clash of both of our personalities. The class provided some suggestions to temper and learn to adjust my reaction to my frustrations.”

“Gives me insightful solutions to tricky problems.”

“It was wonderful for me to hear other parents and learn tactics and become a better parent.”

“I have changed some of my parenting techniques because of the book and the discussion in this SENG parent group.”

“We learned we are not alone, the road will continue to be rocky, but I am equipped now.”

Relationships between parents and their gifted child were looked upon in the second research question. Some of
the parents’ reactions toward what the group contributed to the relationships with their gifted child were as follows:

“Understanding the extent of his giftedness means I can parent him more empathetically.”

“The social/emotional extremes and difficulties that I saw as separate from his giftedness, I now see as being a typical characteristic of this type of child. I also feel more respect for him in the areas that frustrate me.”

“That my son is not a monster! (Extremes of emotions!) That there are many tools & resources that can help.”

“That it is even more complex than we thought but we’ve learned ways to encourage and help our child to be the best he can be.”

“I learned that I need to help my gifted child find his place in society; instead of making him conform to what I believe that society expects. Instead of showing him the way, I now have tools & resources to help him find his way within the society.”

“Gave me greater empathy for what my child is dealing with.”
“Try to understand his point of view . . . that gifted people see the world differently and experience it with more intensity, to be more patient with him.”

“THEY ARE DIFFERENT and need to be handled differently. They are not just weird.”

Some of the objectives of the SENG model are to increase the awareness of parents of the social and emotional needs of gifted children and their families, and to develop parenting skills in nurturing emotional development of the gifted children (Webb & DeVries, 1998). From the parents’ responses one can speculate that these objectives were met in these support groups.

All these quotations suggest that differences might have been found if a pre- and a post-test had been given to the experimental group. It seems that the parents who participated in the support groups felt that they had learned in the group meetings, and now know more, about the characteristics of gifted children. They also reported that they learned different techniques of dealing with issues concerning their gifted children. Some of them mentioned that after they have been in the support group, they reacted to their gifted child’s behaviors with more
understanding and empathy. These are exactly the areas of concerns examined in this research study.

Research Limitations

This research had some limitations, as cited below.

1. The structure of the family of the gifted child was not taken into consideration. In some cases, the families were a single parent family; in other families, a caretaker came to the group instead of a biological parent.

2. Differences between reactions of fathers and mothers in raising their gifted child were not considered.

3. Differences in reactions of families who came to the group having their first gifted child and others who have some experience raising a few gifted children were not examined.

4. Parents who came to the support groups had gifted children of all school ages. There was no attempt made to distinguish between reactions of parents of elementary school children and parents of secondary school adolescents, even though the parents’ needs and their children’s needs may differ.
5. Although the experimental and control groups were found to be similar, it was also determined that both groups did not represent the general United States population (see Tables 4, 6, and 8). It was found that most of the parents in both groups were Caucasian, married women, well educated, and with a high family income. This distribution showed that the participants did not represent the general population, which might have affected the results of this research study. Also, the groups who participated in this research study were big enough for statistical evaluation, but they were quite small regarding the entire population of parents of gifted children.

6. Another limitation of this research was that parents who participated in the support groups were not asked to prove that their child had been tested and evaluated as gifted. Most parents found out about the parents’ support groups through gifted program coordinators or teachers who sent out the information about the groups to parents of gifted children who participated in these programs. The
parents were asked if their child was tested, what kind of test he or she took, and what the results were, but the credibility of their answers was not independently verified. Also, some parents did not know how their child was identified as gifted, or what his or her IQ was, so the research was not able to differentiate between parents of talented children, gifted children, and highly gifted children.

Future Research

Since this was the first study done on parents’ support groups, some future research is suggested:

1. A future research study should try to look for a more diverse population of parents with gifted children, especially those families who represent minority and/or low-income populations. Effort should be given by gifted program coordinators to get in touch with families of gifted children who are not upper middle class Caucasian families.

2. As no significant differences were found between the experimental and the control groups, but parents in the experimental group did write that the group
meetings were very beneficial to them, a pre-post study with parents who participate in the support groups could be beneficial. A problem that could be anticipated with this kind of research is the fact that the parents see the questions while they answer the survey the first time. Seeing these questions might bring more awareness to the issues raised by the questions, thus the effects of the group participation could be greater than in case the parents did not see the questions ahead of time.

3. Another research study should look for the long-term effects of participation in parents’ support groups, including such items as the level of contact maintained by parents in the support group. If future research determines there are long-term effects, the reasons behind those effects should be examined. Such research might discover whether long-term effects were due to group participation or contacts maintained with other group participants.

4. Another research study could try to distinguish between reactions of parents of talented children, gifted children, and highly gifted children. Such a
study could be important because there is literature that states that parents of gifted children encounter different issues depending upon the child’s level of giftedness or talent.

Conclusion

This research study did not find the anticipated differences between the parents who participated in parents’ support groups designed for parents of gifted children, and parents of gifted children who did not participate in such groups. In spite of these findings, there was anecdotal evidence that showed that parents’ support groups did help parents acquire more knowledge about the characteristics, traits, and special needs of gifted children; gave parents ideas and tools for parenting techniques; helped parents improve their relationships with their gifted children; and enhanced their confidence in their parenting skills. This belief was supported by the parents’ responses to the open-ended questions that were given to parents who participated in the support groups and through the literature that was reviewed for this research study.
APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY

FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP MEMBERS
Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at Kent State University, working on my Ph.D. dissertation. I want to do research on the effects of participating in support groups focusing on parenting gifted children. I want to do this because we believe that participating in parents’ support groups helps the parents and, in an indirect way, helps their gifted children. If this research can prove that, than maybe more support groups for parents of gifted children will be available, and more gifted children and their parents will benefit from them. I would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to answer a survey. From our experience, it takes between 15 – 25 minutes to answer the survey.

The survey you will answer presents no danger. The data gathered in this research will be confidential in the following manner: All the answers in each part of the first three parts of the survey will be combined to a single score, so no individual response can be connected to the participant and there will not be a disclosure of personal information. The responses you make as an individual will not be singled out or revealed to anyone beyond the research personnel. The survey form is entirely confidential. There is no way that your responses can be identified as yours. The confidentiality of all responses will be kept at all times.

Taking part in this project is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you do take part, you may stop at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please email me at dmadler@kent.edu, or call my advisor Dr. Jim Delisle at: 330-672-2294. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies (Tel. 330-672-2704).

By completing the survey and returning it, you give your consent to take part in this project.

If you have more than one gifted child, please choose one of your gifted children and answer all the questions regarding the same gifted child. For research purposes, if more than one family member participated in the support group, only one person should complete the survey for each gifted child.

Sincerely,
Dalia Adler
Doctoral Candidate
SURVEY

Dear Participant:

If you have more than one gifted child, please choose one of your gifted children and answer all the questions regarding the same gifted child. For research purposes, if more than one family member participated in the support group, only one person should complete the survey for each gifted child.

Part 1

In relationship to typical children you know, for each question please circle a number which best describes your child.

1- my child does not exhibit this trait. (no)
2- my child exhibits this trait less than a typical child (less than).
3- my child exhibits this trait similar to a typical child (similar to).
4- my child exhibits this trait more than a typical child (more than).
5- my child exhibits this trait to a high degree (high).

1) Has advanced vocabulary, expresses himself/herself well using “rich” language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Has a great deal of curiosity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Asks a lot of questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Knows a lot about a variety of topics (beyond the usual interests of children his or her age).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5) Tries to discover the how and why of things; wants to know what makes things (or people) “tick”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) Recalls facts quickly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) Has a rapid grasp of cause-effect relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8) Puts unrelated ideas together in a new and different ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9) Looks for similarities and differences in things.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10) Makes valid generalizations about events, people, and things.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) Is a keen and alert observer; usually gets more out of the things observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12) Becomes absorbed in certain topics of his or her choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13) Generates a large number and unique solutions to problems and questions.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

14) Uses atypical ways to approach a problem or a topic.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

15) Needs little external motivation to follow through in work that initially excites him or her.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

16) Has a long attention span on most tasks.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

17) Gets easily bored with routine tasks.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

18) Is self-critical and is not easily satisfied with his work’s outcomes. Tends to be a perfectionist.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

19) Is concerned about global problems like world peace, ecology, energy crises etc.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5

20) Has a keen sense of humor and understands irony. Sees humor in situations or events that are not obviously funny to most children his or her age.

no  less than  similar to  more than  high
1    2        3         4         5
21) Has a lot of imagination. Likes to fantasize.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22) Attends to aesthetic characteristics of things, like walking on a street and reacting to the architectural features of the buildings, or the beauty or ugliness he or she sees in a bridge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23) Is not willing to accept authoritarian instructions without critical examination and understanding of the reasons underlying the instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24) Is able to view the other person’s point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25) Develops empathy with the feeling and rights of others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your next responses, please circle one of the numbers on a continuum from 1 to 5:

1= to a little extent,
5= to a great extent

26) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her motor skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her social skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

   little extent  1  2  3  4  great extent

28) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her emotional skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

   little extent  1  2  3  4  great extent

Part 2

In your responses to the next group of questions, please circle one of the numbers on a continuum from 1 to 5:
   1= to a little extent,
   5= to a great extent

1) To what extent do you and your child share time and activities together?

   little extent  1  2  3  4  great extent

2) To what extent do you encourage your child to talk out his or her worries with someone?

   little extent  1  2  3  4  great extent

3) To what extent do you listen if and when your child chooses to talk out his or her worries with you?

   little extent  1  2  3  4  great extent
4) To what extent do you encourage your child to share feelings and to display affection?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

5) To what extent do you expect your gifted child to get only A’s in the regular class?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

6) To what extent do you expect your gifted child to get only A’s in the gifted class? (If your child is in a gifted program where grades are given)

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

7) To what extent are you concerned and/or frustrated when your child gets a grade lower than an A?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

8) To what extent do you praise your child and/or his or her works and performances.

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

9) To what extent do you avoid “put down” Statements such as: “I expected a better grade from a gifted child like yourself”.

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

10) To what extent do you help your child develop the “courage to be imperfect” – to understand and accept his or her limits and learn to accept failures?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5
11) To what extent do you help your child learn to make choices and decisions, e.g., discussing alternative behaviors to routine dilemmas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12) To what extent do you discuss with your child that some of life’s problems do not have quick, easy solutions and that he or she must learn to accept what cannot be changed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13) To what extent do you help your child identify ways to take control of his or her life, e.g., developing goals and strategies for their achievement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14) To what extent do you help your child identify the “stresses” in his or her life, talk about them, and take appropriate action whenever possible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15) To what extent do you help your child look at his or her problems from other perspectives?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16) To what extent do you help your child balance work with recreation and leisure activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17) To what extent do you let your child have time and space to relax and enjoy quiet, “do nothing” occasions or daydream?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18) To what extent do you expect your child to do what you have done or to achieve what you have failed to achieve, or to be the person you wanted to be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19) To what extent do your own problems get in the way of recognizing those your child may be experiencing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20) To what extent do you think your gifted child agrees with your expectations of him or her?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions only if you have other children who are not gifted

21) To what extent do you feel you give your gifted child more attention than his or her siblings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22) To what extent do you feel you spend more time with your gifted child than with his or her siblings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3

For each of the next questions please circle one of the numbers.
"1" means you strongly disagree with what is stated in the question (SD)
"2" = disagree (D)
"3" = no opinion (NO)
"4" = agree (A)
"5" = strongly agree (SA)

1) I know a lot about traits and characteristics of gifted children?
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

2) I have read books or articles about gifted children.
   None  1 or 2  3-5  6-10  more than 10

3) I feel confident about the way I educate my gifted child.
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

4) I doubt that I will be able to help my gifted child develop to his or her full potential.
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

5) I think that my gifted child has higher IQ than I have.
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

6) I am afraid that at a certain point I will not be able to help my child because I am less intelligent than he or she is.
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

7) I am afraid that I will not be able to give my child all he or she needs to develop his or her special skills because of financial limitations.
   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5
8) I am not sure that I can devote the amount of time my gifted child needs because I have other commitments (like: work, responsibilities for my other children, etc.).

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

9) I am not sure that I find the “golden path” between encouraging my child and pushing him or her too much.

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

10) I am not sure how much out-of-school organized activities (like music lessons, chess, sports, boys/girls scouts etc.) I should let my child be involved in.

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

11) I feel comfortable to ask my child’s school to accommodate his or her special educational needs.

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

12) I wish I could help my gifted child have more friends and be more socially accepted.

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5

13) I accept the idea that my child is different from other children his or her age.

   SD  D  NO  A  SA
   1   2   3   4   5
Part 4

Please elaborate on the next 2 questions. If you need more space please use the other side of the paper.

1) In what ways did the support group help you to better understand your gifted child?

2) What did you learn about giftedness - your child’s or your own - as a result of the participation in the support group?
Part 5: Demographic Information

So that we can see how your answers compare with those of other people, we would like to have a few facts about you. Your individual responses will not be shared with anyone.

1. City ______________________________

2. State _______________ Zip ____________

3. Gender: 
   Male _____
   Female ____

4. In what year were you born? 
   Before 1941 ____
   Between 1941 – 1950 ____
   Between 1951 – 1960 ____
   Between 1961 – 1970 ____
   Between 1971 – 1980 ____
   Between 1981 – 1987 ____

5. Indicate your marital status 
   Single _____
   Married ____
   Widowed ____
   Divorced ____

6. How many children do you have? _______

7. The gifted child you filled this survey about is your 
   Oldest _____
   Youngest _____
   Neither oldest nor youngest ____

8. According to your knowledge what is the IQ of the child you filled this survey about? ___________________

9. What test did your child take to achieve this IQ score? ____________________________________
10. Is this gifted child 
a boy _____  
a girl _____

11. How old is the gifted child about whom you answered this survey? _____

12. (a) Does this gifted child have also learning disabilities?    
yes _____  
no _____

(b) If your child has learning disabilities, how did you find out about it?  
______________________________________________________________

13. How many children identified as gifted (including the child you answered this survey about) do you have? _____

14. What is the relation between you and the gifted child?    
You are his or her birth mother _____   
You are his or her birth father _____  
Other (please specify) ____________________

15. Do you believe you yourself are gifted? ____________

16. Your racial designation is:    
African American _____   
Caucasian _____   
Latino/Hispanic _____   
Asian _____   
Native-American _____   
Other (Please describe) ____________

17. What is the highest school level that you completed?    
11th grade or less _____   
High School Graduate/GED _____   
Bachelor’s Degree _____   
Beyond Bachelor’s Degree (some graduate work) _____   
Master’s Degree _____   
Doctoral Degree _____   
Other (Please specify) ________________
18. Which of the following best describes the area you live in?
   Urban     _____
   Suburban   _____
   Rural      _____

19. Please indicate the number of people living in your household
   (including yourself) _______

20. Please indicate your approximate household income in 2004 before taxes.
   Under $25,000     _____
   $25,000 – $49,999  _____
   $50,000 – $74,999  _____
   $75,000 – $99,999  _____
   $100,000 – $149,999 _____
   $150,000 and over  _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY

FOR CONTROL GROUP MEMBERS
Dear Participant

I am a doctoral candidate at Kent State University, working on my Ph.D. dissertation.

I want to do research on the effects of participating in support groups focusing on parenting gifted children. I want to do this because we believe that participating in parents' support groups helps the parents and, in an indirect way, helps their gifted children. If this research can prove that, than maybe more support groups for parents of gifted children will be available, and more gifted children and their parents will benefit from them. I would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to answer a survey. From our experience, it takes between 15 – 25 minutes to answer the survey.

The survey you will answer presents no danger. The data gathered in this research will be confidential in the following manner: All the answers in each part of the first three parts of the survey will be combined to a single score, so no individual response can be connected to the participant and there will not be a disclosure of personal information. The responses you make as an individual will not be singled out or revealed to anyone beyond the research personnel. The survey form is entirely confidential. There is no way that your responses can be identified as yours. The confidentiality of all responses will be kept at all times.

Taking part in this project is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you do take part, you may stop at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please email me at dmadler@kent.edu, or call my advisor Dr. Jim Delisle at: 330-672-2294. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies (Tel. 330-672-2704).

By completing the survey and returning it, you give your consent to take part in this project.

Please complete the survey only if you have never participated in a support group designed for parents of gifted children. If you have more than one gifted child, please choose one of your gifted children and answer all the questions regarding the same gifted child. For research purposes, only one person should complete the survey.

Sincerely,
Dalia Adler
Doctoral Candidate
SURVEY

Dear Participant

Please complete this survey only if you have never participated in a support group designed for parents of gifted children. If you have more than one gifted child, please choose one of your gifted children and answer all the questions regarding the same gifted child. For research purposes, only one person should complete the survey.

Part 1

In relationship to typical children you know, for each question please circle a number which best describes your child.

1- my child does not exhibit this trait. (no)
2- my child exhibits this trait less than a typical child (less than).
3- my child exhibits this trait similar to a typical child (similar to).
4- my child exhibits this trait more than a typical child (more than).
5- my child exhibits this trait to a high degree (high).

1) Has advanced vocabulary, expresses himself/herself well using “rich” language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Has a great deal of curiosity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Asks a lot of questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Knows a lot about a variety of topics (beyond the usual interests of children his or her age).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5) Tries to discover the how and why of things; wants to know what makes things (or people) “tick”.

   no   less than   similar to   more than   high
   1     2          3            4          5

6) Recalls facts quickly.

   no   less than   similar to   more than   high
   1     2          3            4          5

7) Has a rapid grasp of cause-effect relationships.

   no   less than   similar to   more than   high
   1     2          3            4          5

8) Puts unrelated ideas together in a new and different ways.

   no   less than   similar to   more than   high
   1     2          3            4          5

9) Looks for similarities and differences in things.

   no   less than   similar to   more than   high
   1     2          3            4          5

10) Makes valid generalizations about events, people, and things.

    no   less than   similar to   more than   high
    1     2          3            4          5

11) Is a keen and alert observer; usually gets more out of the things observed.

    no   less than   similar to   more than   high
    1     2          3            4          5

12) Becomes absorbed in certain topics of his or her choice.

    no   less than   similar to   more than   high
    1     2          3            4          5
13) Generates a large number and unique solutions to problems and questions.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

14) Uses atypical ways to approach a problem or a topic.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

15) Needs little external motivation to follow through in work that initially excites him or her.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

16) Has a long attention span on most tasks.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

17) Gets easily bored with routine tasks.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

18) Is self-critical and is not easily satisfied with his work’s outcomes. Tends to be a perfectionist.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

19) Is concerned about global problems like world peace, ecology, energy crises etc.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5

20) Has a keen sense of humor and understands irony. Sees humor in situations or events that are not obviously funny to most children his or her age.

no           less than     similar to     more than     high
1             2            3              4              5
21) Has a lot of imagination. Likes to fantasize.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22) Attends to aesthetic characteristics of things, like walking on a street and reacting to the architectural features of the buildings, or the beauty or ugliness he or she sees in a bridge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23) Is not willing to accept authoritarian instructions without critical examination and understanding of the reasons underlying the instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24) Is able to view the other person’s point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25) Develops empathy with the feeling and rights of others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>less than</th>
<th>similar to</th>
<th>more than</th>
<th>high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your next responses, please circle one of the numbers on a continuum from 1 to 5:

1= to a little extent,
5= to a great extent

26) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her motor skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little extent</th>
<th>great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her social skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

28) To what extent do you think your child thinks and talks like an older child but his or her emotional skills are not as developed as the intellectual skills?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

Part 2

In your responses to the next group of questions, please circle one of the numbers on a continuum from 1 to 5:

1= to a little extent,
5= to a great extent

1) To what extent do you and your child share time and activities together?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

2) To what extent do you encourage your child to talk out his or her worries with someone?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

3) To what extent do you listen if and when your child chooses to talk out his or her worries with you?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

4) To what extent do you encourage your child to share feelings and to display affection?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent
5) To what extent do you expect your gifted child to get only A’s in the regular class?

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

6) To what extent do you expect your gifted child to get only A’s in the gifted class? (If your child is in a gifted program where grades are given)

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

7) To what extent are you concerned and/or frustrated when your child gets a grade lower than an A?

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

8) To what extent do you praise your child and/or his or her works and performances.

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

9) To what extent do you avoid “put down” Statements such as: “I expected a better grade from a gifted child like yourself”.

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

10) To what extent do you help your child develop the “courage to be imperfect” – to understand and accept his or her limits and learn to accept failures?

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |

11) To what extent do you help your child learn to make choices and decisions, e.g., discussing alternative behaviors to routine dilemmas?

| little extent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | great extent | 5 |
12) To what extent do you discuss with your child that some of life’s problems do not have quick, easy solutions and that he or she must learn to accept what cannot be changed?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

13) To what extent do you help your child identify ways to take control of his or her life, e.g., developing goals and strategies for their achievement?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

14) To what extent do you help your child identify the “stresses” in his or her life, talk about them, and take appropriate action whenever possible?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

15) To what extent do you help your child look at his or her problems from other perspectives?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

16) To what extent do you help your child balance work with recreation and leisure activities?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

17) To what extent do you let your child have time and space to relax and enjoy quiet, “do nothing” occasions or daydream?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5

18) To what extent do you expect your child to do what you have done or to achieve what you have failed to achieve, or to be the person you wanted to be?

little extent 1 2 3 4 great extent 5
19) To what extent do your own problems get in the way of recognizing those your child may be experiencing?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

20) To what extent do you think your gifted child agrees with your expectations of him or her?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

Please answer the following questions only if you have other children who are not gifted

21) To what extent do you feel you give your gifted child more attention than his or her siblings?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent

22) To what extent do you feel you spend more time with your gifted child than with his or her siblings?

little extent 1 2 3 4 5
great extent
Part 3

For each of the next questions please circle one of the numbers.
“1” means you strongly disagree with what is stated in the question (SD)
“2” = disagree (D)
“3” = no opinion (NO)
“4” = agree (A)
“5” = strongly agree (SA)

1) I know a lot about traits and characteristics of gifted children?

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5

2) I have read books or articles about gifted children.

None  1 or 2  3-5  6-10  more than 10

3) I feel confident about the way I educate my gifted child.

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5

4) I think that my gifted child has higher IQ than I have.

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5

5) I am afraid that at a certain point I will not be able to help my child because I am less intelligent than he/she is.

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5

6) I doubt that I will be able to help my gifted child develop to his or her full potential.

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5

7) I am afraid that I will not be able to give my child all he or she needs to develop his or her special skills because of financial limitations.

SD  D  NO  A  SA
1  2  3  4  5
8) I am not sure that I can devote the amount of time my gifted child needs because I have other commitments (like: work, responsibilities for my other children, etc.)

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5

9) I am not sure that I find the “golden path” between encouraging my child and pushing him or her too much.

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5

10) I am not sure how much out-of-school organized Activities (like music lessons, chess, sports, boys/girls scouts etc.) I should let my child be involved in.

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5

11) I feel comfortable to ask my child’s school to accommodate his or her special educational needs.

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5

12) I wish I could help my gifted child have more friends and be more socially accepted.

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5

13) I accept the idea that my child is different from other children his or her age.

   SD D NO A SA
   1 2 3 4 5
Part 4: Demographic Information

So that we can see how your answers compare with those of other people, we would like to have a few facts about you. Your individual responses will not be shared with anyone.

1. City ______________________________

2. State ____________ Zip ____________

3. Gender:
   Male ______
   Female ______

4. In what year were you born?
   Before 1941 ____
   Between 1941 - 1950 ____
   Between 1951 - 1960 ____
   Between 1961 - 1970 ____
   Between 1971 - 1980 ____
   Between 1981 - 1987 ____

5. Indicate your marital status
   Single ____
   Married ____
   Widowed ____
   Divorced ____

6. How many children do you have? _______

7. The gifted child you filled this survey about is your
   Oldest _____
   Youngest _____
   Neither oldest nor youngest ____

8. According to your knowledge what is the IQ of the child you filled this survey about? ___________________

9. What test did your child take to achieve this IQ score? ___________________
10. Is this gifted child
   a boy _____
   a girl _____

11. How old is the gifted child about whom you answered this survey?
    _____

12. (a) Does this gifted child have also learning disabilities?
    yes _____
    no _____

   (b) If your child has learning disabilities, how did you find out about it?
    _______________________________________________________________

13. How many children identified as gifted (including the child you answered this survey about) do you have? _____

14. What is the relation between you and the gifted child?
   You are his or her birth mother _____
   You are his or her birth father _____
   Other (please specify) ____________________

15. Do you believe you yourself are gifted? __________

16. Your racial designation is:
   African American _____
   Caucasian _____
   Latino/Hispanic _____
   Asian _____
   Native-American _____
   Other (Please describe) __________

17. What is the highest school level that you completed?
   11th grade or less _____
   High School Graduate/GED _____
   Bachelor’s Degree _____
   Beyond Bachelor’s Degree (some graduate work)___
   Master’s Degree _____
   Doctoral Degree _____
   Other (Please specify) ____________________
18. Which of the following best describes the area you live in?
   Urban  ____
   Suburban  ____
   Rural  ____

19. Please indicate the number of people living in your household (including yourself) _______

20. Please indicate your approximate household income in 2004 before taxes.
   Under $25,000  ____
   $25,000 – $49,999  ____
   $50,000 – $74,999  ____
   $75,000 – $99,999  ____
   $100,000 – $149,999  ____
   $150,000 and over  ____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Delisle, J., & Galbraith, J. (2002). *When gifted kids don’t have all the answers*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.


Rimm, S. (1984, Jan/Feb). Underachievement . . . Or if God had meant gifted children to run our homes, she would have created them bigger. *Gifted Child Today Magazine, 26*-29.


