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A Comparison of Family Stress with Gifted Children and Non-Gifted Children

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to design and test a psychological attitude measure intended to compare the stress experienced in families of nongifted children. After a review of the literature, evaluation by 5 experts and a pilot study with gifted families, a 31 item survey, organized under six categories was compiled. This survey, the Family Stress Scale (FSS) was given to the families of children enrolled in grades 1 through 3, at the Lindenwood School District. Thirty one families with gifted children and 67 families with nongifted children responded. A 2-test of difference between means was performed and the hypothesis that there was a difference between family stress with gifted children and family stress with nongifted children was supported.



Cynthia R. Motley, BA

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Art
1992

A COMPARED ABSTRACT STRESS
WITH GIFTED CHILDREN AND NON GIFTED CHILDREN

The goal of this research was to design and test a psychological attitude measure intended to compare the stress experienced in families of gifted children with the stress experienced in families of nongifted children. After a review of the literature, evaluation by 5 experts and a pilot study with gifted families, a 31 item survey, organized under six categories was compiled. This survey, the Family Stress Scale (FSS) was given to the families of 755 children enrolled in grades 1 through 3, at three schools in the Hazelwood School District. Thirty one families with gifted children and 67 families with nongifted children responded. A Z-test of difference between means was performed and the hypothesis that there was a difference between family stress with gifted children and family stress with nongifted children was supported.

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
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1992

A COMPARISON OF FAMILY STRESS WITH GIFTED CHILDREN AND NON GIFTED CHILDREN

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Assistant Professor Pamela Nickels, Ed.D.
Cooperator and Advisor

George Archibald, MA
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CHAPTER I**Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to study the contrast between stress experienced in families with intellectually gifted and talented children and stress found in families with nongifted children. The literature was replete with articles that documented the challenges and problems of raising gifted children. However, there was little that compared the stress felt in families with gifted children with families with nongifted children.

Despite the lack of research specifically addressing family stress, the literature revealed that there were unique stressors in raising the gifted and talented. These unique stressors could be measured and compared with families raising children of normal intelligence. It is hoped that a better understanding of these unique stressors will aid in normalizing family life with gifted children.

The secondary purpose of the study was to understand more about the unique stressors of raising gifted and talented

children. This information could perhaps facilitate the development of healthy coping mechanisms. It was reported by Morrow and Wilson (1961) that healthy relations and parent-child interactions are important to the positive adjustment of gifted youngsters.

There is a lack of understanding regarding the definition of the important terms. The Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry defined stress:

"A state of physical or psychological strain which imposes demands for adjustment upon the individual. Stress may be internal or environmental, brief or persistent. If excessive or prolonged, it may over tax the individual's resources and lead to a breakdown of organized functioning or disorganization. Types of situation that produce stress include, frustrations, deprivations, conflicts and pressures, all of which may arise from internal or external sources" (Goldenson, p. 715 1964).

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Definition of Important Terms

The literature illustrates that part of the stress surrounding giftedness is a lack of understanding regarding the definition of the important terms. The Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry defined stress:

"A state of physical or psychological strain which imposes demands for adjustment upon the individual. Stress may be internal or environmental, brief or persistent. If excessive or prolonged, it may over tax the individual's resources and lead to a breakdown of organized functioning or decompensation. Types of situation that produce stress include, frustrations, deprivations, conflicts and pressures, all of which may arise from internal or external sources" (Goldenson, p.715 1984).

There was no consensus of definitions for the phrase family stress. However, Hill (1949) was quoted in McCubbin, et. al., p. 857, (1980):

"most commonly stressors are defined as those life events or occurrences of sufficient magnitude to bring about change in the family system. Stress is not seen as inherent in the event itself, but rather is conceptualized as a function of the response of the distressed family to the stressor and refers to the residue of tensions generated by the stressor which remain unmanaged".

The term gifted child is "a label for any child whose intellectual aptitude and performance dramatically exceed the norms for her or his age" (Reber, p. 302, 1985). Reber continued by stating:

". . .the American educator, E. Paul Torrence put forward one (definition) which is more defensible: a child who shows 'excellent performance in any area of human behavior that is important to

society. The virtue of this definition is that it recognizes that giftedness extends beyond simply those characteristics and talents delineated by IQ tests and standardized scholastic-assessment devices" (p.303).

Foundations for the recent family stress research may be traced, in part to Hill's (1949) classic research on war-induced separation and reunion. In his A, B, C, X (crisis) formulation and his post-crisis "roller coaster course of adjustment," Hill outlined a set of major variables and their relationships which have remained virtually unchanged for over 30 years. In summary briefly, the two parts of this framework may be described as, first, a set of theoretical statements regarding the period of crisis:

"A (the event and related hardships)-interacting with B (the family's crisis meeting resources) - interacting with C (the definition the family make the event)-produce X (the crisis)'; and second, a set of statements relating to: 'the course of family

adjustment which is said to involve (1) a period of disorganization, (2) an angle of recovery, and (3) a new level of organization" (McCubbin, et. al, p. 855, 1980).

McCubbin, et. al., (1980) continued to discuss the difficult task of determining whether the family's specific hardships were a part of the response or whether the hardships were an inherent part of the stressor. This question alone made researching family stress complex.

For the purposes of this paper, the focus was on nonnormative events and family stress rather than examining a family's response to a specific crisis. The literature revealed that investigators have begun to turn attention toward the study of family behavior in response to long-term chronic stressor events rather than short-term and acute stressors. In general, the greatest concentration of study has been focused on the emotional and psychological hardships of both the child and parents. Few have attempted to shed light on the reasons

why some families are better able than others to adjust and manage chronic long-term stressors (McCubbin, et. al., 1980).

Another important concept introduced by Geismar et al, (1972) was "pile up". McCubbin et al, (1980) illuminated the importance of the concept by noting Geismar's conceptualization and systematic assessment of multi-problem families and young families struggling with increased responsibility for child care and economic burdens. Regardless of whether or not a family is composed of gifted or nongifted children, "pile up" is sure to occur.

The importance of Hill's B factor, the family's crisis-meeting resources will be further discussed later in this paper. However, it is important to realize that these resources are key to the family's ability to cope with a particular stressor event.

Gifted Characteristics Likely to be Stressful

The characteristics that caused much of the stress were the gifted child's heightened sensitivity and the parent's guilty sense of responsibility for raising a child with unique abilities

(Colangelo, 1988). There were misconceptions about gifted children's actual abilities that often caused peers and family members to respond to the child with mixed messages (McMann & Oliver, 1988). A by-product of the gifted child's uniqueness was others treating the child as a misfit. Gifted children were often independent thinkers and tended to immerse themselves single-mindedly into a few interests. The gifted child's tendency to set high expectations was also a pervasive theme in the literature as evidenced in (Dirkes, 1983) and (Room & Romney, 1985).

Colangelo (1988), characterized gifted children as being more sensitive to the feelings of others. The heightened sensitivity often was the cause of gifted children being overly conscious of the jealousy, envy and resentment of those around them. Kaplan (1990) went on to note that gifted children also have heightened sensitivity to their surroundings, to events, to ideas and to expectations. A sensitivity to other's feelings and to the world around one was often a characteristic parents may wish for their child to obtain. The alternative for the child would

then be to feel responsible for causing others to feel jealousy, envy, and resentment. The alternative behavior may cause stress for the gifted child and in turn the family.

Family or Parental Response

So often with a potential for greatness came the hope that the child would be happy, free from conflict, and have a normal life. How possible could it be to have a child be great and normal, happy and a super star? Problems that faced the gifted individual and indirectly his/her family according to Kreger-Silverman (1983) as quoted in McMann & Oliver (p. 275, 1988), "cluster around three primary areas: (a) perceptions of others, (b) self-perceptions, and (c) personality traits-external factors".

There are many problems of having a gifted child in the family. Keirouz (1990) admitted that with the blessing of having a gifted child there were a number of problems related to their child's giftedness or talent. When parents discovered that they have a gifted child in the family it should have been a time of rejoicing, however, often, they first felt "a guilty sense of

responsibility in being the custodian of talent and, at the same time a fear of somehow unintentionally stifling it" (McMann & Oliver, p. 276, 1988). McMann and Oliver went on to state that some parents avoided the issue entirely by denying their child's giftedness.

The perceptions of others was often confusing to the gifted child. There were mixed messages from peers, siblings and parents. On the one hand the gifted child was applauded, rewarded and admired, and on the other hand messages of jealousy, envy and resentment were sent. As a result of the mixed messages the child may have felt guilty about his/her giftedness, therefore, may have seemed "rude and obnoxious or secretive and withdrawn, depending on whether the emotional response is externalized or internalized" (McMann & Oliver, p. 275, 1988). A child would likely feel stress after receiving mixed messages from one's parents, siblings and peers.

Despite the fact that gifted children are perceived as being better adjusted the condition of giftedness was fertile ground for anxiety and stress because these students created

their own pressure to succeed by setting high, sometimes unrealistic, goals for themselves (Yadusky-Holahan & Holahan, 1983, quoted in Roome & Romney, 1985). Some gifted children experience their own high expectations for achievement as a relentless pressure to excel. Stress can occur even when everything is going well (Kaplan, 1990).

Another source of stress for the gifted student occurred as a result of the ability to readily see relationships and implications. The gifted must cope with convergent requirements on tests and in class discussions. "They are often torn between thinking like the test author and thinking on their terms. Holding back ideas produces stress in many of them" (Dirkes, p.68, 1983). Therefore, one could conclude that when parents, teachers and peers, as well as the gifted child, set unreasonably high expectations, family stress could flourish.

Stress may be fostered in the family of the gifted child because the occurrence of being gifted was not ordinary and unprepared peers and adults may have behaved inappropriately. Lacking an understanding of giftedness, they may not be able

to recognize and accept individuals whose abilities differ and may surpass, their own. Consequently family and peers were often unaware of the pressures that they created. This lack of understanding may have caused others to shun the gifted child and treat the child like a misfit. As children grow, the urge to fit in and be a part of an acceptable group may have become stronger than their urge to succeed and continue to excel in their studies. Often this conflict caused stress unless the gifted child and the family could come to terms with the conflict, either by associating with others who were in the same situation and/or by accepting the fact that they were different and rejoicing in the difference (Dirkes, 1983).

Most smooth running organizations share common goals and the members work toward those goals. Considering a family as an organization that must run smoothly in order to keep the stress level at a minimum may help illustrate the conflict that arises when one person has another agenda. Living with a child who is habitually an independent thinker, could cause a great deal of stress at home. "Children with creative

abilities may be perceived as wild, playful, silly, 'off the beaten track,' having a tendency to think independently, and to be nonconforming" (Sisk, 1977, quoted in Colangelo & Dettmann, p. 23, 1983).

Living with a child who single-mindedly immersed him/herself into a few interests often can cause alarm and stress with the parents. Parents hoped that their child would be well rounded and would excel in many areas. However it was common to find that gifted children immerse themselves in their primary interests, to the exclusion of other activities. Preference for well-rounded development of youth not only increases pressure for performance, but also suggests that individual interests give way to demands for multiple interest (Dirkes, 1983). Consequently, the conflict between the child and parent can cause stress within the family.

Family members experienced a challenge when faced with divergent intellectual capacities. Ross (1964) quoted in Colangelo and Dettmann (1983), stated that the difference between the intellectual capacity of the gifted child and other

family members will determine the degree of the problem for those children and their parents. In addition, the discrepancy between the intellectual and social-emotional development of the gifted child often creates stress for the child and parents alike.

Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D., (1983) saw a need for more study of family. Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D., (1983) noted that in American education, the most neglected minority was the gifted child. He concluded that parents of gifted children face the probability that their child will be in an educational environment inappropriate for his or her needs. A concerned parent of a gifted child might find this fact stressful. Five years later, Colangelo was still concerned with the families of gifted children: "One of the most significant trends in gifted education for the next ten years will be a focus on family issues. At this point, the family therapy field has not given attention to the issue of families with gifted children" (Colangelo p. 18, 1988).

Kathryn S. Keirouz, Ph.D., (p. 56, 1990) wrote "Although it has long been hypothesized that having a gifted child in a family has an effect on the roles and relationships within the family, it is

only in the last ten years that empirical work has been conducted in this area".

Statement of Purpose

The literature indicates that the study of gifted families is just beginning. Colangelo (1988) saw a need for more study of family issues. In an attempt to further explore the problems of raising a family with a gifted child, Keirouz (1990) stated that most of the work to date had been done very recently. Keirouz noted there was little doubt much was yet to be studied in the field of family stress and gifted children. Keirouz studied the problems of raising gifted children using the Parent Experience Scale (1990). Keirouz's study grouped the problems of raising gifted children into six categories:

- 1) Sibling Relationships, 2) Educational Issues,
- 3) Neighborhood and Community Issues, 4) Family Relationships, 5) Development of the Child and
- 6) Parental Self-Concept.

Using these categories as a basis, the research notion of the current study was that the stress of having a gifted child in

a family was unique. In other words, families experienced stress whether or not a gifted child was a member. However, the stress experienced by families of gifted children was different than families with nongifted children.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects for the study were parents of gifted and nongifted children in grades one through three. The children were enrolled in the Hazelwood School District in North St. Louis County, Missouri during the 1991-92 school year. One elementary school was selected from each of the three subdistricts by Dorothy Ricketts, Ph.D., Administrator of the Galactic Program. Galactic is the gifted program in Hazelwood. Dr. Ricketts chose one school from each of the three subdistricts to insure a cross-section of socio-economic background. Criteria for choosing each individual school was that they first, were located in different subdistricts and secondly, that they had the largest population of gifted students in that subdistrict. This aspect was important to offer the maximum variety of socio-economic background, as well as, providing the largest pool of gifted families to study.

A total of 755 children were enrolled in the three schools in grades one through three. Thirty-one were identified as gifted. Sixty seven surveys were returned from families with nongifted children with no identified learning disabilities. If a family identified any child as having a learning disability or behavior disorder their survey was removed from the sample. Of the thirty one gifted children, thirteen returned surveys. Seven of the gifted children were male and six were female. Of the sixty seven nongifted children, thirty two were male and thirty five were female.

Prior to sending out the surveys, it was determined that a minimum of thirty subjects per sample was an acceptable return. As noted above there was a short fall in the gifted sample's survey return. The balance was made up by administering the survey at a Galactic open house where eighteen more surveys were returned. Only these surveys were completed by the parents while the researcher was present.

Strongly disagree and almost never were given one point, strongly agree and almost always were given five points. The

Procedures

Except for the surveys that were completed at the Galactic open house, the children at the three schools in grades one through three were given a survey to take home for one of his/her parents to complete. The instrument used was the Family Stress Scale, (FSS). The FSS was developed by the researcher. It was comprised of 31 questions in six categories. The surveys that were sent home from the schools were given out on a Friday and returned the following Monday.

Instrumentation

The parents were asked to answer each question on a 5 part likert scale with a range of strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree and not applicable for all sections except for parental self-concept. The parental self-concept section was rated on a likert scale ranging from almost never, seldom, sometimes, frequently, almost always and not applicable. The not applicable answer earned no points. Strongly disagree and almost never were given one point, strongly agree and almost always were given five points. The

survey was constructed in such a way that the parent answering the questions could answer independently for each child in the family. (see the attached survey in Appendix)

The questions on the FSS were divided into six categories. The categories under which the questions were organized were, sibling relationships, neighborhood and community issues, child development, family issues, education issues and parent self-concept. These categories were inspired by the Parent Experience Scale, (PES). The purpose of the PES (Keirouz, 1990) was to identify problems of parents of gifted children.

The researcher was unable to locate an instrument that specifically measured family stress with gifted children. The closest instrument to measuring family stress with gifted children was the Parent Experience Scale. Kathryn Keirouz (personal communication, December 31, 1991) allowed the PES to serve as a model for the Family Stress Scale. Questions 1 through 12, and 17 through 26 were taken directly from the

asked to return the survey the following week. The researcher

PES. The additional questions were derived from the literature, parent comment and recommendations from 5 professionals.

Five experts evaluated the 37 questions on the FSS-A.

The experts were Georgia Archibald, Director of Teacher Programs at the Network; Beverly K. Berla, Executive Director of the Gifted Resource Council; Jesse B. Harris Jr. Ph.D., of Educational Services & Technologies; Kathryn Keirouz, Ph.D., author of the Parent Experience Scale; and Pamela M. Nickels, Ed.D, Chairman of the Counseling Department at Lindenwood College. The five experts evaluated the questions for content, as well as placement in the body of the survey.

Pilot Study

The Family Stress Scale-A (FSS-A) was initially given to 236 families registered for enrichment classes in the Gifted Resource Council. Of the 236 surveys given out, 33 responded. At least one of the children in these families was enrolled in enrichment classes at the Gifted Resource Council. The survey was given out at the parent orientation meeting. Parents were asked to return the survey the following week. The researcher

asked the parents to complete the survey as well as offer suggestions for further research and comments regarding the content of the questions.

The mean score for each question was computed. If any answer had a mean score of less than a 2, the question was dropped from the survey. The researcher determined that 2 questions did not address family stress in a significant way and were dropped as a result of the findings in the pilot study. No other tests were performed on the sample from the pilot study. It was presumed that by being enrolled at the Gifted Resource Council, at least one of the children in the family was professionally identified as gifted or was extremely talented. Therefore a comparison of stress between the families of gifted and nongifted children was out of the question.

The respondents to the pilot study also offered suggestions for rewording questions. Another four questions were dropped as a result of the pilot study because they addressed the families of gifted children exclusively. The respondents also seemed to appreciate the long awaited

attention to the issues of family stress. In the narrative portion of the survey, one woman stated, "No one has ever asked me this". Another person stated, "I never stopped long enough to analyze why we felt this way".

Origin of Survey Questions

Based upon the results of the FSS-A, the FSS evolved into a 31 question survey in six categories. The six questions that were removed pertained either to only gifted families, or averaged a score of 2 on the likert scale. The questions that scored a 2 or lower on the likert scale were deemed by the researcher to not pertain to family stress.

Sibling Relationships

The first four questions on the survey dealt with the child's relationship with his/her siblings. Two of the four questions in the section that addressed the sibling relationship concerned competition. The other two addressed the overall sibling relationship. The questions were taken directly from Keirouz's Parent Experience Scale (PES).

Neighborhood and Community Issues

The section addressing the neighborhood and community issues category had three questions. All of the questions were taken directly from Keirouz's Parent Experience Scale. The questions pertained to the parent's feelings about the quality of support they experienced in their community.

Child Development

Four of the nine questions in the section that addressed the child's development were taken directly from Keirouz's Parent Experience Scale. The remaining five, were derived from parent concerns and issues addressed in the literature. Kathryn Keirouz approved all of the additional questions. Keirouz's questions addressed issues such as: the parents of gifted children need to understand that the social and emotional growth of their child may lag behind his or her intellectual growth. The gifted child may not have the same level of ability in all endeavors. Some parents of the gifted report concerns because of the high energy level, low need for sleep, or untidiness of their child" (Keirouz, 1990).

Two of the researcher's additional questions addressed the child's ability to grasp abstract concepts. The literature, as well as responses from parents who were in the pilot study, indicated that this issue caused great concern. The child's advanced intellectual abilities often cause the child to be capable of grasping concepts such as death, racism, violence, and meaning of life issues. However, the child, developmentally was still a child and did not have the life experience to support the grasp s/he had of abstract issues.

The researcher added a question that addressed the child's feelings about when his/her performance was less than he/she expected. The last question in the section addressed whether or not it was a priority to spend time each day with the child reading, talking or playing. Both of these issues were repeated in the section dealing with the parent's self concept and are discussed in more detail there.

Family Relationships

The section dealing with family relationships had three questions. The questions were taken directly from the Parent

Experience Scale. The questions addressed issues regarding family roles, relationships, functioning, daily life and lifestyle. Sibling relationships were handled separately. However, the marital relationship and the extended family, including the in-laws were referenced. Keirouz (1990) stated that it appeared that parents of gifted children have stable marriages on the average. However, it did not mean that they were free of problems in their marital relationship. The problems Keirouz addressed were specifically related to having a gifted child along with other sources of conflict common to all parents.

Education Issues

The section covering Education issues concerned issues that may develop between the family and the school. All four questions in this section were taken directly from the Parent Experience Scale.

Parent Self-Concept

The eight questions in this section were answered on a likert scale ranging from Almost Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Frequently, and Almost Always. Three of the questions were

taken directly from the Parent Experience Scale and the remaining five were developed by the researcher based upon the literature review, and subject response to the pilot study.

All questions were approved by Kathryn Keirouz, Ph D.

First the total survey mean scores for the gifted and nongifted samples are compared. Then the mean scores for each sample is compared and analyzed by subcategory. The null hypothesis for this research was there was no statistically significant difference between the areas experienced by families with gifted and families with nongifted children.

Total Scores

To ensure that all six categories had impact upon the results the total scores were tested. A two-tailed, two sample Z-test for differences between means was used. The Statistica on Software computer program was used to test the difference between means (Timko & Downie 1986). Total mean score for the families with gifted children was 88.24. The families with nongifted children had a mean score of 84.95. The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level of significance because

CHAPTER IV

Results

The results of the 98 surveys returned are reported in terms of a comparison between the differences in mean scores. First the total survey mean scores for the gifted and nongifted samples are compared. Then the mean scores for each sample is compared and analyzed by subcategory. The null hypothesis for this research was there was no statistically significant difference between the stress experienced by families with gifted and families with nongifted children.

Total Scores

To ensure that all six categories had impact upon the results the total scores were tested. A two tailed, two sample Z-test for differences between means was used. The Statistics on Software computer program was used to test the difference between means (Timko & Downie 1988). Total mean score for the families with gifted children was 88.94. The families with nongifted children had a mean score of 84.91. The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level of significance because

a Z of 1.973 is greater than or equal to the critical value of 1.960. There was a p value = 0.048495. See Table 1 in Appendix.

Subcategories Analyzed

Each of the subcategories were also tested using the Statistics on Software (Timko & Downie 1988). A two tailed two sample Z test for difference in mean scores was used. The null hypotheses were that there was no significant difference in the stress experienced in the families with gifted children and the families with nongifted children. See Table 2 in Appendix.

Sibling Relationship

There was no significant difference between the stress in the gifted and nongifted samples. The mean score for the nongifted sample was 7.8358. The gifted mean score was 9.2903. There was a higher gifted mean score for this category. At the .05 level of significance, the p value was equal to 0.104072. The null hypothesis was retained because the Z score was -1.6255 and the critical value was -1.9600. See Table 2 in Appendix.

Neighborhood & Community Issues

The null hypothesis was retained in this section as well. At a .0500 level of significance, with a p value equal to 0.255250, a Z score of 1.137706, is less than the critical value of 1.960000. The neighborhood and community issues section was one section where the questions were slanted positively. The section had a possible high score of 15. The gifted sample mean score was 11.1935 and the nongifted was 10.4925. There was .701 difference in the mean. The gifted sample mostly used the "Agree" answer on the likert scale. The nongifted sample scored "Undecided" to "Agree". Overall both samples approved of the support they received from their neighborhood and community. See Table 2 in Appendix.

Child Development

The Child Development section had a mean score of 27.4925 for the nongifted sample. The gifted sample had a mean score of 30.4516. The null hypothesis was rejected at the .0500 level of significance with a p value equal to 0.000537. This section had a Z score of -3.4673 which was

greater than the critical value of -1.9600. See Table 2 in Appendix. This was the only section that, as a subsection of the survey, rejected the null hypothesis. The spread between the two mean score was 2.95907.

Family Relationships

The mean score for the gifted sample was 4.0645 and the mean for the nongifted was 4.2388. Even though the null hypothesis was retained, the spread between the mean scores was merely .1743.

At the .0500 level of significance there was a p value of 0.748788. The Z score was .0320236 and was less than the critical value of 1.9600. See Table 2 in Appendix.

Education Issues

The gifted sample had a mean score of 16.0967. The nongifted sample had a mean score of 15.8806. The gifted families' average response to the questions was to agree that their child's needs were being met. The nongifted families were undecided to agreeing that their child's needs were being met by the school district. The null hypothesis was retained at the

.0500 level of significance. The p value was equal to 0.700003. The Z of 0.385312 was less than the critical value 1.9600. See Table 2 in Appendix.

Parent Self-Concept

The null hypothesis was retained at the .0500 level of significance because there was a p value equal to 0.303436. The Z of 1.02909 was less than the critical value of 1.96000. There was a 1.0418 spread between the two means. Coincidentally, the nongifted sample had a higher mean score than the gifted sample. The nongifted sample had a mean score of 18.8806 and the gifted sample had a mean of 17.8387. See Table 2 in Appendix.

CHAPTER V

Interpretation of Data and Conclusion

The review of literature illustrated many problems in raising gifted children, however there was little research, to date, that measured the problems and stress. Researchers have taken a "piecemeal" approach to the concept of problems encountered by parents of gifted children. Some research has been done regarding specific parental concerns but there is little evidence of research covering the overall concept.

One reason is that there has not been an examination and synthesis of the work that has been done in the past (Keirouz, 1990).

Therefore, it became clear to the researcher that there was a need for further understanding of the realities of living with family members who are intellectually gifted. The ultimate goal of this research was to offer hope and education. Hope to families with gifted children. Education to well meaning peers of families with gifted children. Out of ignorance, many times one's attempts at assistance falls short.

The intent of this research was to identify areas of stress unique to families with gifted children. Family stress, itself, is not limited to families of gifted children. However, much of the literature suggested that teaching coping skills was the most effective way to handle family stress. Most investigations appear to be shifting away from a dysfunctional emphasis, to an interest in accounting for why some families are better able to endure hardships over the life span. This recent emphasis, which views stress as prevalent, but not necessarily problematic, has led to an increasing interest in coping (McCubbin et al., 1980). If the stress of raising a family that included a gifted child was unique, it stood to reason that an understanding of these stressors and how they correlated with the subcategories was appropriate.

Sibling Relationship

In any family, sibling relationships can cause stress as well as joy. Peterson (1977) found that the presence of a gifted child in the family was associated with increases in competitiveness among all family members, sibling jealousy,

and disrespect for each family member's uniqueness. Siblings who were younger than the identified gifted child may feel that they have an impossible "act" to follow in terms of achievement or talent. If the sibling is older than the gifted child, the sibling may feel pressure and resentment because the gifted child's achievements may rival or surpass his/her own.

Of the 31 subjects in the gifted sample, 10 percent did not have siblings. The nongifted sample had 9 percent of the 67, without siblings.

Neighborhood and Community Issues

The perception of a lack of understanding and community support for gifted children and their families was pervasive in the literature. This stance was not supported in the current research. The families of gifted children felt supported by their community. The families with nongifted children were undecided about the support offered by their community.

Child Development

The development of the child section dealt with issues concerning the child's cognitive, social, and emotional

development. The section did not include issues regarding the child's educational placement or other educational issues.

The entire survey was constructed in such a way that the parent was able to give an answer for each individual child in the family. Therefore, it was possible to track the differences in the children's development. This was particularly important in this section.

The literature emphasized the importance of the disparity between a child's intellectual development and emotional development. The results of the survey supported the literature. Overwhelmingly, this subsection endorsed the difference in the family stress experienced in the two samples.

The fact that this section had more questions than any other might imply that additional questions might be included in the other sections, thus allowing more variability. The researcher originally presumed that this section caused the entire survey to reject the null. However, after further consideration, it was determined that other sections contributed

child's abilities and accomplishments. This category addressed

to the overall rejection of the null, even though they themselves did not reject it individually.

Family Relationship

The support offered by one's extended family was addressed in the family relationship subsection. Again, the concern of the literature about gifted children and their needs not being understood by their extended family was in question in this subsection. Coincidentally, the nongifted sample had the higher mean score.

Education Issues

Like the neighborhood and community issues subsection, the education issues results did not support the findings in the literature. The families with gifted children felt that the Hazelwood School District was meeting their needs. The nongifted families were unsure about this matter.

Parent Self-Concept

Parent self-concept subsection concerned issues of one or both parent's feelings and self-concepts relative to their child's abilities and accomplishments. This category addressed

the roles that parents take and how they were related to the images they carry about themselves. Very often parents of gifted children have problems because they are, like most parents only prepared to deal with 'normal' children. When a child is something other than normal, such as, exceptional, the parents experience confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety about what is the best thing to do to help the child (Ross, 1979).

Coincidentally, the nongifted mean scores were higher than the gifted for this subsection.

The purpose of focussing heavily on the parent's self-concept was as a result of the literature stating that parents were very invested in their child's abilities and label. All parents have a large responsibility to make sure that their children are stimulated and work to the best of their abilities. The questions in this section measured the parent's feelings about the job s/he was doing. "It is widely agreed that parents need to be very involved educationally with the child at home" (Colangelo & Dettmann, p. 24, 1983).

It was a research notion of this study, that in today's American society the additional responsibility of attending to the educational and enrichment needs of children would be stressful. Attending to the needs involved "piling up" these tasks on top of income production, attending to household responsibilities, extended family responsibilities, community and/or church responsibilities as well as the needs of the parent as part of a couple and as an individual. The researcher was interested to note whether these concerns were greater in the gifted families. Apparently, that was not the case in this particular study.

Limitations & Recommendations

There were several issues regarding the construction of the Family Stress Scale that proved to be problematic. The problem with the Neighborhood and Community Issues section and the Education Issues section was that most of the questions on the survey had a negative slant. Therefore agreeing with the statement translated into agreeing with the negativity. The questions in these two sections had a positive

slant. Perhaps the researcher should have reversed the value of the points on this section in order to have parity with the entire survey. This would have reduced the total scores across the board. There would have been no change in the out come overall.

Refinement of the instrumentation might include reversing the values where there is a positive slant to the question. This will offer a more consistent overall score.

Keirouz stated that there is much potential for growth in the research of parent's self-concept. Most of the reports on the self-concept of parents of the gifted appear to be based on field observations or theoretical formulation (Keirouz, 1990).

This study does not support the reviewed research. Three of the many reasons for that might be:

1. The families of gifted children in the Hazelwood School District are remarkably well adjusted.

SUMMARY

This study is the tip of the iceberg in the research of giftedness and family stress. There is much need for further

2. The phrasing of the questions might be improved to facilitate a better understanding of the meaning of the questions.
3. Enough trust did not exist to elicit truthful answers.

Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher did not investigate how the Hazelwood School District compared with other districts in the area, regarding whether or not the family perceived their needs were being met. The researcher also did not compare how the Galactic program in the Hazelwood School District compared with other gifted programs in the area. Another issue of interest was how the Galactic program safe guarded against student burn-out. Were they able to keep the gifted children interested and stimulated over their entire school career? The researcher found many of these questions to be interesting to ponder, but were out of the scope of this study.

Summary

This study is the tip of the iceberg in the research of giftedness and family stress. There is much need for further

empirical work regarding all of the subsections, in particular parent self-concept. There were a few surprises regarding the results of the Z-tests of the subsections. The most surprising was that the gifted families had a lower mean score than the nongifted families in the neighborhood and community issues and education issues subsections. It was gratifying to learn that overall, the results did support the research notion. There was a difference in the stress experienced between families with gifted children and families with nongifted children.

Conclusions

Based on the review of the literature, the concerns of parents of gifted children fall into six major areas. These areas are:

1. Sibling Relationships
2. Neighborhood and Community Issues
3. Development of the Child
4. Educational Issues
5. Family Roles and Adaptations
6. Parental Self-Concept

These categories might be used as a framework for future research or in educational and therapeutic milieus. The framework could also be used in parent support groups. Another use would be for parents, themselves, as a "metacognitive aid for navigation through the maze of difficulties inherent in raising a gifted child" (Keirouz, p. 62, 1990).

As a closing remark, Dorothy Knopper offered encouragement to a parent of a gifted child in her forum for parents and educators of gifted/talented children "Open Space". It is found in Roeper's Review. Her statement seemed to crystalize the theme of the research best when she said:

"Unfortunately, giftedness is not always a high value in our society. We tend to prioritize mediocrity. Gifted programs are the first to go when dollars are tight. The struggle is real, and you can never relax. Your children need you to advocate for them. It's difficult to parent a gifted

Table child, and its harder to be a gifted child. Don't give
Come up" (Knopper, p. 55, 1990).

	Gifted Mean	Nongifted Mean	Z Score	p Value
	88.94	84.31	1.9735	0.048495

critical value = 1.96

$\alpha = 0.0500$

Table 1

Comparison of Total Survey Scores

Category	Gifted Mean	Nongifted Mean	Z Score	p Value
Striving	88.94	84.91	1.9735	0.048495

critical value = 1.96

$\sigma = 0.0500$

Neighborhood/Issues	11.1925	10.4925	1.137705	0.255250
Child Development	30.4516	27.4925	-3.467300	0.000537
Family Relationship	4.0645	4.2385	0.0320238	0.748785
Education Issues	16.0557	15.8506	0.385512	0.700003
Parent Self Concept	17.8587	18.8506	1.02908	0.305436

critical value = 1.96

$\sigma = 0.0500$

Table 2

Comparison of Gifted and Nongifted Scores by Survey Category

Category	Gifted Mean	Nongifted Mean	Z Score	p Value
Sibling Relationship	9.2903	7.8358	-1.6255	0.104072
Neighborhood/Community Issues	11.1935	10.4925	1.137706	0.255250
Child Development	30.4516	27.4925	-3.467300	0.000537
Family Relationship	4.0645	4.2388	0.0320236	0.748788
Education Issues	16.0967	15.8806	0.385312	0.700003
Parent Self-Concept	17.8367	18.8806	1.02909	0.303436

critical value = 1.96

$\sigma = 0.0500$

Strongly disagree (SD) Disagree (D) **FAMILY STRESS SCALE (A)** Undecided (U) Agree (A) Strongly agree (SA) 47

These questions pertain to your feelings about your experiences with your child/ren. For each question, please indicate whether you **strongly disagree (SD)**, **disagree (D)**, are **undecided (U)**, **agree (A)**, or **strongly agree (SA)**. If a question does not apply to you, circle NA. Answer each question for each individual child in your family. Child #1 would be your oldest child listed on the demographics questionnaire, child #2, is the second child, and so on. If more children than three, are in the household please use the back of this sheet.

		<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>NA</u>
8.	<i>My child's social and emotional growth are developing</i>						
1.	The competition between my children seems to encourage communication and cooperation.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9.	<i>My child is developing socially and intellectually at</i>						
2.	My child is overly competitive with a brother (or sister, or both).						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	My child seems to have a poor relationship with the other child(ren) in the family.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11.	<i>There is a difference between the rates of my child's</i>						
4.	The competition between my children seems to damage their overall relationship.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12.	<i>My child often isolates him/herself to follow his/her</i>						
5.	My family lives in a community that has the resources to fit my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13.	<i>My child becomes overly disappointed when his/her own</i>						
6.	People in my community seems to be responsive to my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Family Stress

Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (U), agree (A), strongly agree (SA) 48

		SD	D	U	A	SA	NA
7.	People in my community seem to be empathetic to my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8.	My child's social and emotional growth are developing at equal rates.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9.	My child is developing socially and intellectually at different rates.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10.	My child has difficulty in making friends.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11.	There is a difference between the rates of my child's emotional and intellectual development.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12.	My child often isolates him/herself to follow his/her own interests.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13.	My child becomes overly disappointed when his/her own performance is less than he/she expected.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA



Family Stress

49

Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (U), agree (A), strongly agree (SA)

	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>NA</u>
14. I believe my child grasps abstract concepts such as life and death, good and evil, loyalty, and destiny.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
15. My child's understanding of abstract concepts at an early age made him/her unnecessarily anxious.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
16. It is a priority in my household to spend time each day with my child talking, playing together or reading.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
17. Difficulties in my relationship with my parents center around my child.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
18. My child has been the center of difficulties in my marital relationship.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
19. My child is the center of difficulties in my relationship with my in-laws.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
20. I think that the school provides well for my child's educational needs.						
(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA



Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (U), agree (A), strongly agree (SA)

		<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>NA</u>
21.	The school has made adequate efforts to accommodate my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
22.	My child's teacher seems to be sensitive to my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
23.	The school has made appropriate efforts to provide for my child's needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA

The questions in this section pertain to your feelings about yourself as a parent. Please indicate the degree to which each of the statements is a problem for you as a parent: **Almost Never (AN)**, **Seldom (S)**, **Sometimes (ST)**, **Frequently (F)**, or **Almost Always (AA)**. If a question does not apply to you circle NA.

		<u>AN</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>ST</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>AA</u>	<u>NA</u>
24.	I regret not being able to provide my child with enough intellectual stimulation.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
25.	I feel anxious when I cannot answer my child's questions.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
26.	I feel guilty because I cannot provide my child with enough educational opportunities.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Almost Never (AN), Seldom (S), Sometimes (ST), Frequently (F), or Almost Always (AA)

		AN	S	ST	F	AA	NA
27.	I feel unable to provide the emotional resources my child needs.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
28.	I feel that my child's accomplishments are a credit to my parenting skills.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
29.	When my child's performance in school is better than I anticipate, I feel responsible.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
30.	When my child's performance in school is less than I anticipate, I feel that I am not a good enough parent.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
31.	I feel guilty if I do not spend time each day with my child talking, playing together or reading.						
	(child #1)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #2)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	(child #3)	1	2	3	4	5	NA

GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC GALACTIC PROGRAM

The major goal of education is to meet the needs of the learner. The state of Missouri has passed a state law encouraging school districts to establish programs for gifted children which will provide services beyond the level of instruction ordinarily provided in regular school classrooms. These programs provide differentiated curriculum designed to meet the needs of the gifted learner.

ENTRANCE PROCEDURES FOR THE GALACTIC PROGRAM

Academic

Step 1

Teacher or parent recommendations are required and students who have two recommendations are eligible for further testing. The MMAT is used as a screening device as a step in selection for the District's gifted programs in grades 2-6. A student must score at or above the 95th percentile in two or more of the sub-tests. The four sub-tests are: Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Step 2

Those students who remain eligible will be given an achievement test. The test will be given by the school counselor, GALACTIC teacher, or other qualified personnel. On the elementary level, intermediate students must score at or above the 95th percentile in at least two of the five basic subjects (language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, reading) with the reading score being at the 85th percentile or higher. Primary students must score at or above the 95th percentile in reading and at or above the 95th percentile in language arts or mathematics.

Step 3

If a current qualifying I. Q. score (97th percentile or above) is not available, building counselors, GALACTIC staff, or other qualified personnel will administer an individual I. Q. test.

Step 4

Those students who have met all of the requirements will be eligible to participate in GALACTIC. Final decision will be made by GALACTIC coordinators.

Process for Filling Vacancies

When a vacancy occurs in the GALACTIC program, the Director will determine placement from the district's eligible children. Priority will be given in the following manner: 1) Children new to the district coming from another gifted program, 2) Children from schools having the lowest percentage of students currently in the program, 3) Date of eligibility.

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Professional Experience:

Chrysalis Center - 100 practicum hours earned between April, 1990 and September 1990.

Responsibilities included: Supporting people recently bereaved and facilitating grief support group.

Women's Counseling Collective - 500 practicum hours earned between April 1987 and September, 1992.

Responsibilities included: Individual counseling, group counseling and conducting intake interviews.