

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND

AIMS OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

The catalyst for the selection of the central phenomenon for this research paper was the literacy workshops for underachieving children with high learning potential that the writer presented. These workshops resulted from the implementation of the Lighthouse Project, an initiative undertaken by a religious education system in New South Wales (further detail is given in Ch.3). The writer began to reflect about what type of influence their parents, and the family dynamics, have on the underachievement of these children. The areas of self-concept, self-efficacy, achievement, motivation, values and attitudes are influenced by the family environment and parental attitudes.

Gagné (2003) highlights that through a variety of environmental factors such as identification, imitation, stimulating home environments, family types and socio-economic backgrounds parents can either hinder or advance the development potential of their gifted child. The successful realisation of a gifted child's potential will depend on the interaction of all these factors, as well as other non-environmental factors such as personality and birth order. Much research has been done on family influences but very little from the perspective of the parents and their own childhood influences, nor on the repercussions of these influences on the child-rearing methods they use for their gifted children.

All lives are formed in history, power inequities, institutional arrangements, and relational negotiations. Compositional studies are well suited to reveal these relations. Youth of colour and in poverty know these relations and consistently narrate them for us all. (Fine 1994: 78)

Research Outline and Questions

There is much descriptive family information based on biographical, historical and questionnaire data for gifted individuals who have achieved eminence (Rimm & Lowe,

1988; Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004). However, there is very little similar research about families of gifted academic underachievers, and virtually none from the perspective of the parents and their own childhood influences. Were they also underachieving gifted individuals? Did their childhood family dynamics influence their underachievement? In particular, there has been very little research on Australian families and the extent to which family dynamics can affect academic underachievement. Are the family dynamics affected by the socio-economic status of the family? At the present time it is generally accepted that those subgroups particularly at risk of underachieving are gifted students in rural areas; students from minority or linguistically diverse groups; females; students with talents and abilities, such as creativity and leadership that are not commonly assessed in school settings (Lupart & Pyryt, 1996: 38).

This study explores the life experiences of parents of academically underachieving gifted children (from a low socio-economic area) through the use of a mixed methods design. It involves the collection, analysis, and ‘mixing’ of both quantitative and qualitative data to best study the research problem (Creswell, 2005). The quantitative data were collected initially to establish the socio-economic status of the family, and the identification of the children as underachievers with high learning potential. The qualitative data took the form of interviews, presented as narrative inquiry case study which explores the problem of underachievement through the parents’ stories. From this focus the study makes connections between parental experiences, family dynamics and underachievement in Australian families from low socio-economic areas.

It is a *phenomenological study* as the researcher attempts to understand the participants’ perceptions, perspectives, and experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The phenomenological approach focuses on understanding the meaning that events have for

the persons participating in them (Shkedi, 2005). By looking at multiple perspectives the researcher can make generalizations and draw some linking themes between the stories. The stories of Teena, Claire, Renee and Arna provide insights into understanding the experiences and challenges faced by these individuals. The study aspires to highlight their stories and perspectives so that we may more clearly envision and understand their worlds. Teena, Claire, Renee and Arna were enthusiastic and generous in sharing experiences that evoked strong emotive memories, memories that were not always pleasant. A rapport was built between the researcher and the participants, a rapport based on empathy, mutual trust and mutual valuing. In this research study the paradigms of feminist research writers have been valued and have influenced the narrative style of the case studies. Through feminist scholarship we are now beginning to learn about women and women's lives (Du Bois, 1983; Fine, 1994).

Sociological research from a feminist writer's viewpoint involves dealing with the actualities of people's lives. Unlike sociologies that seek to generate a totalizing system, different sites of women's experience, different social relations or different aspects of the same complex are brought into view (Smith, 1999). This method of research relies on investigation, of finding out, of discovering rather than the theories being in place to govern the research. Du Bois (1983) highlights that the different phases of science-making constitute a process, and, contrary to general ideas of strict scientific neutrality, the process involves interpretation, theory-making, and thus values, in each of its phases. "As Marx clearly saw, beginning with actual individuals, and their activities, means taking for granted that consciousness cannot be separated from them. It is always and only theirs." (Smith, 1999: 71).

Feminist research writers struggle with the dichotomy of their position as researcher and friend (Deutsch, 2004). A researcher has multiple personas, they are an objective

observer and an empathetic listener. As a researcher the writer has found that by being an empathetic listener richness is added to the stories and by being an objective observer a clear narrative can be achieved. Deutsch (2004) recognises the bi-directional nature of research. “I am subject, object, and researcher. My participants are subjects, objects, and actors. Through examining the humanity of both, we learn more about our topic and ourselves, we bring richness and honesty to our research” (p.889).

This paper is written from the perspective that the women involved, the participants, cannot be separated from their actualities, their contexts, or their life experiences. It is these elements that designate them as individuals that are integral to their consciousness. Any universal understanding of human beings and human society that leaves women out and, when it brings us in renders us unknowable even to ourselves, is not only inaccurate but mystifying, damaging (Du Bois, 1983). Feminist writers see things as whole, entire, complex, where experiences impinge on other experiences until a complex matrix of self is constructed. This type of research demands rigour, precision and responsibility.

Punch (2001: 21) explains that the content of the research has a logical priority over the method of the research. He also emphasises that a good question-method fit is a central criterion in the validity of research. The writer has attempted to ensure that the content of the research is validated by the design and the question-method fit. The purpose of this study is to “explore and understand a single phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005: 134) through the ‘eyes’ of the parents from the Lighthouse Project and to capture each of their experiences in a narrative. Creswell (2005) points out that there are several kinds of narrative research, the approach used in this study is a combination of different elements: a biography and a personal story, with a ‘theoretical lens’ on underachievement.

The central phenomenon is the extent to which parents of underachieving students with high learning potential are underachievers themselves. Research questions (rather than

hypotheses) are more common in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). They provide the key to the central concept that is to be explored in the research design. The research question provides the sounding board against which the data collected are tested in order to discern whether the data provide support, or not, for the question posed. This study asks the following research questions.

1. To what extent may parents of underachieving gifted children (from low socio-economic backgrounds) underachieve themselves?
2. What family dynamics are presented in the family of an underachieving gifted child?

In order to clarify exactly what the question is asking, the key terms need to be defined.

In this study the terms to be defined are:

underachieving gifted child – a student who has shown exceptional performance on a standardised test of intellectual ability or achievement and who, nevertheless, does not perform as well as expected on school-related tasks as evidenced by grades or teacher reports (Clark 2002: 541, Chaffey, 2005)

invisible underachiever - a student who underperforms both in the classroom and on commonly used evidence of potential for higher achievement. They are more likely to be found in culturally diverse and low SES populations (Chaffey, 2005).

low socio-economic – having to do with or involving a person's low social and financial status (Macquarie dictionary)

family dynamics – the patterns of relating, or interactions, between family members.

Each family system and its dynamics are unique, although there are some common patterns (Strong Bonds, 2007: 1).

The writer has also refined a definition of family dynamics relevant to this paper - the growth and development of the child with respect to the availability of resources stemming from parental influences.

Symptomatic behaviour is seen as arising out of the inter-related behaviour of all family members. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of a young person's situation, their behaviour is explored in the context of their family system, rather than in isolation. (Becvar & Becvar, 2002: 5)

The following chapters provide the details of *Underachieving gifted children: intergenerational issues*. The literature review provides a background to the discussion on the causes of underachievement in gifted children. The methodology describes the methods, process and conduct of this research study. The context provides a statistical background for the narratives. The four case studies of Teena, Clare, Renee and Arna follow and they generate material for the final chapter that includes the findings and discussion.

The Aims of the Study

The research questions generate a specific set of aims for the study which are needed in order for the study to proceed with clarity and logic:

- i. to listen to the educational and formative experiences of parents of underachieving gifted children;
- ii. to explore the synergy between the parents and a child, and how this affects the learning potential of gifted children;
- iii. to explore the effects of low socio-economic backgrounds on the learning potential of gifted children.

By exploring the parents' life experiences educators and counsellors may gain insights into ways to assist underachieving academically gifted children. They may be able to assist the families in creating stimulating and stable home environments that will nurture

giftedness and encourage the children to achieve their academic potential. It is the hope of the writer that this study may contribute to a growing body of knowledge that will be used to prevent the loss of so many of our gifted students to underachievement.

As Shaun (2004), aged 14, wrote to his English teacher:

I'm just a boy and you're a man with my mind in your grasp.

You could hold it and caress it, and help it grow and prosper

Or crush it into cubeness so it fits into the pile.

It is the aim of the writer and the participants that this study will contribute to the growing body of work on gifted children so that less of our gifted children will be crushed 'into cubeness'.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Parents of gifted children have a very strong influence on a number of aspects of their children's development. The significant impact of persons (parents, siblings, extended family, carers) on other persons (gifted children) is probably easier to imagine than that of any other source of influence within their environment (Gagné, 2003). The provision of social models is an indispensable means of transmitting and modifying behaviour in situations where errors are likely to produce costly or fatal consequences (Bandura, 2003). Psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants. Parents with children who have become outstanding in their talent field have been a positive influence on their children. However, other parents experience much stress and insecurity when dealing with their gifted child and so the parental influences can become negative. What happens when the parents themselves were unrecognised gifted children? How can they provide the right modelling and environment if they do not have experience to draw upon? This lack may have contributed to their child's inability to achieve their potential. Tolan (cited in Kearney, 2000) describes the emotional intensity parents can experience on two levels - as parents and the powerless children they themselves once were. They may feel an overwhelming need to fix for their children what they could not fix for themselves.

Early socialisation processes

Socialisation is carried out by social institutions and by individuals within those institutions. These *agents of socialisation* shape and filter the effects of culture on the individual (Partington, 1998: 40). In most societies the mother, or primary caregiver (a

term more relevant to contemporary societal structures), is the prime facilitator of a young baby's contact with the prevailing cultural norms and other social contacts. She provides the home environment that can have either a positive or negative effect on the cognitive and socio-affective development of the child. Feuerstein (cited in Freeman, 1993: 576) believes that it is this mediation which is of great importance for children of high ability. A positive emotional atmosphere allows and encourages the child to explore and develop while a negative emotional atmosphere inhibits this development. A distressed child, reacting to the mother's negative emotions, will have a decreased urge to explore. This can have significant effects on the intellectual growth of a baby. Thus, the mother's role in the initial socialisation process is of primary importance and is highly significant to the development of the gifted child. Clark (2002: 120) emphasises that the caregiver is the most critical factor in the young child's learning.

Most gifted children show early signs of concentration, word memory and talking. Some aspects of cognitive development can be traced from as early as three months such as verbal ability, as well as spatial and nonverbal signs. Clark (2002) indicates that animation and simple playful exchanges of vocalizing and smiling with caregivers will begin to establish patterns of early socialisation. Cognitive stimulation and emotional involvement are necessary for later intellectual development. Freeman (1991: 674) indicates that responses of babies very much depend on the care that they receive from the mother, and this will often reflect the type of care the mother herself has received as an infant.

The mother encourages the activities of which she approves and discourages those she considers inappropriate thus attempting to extend the baby's grasp of what is appropriate. By being sensitive to signs the mother can reinforce the appropriate behaviours wanted from the baby. It is not just physical behaviour that the mother is

moulding, but a conceptual learning system. The mother-baby dialogue is most certainly a two-way process, its success depending on the sensitivity and tolerance of both parties.

Many behavioural similarities undoubtedly result from direct tuition, selective exposure to environmental settings and activities, and the influence of common reinforcement contingencies in specific cultural settings (Bandura, 1969: 214/215). A child will learn to identify with and imitate their parents through a socialisation process. Observational learning is the basic socialisation tool underlying identification and imitation.

Identification is a process in which a person patterns their thoughts, feelings or actions after another person who serves as a model.

Clark (2002: 126) states that in the early years curiosity seems to be a major driving force towards self-initiated, autonomous learning. At this stage it is essential for the parents/caregiver to provide a stimulating, safe environment full of sensory experiences that the baby is free to explore. The baby can start their own self-initiated exploration of their world.

Only as these are made a part of children's lives will they begin to explore and move cognitively toward mastery of more complex skills. If deprived of these experiences, their motivation for learning and potential for wonder and discovery are stunted. (Clark 2002: 126)

According to social learning theory, modelling influences produce learning principally through their informative function. The people with whom one regularly associates, either through preference or imposition, delimit the types of behaviour that will be repeatedly observed and hence learned most thoroughly (Bandura, 1977: 24). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that parents of identified gifted young children receive assistance in some way (through counseling or trained teachers) so that they can implement strategies that will enhance their child's talent development. If the parents did

not experience such an environment as a child they will have few strategies to draw upon and may not provide the necessary modelling behaviours.

The modelling of behaviours encourages observational learning. According to Bandura (1969: 220-224) observational learning consists of three parts: sensory conditioning, verbal coding of observed events and motor reproduction. Sensory conditioning is the provision of sensory stimuli that elicit perceptual responses, if these are repeated they result in enduring, retrievable images of modelled sequences of behaviour. Later, the use of this sensory stimuli serves as a guide for reproduction of matching responses. For example, children learning to read will be stimulated by the sights and sounds produced by a parent reading aloud, eventually the child is able to 'read', by retrieving the images of the modelled behaviour and by repeating the appropriate sounds at the appropriate pictures. The modelling of verbal behaviours is of vital importance in the early years of a child's development. Parents who provide this type of stimulating verbal home environment are empowering their child with an essential tool for future talent development.

A verbal learning environment which is responsive to the child's needs should be provided by the caregiver. Carew (cited in Clark, 2002: 130) reported on his study findings that children prior to two years of age require modelling of a variety of language patterns, visual encounters, and other sensory opportunities from the caregiver. Clark (2002), citing research by Chomsky and McNeill, also indicates that in the early years, from eighteen months to four years of age, every human has available an innate device for learning language, referred to as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). During the LAD period the child must be provided with an environment rich in language experiences which optimises this critical learning period. Parents who are able to provide

rich language experiences in the early years assist in optimising their child's intellectual growth.

In motor reproduction it is assumed that recall of the patterns provides a basis for self-instruction on how component responses must be combined and sequenced to produce new patterns of behaviour. For example, riding a bike will involve mental decoding and verbal instructions of what actions are needed to ride the bike; then the overt performance occurs in the physical action of riding the bike. Many gifted children whose talents lie in the more creative and physical domains will need this type of modelling in the early years. Sometimes a gifted child can acquire, retain, and possess the capabilities for skillful execution of identified behaviour, but the learning is rarely activated into overt performance due to negative sanctions or inadequate positive reinforcement.

Bandura (1969: 223) points out that during exposure to stimulus sequences observers are inclined to recode, classify and reorganise elements into familiar and more easily remembered schemata. These schemes may be in the form of vivid imagery, translating action sequences into abbreviated verbal systems, or grouping constituent patterns into larger integrated units. At a camp for gifted underachievers the writer was able to observe the inter-play between a parent and her gifted child in a stimulus sequence situation. The children were asked to make masks for a play about aliens. The child and parent interacted while creating the mask by discussing the Solar System, the features of the planets and the place of aliens in this system. Through the mutual interaction the child was exposed to stimulus sequences involving the cognitive understanding of the material, the movement to the abstract notion of 'aliens' and the social skills required in a 'discussion'. The parent was able to provide modelled behaviours through both sensory and verbal coding to the gifted underachiever. Would she have provided this behaviour in the home environment without the modelled behaviour that the facilitators at the camp

had provided for her? Perhaps these outside influences provided her with the model of how parents of gifted children can provide stimulating environments for their children. Baldwin (cited in Kohlberg, 1984: 102) explains that the development of the imitative process into social dependency, such as the need for approval, is also part of the development of imitation into 'identification'. The identification process is also based on a combination of attachment, admiration, and desire for normative guidance, which forms a focus of children's attitudes towards their parents. Clark (2002) argues that the belief that one matters in the world and the development of the inner locus of control are learnt early in life. If parents are unaware that they are dealing with a gifted child then the parents' observed behaviour could lead to the development of a poor self-concept for the child. This in turn is reinforced by the child's imitative acts. That is, if a child is constantly in trouble with the parents for asking too many questions, and observes that her parents very rarely question their world, then she may 'learn' that there is something 'wrong' with her for having an inquiring mind. An important skill in cognitive development is lost or reduced thus affecting the potential of the gifted learner.

Identification and imitation are vital tools in the development of a gifted child if they are used as a means of stimulating and enriching the child's environment. Parental behaviours that are observed and communicated will be profoundly influential on the formation of physical, cognitive and socio-affective skills in the gifted child. Gustin (1985) found that observational learning was a major contributor to the talented young child's development. In the early years the parents acted as models of persistence, paying careful attention to detail and the importance of the development of the mind. Much of this was through observational learning, for example, one parent recalled:

My husband spent a lot of time working in his study, reading and writing...He spent almost his whole life in his study when _____ was about four, he started using my typewriter. When he was about six he told me he was going to write a

book. So he typed a pretend book. He was trying to imitate his dad. (Gustin, 1985: 275)

Parents who provide this type of environment and modelled behaviours are enabling their child to reach their potential. However, parents who are unaware of these needs, or who do not naturally provide this type of stimulating identification and imitation behaviours can inhibit the growth to full potential.

Family Characteristics

Researchers of the families of gifted children and eminent people report on a number of common characteristics to be found in these families. These characteristics include a strong drive towards intellectual or creative achievement, curiosity, willingness to experiment, restlessness, physically driving, intellectually striving; they respect learning, and often love beauty (Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004; Gross, 2004; Bloom, 1985). That this stress on learning is part of a pattern of producing eminence is verified by a study done by the psychologist Roe (cited in Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004: 5). Roe tested and interviewed sixty-four outstanding physical, social, and biological scientists in the United States. Learning was highly valued in these middle-class, low income, professional homes, as was true in the families of the Four Hundred in Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004) study. Over ninety percent of the families of the Four Hundred showed a love for learning and achievement. On the other hand Wolfle (cited in Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004: 6) who directed an extensive study of American sources of specialised talent, estimates that about half of each year's gifted high school graduates come from homes where the parents have no particular interest in schooling or in learning, and that the talents of this half tend to become lost to underachievement.

In Gross's (2004: 84) study of exceptionally gifted children she found that the parents tended to hold professional and managerial positions regarded as high status occupations

within the Australian community. They come mainly from the professional groups in society, with a significant representation from business management, education and medicine. Similarly, the parents of the children involved in Bloom's (1985) study were well educated. Of the parents of the twenty mathematicians in Bloom's study seventy percent of the fathers had advanced degrees, and fifty-five percent of the mothers had earned at least one degree. In most cases in the study the parents' special interests were closely related to the field in which their child became eminent. "In other words, the parents of the swimmers and tennis players tended to be people who particularly enjoyed sports and physical activity. The parents of the musicians and artists tended to prefer music, the arts, and literature" (Bloom, 1985: 446).

While many of the parents in Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004) study are highly educated, Goertzl and Goertzl report that approximately one-half of the fathers in their study were failure-prone in the routine of everyday life. They found that "seeing a father try and fail does not seemingly inhibit the child's striking out into untested areas of achievement" (p. 55). Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) thought that these fathers, though unsuccessful in domestic life, were willing to take calculated risks - qualities necessary in those self-actualizing persons who do make significant contributions. Morris Gershwint, father of composer Gershwint, was a man who seemed to specialise in business failures.

Modigliani's mother was in labour when the bailiff called to cart off the family's household goods. Creativity seems to thrive on the challenges of the dysfunctional home (p. 57). Certainties were let go with abandon in many of the families of the Four Hundred:

The men and women who are able to produce a novel product or add to the knowledge or pleasure of mankind seem almost to depend for their creativity upon their father's childish eagerness for new experiences, their naiveté, and even their inefficiency. (Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004: 57)

The parents in these studies of eminent persons while varying in their degrees of success in life were, in the main, highly educated people who valued the joys of learning and achievement. They maintained the process of life long learning themselves and modelled that behaviour for their children.

Gross (2004) highlights previous studies of highly and exceptionally gifted children that suggest that an unusually high proportion of highly gifted children are first-born and come from small families. Family demographics such as birth order and family size can maintain a strong influence over the degree to which a child's innate capacities can be fostered. Parents of first-born children may have the time to provide stimulating environments that will enhance the potential of their gifted child. First-borns are often given more responsibility and independence (Gross, 2004). Small family size will, generally, mean less financial strain on the parents so that they are able to provide better care and nourishment, and greater experiential opportunities. Small family size also means there are fewer siblings to disturb the family unity and distract a parent's focus.

The Family Environment

According to Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993), particular family types can be a vital influence on the positive development of gifted children. However, Rimm and Lowe (1988) maintain that parenting styles are much less important than consistency in parenting. Is it a combination of the two that will create a positive environment that nurtures or hinders a child's potential? To what extent do family dynamics play a role in the development of the potential of the gifted child?

Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 150) in their general summary of the development of talent state "no child succeeds unless he or she is strongly supported by adults, usually parents, and usually both parents". It can be a heavy burden to provide the type of stimulating environment that will allow a gifted child to flourish. Bloom (1985: 3) in his

longitudinal study detailed the immense amounts of energy, time, and money needed to cultivate the talents of a gifted child. His study provided strong evidence that no matter the strength of the giftedness, unless there is a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education, and training, the individual will not attain extreme levels of capability. There are other factors which contribute to the development of the child's learning potential and overall development such as the school environment and peers, but the parents and the family environment remain one of the main contributing factors.

Van Rossum (1995), in his study of Dutch athletes, found that the mentor and the parents are the central and most influential people in the career of the talented individual. Gross (2004: 75) accentuates the importance of family influence, "the family and its role in moulding the gifted child's attitudes, values and aspirations may well be the most significant factor in talent development". If the family does not value, encourage and facilitate the growth of the young child's gifts these gifts may not develop in later life. That a warm home environment and positive attitudes toward gifted children make them feel a valued person in the family is a notion also supported by Sahin (1995). Families, and the positive environment they provide, are essential to the actualization of talent in gifted children.

Freeman's (1991), in her discussion of the overall effects of the home environment, found two important home influences:

1. The material provision the children had to learn with e.g. books, space, musical instruments and paper. Freeman (1991: 103) found that the most impetus for the development and practice of arts and music had come from the parents. The long hours and concentration necessary for the development of the child's talent began long before they started at school. For example, in one of Freeman's (1991) case studies the mother

sang with her child, and tapped out rhythms, frequently and regularly. “Cathy was always on my knee when I was teaching the piano so she soaked up a lot of music.” (p. 56)

2. Parental involvement with their children. Freeman (1991: 16) concluded that parental behaviour and the cultural milieu they created - a rich and varied environment - provided many opportunities for the children to learn. “In simple terms, it was not a very effective move for a parent to say to a child, ‘Here is a book about flowers; go out and identify some!’ What was effective was when a parent said, ‘Let’s use this book to find out the names of the flowers – together’.” (p.16)

Freeman (1991) provides many examples of effective home environments. One case study she cites from her research is that of John Whitcombe. John’s father gave him enormous support, “I fed him books and taught him ‘body language’ ...I’ve remarried you see, but I kept the kids, as John needed my brain.” Another example of an effective home environment is from the research of Goertzl and Goertzl (2004: 8). The parents of small Clement Attlee (a future Prime Minister of England) were strongly concerned with their children’s academic achievement. Every evening the children would march around singing the songs their mother had taught them while she played the piano for them. The older children would then sit around the dining table and converse with their parents on the events of the day.

Bloom (1985) discussed similar findings on the early positive influences of home and school on the development of concert pianists, sculptors, research mathematicians, research neurologists, Olympic swimmers, and tennis champions. He split his study and findings into three phases: The Early Years, the Middle Years and the Later Years.

Bloom (1985) thought that the parents’ roles and degree of influence were strongest in

the Early Years and then diminished over the next two phases. However, it never completely disappeared even in the Later Years.

Bloom's (1985) findings are substantiated by Van Rossum's (1995) findings that there are different phases of parental influence with the early and middle phases being the most intense. An athletic career cannot be distinguished from one in music, chess or science when considering the influences of the home environment. In a study by Scanlan, Ravizza and Stein (cited in Van Rossum, 1995) with twenty-six former elite figure skaters, the 'skate-specific involvement' appeared to increase over time in accordance with the career phases as described by Bloom, taking an average of seven years to attain the third phase, which then lasted for about six years.

In the Early Years the parents encouraged their children's curiosity by responding seriously to any questions asked. Gustin (1985) points out that the wide range of home environments notwithstanding, intellectual and academic achievement were valued highly in the mathematicians' homes. Models of cognitive and intellectual behaviour were available. The first signs of curiosity, questioning, wondering, wanting to know were encouraged and nurtured. Sloane (1985) in referring to Bloom's (1985) study on talented pianists, sculptors, swimmers and tennis players clarified Gustin's comments on parental influences. Parents in following their own interests often created situations that raised the curiosity of the child. The parents responded to that by allowing the child to participate in the activity or by arranging special opportunities for the talented child. They also provided material and resources for the child, such as records, toy instruments, sketchpads, watercolours and sporting equipment. These parents were aware of their child's talent and did everything they could to nurture it in the early years.

Van Rossum's (1995) study questions Bloom's (1985) contention that the parents of the athletes identified their child's talent. Van Rossum found that only 18% of parents were

actively involved in identification whereas 86% of coaches were involved in identification. It seems to be the reverse for intellectual talent where researchers such as Bloom (1985), Gross (2004) and Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) indicate that parents are the most involved in the early identification of intellectual talent. Although the studies differ on the question of identification they agree that parents are very important in passing on the value of achievement, placing emphasis on self-discipline, always doing one's best and the satisfactions to be gained in achieving one's goals.

The modelling of these values is highly influential on the child as they observe and internalise the actions of the caregivers. These values are, in turn, reflected in the child's behaviour and contribute to their ability to fulfil their talent potential at a high level (Gross, 2004; Goertz & Goertz, 2004; Bloom, 1985; Van Rossum, 1995). Gross (2004: 86) found the families in her study of twenty exceptionally gifted children reflected the parents' values very strongly. Qualities of zeal, task commitment and perseverance were listed in 30% of the grandparents of the study families and were also striking characteristics of many of the parents. For example, Cassandra's father distinguished himself by winning a number of academic awards as well as an overseas scholarship, while her mother won three scholarships at school as well as gaining prizes for language and literature.

Goertzl and Goertzl (2004: 1) in their study of over seven hundred famous men and women found that there was a strong drive toward intellectual or creative achievements present in one or both parents. The parents of these celebrities are curious, experimental, restless, seeking. They are physically driving, intellectually striving, they respect learning, and they love truth and sometimes beauty. The parents of Louis Brandeis, a Supreme Court Justice, immigrated to the United States. Their home became an impromptu intellectual centre, a Mecca for scholarly residents and visitors to the

growing city of St Louis. The family was remarkable for its learning and culture. Both parents spoke three languages.

As with other researchers (Bloom, 1985; Gross, 2004; Clark, 2002) Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) discovered that the families of their eminent men and women valued learning and provided environments that were learning-centred. Pablo Casals, the cellist, received his initial musical training from his father; David Baden-Powell (father of Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell) took his children on nature walks and encouraged them to make collections, and create playthings from discarded possessions. Over 90 percent of the Four Hundred families showed a love for learning and achievement. It becomes obvious that the family home which places value on learning, task commitment, and perseverance, and where the parents model these values, will enhance the potential of a child leading to high performance. Such homes provide Gagné's (2003) environmental catalyst for the development of talent.

The Middle Years of Bloom's (1985) study reflect a decline in parental influence, but the parents still maintain a strong interest and provide support for their talented child. In actual fact it required more sacrifice on the parents' behalf as the talented child developed beyond the parents' level of expertise. The child needed instructors who could provide this expertise, and they needed longer hours of practice and study. This required an alteration in home routines, more financial commitment and perhaps even sacrifice of family holidays and time spent together.

Most of our vacations were frankly tennis-oriented.

The whole family revolved around the music, and unfortunately, I think that's what it takes.

Swimming was our way of life. All our vacations and extra money went into swimming weekends- that was our recreation. (Bloom, 1985: 462)

As well as the financial, emotional and time supports, the parents found ways to smooth obstacles, soothe failures and tried to assist in overcoming any other problems which occurred. In this way they were able to offer different forms of support rather than being models or early educators. The mathematicians also continued to be influenced by the values and priorities of their parents in the Middle Years. The parents of these children either made sure their child had the material for model building and experimentation, offered moral support, or worked with their child on the projects offering discussion and suggestions.

Bloom's (1985) study indicated that in the Later Years parental influence was at a minimum but still present. The parents helped the adolescent make decisions about their future options and education choices. They continued their financial support and, most important, they provided a nurturing, understanding environment for their child. The importance of this nurturing role is also supported by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) in their study of two hundred talented teenagers. They found that the adolescent who can rely on parents for moral, emotional and physical support when needed is probably more ready to spend time perfecting their talent. Most parents in Bloom's study felt that they had the responsibility to provide the best opportunities for their talented child and did not regret any difficulties or hardships they had to overcome in order to provide those opportunities.

We did feel an obligation to provide opportunities, and that made it hard-not knowing if you were making the right decision. We still wonder what would have happened if we had made different decisions. (Sloane, 1985: 475)

Albert and Runco (cited in Walberg, 1995: 174) found the families of talented students "provided affection but avoided clinging". Achievement-inducing families encouraged children's explorations and encouraged them to pursue their natural inclinations. They safeguarded their children but encouraged independence and curiosity; they tried to

enrich their children's environment. They expected high performance and valued and rewarded competent action. If parents can provide such a stimulating, enriching, warm, caring and stable environment then their gifted child's development will be enhanced. Gifted children have unique intellectual, social and emotional needs, which can place great stress on parents and families. How well the parents cope with these stresses will contribute to a child's successful journey through their formative years.

The parents' inability to make an early identification of giftedness and their failure to provide an encouraging environment can lead to psychosocial maladjustment. Janos et al. (1985) indicate that positive childhood psychosocial adjustments is one's ability to operate effectively within and constructively beyond the structures imposed by the environment, to respond 'zestfully' to challenge, and to maintain a high degree of relatedness, vitality, and personal satisfaction. They found that there was evidence to indicate a greater maturity in intellectually gifted children than typical age-mates in psychosocial spheres such as friendship patterns, play interests, social knowledge, and personality.

Janos et al. (1985) reported that the gifted demonstrated trustworthiness under stress, social preferences and attitudes, and diminished tendencies to boast, exaggerate and cheat. The gifted children had a strong sense of self-worth, social skills, a sense of personal freedom, reduced antisocial tendencies, good school relationships, and comfort with oneself and with interpersonal relationships. They had greater participation in extra curricular activities, values and interests.

Parents have a vital role to play not only in the cognitive development of the gifted child but also in their psychosocial adjustment. If parents can provide the child with a holistic development it will lead to the child's life long talent development. The sense of

fulfilment in realising the child's talent potential in a particular field is significant, but so too is their self-actualisation as a human being.

Family backgrounds and types

Socio-economic status has enormous impact on the educational experiences of children. The pattern of attendance at school for working class families and girls was erratic in the early part of the twentieth century. This was because they were needed to work and support the family. The working class families of the early twentieth century could not afford to lose the wages or the domestic labour provided by their sons and daughters. In fact, even as recently as 1971 barely 30% of students in high school stayed until Year 12 and boys' retention rates were 7% higher than girls (Vick, 1998).

Vick (1998: 51) explains that social and cultural alienation affected school attendance and attitudes towards education. Schools have been seen as hostile institutions by many families on the margins of mainstream society; by those large numbers of working class parents whose own school experience remained a bitter memory of failure and embarrassment; by non-English speaking families trying to 'make it' in a new and hostile society. There was little to motivate these families to battle against the odds to send their children to school every day.

Socio-economic background tends to advantage children in their psychosocial adjustment if they come from a more prosperous and stable home background. Advantaged groups tend to have children with above-average IQ as measured by psychometric testing. The social status or socio-economic background of the family of a gifted child can be a strong influence on the realisation of the child's potential. In circumstances of low socio-economic status unfavourable socialisation, unequal school opportunities, and occupational discrimination work to lower motivation and achievement (Clark, 2002: 529).

The family backgrounds in Freeman's (1991) study varied and so did the levels of achievement of the children she researched. Neil had overcome the disadvantages of his low socio-economic background and was well on the way to realising his intellectual potential in studying chemistry at University. However, there were many others whose background restricted their pathways or desire to achieve their potential. For example, Tony Stewart (age 20, trainee car mechanic) felt that academic qualifications were of little importance. He described his parents' poor backgrounds and explained how they had to go to work at age fourteen to earn money to provide food and necessities for the family. Tony felt that he had been influenced by his parents' behaviour and that he also needed to work to earn a living rather than follow intellectual pursuits.

Bloom's (1985) study found the majority of the families were affluent and the parents were well educated. The parents of the mathematicians included twenty-three (70%) of the fathers having advanced degrees, three of the others attended college and only three did not go beyond high school. Eleven of the mothers (55%) earned at least one college degree, four more had some college experience, all but one of the remaining five graduated from high school. All the children in Bloom's (1985) study had realised their outstanding potential. Obviously there were other factors that contributed to their achievements but socio-economic background was a strong contributing factor.

Herskovits and Gyarmathy (1995) conducted a study of over a thousand children in order to research the factors that may help or inhibit the development of giftedness. One of their findings was that "more of the children predicted as gifted were from a higher socio-economic background" (p.59). Even when using a 'culture-free' Raven's Test children in the higher SES schools scored higher. In a study conducted by Renzulli and Park (2002: xii) researching giftedness and high school dropouts it was found almost half the gifted students who dropped out of school (48.2%) were in the lowest quartile SES

level, while only 3.6% of them were in the highest quartile SES level (more details about this study in the Underachievement section). A report for the US Department of Education (cited in Clark, 2002: 529) revealed that students from low-income backgrounds comprised 20% of the student population. During their school experience, such students are less than half as likely to qualify for, and participate in, gifted and talented programs. Birdsall and Correa (2007) found that less children from low income families were referred by teachers for identification as gifted than children of high income families.

Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 70) offer a comparison to these studies with the family backgrounds of the talented students in their study.

The families of talented teens have higher gross incomes and are twice as likely to have incomes above \$40,000. Both mothers and fathers are more highly educated than their average counterparts. ... Talented teens also tend to have fathers with higher occupational status. ... None of the parents in the talented sample had less than a high school education, and over 80% had at least a bachelor's degree.

These families were able to offer the types of support that Bloom's (1985) study indicated to be essential for the development of talent.

Family types can also be influential when exploring the effects of home environments on achievement. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 156-7) describe three main family types in their discussion of talented teens. An integrated family type is where stable conditions occur and the child feels supported and finds consistency. A differentiated family type is where family members are encouraged to develop their individuality by seeking out new challenges but were not always stable or consistent. One or both parents promote the qualities of individual differentiation: curiosity, risk and experimentation, physical vigour, dedication to principle, and love of learning with personal involvement. A complex family type is one which is a combination of the integrated and differentiated

family. The complex family type is considered by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) to be the best stimulus to teenagers' talent development because of its ability to provide stimulation, enrichment, warmth and stability at the same time.

Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 156) considered Bloom's research on family influences and wondered why such family support worked so well for talent development. In their study they formed their own ideas about the effects of different family complexities.

They found that family complexity enhances children's investment of energy in growth-producing activities and so facilitates the quality of their subjective experience both at home and at school. Complexity allows the child to develop greater capabilities in meeting challenges and engaging in enriching activities. The child knows that they are supported in their endeavours. Family approval and support can lead to improved self-esteem and the willingness to meet further challenges. It can also contribute to a willingness to commit to the time and practice required to gain expertise in their talent.

In their study of the Four Hundred families of eminent persons Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) found less than 15% had experienced supportive, warm and relatively untroubled homes. This finding is in strong contrast to Bloom's (1985), Von Rossum's (1995), and Gross's (2004) findings. However, a large number of the eminent persons in Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004: 135) study are creative in one form or another:

Children who later make contributions to the theatre or to literature have the most internal tension to report. The homes of the reformers and humanitarians are the most explosive with ideas and argument.

The differentiated family type in the study by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) is similar to the creative family types of Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004) study in that they are conducive to the development of the creatively gifted child. Goertzl and Goertzl comment that creativity and contentment are not congenial and many of the eminent persons in their study who have creative achievements came from disruptive households (p.133).

However, “there is no way of estimating how many equally capable and imaginative children lived in similar homes and became neurotic or psychotic, delinquent, or indifferent to such a degree that they were unproductive” (Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004: 135). Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 175) found that family differentiation had a strong impact on the teenagers’ ratings of their flow experience in talent-related work. Flow is a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of losing track of time and of being unaware of fatigue and of everything else but the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993: 14).

Rimm (2003) conducted a study in 1988 of the family environments of twenty-two gifted underachievers. From her findings Rimm (2003: 427) summarises a family type found in the family background of the underachievers:

The modeling of intrinsic and independent learning, positive commitment to career, and respect for school were remarkably, though unintentionally, absent from families of underachieving gifted children. The enrichment and fun of early childhood were often replaced by a plethora of activities and lessons were so time-consuming little energy was left for intrinsically interesting home learning, independent projects, or family game playing.

This family type tended to produce children with low motivation to achieve, low self-esteem and very little chance of realising potential. VanTassel-Baska (2004) found that the family’s role in the success of low-SES gifted learners was most important. She reports that the families of successful low-SES gifted learners encourage and monitor progress, communicate high expectations and standards for academic achievement, and view socioeconomic circumstances as motivators to succeed.

Potential talent can be easily sidetracked if the child experiences too much deprivation, conflict or neglect. Parents may not support talent in the arts, seeing it as a difficult and financially unrewarding career path, or may discourage curiosity and abstract thought as

a waste of time (Csikszentmihalyi et al.; 1993, Kim, 2008). They may fail to provide the resources and opportunities which will allow the gifted child to develop their talent, or the emotional support to develop self-concept and self-acceptance. The provision of this opportunity for development can be a problem when the parents also have been brought up in a culturally impoverished and a cognitively unstimulating environment.

Impoverishment in the parental background may affect the talent development of the gifted child resulting in some form of underachievement. Gallagher (1993: 756) discusses Bloom's (1985) findings that a consistent history of strong and early family identification is linked to a promotion of the talents of the child. These parents tend to stress the importance of academic achievement, hard work, and the full development of one's talents. In families where there is a lack of interest in intellectual development, or an inability to provide the necessary resources, it is likely that the child's talent will remain underdeveloped. Some parents (generally less educated ones) accept events as they occur, whereas others (generally more educated ones) take control (Partington, 1998). What happens when a parent fails to recognise that their child is gifted? Sadly it appears that most of these children will underachieve and find it difficult to reach their full potential (Rimm & Lowe, 1988; Rayneri, Gerber & Wiley, 2003; Rimm, 2003; Willard-Holt, 2008).

Motivation

In using Thomas Edison's famous quote, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration," the writer is defining 'genius' to mean outstanding levels of performance in any talented area and 'perspiration' to mean the hard work and practice needed to achieve these levels. Patrick et al. (2006) state that although gifted students need positive motivation in order to realise the promise of their gifts, motivation can be helped or hindered by the actions of others, including peers, teachers, school administrations, and

parents. Schools and parents are expected to create an environment in which gifted students will develop strong self-efficacy, a mastery orientation, and value for academics (p. 188).

A child with high abilities and a nurturing learning environment will have many opportunities to experience goal attainment, success and intellectual satisfaction. Those positive effects are the basis for the development of several types of intrinsic and extrinsic (instrumental) motivation (Lens & Rand, 2000: 200). Through parental encouragement and support motivation can be developed in the child, and the movement from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation can be expedited. As a father from Bloom's study phrased it:

I definitely have the feeling that this [achievement] is tied up with motivational factors, things that are part of the larger experience of life. ... One sets up values from early on. (Gustin, 1985: 279)

Spending more time on a task will improve skills and the level of performance, and it results in the growth of knowledge, abilities and capacities. Motivation is an essential component in the time and interest factor needed for concentration on the task. In Csikszentmihalyi et al.'s (1993) study three factors were ranked highest by the talented teenagers as being important for remaining involved with their domain of talent: enjoyment, satisfaction from learning, and interest. These intrinsic rewards fuelled their perseverance and autotelic flow. The term "autotelic", meaning self-directing or self-rewarding, describes the set of personal characteristics that enables a person to sustain and enjoy the intensive dialectic that results in the experience of flow. The mark of the autotelic personality is the ability to manage a rewarding balance between the 'play' of challenge finding and the 'work' of skill building (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993: 80).

Extrinsic rewards can be a good starting point to enable parents to move the child towards the more favoured motivational tool of intrinsic reward. Allport (cited in Lens &

Rand, 2000) calls this the “functional autonomy of motives”, that is, actions that used to be instrumentally or extrinsically motivated become functionally autonomous and intrinsically motivated. Through gaining mastery over challenges just beyond their reach, and that are contextual to their life, the child gains a sense of achievement and confidence that can lead to more enjoyment and interest. For example, a child who finds it difficult to read may persevere because of an extrinsic reward offered by the parent. The child may then find that she has mastered some reading skills and gained a sense of achievement. The intrinsic reward from this sense of achievement, and finding enjoyment in continued reading activities, may encourage the child to attempt texts that require more difficult reading skills. The child is moving towards expertise. Extrinsic rewards can vary from promises of pleasurable activities, foodstuffs, toys or other desired objects in a young child, to good exam results, the kudos of a high ranking in a sport or competition, the chance to get a good job in an older child. The rewards can also be of long term or short term expectation, for example, a medal or a tertiary education. The parents in Bloom’s (1985) study offered extrinsic rewards in a number of ways. The parents of the concert pianists played games with their children, they made sure that the early learning was fun and full of attention, praise and applauding. The children were offered warmth and affection and the enticement of possibilities. The parents of the exceptional research mathematicians also offered similar experiences to the young child.

We played a lot of games together. I taught him how to play cards. In the evenings there would be games or board games.

We played games like dominoes, throwing dice and adding the numbers. (Gustin, 1985: 280)

Parents helped children develop the habits of practice, discipline, and attention through the use of extrinsic rewards that resulted in the development of longer concentration spans and the willingness to maintain the necessary lengthy practice times.

Lens and Rand (2000) highlighted that intrinsic rewards are important determinants of creativity, of high achievement and the development of high abilities. They identified three types of intrinsic motivation. The first type is curiosity – the desire to know more, to be aroused by discrepancy, complex or novel information, then having the time, room and resources to follow this curiosity. Bloom's (1985) study parents often found ways to pique their child's interest and curiosity through the pursuits of their own interests. They then responded to the child's curiosity favourably by allowing the child to participate or by arranging special challenging opportunities that allowed the child to satisfy their curiosity.

I always put the [toy] piano in the area where she was playing, always kept it handy for her. ... If you have an instrument where they can get at it, they'll learn.

He asked a lot of questions. ... He had intellectual talent. ... I remember he wanted to know how everything worked, he wanted to know about everything. (Sozniak, 1985: 448)

The second type of intrinsic motivation is the need for mastery, competence and efficiency in solving challenging tasks – individuals will invest great time and effort in tasks in which they expect to find mastery. A student in the Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 111) study expressed his feelings about the intrinsic reward of mastery and creativity thus:

My major goal, my ultimate goal, I'd love to design cars. ... It would be something that I would like to do because I love cars and I like working with my hands. To me, a new car is like a work of art ... although it has got to be uniform and conform to structure, you can still give it your artistic signature.

Though mastery in a domain can be difficult, attaining mastery is gratifying and thus offers its own intrinsic rewards. The striving for mastery can provide the kind of concentrated span that many people find intrinsically rewarding; it creates a flow experience.

Freeman (2001) does warn that too much parental (or adult) control can undermine good motivation towards mastery. If you remove the child's 'locus of control' (Stipek & Weisz, 1981) then they may feel less involved in their own learning and only see it as an external achievement for someone else in authority. The child will lose the 'flow', and the gratification of mastering challenges set by themselves. McNabb (2003) indicates "people with an internal locus of control have been found to take more responsibility for their behaviour and to demonstrate typical 'expectancy shifts'; that is, to raise their expectations after experiencing success, and to lower their expectations following failure." The trait that all the eminent persons had in Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004: 342) study was that they followed their 'own inner voice' regardless of what others told them to do.

The third type of intrinsic motivation is the need for mastery and high self-efficacy which is closely related to the need for achievement – for most gifted children the task needs to be challenging enough to offer a sense of achievement when mastered. For all high achievers, the most important influence in their lives has almost always been exceptional support and encouragement from their parents (Freeman, 2001). Parents in Bloom's (1985) study placed an emphasis on achievement, on doing the best of which one is capable. Once goals were attained, there was pride in achievement, the reward for a job well done. The models the parents provided of working hard and setting high standards of performances were clearly recognised by the children (Sosniak, 1985). For the families pursuing activities together became a means of translating the value of achievement into specific behaviours. The importance of goals, self-discipline and doing one's best were behaviours that were seen to be valued by the parents and they were reinforced by rewards and praise for a job well done. Ultimately these values became so entrenched that the child was intrinsically motivated to achieve and this resulted in a willingness to work and a desire to excel.

He made me think and he made me experience and he made me understand that you have to find your own way. You have to know what's right [and] what's wrong, but the possibilities and tonal colour are absolutely endless. (Sosniak, 1985: 423)

Dweck's (1986: 1041) research shows "how a focus on ability judgements can result in a tendency to avoid and withdraw from challenge, whereas a focus on progress through learning and effort creates a tendency to seek and be energised by challenge."

Performance goals will work against the pursuit of challenge because they require the child's perception of their ability to be high before the child will accept a challenging task. Underachievers (Rimm, 2003) and girls (Reis, 2002; Willard-Holt, 2008; Reis & Herbert, 2008) need to have their belief in their high abilities raised and reinforced otherwise there is a tendency to avoid challenging tasks. The development and encouragement of learning goals will develop a stronger locus of control than performance goals as the child has more internal control over their achievements.

Dweck (1986: 1046) recommends certain strategies to educators for the promotion of learning goals rather than performance goals, and parents are definitely educators.

Rather, the procedures that bring about more adaptive motivational patterns are the ones that incorporate challenge, and even failure, within a learning-oriented context and that explicitly address underlying motivational mediators. For example, retraining children's attributions for failure (teaching them to attribute their failures to effort or strategy instead of ability) has shown to produce sizable changes in persistence in the face of failure, changes that persist over time and generalise across tasks.

Self-concept and motivation are interwoven, for if the gifted child has a poor self-concept they are unlikely to be highly motivated to achieve their potential. Peters et al. (2000: 85) believe that "the self-concept is one of the most important personality factors in the development of gifted children in order to reach a high level of achievement."

Self-concept is defined by Neihart (1999) as the collection of ideas that one has about one's self, an essential component of what is usually called personality. A person is especially influenced by evaluations of significant others, reinforcements, and attributions for one's own behaviour. These self-perceptions influence the way one acts and these acts in turn influence one's self-perceptions thus forming a reciprocal relationship (Craven & Marsh, 1997). Lofgreen and Larsen (cited in Sahin, 1995: 97) state that "gifted children need help from their parents and teachers to form accurate inner pictures of themselves."

Self-concept is forged initially by the child's daily interaction with parents as the primary socialising agents (Mendaglio & Pyryt, 2002). If the child is constantly psychologically or emotionally undermined by parents then it would be difficult for the child to form the abilities, capacities and motivation needed to achieve outstanding performance. Conversely when supported by parents who offer judicious praise, support and warmth, self-esteem and motivation can act as a springboard for outstanding performance.

Mendaglio and Pyryt (2002) indicate some significant contributors to the formation of self-concepts. An individual incorporates feedback from others with her own cognitive abilities to form her self-concept. The person's cognitive ability interacts with the self-referent feedback. It is assumed that initially a young child, with less mature cognitive structures, will accept feedback from parents with little questioning. However, as the child matures so does their cognitive structures and they "accept, deny, distort, or disregard" the self-referent feedback (p.116). This self-referent feedback can be communicated either verbally or non-verbally, and so a child's acquisition and development of language is an important contributing factor to self-concept. It would seem that parents who are better communicators would be more significant contributors

to their child's self-concept than parents who are not. This contribution would also depend on whether the communication is positive or negative. Parents can reinforce, for good or ill, the evaluations of the child's behaviour. The parents in the studies of Bloom (1985), Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993), Gross (2004) and Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) were successful in reinforcing their child's behaviour so that the child built a strong foundation supporting their self-concept.

Social learning theory defines negative self-concepts in terms of tendencies to devalue oneself and positive self-concepts as a tendency to judge oneself favourably (Bandura, 1977). Some of this judgement will come from the feedback given by significant others but as the child matures it will also come from their own crystallizing values. What is it that they value that acts as a mitigating influence in the self-referent process? Is it extrinsic or intrinsic rewards that they value most highly? Is it certain aspects or domains of their giftedness that they prize above others? The influence of parents will vary depending on whether the parent is encouraging development in the areas valued by the child. If the parent is offering an extrinsic reward such as money or status and the child values more intrinsic rewards such as a sense of achievement or joy in creation then a parent's influence on self-esteem will be minimal.

Self-esteem (an affective aspect of self-concept) refers to the respondent feeling good about oneself, living up to one's own expectations, living up to other's expectations, the sense of succeeding, and the sense of satisfaction with the performance (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993).

The characteristic found most often among underachieving children is low self-esteem (Rimm & Davis, 2004). Related to their low self-esteem is their feeling of little control over their own lives. Freeman (1991) found that special vulnerabilities may result in a low self-concept and anxiety, and these two psychological factors then inhibit both creativity and scholastic achievement. According to Clarke (2002: 183) the lack of high

self-esteem in the parent affects the parents' ability "to provide a healthy environment for the child" which is "effective in nurturing children's positive self-esteem and personal responsibility". Janos, et al. (1985) point out that underachieving gifted children often exhibit disturbances of self-esteem, and for a variety of reasons, have lower self-esteem than do achieving gifted children. It is very important for parents to be aware of the differences between encouragement and false rewards, challenges and over-pressurising, inconsistent praise and discipline. Wise parents, while wanting their children to feel strong, valued, and competent, also expose their children to appropriate situations that help them to develop positive regard for their own ability to handle the new and the challenging as opposed to being 'best' with little effort (Robinson, 1993: 516). Parents should accept their children as individuals, be loyal sources of support, and openly express acceptance, set realistic goals based on the abilities of the individual child, and success is expected as a right of the child, not of the parent (Gross, 2004: 186). Robinson and Noble (1992: 64) point out that if self-esteem is derived from being "a big frog in a little pond", it may not have a strong, lasting foundation. When they enter a more challenging arena, such as selective schools, and perhaps suffer 'failure' at certain tasks, the blow to self-esteem can be quite devastating. A feeling of confidence derived from having coped with the difficult rather than merely having excelled at the easy may be better preparation for life's challenges (Precket et al., 2008).

Perhaps this is why Csikszentmihalyi et al.'s (1993) differentiated and complex family types offer a stronger influence in developing outstanding talent. In these family environments the child was always challenged and never allowed to become complacent. This is conducive to the development of strong self-esteem in being able to face challenges, and confidence in one's ability to overcome failure. However, in the differentiated family the opposite effect could also have occurred because of the lack of

parental warmth and support (Kim, 2008). Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993: 174) stated “to enjoy a highly challenging activity requires a correspondingly high amount of psychic energy if the difficulties are to be mastered.” A family that provides a teenager with a sense of support and consistency, and encourages their intensity and self-direction, enhances attention capacities for finding challenges and for mastering them. Thus complex families create autotelic contexts that improve the quality of experience for their members.

Underachievement

Underachieving in any talent area denies the child the right to achieve to their potential. Humanity needs its artists, musicians, athletes, philosophers and moralists, as well as its academics. Assouline and Colangelo (2006: 77) define underachievement as a discrepancy between assessed potential and actual performance. There are problems with assessing that potential, but even with this problematic factor Assouline and Colangelo (2006) offer a broader, more encompassing definition of underachievement. Butler-Por (1993: 650) also offers a broader definition: “not only as achievement below expected performance in school subjects, but also as below expected achievement in terms of expressed talent potential and productivity.” Butler-Por is right when she concludes that with the expanding multidimensional concept of giftedness that any definition restricted to IQ testing is very limited.

Eccles and Harold (1992: 264) link achievement related beliefs, outcomes, and goals to the input of socialisers (primarily parents and teachers), to gender role beliefs, to self-perceptions and self-concept, and to one’s perceptions of the task itself. If a child has low self-perception and low self-concept, amongst other factors, then they are unlikely to achieve to their potential and they become underachievers. Renzulli et al. (1999: 219) in

their case study research of gifted underachievers cited the case of Jamison as an example of the deleterious effects of these ‘socialisers’:

Jamison came from a dysfunctional family struggling with divorce, alcohol problems, and accusations of child abuse. Even his mother mentioned that “school is his escape from our rocky home life.” This 10-year-old boy had no positive role models in his family and his time after school was totally unsupervised.

Pringle’s study (1970) detailed some of the family issues that can lead to underachievement. He studied one hundred and three gifted school age children with a variety of problems - homes lacking harmony, lack of above average cultural, social or leisure activities, inconsistent handling with discipline problems, little concern with the child’s emotional development (although strong concern with the academic) and inadequate support and interest shown by the parents. Consider, in contrast, the support and interest, almost to the point of self-sacrifice, that was shown by the parents in the studies of outstandingly successful gifted people by Bloom (1985), and Goertzl and Goertzl (2004). “If school and home environments foster successful relationships between effort and outcomes, it is more likely that children will manage the internal pressures and will incorporate them as motivations toward achievement” (Rimm, 2003: 424).

Butler-Por (1993: 653) explores the effect of family issues on underachievement in her summary of the detrimental influences of the negative home environment on achievement. She conducted an analysis of interviews with parents of gifted children in special classes in Haifa and identified three risk factors similar to Pringle.

1. Unwanted and rejected children - it is unlikely that the socialisation patterns of unwanted children are capable of providing them with psychological conditions to develop self-confidence, the intellectual stimulus and the experiences required for developing the motivation for learning. Rejected children who are not receiving

appropriate nurturing reinforcement and support are unable to acquire coping skills, to gain confidence and build a realistic self-concept. They may adopt withdrawal or aggressive behaviour, hostility, express high need affiliation, seek constant attention at home, and at school.

2. Divorced parents - when parents are unaware of their child's problems at this difficult and sensitive time and don't provide coping strategies then the child can become frustrated and disoriented. This failure can result in manipulative, aggressive or irresponsible behaviour. Rimm and Lowe (1988) report that power struggles between the parents, and involving their children, can lead to the child taking the path of least resistance, often leading to underachieving practices.

3. Highly creative children - unidentified and unrecognised giftedness of highly creative children places them at risk of underachievement (Butler-Por, 1993; Kim, 2008). The creative child may be pressured to conform to the narrower academic requirements of the parents and find frustration at the lack of understanding of the freedom needed to create. Divergent thinking can lead to conflict with parents and school and so lead to the child 'opting out' and taking the easier path of underachieving.

Renzulli and Park (2002: 15) researched the reasons for gifted students (in the United States) dropping out of high school. They used the data from a longitudinal study by the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. The NELS: 88 began in 1988 by collecting data on approximately 25,000 eighth grade students, including data from their parents, teachers and school administrators, which was then followed up at 2-year intervals in 1990, 1992, and 1994. The data included a variety of personal, family, and school variables related to high school students' dropout decisions.

It was found that 5% of identified gifted students were dropouts. The majority of gifted males left school because they were failing school, they got a job, they couldn't keep up

with their schoolwork, and they didn't like school. For gifted females it was found that they left school because they were pregnant, they were failing school, and they didn't like school. Almost half of the gifted students who dropped out of school (48.2%) were in the lowest quartile SES level and a high percentage of the gifted dropouts' fathers and mothers did not finish high school (father: 40%, mother: 25.6%).

The results confirmed that many gifted students who dropped out of school were from low SES families and racial minority groups, had parents with low levels of education, and participated less in extracurricular activities. It also revealed that the students had limited experience with computers and seldom engaged in hobbies. Not many gifted students had plans to return to school, there was no significant difference between gifted females and gifted males with respect to their parents' educational expectations and their own educational expectations. Students' educational aspirations, pregnancy or having children, gender, father's highest level of education, mother's highest level of education, and SES significantly predicted gifted students' decisions to drop out (p.40).

Renzulli and Park (2002: 43/44) recommend a preventative programme. First, schools and teachers need to identify gifted students at risk of dropping out of school. Second, schools should provide an appropriate curriculum that addresses the needs of gifted students. Third, schools should provide more opportunities for extracurricular activities and the encouragement to participate in them. Fourth, teacher and student relationships should be improved. Fifth, schools could provide counselling services and special programmes for at risk students. Also, schools and teachers should communicate closely with parents whose gifted child has the potential to drop out of school, and parents should have more involvement with regard to their child's problems. A study of Puerto Rican females by Antrop-Gonzalez et al. (2008) supports Renzulli and Park's (2002) recommendations as the researchers found that the gifted girls were assisted in their

achievements by the provision of extracurricular activities, strong maternal support and counseling services.

In Rimm and Lowe's (1988: 355) study of twenty-two underachieving gifted students they found that there were differences in standards between parents' limits, expectations and the provision of clear guidelines. Ninety-five percent of the students indicated that they could manipulate one or both of their parents. The absence of consistent leadership among these parents was remarkable. Rimm and Lowe's findings support Pringle's (1970), Butler-Por's (1993) and Renzulli and Park's (2002) findings that many underachieving children seem to come from disturbed family groupings. All the studies point out the problems of inconsistencies in standards and achievement levels amongst the parents so that it seems the child has little choice but to retreat into a protective shell of underachieving.

The parents of underachieving children show an inconsistency between words and actions (Rimm & Lowe, 1988; Rimm, 2003). Observational learning has taught the children that although parents may espouse one value in fact their actions and verbal language communicate something quite different. In Rimm and Lowe's (1988) sample all the fathers were employed, most in professional and high status occupations to which they were very committed. However, they failed to communicate this valuing of careers to their children. They often complained about their work, the time constraints and frustrations. They rarely involved their children in their career interests or modelled the intrinsic rewards gained from commitment and achievement. In contrast is the father of Karl Flesch (the violinist) who was a physician in general practice in the small Austrian town of Wieselburg and who regarded his profession as a mission rather than a means of earning money. Work was his credo and he communicated this value to his son. (Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004: 9).

The structure of the environments established by families of underachievers are reported to be disorganised, with unclear guidelines about behaviour and academic performance; lack of cohesion and parental agreement regarding parenting; and often present the child with emotional distance. The environment is filled with mixed messages regarding the valuing of achievement and there is a lack of consistent modeling of achievement behaviour. (Clark, 2002: 545)

The underachieving child continues to underachieve because home, school, or peer group unintentionally reinforces underachievement. Whether it is a way of regaining attention, of bolstering low self-esteem, or finding acceptance the child will maintain the underachieving behaviours as long as they are meeting one of these needs.

The strategies for assisting parents to overcome underachievement are too many to discuss in this review but it is important to offer some direction. Willings (cited in Peters et al., 2000: 616) suggests an approach to reversing underachievement is to distract the attention of student, parents and educators from all that is not functioning well and to emphasise and elaborate on the strengths that are present in the individual. This enables the personal growth that is necessary to give the individual the strength to direct his own behavior again. Rimm (2003: 434) supports this approach by highlighting the need for 'important others' (parents and teachers) to have sincere belief in the underachieving child's ability to reverse underachievement thus leading to a personal change in self-expectations in the child.

The strengthening of a child's self-efficacy is another tool that can be used to assist a child to move towards improved achievement levels. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome i.e. will they achieve mastery. The strength of a child's self-efficacy will affect their ability and persistence in achieving mastery (Bandura, 1977). An underachieving child will benefit greatly from a strengthening of their self-efficacy (Chaffey, 2006). After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of failures is

likely to reduce. Students who have experienced greater achievement are more likely to feel confident they will be successful again (Patrick et al., 2006). With greater feelings of success and mastery will come greater willingness to persist at a task in order to gain further expertise, and so the cycle continues. At a camp for gifted underachievers (where the writer was a workshop presenter) one of the children was heard to remark, “I have so many good products I don’t know which to choose for the presentation”. This child had experienced feelings of success and mastery and it is to be expected that these experiences will encourage her to continue to achieve.

Parents and educators are concerned about a gifted child’s achievements and they want to encourage the full realisation of the child’s potential. A problem arises when parents and educators have different goals to the child. Crocker (2002: 7) points out that “being successful in any arena or being an underachiever is dependent upon many complex factors and this includes personal choices and decisions.” Is it less of an achievement to be socially successful, to value compassion and caring above academic or career success? Do we value less or more the child who supports the family financially in straitened circumstances at the expense of academic achievement, are they still an underachiever? As a society we force our academic values on children by labeling them underachievers.

It is important that as parents and educators we consider carefully the motivations of the gifted child we are trying to assist. Crocker (2002: 8) succinctly makes the important point that:

There is a difference between being an underachiever because the system, or individuals within the system, have failed to identify the abilities and talents of children for whatever reasons and children ‘choosing’ to be underachievers in some parts of their lives because other things are very important to them.

Crocker (2002: 8) also warns:

Wasn't it John Steinbeck who wrote in *Travels with Charlie* that the happiest man he ever met was a milk delivery man with a PhD? Surely that man was an underachiever. Or was he?

Many parents may not realise what it is about their own behaviour that has contributed to the problem of underachievement and without this realisation they cannot implement steps to alter the environment that is contributing towards their child's underachievement (Reis & Herbert, 2008). Colangelo (2003) points out that one of the most significant contemporary trends in gifted education would be the focus on families and the need to increase counselling for families. Indeed, he notes that one of the major stumbling blocks is that many family therapists and counsellors have little knowledge of the specific needs and requirements of gifted children. One of the aims of this study is to provide insight into the family environment through the parents' stories, and to provide insights into the parents' behaviours and how these may affect their children's underachievement.

Women's Identity

In a conceptual model of multiple dimensions of women's personal identity Jones and McEwan (2000) proposed that at the center of a woman's identity was a core sense of self. Surrounding the core identity and integrally connected to the core were the "social identities" - what women experienced as externally defined dimensions such as gender, class, race, culture, sexual orientation, and religion. Jones and McEwan (2000) indicated that contextual influences such as family background and life experiences also played important roles in shaping the multidimensional identities.

Whether it be societal or cultural pressures there still exists today inequities between the achievements of gifted boys and girls. Callaghan (cited in Butler-Por, 1993: 654) stated that:

There is certainly convincing data that suggests that this (female gifted children) particular group of gifted students is still facing inequities, they are still not

achieving at the levels we would expect and they are not choosing career options commensurate with their abilities.

Girls today have placed upon them many overt and covert pressures to underachieve.

The images and 'propaganda' of the media bombard them every day reinforcing the stereotypes of compliance, conformity, physical beauty as designating worth, that to be intellectual will deprive one of sex appeal. Achieving girls and women struggle with societal images of the perfect woman with impossible ideals of physical beauty (Kerr & Nicpon, 2003; Reis, 2002; Vialle, 2006). It has even come to the point where this propaganda is appearing on lolly packets (M&Ms) advocating girls give up careers for home and babies to support their nation! Stereotypes can often be reinforced by parents, peers and teachers.

Horner's (cited in Butler-Por, 1993: 654) study of fear of success in women found that "fear of success is more salient among women who are highly able, highly motivated to achieve and competitively successful than for those less able, less motivated to achieve, and less successful." However, Reis (2002: 18) in her research with women in their late 20s, 30s, and older found that women do not fear success but rather are ambivalent in their feelings. They desire success but not the trappings which may accompany success. These trappings include overexposure in a too public life, and inability to balance success with time for family, an overt dislike of the competition necessary for success, and a strong dislike of the types of behaviour that may become necessary to maintain success.

Reis (2002) points out that fear of success at an early age, can lead to a change of confidence in one's ability and can have devastating effects if it occurs during late secondary or tertiary education. It can lead to changes in course choices due to a lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed in the more academically rigorous courses.

Charmaine Gilbreath, a rocket scientist at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington D.C. recalled:

It took me two years to get up the nerve to take a pre-calculus class. I was surprised that it wasn't that hard. I aced it. Then I took physics and calculus courses, and they weren't all that hard either. That's when I first realised I'd been buffaloed. (Reis, 2002: 22)

According to Rimm and Davis (2004) both mother role modelling and father expectations have a compelling influence on the achievement orientation of gifted girls. Fathers' direct expectations of their daughters may influence female achievement. Radin and Epstein (cited in Rimm and Davis, 2004) found that father's short and long-term academic expectations of their daughters were positively correlated with measures of the girl's intellectual functioning. Rimm and Davis (2004) also point out that career modelling by mothers motivates females to have higher educational career aspirations. Other homemaker mothers cautioned their daughters on what *not* to do by advising them to be independent and have their own careers and identities.

Many gifted girls are taught early in life that competence and achievement will be accompanied by loneliness and ostracism (Robinson & Noble, 1992; Reis, 2002; Willard-Holt, 2008), so many of them choose underachievement as a way of avoiding this ostracism. Unfortunately, this underachievement will continue unless intervention strategies are put into place to educate parents, and to try to combat the negative socialisation of gifted girls. As socialisation occurs virtually from the moment we are born, and the maternal bond is extremely influential in the early years it will be difficult to overcome the sex stereotypes. Society needs to change its mores and values about the worth of girls, and as the feminists know, it takes many years to affect change. Ries and Diaz's (cited in Peters et al., 2000) case studies have shown that gifted girls need an accepting and stimulating environment which supports their academic activities. It

should be the aim of more successful women to implement some of the educational strategies and interventions needed so that society doesn't just simply pay lip service to sexual equality.

In an analysis of the literature Freeman (1991: 580) reports on a number of studies into sex stereotyping: in a German, American and Chinese study it was found that there was a stable ratio of two boys to every girl when parents identified their children as gifted.

Remarkably similar proportions were found in Freeman's U.K. study (1991) where parents made the first recommendation – 64.3% boys and 35.7% girls.

Girls seem to be more influenced by societal pressures than boys, girls have been socialised strongly into 'learned helplessness' and attribute success more often to luck than abilities (Freeman, 1993; Reis, 2002). Girls may accept responsibility for failure, but not for success (Reis, 2002). The lack of ability acceptance, and the attribution of success to an external locus of control severely affects the self-efficacy of girls (Precket et al. 2008). Schunk (cited in Reis, 2002: 20) found that children who initially receive feedback complimenting their ability, rather than their effort, developed higher ability attribution, self-efficacy, and skills. It is essential that young girls learn early about effort and ability, and come to an understanding that the most talented people expend a great deal of effort to be successful at challenging pursuits.

Gilligan (1982) described the ethic of care, accompanied by women's belief in the importance of relationships, that has been found to be the single greatest issue for gifted females who have their own unique dreams and aspirations for important work. Eccles and Harold (1992: 14) give an example of the influence of socialising pressures and the different values held by girls. Both boys and girls stereotype mathematicians and scientists as loners who have little time for their families or friends because they work long hours in a laboratory on abstract problems that typically have limited social

implications. Because gifted girls rate social values more highly than gifted males, gifted females should be less likely to aspire to a career as a mathematician or scientist than gifted males. This lack of aspiration is often described by researchers as a great problem and girls are exhorted to achieve in these areas of talent. Rimm and Davis (2004: 344) as researchers unconsciously reinforce this denigrating outlook in comments made in a discussion of underachieving females:

The increase in percent of women in science and engineering is dramatic and hopeful. However, the continued under representation of women in most fields of science provides graphic proof of the underachievement of gifted women.

Why are these areas of talent more highly valued than girls' achievements in areas of the social domains e.g. being a Principal of a school, or a Head of nursing, or doctor or lawyer working for humanity? Who has decided that girls have not achieved if they do not fit the stereotypes of achievement in society?

One of the most tragic messages many gifted young women receive is that society does not need or want their gifts and abilities, that the real work of the world is accomplished by men, and that any contribution they might make is:

peripheral or ancillary. It is little wonder that so few females reach maturity with their giftedness intact. (Robinson & Noble, 1992: 14)

The socialisation process of girls by parents and society needs to change (a difficult process) so that the girls are valued and encouraged in their choices and that parents come to accept that realising potential in an area central to one's identity is just as valid as being an outstanding mathematician or scientist. Parents need to support and encourage the talents of gifted girls just as much as gifted boys, and have confidence in the girls whatever domain they may choose. Eccles and Harold (1992: 26) state that given the omnipresence of gender-role prescriptions regarding appropriate female life choices, there is little basis for gifted girls to develop non-traditional goals if their

parents, teachers, and counsellors do not encourage them to consider these options, and support them once they do make these choices (Willard-Holt, 2008: Precket et al., 2008). Butler-Por (1995: 254) cites an example of a creatively gifted girl who did not receive parental support or encouragement:

[A girl aged 10] surprised her teacher by writing most creative and insightful poems. However the parents failed to appreciate their daughter's talents. Sad as it is the girl chose to psychologically 'opt out' and adopt underachievement behaviours.

Passow (cited in Butler-Por, 1993: 655) has argued that what is needed is:

A real commitment on the part of educators and society at large to the concept that talent is not the prerogative of any racial or ethnic group, any social class or any residential areas. It may lie untapped in some situations under some conditions, but no population has either a monopoly on or absence of talents.

Gifted girls need to be given the chance to explore a wide range of opportunities and to be encouraged to believe in their abilities to take these opportunities. Reis (2002: 26) suggests that gifted females should explore careers, further education, and plan and pursue professional opportunities that will challenge their intellect, as well as fit into their personal plans for the future. Families, schools, and businesses need to offer talented women across the life span opportunities that will enable them to continue to pursue their own choices.

Conclusion

Lewis Terman (1925) in his pioneering longitudinal study of gifted children in California was one of the first to consider parental and family influences. In his study he found family characteristics of marital stability, high levels of education, commitment to learning, and high occupational status were strong positive influences on gifted children. Most studies completed since have reached similar conclusions (Bloom, 1985;

Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Freeman, 1991; Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004; Van Rossum, 1993; Gross, 2004; Renzulli & Park, 2002; Antrop-Gonzalez et al., 2008)).

The literature has provided a sound background on the different family and personal traits that parents model which assist gifted children to achieve to their potential.

However, there are gaps in the literature when reviewing the research on underachieving gifted children. Many studies have been conducted in other countries on marginalised groups and the effects on underachievement. However, there are very few in an Australian context with particular emphasis on low socio-economic background. There is even less research, in an Australian context, on the extent of the influence of intergenerational family dynamics on underachievement.

Gifted children have very specific characteristics and needs which if not met can cripple their potential. Parents have an enormous responsibility in meeting these needs and to meet this responsibility they need support and direction from informed educators and counsellors. Those parents who underachieved themselves are a particular group that will need support and direction. They do not have the role modelling or experiences necessary to meet their children's needs. The significance of this study is to provide indepth research on family dynamics in an Australian low socio-economic context to add to the body of work on underachievement in gifted children.

There is a plethora of information on strategies parents can implement to provide the right stimulating and supportive environment for their gifted child. Table C (Strategies for Parents of Gifted Children, Appendix 6, pp. 194ff.) may provide a useful reference for some of these strategies. Sources include: Clark (2002); Mares (1997); Konza (1997); Lloyd (1997); Bloom (1985); Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993); Davis and Rimm (2004).

Family climate variables such as quality of family types, consistency, female stereotyping and valuing of the child can make the difference between high achieving

and underachieving gifted children. The development and realisation of talent potential is a delicate interweaving of so many elements but most vitally the family environment and dynamics.

Parents tend to foster the child's success in terms of academic achievement, sometimes in sporting terms but much less often in terms of the creative arts. This can have a controlling influence on the areas of talent that will be valued by the child. Parents tend to be influenced by the prevailing societal values and can sometimes fail to see that the child's area of talent and interest is just as valuable even if not as valued by society e.g. financial success over altruism.

A quote from a Deputy Principal reporting to the Senate Committee (1988: 5) encapsulates the dilemma of carers and educators of the gifted:

If children are not recognised at an early age and are allowed to sit there, they will switch off, and if you get them too late in life you cannot actually switch them back on again.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A need for more in-depth research on the parents of underachieving gifted children became apparent after an extensive reading of the current literature. By exploring the parents' life experiences educators and counsellors can gain insights into the ways to assist underachieving academically gifted children. The counsellors may be able to assist the families in creating stimulating and stable home environments that will nurture giftedness and encourage the children to achieve their academic potential. It is possible that the insights thus gained will affirm and extend existing understandings and so assist in the further development of educational and counselling strategies for underachievement. This chapter's intent is to rationalise the selection of the study methods and present a case protocol (Yin, 2003).

A mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and 'mixing' both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to address a research phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The researcher chose this design as it built on the strengths of both paradigms and brings a better understanding to the research problem.

Perspectives on the qualitative and quantitative paradigms

The quantitative and qualitative paradigms provide different perspectives on the research problem. The purpose of the design is to understand more comprehensively, developing more complete and full portraits of our social world through the use of multiple perspectives and lenses (Greene, Kreider & Mayer, 2005). The quantitative paradigm in the case of this mixed method approach acts as an identifier and provider of statistical background information. It is a numerical, objective approach to the problem that will

act as a support for the qualitative paradigm. The quantitative data will have less emphasis than the qualitative data. Sequentially the collection of the data will both precede (identifying the sample) and will take place at the same time as the qualitative data (gaining statistical information about the participants' socio-economic background). The sequencing of the data collection is explained in more detail later in this chapter. The approach for the quantitative paradigm is not one of the more classic approaches such as cross-sectional, survey or questionnaire; rather, it involves the use of testing instruments and statistical information as identifiers and background for the qualitative research. However, the instruments still have to be appropriate for the design and methodology used or the results will be meaningless.

The qualitative paradigm is a subjective approach that explores the research question from the social perspective of the individual. Its aim is to derive insights and meaning from the life experiences of an individual. Shkedi (2005: 47) encapsulates the essence of qualitative research when he states, "it is understanding the person's point of view from an empathetic rather than a sympathetic position." Qualitative research depends on a thorough understanding of the framework upon which it rests. The data analysis leads to rich textual detail and the development of meaningful themes from the narratives. Often in qualitative research the data analysis can occur at the same time as the data collection (Salkind, 2006; Creswell, 2005), whereas in quantitative research the data analysis follows the collection of data in a linear pattern (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 2003).

Both paradigms are similar in their requirements. Both methods require theoretical foundations to be laid through the literature review. Data collection and sampling processes have to be planned. Ethical requirements have to be considered and the demands of ethical committees met. The final report format will influence the way the data are presented. Both paradigms require the safe storage and clear reference filing of

the collected data. In the case of this study they both rely on the Lighthouse Project to meet sampling and data collection requirements.

In a mixed method research study both paradigms provide vital information for the researcher. Both are essential to the success of this study as they provide two very different perspectives to the research question.

Narrative as Representation

A narrative is a qualitative method in the form of storytelling that constructs a person's life experiences. Narrative both names the quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 2). In this study a distinction will be made between the phenomenon 'story' and the inquiry 'narrative', thus saying, people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 2). Within the parameters of this form of research there is a strong interplay between the researcher and the participant that will influence and add richness to the research.

Narrative researchers need to understand the individual's past experiences and influences, and how these have affected the present. This is particularly significant in this research study as it is exploring the participant's past experiences that may have affected their ability to achieve their true potential, thus creating a history of underachievement. It is important to create a chronology of the individual's past and present history (Creswell, 2005: 479).

Hinchman and Hinchman (1997: xvi) give a useful definition of narrative as:

Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way

for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it.

This definition stresses three key features of narratives that are embedded in the qualitative research method of this study. The first feature is that they are *chronological*; second, that they are *meaningful*; third, that they are inherently *social* (Elliott, 2005). Here, they are social in the sense that all individuals are constructed by their social milieu:

The self is, like other things, signified and culturally constructed. Human reality is a construction, the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. (Lye, 2000: 3)

Plummer (1983) suggests that individual stories and personal documents can potentially take us beyond the individual to an appreciation of that individual in a social context. There is always a tension between the individual's world as it is simply articulated and the unseen wider cultural context within which the informants live their lives (Shkedi, 2005).

Story has been used as a vehicle for social change (Razack, 1993). It can be utilised to provide a voice for those in traditionally marginal positions (Drake & Ryan, 1994: 45). This is one of the strengths of the narrative inquiry form in general. The narrative form is a vehicle for illuminating and promoting discussion of a marginalised research position. Drake and Ryan (1994: 46) strongly suggest that "any meaningful dialogue between marginalised groups and those of the dominant culture, will require that all parties have both the opportunity to tell their stories and the assurance that those to whom they speak will listen." Narrative allows the voice to be heard.

Grenfell (1997: 4) describes 'voice' as:

The individual's struggle to create and fashion meaning, assert standpoints and negotiate with others. Voice permits participation in a social world. Through the alterity of the speaker, voice affirms one's relationship to the world and to others.

Secada (1995: 156) makes particular reference to women's voices and the need to understand their experiences in order to engage with their lives: "Voice refers to the discourse that is created when people define their own issues in their own ways, from their own perspectives, using their own terms-in a word they speak for themselves." By attending to their voices the researcher and the reader can glean insight into their worlds and the family dynamics of that world.

Britzman (cited in Grenfell, 1997: 5) adds a proviso to the use of voice by advising that the researcher should be cautious in addressing voice for three reasons. First, we do not have one voice but many, by which he means the different personas adopted in our lives, for example, at work, at home or with friends. Secondly, the capacity to make language work for us is problematic as the signifiers in language are very personal and can be misinterpreted. Thirdly, interpreting the voices of others leads to the development of yet another voice, the voice of the researcher. The realisation of the subjective nature of 'voice' must lead the researcher to a self-reflexive awareness that the storying process should provide a vehicle for the marginalised while avoiding the trap of just adding another 'voice' or meaning to the research problem. Razack (1993: 67) concurs with Britzman in pointing out that "the problems of voice and identity are packed with internal dilemmas not only for the listeners but also the tellers of the tale."

The narrative form depends very much on context. A definition of context which is preferred for this study is that context is multilayered, involving the historical moment of the telling, the race, class, and gender systems that narrators manipulate to survive and within which their talk has to be interpreted (Personal Narrative Group, 1989). Context will influence the language choices made in the telling of the story. The linguistic

choices and pattern of discourse (Reissman, 1993) will affect the representation created and subsequently the interpretation. According to Bassey (1999) language is a more or less agreed symbolic system, in which different people may have some differences in their meaning. Language constructs semantically, pragmatically and stylistically (Bruner, 1987). For Foucault (cited in Cheek & Gough, 2005: 303) discourses cannot be analysed in isolation because they are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”.

Through the subjectivity of the language of Teena’s discourse, her suffering and her need to create a representation in story that would make sense of that suffering is perceived. We are able to value her voice as an actor, rather than an object of study (Deutsch, 2004: 896). The terms of “good girl”, “wicked girl” and “bad girl” appear frequently through her discourse. These are terms that her mother used often in reference to Teena, and Teena seems to be unconsciously using these terms in her own judgements of others. The often repeated appeal of “you know” emphasised her need for acknowledgement that her story was being “heard”. Validation and empathy was sought by the participant, and in the collaborative style of narrative inquiry, was offered by the researcher. Thus, a tenuous bond between researcher and participant was created but the writer needed to be aware of the dichotomy of position as researcher and friend (Deutsch, 2004).

The story emphasises how the individual constructs texts from particular contexts (Reissman, 1993). Concepts of reality can vary from one person to another (Bassey, 1999). Individuals when retelling their stories will make selective choices in what to include and what to exclude. Bruner (1987: 13) states that “at the very least, it is a selective achievement of memory recall: beyond that, recounting one’s life is an interpretive feat.” The events they choose to relate will be influenced by their perspective

and context, and a desire “to clothe the self in forms of protection” (Grenfell, 1997: 6). It becomes a representation of their lives and is not always transparent.

Respondents narrativise particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society (Reissman, 1993). The respondents in this study experienced such breaches in their life experiences and these disruptions are reflected in the events they have chosen to retell in the interviews. There was a strong sense of their need for validation through the telling of their story, for the researcher “to bear witness” (Reissman, 1993: 3). Ricoeur (2004: 87) explains that “to say: you will remember, is also to say: you will not forget. It may even be that the duty of memory constitutes, at one and the same time, the epitome of good use and of abuse in the exercise of memory.”

In this postmodern era there is a turn of thought that the individual is constructed by external forces which influence the individual’s internal forces. The postmodern conception of the self stresses the continual production of identity within specific historical and discursive contexts (Elliott, 2005; Davies & Gannon, 2005). The self is better understood as multiple and continually under construction rather than being a fixed set of characteristics or traits (Cheek & Gough, 2005; Davies & Gannon, 2005). For example, in her narrative Claire explained how she had to learn to survive, how she “grew up fast” due to the deleterious change in her circumstances. One of the fascinating aspects of narrative research is being able to explore the ways an individual constructs and reconstructs themselves in response to external forces over time. As Ricoeur (2004: 247) explains:

Without the recourse to narration, the problem of personal identity would in fact be condemned to antinomy with no solution. Either we must posit a subject identical with itself through the diversity of its different states, or, following Hume and Nietzsche, we must hold that this identical subject is nothing more than a

substantialist illusion, whose elimination merely brings to light a pure manifold of cognitions, emotions and volitions. This dilemma disappears if we substitute for identity understood in the sense of being the same (*idem*), identity understood in the sense of oneself as self-same [*soi-meme*] (*ipse*). The difference between *idem* and *ipse* is nothing more than the difference between a substantial or formal identity and a narrative identity.

Narrative identities are a product of an interaction between the cultural discourses which frame and provide structure for the narrative, and the material circumstances and experiences of each individual (Bruner, 1987; Ezzy, 1997). An analogy used to clarify the philosopher Hegel's concept of historical truth (Gaarder, 1995: 301) is very applicable to the concept of narrative identity:

[It] was like a running river. Every tiny movement in the water at a given spot in the river is determined by the falls and eddies in the water higher upstream. But these movements are determined, too, by the rocks and bends in the river at the point where you are observing it.

Within the narrative identity the individual plays a role as an active narrator, that is, they manage actively their own narrative performance and identity (Elliott, 2005). The active narrator while influenced by their social and cultural context nevertheless has stories which are individual and distinctive, "the rocks and the eddies". It is these distinctive stories that are presented to the researcher. Gubrium and Holstein (1998: 170) argue that "as much as the storyteller can be the author of his or her narrative, he or she is also an editor who constantly monitors, manages, modifies and revises the emergent story. Editing confirms that storytellers are never narratively 'frozen' as authors of the texts they produce."

Somers (1994) suggests that the researcher needs to allow for a focus on the social constitution of identity to inform the development of sociological interpretations and understandings of social action. A social researcher needs to be aware of the aspects of

the narrative form that involved the construction of identity and story, and to take this into account when analysing the data.

Reissman (1993) observes that narratives are suited to studies of subjectivity and identity. In this research study that is exactly what is being explored, the identity of the respondent. What are the influences, the contributing factors that helped shape them? The narrative form allowed the researcher to do the type of research she felt most 'in tune' with, research that saw values and empathy as significant (Deutsch, 2004). Mission (1994: 5) points out that "writing shapes how things are seen, and shapes what can be said", thus, the researcher has the responsibility to write with empathy, and a self-reflexive awareness about her own biases in 'shaping' the story.

Narrative Truth

While narrative as a constructed representation can give valuable insights and richness into the teller's story it also has its limitations. A problem in narrative research is the truth of what a teller says. The distortion of data may occur in the research study due to the 'constructed' nature of the narrative form. Some respondents, for whatever reasons, may not be able to tell the real story. It could be that the experiences are too horrific, too deeply in the subconscious, or may create a dangerous situation for the respondent (Creswell, 2005).

The Personal Narrative Group (cited in Reissman, 1993: 22) wrote about truth in narrative:

When talking about their lives, people sometimes forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was", aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences... Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We

come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them.

The idea of ‘truths’ through our experiences is supported by Bruner (1987) who writes about the internal criteria of the narrative relating to how one felt or what one intended, and these, if not subject to verification, do lend themselves to a demanding and ‘deep’ narrative. Ricoeur (2004: 96) further explores the idea of personal memory:

Memory does seem to be radically singular: my memories are not your memories. The memories of one person cannot be transferred into the memory of another. As mine, memory is a model of mineness, of private possession, for all the experiences of the subject. ... Memory is of the past, and this past is that of my impressions; in this sense, this past is my past. Through this feature, memory assures the temporal continuity of the person.

The memories of the participants are singular to each individual case study and as such will reflect the “use and abuse of the exercise of memory.”

The use of narrative and narrative research is not less scientific because of the problem of narrative truth. Rather it keeps the researcher honest, questioning and self-reflexive while at the same time empathetic and valuing. In fact, “they make for better science, our uncertainties hold the beginnings of the *synthesis* of subjectivity and objectivity that is the source of intellectual power and responsibility – and truth” (Du Bois, 1983: 113).

The Significance of the Study and Narrative Inquiry Research in Education

Grenfell (1997: 3) offers an explanation as to why this type of research can be a useful tool in implementing innovative educational changes that will benefit both teacher and student. It acts as a springboard and provides points of access, offering insights into ways of thinking, the ways people see themselves positioned, the ways we ourselves are positioned by others. Narrative inquiry helps us to challenge the parameters that surround, impede and circumscribe our lives. Connelly and Clandinin (1989: 9) describe

the reciprocity of narrative research and its influential properties: “the relationship is a dynamic one in which the social is reconstructed for a personal life story in which the larger social structures themselves are influenced by the personal action.” Through the stories in the case studies “the larger social structures” [education] are influenced in a way that will bring benefit to both parent and student.

By listening to the narrative of the participants in this study educators may be able to challenge and overcome some of the family dynamics that impede gifted students from reaching their potential. Participation in a narrative inquiry opens participants to understanding change in their practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989). Storying can provide student and teachers with the opportunity “to escape the prison of school experience, cultural myths and biography through acculturation, awakening and transformation” (Connelly & Clandinin, cited in Grenfell, 1997: 3).

Storytelling in educational studies is not new but there is a new emphasis in critical pedagogy on voices silenced through traditional education (Razack, 1993). Storytelling has the potential to generate significant insights for teachers (and counsellors). The participants in this study are in a marginalised social position, from a low socio-economic group. Their narratives will enable educators to gain insights into some of the family dynamics that lead to academic underachievement.

Connelly and Clandinin (1989: 18) reflect the researcher’s thoughts on the significance of this study when they state:

Narrative researchers’ purposes in writing for a larger audience are to have readers raise questions about their practices, their ways of knowing. Researchers want to share their narrative inquiries in ways that help readers question their own stories, raise their own questions about practices and see in the narrative accounts stories of their own stories. As people read narrative accounts, the intent is to foster reflections, storying and restorying for them.

Case Study

Grenfell (1997: 3) explains that a case study acts as a springboard and provides points of access, offering insights into ways of thinking, the ways people see themselves positioned, the ways we ourselves are positioned by others, and helps us to challenge the parameters which surround, impede and circumscribe our lives. Salkind (2006: 205) points out that case studies enable a close examination and scrutiny of the collection of a great deal of detailed data and they provide a rich account of experiences. Case studies allow for insights into the “how” and “why” questions of individuals’ experiences and choices and so allow the researcher to come to a deeper understanding of the research data. Herein lie the reasons why case studies appear appropriate for this research project. It enables an investigation (into family dynamics) “in detail, holistically and in...context, finding out about interpretations...and about [the] meanings” it has for the subjects (Punch 1988: 244). In other words, this qualitative method gives us the “insider view” (Minichiello, Fulton & Sullivan, 1999: 39).

This study is using a *multiple* case study design in order to make comparisons and propose common themes, which may lead to theory generation. Themes are organizing tools that will allow the researcher to sort out data according to relevant characteristics (Shkedi, 2005). Each case will be selected carefully from the available sample in order to predict similar results; that is, it becomes a *literal replication* (Yin, 2003). Even if the circumstances vary for each case study if the study can arrive at common conclusions it will have immeasurably expanded the external generalizations of the study findings (Yin, 2003: 53). The case studies may also suggest directions for further study. It is for these reasons that a multiple case study design was selected.

Although case studies provide more depth than breadth (Salkind, 2006) by providing in-depth data on one type of phenomenon in a multiple case design they become an

appropriate design selection. As Salkind (2006: 248) states, “some scientists believe that case studies will never result in groundbreaking basic research (which is not their purpose anyway). Case studies do, however, reveal a diversity and richness of human behaviour that is simply not accessible through any other method.”

Criteria for the selection of the participants

The participants have been selected from the group of parents whose children are involved in the Lighthouse Project. The Lighthouse Project is a project initiated by a religious education system in New South Wales to provide specialised educational opportunities for identified underachieving gifted students in their primary schools. Thirty-two children from Year Three and Four were identified through a testing process discussed in the quantitative paradigm section. Through a lengthy process of initial contact and further meetings with the parents and teachers four camps were organised where the students would be offered a range of stimulating physical and mental activities. The main aim of the camps was to improve the self-efficacy of the students and to stimulate their motivation to achieve at a higher level in their classroom curriculum. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome, that is, they will achieve mastery (Chaffey & Bailey, 2006). Bandura (1977) identified personal accomplishments as the most powerful of the factors that positively influence self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been identified as an important component in developing expertise (Sternberg, 2001).

The selection of the participants has been *purposeful*, an intentional selection of the respondents as an homogeneous group (Creswell, 2005). The participants are known to the researcher as we met at a number of parent meetings to introduce the Project, and on at least two weekend camps. A trust had already been established between the participants and the researcher. When approached the participants were quite

comfortable about being interviewed and it allowed for ease in ‘breaking the ice’ at the initial interview. The common goal of helping the children to achieve their potential immediately established a connection and rapport between the participant and the researcher.

The participants are four parents: Teena, Clare, Renee and Arna. Each of these participants has been selected on the basis that one of their children had been identified as an underachieving gifted student, and because of their low socio-economic status. The targeted parents were those who had already shown co-operation and enthusiasm for the Lighthouse project. It was thought that because of their enthusiasm they would be more receptive to the idea of being part of the study (but that is not to imply that the unenthusiastic don’t also have important narratives). The researcher contacted the participants and set up meeting times suitable to their availability. More formal meetings ensued during which the interviews took place. They each have a valuable story and the four stories enable a search for comparisons and contrasts, and the development of themes. The identification of themes provides depth and insight to our understanding of individual experiences (Creswell, 2005).

Qualitative Data Collection

Throughout the research process collaboration is essential in order to maintain the authenticity of the data and to ensure an ethical process. Creswell (2005: 483) defines collaboration as a process where the “inquirer actively involves the participant in the inquiry as it unfolds”. This collaboration assists in maintaining the integrity of the narrative so that the story reported closely reflects the story told. Collaboration will also assist in retaining an accurate perspective of the ‘voice’ of the respondent. A sense of equality between the participants is particularly important in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The research question is broad and general as it seeks to explore the individual's experiences rather than explore a narrow theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2005). By answering the researcher's question, the participants may penetrate more deeply to other experiences to trace the emotionality attached to their particular way of storying events and this, from the point of view of research, also constitutes data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989: 14). In the interviews conducted in this study all participants deviated from the initial questions branching out and touching upon other experiences they had had, the story 'lived'. In each of the interviews the participants added richness and depth to the narrative by storying events with their own particular emotionality.

The narrative inquiry process is not a linear one. There is data collection, mutual narrative interpretation by practitioners and researchers, more data collection and further narrative reconstruction. The narrative inquiry process itself is a narrative one of storying, restorying and restorying again. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989: 14)

Punch (2001: 25) states that typical qualitative studies have general rather than specific questions set up in advance, with a general design, and with data not coded at the point of collection. Shkedi (2005) points out that questions are the means by which the interviewer navigates the interview. They help the participants to construct and tell their stories.

In this study the first interview established a rapport with the participant and attempted to make them feel comfortable with the interview process. The following questions were asked to initiate the narrative. They are a mixture of descriptive, meaning, and triggered questions (Shkedi, 2005).

- 1) Tell me about your schooling and educational background?
- 2) What could teachers have done to encourage you to extend yourself?
- 3) What do you think are the main influences on your life?
- 4) What qualities helped you to reach your present position?

5) How do you define achievements?

6) Looking back what did you do that led to your undertakings or directions in life?

Narrative researchers need to understand the individual's past influences and how these have affected the present. This contextual information is particularly significant in this research study as it is exploring the interviewees' past experiences which may have affected their abilities to achieve their true potential, thus creating a history of underachievement. It is important to create a chronology of the individual's past and present (Creswell, 2005: 479).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Researchers need a conceptual perspective to analyse data but their perspective must be shaped and tested by the data they are analysing. This interaction informs narrative analysis from the outset (Shkedi, 2005). Description and developing themes from the data is the main form of data analysis used in this study. The description process began after the initial transcribing, reading and coding of the data. The raw data need to be retold, or *restoried*. Restorying is the process in which the researcher analyses the story for key elements (e.g. time, place, plot and scene), and then rewrites the story in a chronological order (Creswell, 2005). The process involves transcribing the raw data from the audiotape, then identifying the key elements of the story.

The description by the researcher then follows, "the description can transport the reader to a research site or help the reader visualise a person" (Creswell, 2005). It gives the detailed information in the restorying and creating of the narrative that will convey the 'voice' of the participant and add richness to their story thus eliciting an empathetic response from the reader. The researcher attempts to have the reader understand enough of the participants' experiences so that the reader can share something of what the

participants have experienced (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1989: 32) highlight the fact that “ the choice of what is included and what is excluded can make the difference between a compelling narrative-which evokes sensitivity and compassion for some part of the human condition-and a dry and tasteless technical report.”

The use of several narratives will enable analysis of the stories for common themes. As with all qualitative research, a small number of themes are identified by the researcher. They are usually presented after retelling the stories (Creswell, 2005: 483). The writer has identified four themes that resulted from the narrative inquiry and are reflected in each of the stories.

Quantitative Research Paradigm

The collection of the quantitative data is the first phase of a two-phase collection process (Creswell, 2005). The quantitative data provides identification and a general picture for the study, and the qualitative data collection provides the material for the refining analysis. The data collected in this paradigm identifies the underachieving gifted students and their parents. It will also give statistical information about the socio-economic status of the geographical area in which they live, and statistical information about the educational status of this area.

The initial identification process was carried out by individuals trained in the Coolabah Dynamic Assessment (CDA) (Chaffey, 2002). The data from this assessment was compiled by the Catholic Schools Office consultants. Parents, teachers and the writer also contributed to the identification process through checklists, anecdotal evidence and observations.

Sampling of the children

The population tested using CDA included all Year Three students in the participating religious primary schools over a two year period. The schools were approached by the regional office of the catholic education organisation and permission received to test the children. The testing took place at each of the seven primary schools and from the 224 students tested in 2005/6 thirty-two underachieving gifted children were identified. In 2006 the initial Lighthouse camps were organised.

Quantitative Data Collection

The Coolabah Dynamic Assessment (CDA) was used to identify the underachieving gifted students. Teachers trained in administering Chaffey's CDA conducted the testing at each school.

The CDA (Chaffey & Bailey, 2006) method has been designed as a non-verbal identification test for 'at risk' students aged eight to eleven years of age. The children were pre-tested and post-tested using the Ravens Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM) as a psychometric measure. This test instrument has been designed to measure the underlying ability to learn (learning potential). It is internationally recognised as one of the better measures of learning potential (Chaffey, 2006). The steps taken are the pre-test using RSPM, the intervention using CDA, then post-testing using RSPM again. This process took place over a four-week period. Those students who made significant statistical gains from the pre-test to the post-test (low 20th to 30th percentile to over 93rd percentile in two cases) were identified as gifted children. After consultation with their teachers, viewing of school reports and other assessment records thirty-two children were identified over the two-year period of testing.

The other form of quantitative data collected is the descriptive statistical information necessary to give contextual background to the socio-economic area in which the

families live. This was collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website, for example, median household income, median personal income, registered unemployment rate, single parent families and school completion rates (see Chapter 4). The school data were collected from the three Catholic secondary schools in the region (the state school data were unavailable). School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results and absentee rates for 2006 and 2007 are discussed in Chapter 4 (see also Table B, Appendix 5, pp. 187ff.).

The data form should be easy to understand and easy to work with, as it is the main link between the raw data and the data analysis (Salkind, 2006). The data form are tables (see Table A, Appendix 4, pp. 181ff.) with the information broken down for the comparative socio-economic regions into suitable sub-headings, such as, income, education and health. The writer has compared the data of a high socio-economic region to that of the low socio-economic region involved in the research in order to provide a stronger clarification of the statistics.

Data analysis

The data analysis also involved a two-phase process. The first phase occurred when the body of the data from the testing instruments was analysed, and the calculations made in order to identify the underachieving gifted students. Thirty-two students were identified and they attended the Lighthouse Project camps. The mothers who participated in the interviews were parents of four of these children.

The second phase involved the analysis of the statistical data to verify the type of area in which the families are now located as low socio-economic. The geographical region in which the families are located has recently changed from low socio-economic to having a mixture of high and low socio-economic areas within the one region. This mixture is due to the fact that the region is currently experiencing rapid population growth.

The analysis added validity to the qualitative research in giving a clear picture of the types of backgrounds that the children and parents come from. The statistics provide an objective support for the narrative. The statistical information is reported in the organised data collection format, that is, tables and charts. The report is presented in Chapter 4 before the case studies so that a clear picture is given of the family backgrounds as low socio-economic.

Reliability and Validity

A limitation of the narrative form is that it does not lend itself to clear cut measurements of reliability and validity. However, the concepts of reliability and validity are not as vital in case study research, as they are in other forms of research such as surveys and experiments (Bassegy, 1999). Traditional notions of reliability and validity need to be reconceptualised for narrative studies (Reissman, 1993). Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 7) point out that narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalisability. They have identified apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability as possible criteria. Apparency is the clear understandable representation of the data.

Verisimilitude refers to the probability that the research findings are consistent with occurrences in the 'real world'. Transferability is the ability to apply the results of the research in one context to another similar context.

Validation means moving back and forth between induction and deduction, between experience and reflection on experience, between data and our conceptual perspective, between our perspectives and our conclusions (Shkedi, 2005: 184). Punch (2001: 30) specifies other means of validity for qualitative research. Descriptive/contextual validity refers to whether the account of the research is complete and thorough. The chapters on methodology and contextual information provide a complete account of the processes involved in the research study. Another means is interpretive validity, which refers to

whether the account given in the research connects with the lived experience of the people studied. The original data for the participants' stories, their life experiences, are available in the transcript for cross-referencing if required. Direct quotes are used in the narratives to convey the participants' voices, to authenticate the research findings, and thereby to contribute to validity.

Trustworthiness is connected to how one approaches, collects, analyses, interprets, and reports data with an emphasis on making the steps and influences conscious to the researcher and visible to the reader (Merrick, 1999: 31). Lincoln and Guba (cited in Bassey, 1999) outline a series of questions as an alternative method to ensure trustworthiness in case study research:

- 1) Has there been prolonged engagement with data source?
- 2) Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues?
- 3) Has the raw data been adequately checked with their sources?
- 4) Has there been sufficient triangulation of raw data leading to analytical statements?
- 5) Has the working hypothesis, or evaluation, or emerging story been systematically tested against the analytical statements?
- 6) Has a critical friend thoroughly tried to challenge the findings?
- 7) Is the account of the research sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence in the findings?
- 8) Does the case record provide an adequate audit trail?

Both Punch, and Lincoln and Guba's recommendations are useful tools for ensuring the apparency, versimilitude, and transferability in narrative inquiry. They allow for an authentic voice to be heard.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 101) point out that qualitative researchers frequently use triangulation to support the validity of their findings. Where possible triangulation was

used in this study but in some cases it was difficult or impossible to verify the data through triangulation methods. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) also suggest additional strategies to ensure validity. The first strategy is extensive time spent in the field - the interviews for this study were completed over an eighteen months time span. The interview times ranged from one and half- hours to three hours and there were two interview phases for each participant. Also, the writer had already spent time with the participants at the various project meetings and camps.

A second strategy is negative case analysis – this is a case study that offers contrasts in the data analysis (as does Renee’s story). The contrast reinforces the analysis of the similar case studies and their link to the research literature. Another strategy is the use of thick description when an attempt has been made to give the reader much detail, and little input from the researcher, in the narratives so that the reader can draw their own conclusions. It should be rich and include contextual information, proper quotations from participants, and an explicit conceptual discussion (Shkedi, 2005). Original transcripts from the researcher’s interviews are available if required by the reader to verify narrative details or simply to explore additional details. “Proper quotations” have been used throughout the narratives and explicit discussion given in Chapter 6. A further strategy for validity is to collect feedback from others – the researcher has sought the opinion of the research supervisor on questions of validity.

Another important way to maintain the construct validity of the methodology is to increase the reliability of the information by maintaining the chain of evidence.

The principle is to allow an external observer - the reader of the case study, for example- to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions. (Yin, 1984: 96)

This chain of evidence maintains the validity and integrity of the research design. Yin (2003: 38) suggests that a way of approaching the reliability problem is to make as many

steps as operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder. Bassey (1999) concurs with the necessity of maintaining clear operational steps that point to trustworthiness, but Bassey terms it an audit trail. He suggests the researcher “provides an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments” (p. 61). Bassey (1999) also suggests that a colleague of the researcher be invited to conduct an audit of their research and issue a simple certificate on its trustworthiness. The writer has endeavoured to maintain a clear audit trail through the information provided in the chapters of this research paper, and has invited her thesis supervisor to issue a letter of trustworthiness (Appendix 7, pp. 198,ff.).

A formal retrievable database, preferably constructed under primary and secondary filing systems, that other investigators can retrieve and review will increase markedly the *reliability* of the qualitative research (Yin, 2003). There are four components of the database as suggested by Yin (2003): notes, documents, tabular materials and narratives. The notes of this study are mainly handwritten transcripts of the interviews and thoughts and ideas resulting from the transcript. There are few documents as they belonged to the participants, but rather, there is a record of these in the notes and the narratives. The tabular material is the quantitative data collected as background to the narratives from a variety of sources such as Area Health and the Australian Bureau of Statistics site.

Ethical Considerations

General ethical considerations for this project are in accord with the guidelines from the University of New England, and approval to proceed was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee. The participants’ welfare and best interests were always of vital concern to the researcher. Teena had severe physical and emotional problems at the time of the interview and so the interviews were conducted over short periods of time

spread out over a few weeks so as not to distress her. Due to her husband's illness, Renee could only participate in the interview when he could be left alone. The follow up questions and clarifications were conducted over the phone and by email.

A well-established principle of social research is that the participants know that they are not required to take part in the research and that they can withdraw at any given moment without consequence (de Vaus, 2001). One way to make sure that the participants know that the interview is voluntary is to state it very clearly either verbally, or in written form. At the beginning of the interviews it was stated that participation was voluntary and that the participant could finish the interview at any point that she wished if it became too emotionally difficult. The participants were clearly advised that they could decline to answer a question if they chose. Clare became emotionally choked at certain points in the interview process and chose to curtail her answers to questions that proved too emotionally distressful.

Consent should be obtained *before* participation. An informed consent form was obtained from each of the participants after a basic outline of the planned research study was provided. Confidentiality was ensured by the researcher and that promise honoured by the use of pseudonyms in the narratives. Anonymity cannot be possible in an interview situation but certainly they can expect confidentiality (Babbie, 1986: 453).

That is, the interviewer will be privy to their identity and that of their families but through the use of pseudonyms in the narrative the participant's real identity will be kept confidential. People participating in research are entitled to expect that they cannot be identified as the source of any particular information (de Vaus, 2001: 87).

Confidentiality can assist the methodological process as the participant may feel more able to impart information about private matters. This is a significant factor for a

narrative inquiry study as it allows the participant to be confident that the retelling of their life experiences will not lead to identification.

It is the nature of naturalistic research and the case study reporting method that both are more susceptible to breaches of confidentiality and anonymity than conventional inquiry. Most naturalists are therefore very sensitive to the ethics involved and may go to extraordinary lengths to protect respondents and sites from discovery. ... It seems to be well established that respondents have a right to privacy, and, if they give up that right in the spirit of co-operation with the researcher, they at least deserve as much protection as the researcher can provide. (Lincoln & Guba, 1989: 29)

Babbie (1986: 454) points out that researchers also have to have ethical consideration for their readers. If there are negative findings, shortcomings or limitations they should be reported as they are related to the analysis. "Similarly, it is important to avoid the temptation to save face by describing your findings as the product of a carefully pre-planned analytical strategy when it is not the case, many findings arrive unexpectedly" (Babbie, 1986: 454). To maintain the rigour and validity of a study the truth is the best choice. Ultimately, the inquirer must make individual judgements, which are a reflection of their own value system, the internalised ethical codes of mentors and trainers, and the situation in which the inquiry is conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1989: 9). In social research it is vital to maintain high ethical standards both for the participants and the readers of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUAL

INFORMATION

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The nature and speed of the growth in the area has resulted in a lack of community cohesion. This is compounded by the fact that disadvantaged groups have to compete for limited resources. This dynamic discourages the development of a supportive, interactive community which actively enables citizens to develop their potential and become connected, contributing members. (Samaritan report, 2001)

This chapter will provide the contextual background of the participants' current place of residence. It is within the milieu of this low socio-economic area that the participants are raising their families. It is within this milieu that the learning environments are being created by the participants for their children. This chapter will also provide contextual data on the current Catholic school system of Area A (the participants' current place of residence).

Du Bois (1983: 111) is passionately adamant that researchers need to see things *as they are*: whole, entire, complex. The truths of the storytellers are 'in context, that we understand and explain our eventful, complex reality within and as a part of its matrix'.

The area where the participants now live has been identified as a disadvantaged, low socio-economic area by the local government authorities, the Department of Education and the Catholic Schools Office. Table A (Statistical Data Comparison between Socio-Economic Areas, Appendix 4, pp. 181ff.) gives a statistical breakdown of a number of key areas that reflect the economic, educational and lifestyle context of this area (Area A). As a comparison the writer has included the statistics for the same key areas of a recognised high socio-economic area which is within a one hundred kilometre distance (Area B). Table B (Statistical Data on School Results, Appendix 5, pp. 187ff.) offers a visual comparison of the following data discussion.

Area A is gradually changing as the prices of homes rise and the more affluent are moving into the area as a viable alternative to expensive city living. There are pockets of more affluent families in the areas closest to beaches or waterfront. The area is experiencing a rapid population growth. Between 1991 and 2021 the regional population is predicted to rise by 75,000. The area does offer a pleasant lifestyle in that there is access to many beaches and lakes. This lifestyle and the affordability of homes are significant reasons why people choose to move to this area.

The data show that it is a predominantly English speaking area (91%) which is also reflected in the fact that the two dominating religions are the western religions of Anglicanism and Catholicism. The higher percentage of separated or divorced individuals in Area A (14%) seems, at first glance, to support the better affordability of housing in this region for individuals on low incomes. However, when correlated with the higher percentage of state housing available in Area A (13%) it seems feasible to conclude that more separated or divorced individuals move to this area due to the cheaper state housing available. One of the largest state run housing communities in New South Wales is found in this region. Area A has a higher percentage (19%) of one parent families than does Area B (10%) perhaps also a reason why Area A has such a large proportion of state housing.

The types of occupations found in Area A reflect its lower socio-economic status as compared to Area B. There is a marked difference between 37% and 17% for the Professional occupational statistics. Area A also has more unskilled occupations and less managerial occupations than Area B. The unemployment rate is higher than the state average in Area A (7%), which is also reflected in the higher demands for state housing. Young people in particular experience relatively high rates of unemployment partly due to the fact that there are limited job opportunities in the area.

The differences in the academic requirements of professional and trade occupations somewhat explains the differences in educational levels achieved by individuals in the regions. Gross (2004) found that parents with high status occupations such as professional and managerial positions valued higher education. In Area A, only 38 % completed any senior education whereas in Area B 75% did so. Thus, more individuals in Area B were qualified to continue to the tertiary level education necessary for Professional and Managerial occupations. In Area A 44% completed their studies at the Years 9 or 10 level whereas in Area B only 15% completed their studies at this level. In Area A 38% completed their studies at Year 11 or 12 level whereas in Area B 75% completed their studies at this level, a marked difference. In Area A more individuals only achieved the education levels necessary for trade apprenticeships or TAFE courses. Weekly income levels highlight the differences in the socio-economic contexts of the areas. In Area A the median individual income is \$407 whereas in Area B it is \$672. In Area A the median family income per week is \$1081 compared to Area B where it is \$2397. This difference is substantial and the lack of income would have a limiting effect on the lifestyle of the individuals in Area A. It may contribute to the lower education levels as some parents may not be able to afford to support their children through to Year 12.

The area is serviced by a train line which provides both local and intercity services. This is one of the main forms of transport for the large number of people who commute to work in the city every day. However, large sections of the area are not serviced by the train, and the bus and ferry services are expensive and fragmented. The lack of affordable, regular transport means that resources and support services are inaccessible to many disadvantaged people.

The Samaritans report (2001) indicates that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest one of the most urgent needs in this area is the support for people and families affected by mental health, drug and alcohol issues. Tobacco, alcohol and marijuana are reported to be the most widely used drugs, followed by amphetamines and heroin. Due to the nature of these addictions and mental health issues people affected can experience a range of disadvantages such as social isolation, inability to maintain independent living without assistance and low incomes due to the inability to maintain employment.

Most health and community services currently cannot meet the level of demand for human services and operate with long waiting lists or focus on the most critical and urgent cases. The area's offices of the Department of Community Services rank in the top ten busiest offices in the state for child protection issues (Samaritans report, 2001).

There are a large number of clubs, hotels and bars in the region and these are one of the main sources of entertainment. Movie theatres, restaurants and cafes offer alternative leisure activities. There are three drama groups, one live theatre venue, one community art gallery and a few private art galleries. Other forms of lifestyle or leisure activities centre around the water, for example, surf living saving, boating, fishing. Sporting activities include netball, football, athletics, swimming, surfing and soccer. The area has a large number of dance schools which produce many talented performers. However, there is a lack of affordable recreational activities for teens and young adults which leads to social problems for families in the area.

Diocesan School System

The children of the participants are being educated in Catholic primary schools located in a coastal region of New South Wales. There are 11 primary schools which become the feeder schools for the four secondary schools. The curriculum of the schools is based on the syllabuses of the Department of Education. The Diocesan Catholic Schools Office

holds regular inspections to maintain compliance with the Board of Studies' requirements. The CSO consultant also visits the schools regularly to ensure that excellent educational standards are maintained.

The local Parish priest provides the religious connection to the schools often visiting or overseeing activities within the schools. Most schools also have a Youth Minister or Liturgical/Religious Coordinator. Students are required to have some type of religious lesson each day and they are also encouraged to share in social justice and community assistance activities.

Three of the secondary schools have been classified as disadvantaged by the Catholic Schools Office as compared to the other schools in the Diocese, which are situated in more affluent suburbs. The academic results vary between the schools but generally the students achieve on or just above the state average (see Table B – Statistical Data on School Results). The results for School A (which is in a more affluent area) are higher than School B or C (which are in more disadvantaged areas).

In the last eight years the Office has made a fairly concerted push to meet the needs of the gifted and talented students in its schools (Ryan, personal notes, 2008). A specialist consultant was appointed part-time in 2000 and full-time in 2004. She has collaborated with interested teachers in the Diocesan schools. A parent advisory board has been established for six years and inter-diocesan meetings occur which provide shared professional learning. The consultant has worked with other Education Officers to develop her role and offer considerable input into meeting the needs of the gifted and talented within the diocesan schools at a systems level. During the past three years the consultant organised and presented at five one-day gifted education professional learning courses for Diocesan teachers. These courses involved action research and so provided direct resourcing for the teachers and their gifted students. At the system's level policy

and processes have been developed to ensure a systematic and coordinated approach has been adopted by the schools.

The main area of development in gifted and talented curriculum has been at the primary school level because it has been easier to implement change within these schools. The main motivation has been the necessity of providing for the needs of our gifted students, both achieving and underachieving, before the difficulties of adolescence occur. It is also far easier to deal with the one teacher than seven or eight as happens in secondary schools. The Principals and teachers in the primary schools are very enthusiastic and supportive about meeting the needs of the gifted and talented students in their schools. Some wonderful strategies are being introduced such as a virtual classroom for four hundred gifted students from Kindergarten to Year 4, tracking of gifted students at a system and schools level, resourcing and in-servicing teachers and the Lighthouse Project (Ryan, personal communication, February 2008).

The situation is not so encouraging in the secondary schools (Ryan, personal notes, 2008). The Gifted and Talented Consultant has started working with interested teachers in 2008 to try to raise the profile of gifted education. Since gifted education in the secondary schools is at its infancy stage a few interested teachers who were supported by the office to participate in the Certificate of Gifted Education course lead the way. As the consultant and interested teachers continue to educate Executives and Middle Management within the Diocesan Office and the secondary schools staff more rapid change may occur. One of the secondary schools in this region has implemented differentiated curriculum for the gifted, mentoring for talented students in English, acceleration, enrichment activities in schools, and independent study projects in a variety of subjects. These changes have been achieved due to the enthusiasm and knowledge of

the consultant and interested teachers. The consultant is working to implement change and encourage the teachers in the schools to continue meeting the needs of the gifted.

Many of the underachieving gifted students in the Lighthouse Project will soon be attending these secondary schools. How will their self-esteem and self-efficacy continue to develop? Will all the successful work of the project be lost? It is anticipated that through the work of the consultant and other teachers in the secondary schools the needs of these students will be met.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The model that will be used in the case studies is that of the narrative “that explores the broad contours of a life story” of an individual (Reissmann, 1993: 26). This model allows for the use of field notes as well as the taped interview data. The narrative will consist of a mixture of direct quotes from the interviews to capture the “actor’s voice”, summaries of the content of the interview and the use of an authorial, interpretive voice. A limitation with this model is that the analytical work in transcribing is not as obvious as other models, and it places severe constraints on alternative readings of the data (Reissman, 1993).

The participants’ stories are powerful stories of women struggling against, and overcoming, severe obstacles and challenges in their life experiences. Through listening to their stories the effects of family dynamics on academic achievement can be explored. In order to do this both “teller and listener must share some ‘deep structure’ about the nature of a life, for tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or what she thinks the other is hearing” (Bruner, 1987: 21). The reader also needs to share the “deep structures”, the awareness of the effects of family dynamics on underachievement, in order to gain insights from the participants’ stories. The data give rise to a number of questions about academic underachievement and its causal influences.

Mares (1997: 61) indicates that “intelligence is not enough to ensure that potential will be translated into achievement. The individual needs to have some necessary characteristics and parents can contribute substantially towards their development.” Incidences of child sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence between parents and

children, as well as emotional and economic dominance of one partner over the other, are all cited by conflict theorists as evidence of the fact that the very private nature of families also creates a situation wherein the self-confidence, safety, health and well-being of its members is severely undermined (Harper, 1997).

Case Study One: Teena's Story

Teena is now in her mid-forties and is married with three children. She lives in a beach suburb of a small coastal city which is in a low socio-economic area. Teena is a very lively and outgoing woman who tells her story with fluency, passion and compassion.

Parents and Siblings

Teena's father, Tony, passed away in 1997 when she was thirty-five. He was of Italian descent and his family holds property on a small Mediterranean island. The family has an interesting history which includes an ancestor who was a pirate.

Great, great, great grandfather P was a pirate. He fought for the King in a sea battle and they won. He was given the whole, entire island. Yep, and a title of Conti and we still have the title, my dad was a Conti and my mother a Contessa. You have to pay the government to keep the title and, of course, we've never paid since Dad died. P was a rogue and he gambled away most of the island so we only have twenty-six properties left.

Teena's father was born in an inner city suburb of Sydney, early last century. He was influenced by his mother's words that "he had to be perfect as he was a 'wog', and he had to work very hard at school to be better than all the rest". Migrants were very vulnerable, Italians and other South Europeans were widely resented, castigated as being willing to work "for the smell of an oily rag" (Lowenstein, 1978: 3). So her father went on to become a dentist with a successful practice. He worked very hard in his practice and often did not return home until late at night. Unfortunately, he became very ill after a

major kidney operation and retired in the early 1970s. Teena's Mum and Dad then bought a house in the beach suburb where she now lives.

He worked downstairs where he had the surgery. He did things like make dentures for the Chinese cook at the local restaurant who gave Dad prawn dumplings in payment. Dad used the barter system. We got the deck built for a set of dentures.

Teena was always very close to her father, and she was very special to him,

I always remember his smell ... cigars, Californian poppy (you know, the hair oil) and cloves. He would take me to the Bowling Club with him and buy me pink lemonades (my choice). ... I loved snuggling up to him when he was ill in bed.

Teena's mother, Esther, is Australian, she was born in the capital city of a southern State, early last century and is of Irish descent. She was a nurse before her marriage. Little more is said about the mother's background as Teena is far more interested in talking about her father and his family. The reasons for this become clearer as her story continues,

My mother didn't want me, she was ready to retire, she was sick of kids. She would hit me with the wooden spoon and lock me in the cupboard. She still hits me, only the other day she jabbed her fingers into my neck and slapped my face.

Teena has five siblings: a brother, Greg, who is 17 years older than she, a sister, Terry, who is 15 years older, a brother, Harold, who is 13 years older (and gay), a sister, Lina, who is 11 years older, and another brother, Mark, who is 5 years older. Greg is a Professor of Dentistry, Terry is a CEO for an arts council, Harold works with a State Department, Lina also works with a State Department, in an executive position and Mark is a wildlife ranger, "a wild man and nature lover."

Lina was really the wicked girl of the family because she left home before she left school. I remember Mum covering my eyes as I clung to her legs as Lina went out the door with all her clothes. Mum said, "Don't watch this wicked girl."

Lina went to Teacher's College, fell pregnant and had to come home. They made her give the baby away but the baby Colleen found Lina again when Colleen was twenty-six years old. Colleen had been searching for her mother since she was nineteen years old. Interestingly enough she is a lesbian and the other weird thing is she's also into art. Colleen used to go to the Mardi Gras and she actually spoke to Harold but she didn't know he was her Uncle then. When Colleen finally found us and realised what type of family she came from she felt totally right because, you know, we're all weird. I feel the 'gay' gene comes from Dad's side.

Teena has a variety of nieces and nephews who reflect the influences of a dysfunctional family. One nephew is an alcoholic and in jail, two nieces have drug addictions and one suffers from bulimia. Teena has spent a great deal of time aiding and counselling her nephews and nieces, trying to help them over the obstacles they face. She feels her experiences have given her the compassion and insight to try to help these young, disturbed family members. Her compassion and care for others is reflected through her reactions to many other individuals with whom she has come into contact.

Childhood

Teena was born in Sydney in 1962. For the first three years of her life she travelled the Continent with her family. Teena has seen many photo slides and heard many stories about this time so she feels as though "she remembers it". It was a wonderful time for the family until her sister Terry had a car accident and they had to remain in England for a year so that she could recover. This period in Teen's life has had a profound effect on her and ever since she has had a passion for all things European.

From the ages of five to seven she went to a Catholic primary school in a middle-class suburb of Sydney. She was always an academic achiever in primary school, as her reports verify, nearly always achieving A grades in her subjects. Teena was also a "good girl" at this point, often helping the teacher with her classroom duties. Teena, and the boy she was "in love with, he had dark skin," looked after their teacher who was a

Vietnamese nun. Teena felt “sorry” for the nun as she was having great difficulty coping with her teaching duties and would sit and cry during the lessons. Teena and her boyfriend would sympathise with her and assist her in whatever way they could.

I was so good and helped her so much that I got to play the part of Mary in the Christmas play. It was very sad because she ended up going back to Vietnam during the war. I don't know what happened to her.

Teena recalls a very painful experience from her early school life that had a profound effect on her religious beliefs and her trust in her mother. One day when the class was at Mass another child “dobbed” on her for speaking during the Mass.

I was only saying my rosary. I believed that God would tell them the truth.

However, she was not believed and she received the strap as punishment.

I felt abandoned by God. I couldn't cope with the sense of injustice. I doubted God and my religion. I stopped believing my mother who said God would always help me. I am a Libran, with a strong sense of justice. I felt totally abandoned.

Shortly after this incident the family moved north out of Sydney as Teena's parents wanted to retire. Teena was seven years old.

In 1970 her parents purchased a house in a pleasant beach suburb with very little residential settlement at that time. Her father set up a dental surgery underneath the house and continued his work on a part time basis.

Teena went to the local Catholic primary school but felt very lonely and did not identify with the other “country kids”. She felt that they were naïve and immature and that she was “older in the head than them.” Teena made friends with four of the locals, three of whom were retired teachers and one a retired seamstress. From the ages seven to twelve, these octogenarians were her main friends and had a strong influence on her. They supported her and gave her the attention and love she was missing at home.

Betty, Mary & Esther were all sisters. Dorothy was their friend. They were all teachers, except Betty who was a seamstress, and all spinsters. Betty was the most beautiful of them all. She used to sew Christmas dolls for me.

They used to tell me lots of stories about war, history and other things. Dorothy, who was like a child, had this big cupboard full of mechanical toys and wind up things. I loved playing with them. At Christmas we [Teena and friends] went down there. It was like a wonderland, they had decorations everywhere and they felt more was better. It was so special to be able to go there. They were my company, a way of getting attention.

Also living on the corner was George and his wife. They took care of me when Mum and Dad went to Sydney and I would get spoiled rotten. There'd be ice-cream sundae with strawberry sauce, there'd be Tim-Tams, there'd be everything.

It was a lonely life for Teena. She spent most of her leisure time at the beach which was a short distance from the house. Her mother would send Teena out for the day to amuse herself, simply ringing a bell when the evening meal was ready.

I didn't exist for Mum!

Teena would amuse herself by going on long walks with the dogs, "who were my protectors", around the rocky, wave-splashed sea platforms and up the tree covered, rocky headlands. She had made two friends (of her own age) who sometimes accompanied her.

Mary, she was just like the leader of the pack at school. She was the girl everybody wanted to be. But then I found out she was a Leo. Leo they are leaders, they are very tough task masters and perfectionist. My other friend was Karen, from age seven. She was my "guilty" friend. I felt sorry for her because of the broken marriage.

During these years Teena was often subjected to physical abuse, being hit with "the wooden spoon or being locked in the cupboard for hours on end".

Teena lived for the holidays when the “wealthy kids” would arrive to spend their holidays at their beachside holiday homes. Susan was one of these “kids”, she became Teena’s best friend until Teena was fourteen. Teena protected Susan and took care of her. Then Susan moved to Germany with her family. Susan and Teena were part of a group of three girls and seven boys who met most holidays and became the “surfie/beach group”. Teena was able to identify with these children as they “were educated and had travelled”.

The smell of jasmine reminds me of them, and the stars ... the stars at night were beautiful. We would sit around the beach, drinking and talking and snogging I am a romantic.

High School

In 1974, at age twelve, Teena began her secondary schooling at a local Catholic all girls high school. She is remembered by one of her teachers as being “outgoing and fun loving”. Her Year 9 report substantiates her academic success by providing the information that she achieved four As and three Bs; the As were in English, Science, French and Music; the Bs in Maths, Home Science and History. However, this school only went to Year 10 so Teena had to move elsewhere to complete her schooling.

I was always an A student. My bookwork was good. I went to painstaking care on my books, colour was important. Ms H might remember. Everything else was good but Maths I was terrible at, I had been told I was bad at it.

I was never remarkable or top of the class but I always got A grades. Because I also wasn’t a ‘peabody’, what I call a ‘peabody’. I was a surfie chick, I used to have all the boys and girls who came up here for company. They all went to private schools.

Her siblings had all gone to private boarding schools for the last two years of high school and Teena was offered the same choice. However, she decided that she was too rebellious and would not be able to conform to the rigid expectations of this type of

school. So Teena opted for the local state high school. Her time there began promisingly and she chose her beloved French as one of her HSC subjects.

Unfortunately, half way through Year 11 Teena was stricken with Crohn's disease.

Crohn's is a debilitating disease of the bowel which has no known cure. The doctors still cannot identify the cause of the disease but stress seems to be a strong contributing factor. As Teena had suffered severe stress due to her childhood experiences she thinks this may have contributed to the onset of the disease. The severity of the symptoms meant that she could no longer travel to her current high school which was some distance away. It necessitated her moving to a closer school. This meant leaving her good friend Mary behind and having to establish a whole new friendship base, as well as fitting in to a different school culture. These difficulties only compounded her stress levels and so exacerbated the symptoms of the disease.

To add to her difficulties the new school had only just added the senior years to a Years 7 - 10 high school. The school was having trouble implementing new curriculums due to the changes. Teena had to drop French and was advised not to take Visual Arts, a subject she loved and was talented in, but to do Home Economics instead. These curriculum restrictions, as well as her disease, made these last years of schooling very difficult, and she again became quite ill just before her HSC.

I was very disappointed in my results. I only got 333 but I was in the top 10% for Biology. I won the school prize for Home Economics but it was my worst subject in the HSC. I did Ancient History, 2 Unit English, General Studies and 2 Unit Maths (which I shouldn't have done, I was ill advised).

Due to her disappointing HSC results and the stress of coping with Crohn's disease, Teena decided against going to University and chose an easier option by taking a course at a Dental Therapy College. Unfortunately, this decision was seen as a case of severe underachieving by her mother.

She was always happy with the marks I brought home but I know that if I didn't my life would have been worse than it already was. My Mum thinks achievement is being up on the sideboard, in her picture gallery, in a cap and gown. Mum believed what Dad believed that you have to be better, not just as good as. She always aligned me with herself, "Teena's like me, not much upstairs."

To her I'm a piece of dirt, without the cap and gown. I'm a ninny, a dicky, weirdo freak.

The Adult World

Teena spent two years at the Dental Therapy College completing her Internship, she placed in the "top three of her year". However, when she had finished she decided not to continue in this line of work.

I resigned the day I graduated even though I graduated in the top three of thirty-six girls.

One of the main reasons was that the children who were dental patients of the College were scared of her, as she caused them pain. Teena loves children and she couldn't stand "the negativity" of these experiences.

I love children and animals, they don't judge you.

So she decided to complete a one year course in Beauty Therapy. At the end of this year, at age twenty, Teena left home and vowed never to return. Teena had always had a passion for "Europe and all things European" so she spent the next six months travelling the Continent.

After Teena returned to Australia she held a variety of positions in the workplace. Teena worked with Rodney Clarke as a retail manager in his shops which sold designer clothes. She worked for him, on and off for seven years, until her marriage in 1991. Teena started

in the inner city branch and was a very successful retail manager. Later she managed one of his city shops.

In Rodney Clarke I had a lot of pressure on me to get the target and they were quite high as I was in the city store. It ended up being the top shop in the city even though it was a quarter of the size of the other shops. That makes me proud. My mum doesn't think that's important but I do. The customers were barristers, lawyers and specialists and they trusted me to fit them out for the season, they trusted me to give them the right look. Short of being a buyer or designer, that was as far as I could go in the field. I had a really strong clientele to the point that when I went overseas after I got married, the shop closed down six months later.

Teena's illness still limited her life although she displayed great strength of character in coping with the debilitating effects of the disease. When she was in her twenties she had to undergo a bowel resection and it took her many months to recover. At that time Teena was living with her fiancé and he cared for her during the hospitalisation and recovery period. Teena worked as a beauty therapist in a hairdressing salon in a beachside suburb after she had recovered.

You know I first heard about Tarot cards when I was working in a beauty salon. I was with a hairdresser and a male artist. The whole thing was a mauve, pale-gray and black, mauve is calming.

When Teena was in her middle twenties she had another bout of severe illness resulting from Crohn's disease. Her fiancé could not cope with the difficulties of this recurring illness and so they went their separate ways. Teena moved in with Bert who looked after her and supported her during this period of severe illness. Teena was to spend the next two years with Bert travelling the country as part of a Bicentennial construction team. They travelled to thirty-six cities around Australia. Their job was to construct the tents and mini exhibits that displayed the memorabilia and presentations for the Bicentennial team. Teena showed me a poster of the construction. It consisted of a number of bright

blue shell-style tents grouped in a circular fashion with the caravans sitting to the side. Her work included heavy manual work, “wielding sledge hammers and other heavy equipment”.

Teena described the decor of the caravan in which she travelled for the Bicentennial exhibition. Teena loves colour and design and seems to have a definite artistic flair. She is very proud of her décor.

I was very Japanese oriented at this time in my designs. The caravan was black, pale gray and red because in the 80’s it was very fashionable. We had futons and lanterns, and it looked very different on the inside to the outside. It’s like the Tardis, rough on the outside but beautiful within.

Just before Teena met her future husband, James, she travelled to Greece. Teena was twenty-seven. She spent six months in Greece working in various tavernas and coffee shops. She learnt to speak the language fluently, “like a native”.

I spoke with a Greek accent. They were amazed. I must have been Greek in a past life.

Teena had a wonderful time in Greece but returned to continue working in the designer clothes shop until she married.

Marriage

Teena met her future husband in her twenty-eighth year.

I was attracted to James because of his long hair and olive skin (he looked European and you know my passion is the Continent), and he looked bohemian. I’m bohemian myself. I was told by a psychic that at twenty-eight a profound change would happen because it is when Saturn returns in astrological terms of maturity. Anyway I met him through a Tarot card reading I was doing for his ex-fiancé. She told him to go to a party on the Saturday night and meet me there. So that’s where I met James. Unfortunately, he had a bad leg and he had to go into hospital the next week. I used to visit him there and talk to him. But he had

complications from the knee operation and he got an embolism. I'd only known him for three weeks but I took him home and looked after him for eight months until he was mobile again. There was no one else. I don't know what he would have done.

In 1990 Teena suffered from a crippling combination of glandular fever, Crohn's disease and asthma. This limited her ability to work and she was forced to live on a disability pension for a time. James supported her at this time and cared for her. The relationship developed from there, Teena thought that as he had suffered he would be sympathetic to her suffering and be prepared to care for her in return. They married in 1991 in October, and left the following March for Europe. James was not as caring a husband as Teena had hoped he would be (as shown by later events).

We went to Greece first because I had all my connections there from the prior trip and we got a job in Santorini. You've got to go there, everyone's got to go there, its really magical. I'd picked up Greek quickly from my previous trip and having the language meant I could get everyone employed. Tracey, Sonia [friends they were travelling with] and I were working in a bar and I'd start at 6pm and finish at 6am. James worked during the day so he would pick us up on a little step-through motorbike.

We left Tracey and Sonia in Greece and went through Turkey by bus. Then we went to my ancestral island in the Mediterranean. When we were there we had little money so I used to make necklaces and sell them to the tourists. The Italians throw their terracotta tiles in to the water and they get smoothed, break up, and wash back onto the beach. They are a beautiful colour, a bright orange and they have interesting shapes. I started collecting them, painting on them and threading them with a piece of leather. The tourists loved them.

Teena showed me one of the necklaces that she had brought home with her, it looked exactly as she had described.

On their return to Australia James worked as a subcontractor and managed to gain employment as a carpenter on a Hollywood film set. The film set was for a major

Hollywood film being shot on a Queensland tropical island. Teena, and their one year old son, accompanied James. They had a wonderful time and met many of the actors on the set including Marlon Brando and Val Kilmer. Not long after this they used this experience and the contacts they had made to start their own business building film sets and doing other signage work.

Teena and James set up a studio in the inner city and rented 2000sq metres in an old heritage building. They had a major contract with a leading poker machine company, as well as for a film set of a television drama programme. Teena and James had committed a great deal of money to the venture some of which had been borrowed from Teena's brother, Greg. At first the business was doing very well.

In the early part of the new century they met difficulties with the council about the restructuring work that they had done in the heritage building. The council shut down their business for sixteen weeks while Teena and James met the new structural requirements of the council. Unfortunately, this led to a cancellation of contracts and the closure of the business. They were left heavily in debt and in straitened circumstances.

Children

Teena has three children, a boy twelve years old, another boy ten years old and a girl nine years old. She explained her methods of childrearing.

My oldest son read early, he just soaked it up like a sponge from six months. He was reading signs at two years old. I let him watch Sesame Street and Playschool for the colour and strong visuals. I knew that these educational shows would help him. The other two got double doses of Sesame Street and Playschool in a day. That was my babysitter, the television.

I gave them lots of art, painting and other materials to play with. We often communed with nature. I wanted to instill the power of language, not violence, use your words, use your tongue I would say to them. I'm a pacifist and want to set an example. Nobody wins in a war that's what I tell my kids. The buck stops here. I

don't hit my kids. Her [Teena's mother, Esther] Mum may have done that to her and I feel sorry, but you don't spend your whole life being a victim. I didn't. I got out and I did my stuff. I want my kids to be the same.

I use a merit system, not punishment with my kids for discipline. I have Magical Mystery tours, which are surprises. They could be as simple as going for a picnic or as expensive as going to Cirque de Soleil (which I'm saving up for at the moment). They earn points to get to go on the tour, or 20 strikes and they can't go.

The Present

After the business collapsed Teena began having severe back problems, as well as the continuing problems with Crohn's disease. She was also worried about her mother's failing health and inability to care for herself. So Teena and James decided to move to the coastal town where Esther presently lives. Teena narrates the events of this recent time in her life, and shares her feelings about the challenges with which she currently has to contend.

We came up from the city. We were having a hard time with the business because of the council restrictions. James was still taking on jobs, still commuting to the city. Initially I was doing all the domestic work and caring for the kids myself. But I had a really bad backache, it started in Sydney and we thought if we were up here closer to Mum and not worrying about her it might help. We thought it was stress, stress of the business and stress of not being able to take care of Mum. We thought a sea change and me coming back to where I grew up, might help, with the air and everything. The air is healing.

Nobody could tell me what was wrong. I had injections of cortisone into the sacroiliac joint. I was in heaps of pain day and night. They thought it was rheumatoid arthritis, then that it was from weight bearing. They had no idea. I continued to doing everything. I had a two storey house. We didn't see James as he was gone at 4am and got home after we went to bed. He was always exhausted too. There was all sorts of drama, it was a total nightmare and James is not good with that sort of thing either.

One day the pain was so bad we had a can of soup for dinner. I think I bought it. Anyway I was in so much pain I couldn't stand long enough to cook. Cooking is one of my hobbies and, you know, I was really depressed and saying bad things in my head. A girlfriend rang who I have known since we were seven, and I told her, "I just feel like swallowing a whole heap of these painkillers and not opening my eyes again."

In September of 2005 the family had to move in with Esther so that they could look after her properly. Esther could not be left alone as she could no longer care for herself adequately. Esther had had two car accidents in a short space of time, and was constantly having falls in the house. The close living arrangements are causing a great deal of tension between Teena, her mother and James, although the children enjoy being at the house. The house has a small creek running through the end of the large backyard. The children are able to play in the large, leafy backyard or swim at the nearby beach. They seem to be able to cope with the domestic tensions at the moment.

Esther expresses resentment, rather than gratitude, at Teena's compassion and willingness to care for her. This also causes tension between Teena and her mother, James gets caught in the middle.

I heard her just today talking to an old army friend, and you know she was going through the list of all the brothers and sisters. She was saying how fantastic and fabulous they were and yet they are people who don't ring her. And you know what she said about me, "Teena doesn't have a house" – that was all.

Not Teena chose to come and take care of me and cleans up all my mess and cooks beautiful food and makes sure I have everything I need.

No I don't get admiration I get this because she's so frustrated she can't do it anymore for herself. She hit me yesterday, just yesterday in front of the visiting children, friends of my son. I felt terrible for them but in a lot of ways I was glad too because they were objective observers who saw me unfairly treated. She was hanging washing on the line and it was too difficult for her. I said, "Mum you don't have to do that."

“Get your hands off me!” Mum shouted.

That’s how she treats me. All I wanted to do was help, so in the end I got nasty myself and told her to “bugger off”. That’s when she started hitting me.

They told James when he got home and Mum lied to him and said, “Oh, no, Teena hit me.”

And I didn’t, but it’s always her word against mine. I know James believes me but he sits on the fence. He doesn’t champion me. If the shoe were on the other foot I’d go in, fists up, to protect him. He’s not my knight in shining armour. I was always the whipping girl but it’s hurtful. Now I’m an adult heading for fifty and she has no right to treat me like that. The little girl Teena, you know, still hiding in the wardrobe waiting to be noticed has the big girl Teena to come out and speak for her now.

The tension and stress in the home is exacerbated by Teena’s severe illness and lack of mobility. James had to be the carer for many months and so lack of income compounded the problems. James would often disappear for hours on end leaving the family without food until he returned. He had become unreliable, and when you are immobile it only adds to the stress of the situation. However, in the last six months Teena has become mobile again, her health has improved and so the tension and stress has lightened a little. The problems of the bullying and physical abuse from the mother are still occurring but Teena is able to cope with this problem because some of the other obstacles have been removed.

Teena is proud of her ability to think positively and to tackle life with the attitude “of the cup half full.” Teena feels that she has overcome many difficulties in her life and so has a strong sense of achievement. She attributes her resilience to her ability to think positively. Teena believes that her strong sense of compassion, her artistic talents and her deep capability to love are her strengths. She believes in her achievements and for this reason feels that she deserves her place on the “sideboard”.

Most recently Teena has informed me that she has separated from her husband and has entered into a new relationship. This relationship is much more stable as is the man she has met. Teena feels that he will offer a better role model to her children in that he “does what he says he will do, he is responsible.” However, her compassionate nature has asserted itself to the extent that her husband still lives upstairs with Teena’s mother and Teena still cooks and cleans for both of them. Teena is very happy and appears to be glowingly, vibrantly alive in this new phase of her life.

Case Study Two: Claire's Story

Claire is now in her mid-forties and is a single parent. She has sole financial support for her two children. She lives in a coastal suburb of a small city in New South Wales which is classified as a low socio-economic area. Claire is a quiet, reserved person who has difficulty sharing her personal story.

Parents and Siblings

Claire's parents are both still alive and live in a country town in New South Wales. Her mother, June, has lived much of her life in rural areas of New South Wales. June's mother died when June was only 8 years old and June was sent to live with her Aunties until her father remarried. The Aunties had no children and little idea about how to rear children. One of their forms of discipline was to make June and her sister march around the yard in 40 degree temperatures. June experienced an unstable and harsh family environment where learning was not highly valued. The observational learning and imitating behaviours she learnt from this harsh family environment are later reflected in June's behaviours as a mother.

When June was about fourteen she moved to Sydney and attended a Catholic high school. After completing the Leaving Certificate June worked as a cook. She married at a young age and became the mother of nine children, including triplets, over the ensuing years. Claire's father, Robert, was born and raised in Sydney. His mother also died when he was young. Robert attended a Sydney university and graduated as a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering. He gained employment in a power station situated north of Sydney and the family moved out of Sydney. The area that Robert, June and the children moved to was a low socio-economic area with a predominantly working class population.

Claire has eight siblings. The triplets are the eldest children, two of whom are engineers but the other is suffering from schizophrenia. She has an older brother who is a bank manager and an older sister who is an engineer. Claire also has a younger sister who is a speech pathologist and two younger brothers, one of whom is a computer engineer and the other a graphic designer. Claire cites one of the reasons for her lack of academic achievement as the “middle child syndrome”. When she is asked to clarify exactly what she means by this she explains,

I was told I was too old to be included with the baby’s activities but too young to be included in the older children’s activities. I was expected to look after the younger ones and set an example. I didn’t get much attention myself, Mum was too busy so she used to say, “Get out in the garden.” I was often told, “You’re a girl so you can’t do those things.”

Childhood and High School

Claire was born in a small city north of Sydney. Much of her early childhood and early school years were spent moving between towns where power stations were located. June was too busy with the domestic duties that centred around her large family to spend much time with Claire. Little was done to provide a stimulating learning environment although it was a stable home environment. Claire had a strict, disciplined upbringing against which, occasionally, she rebelled. The harshness and difficulty of her childhood is an oft repeated refrain from Claire and there was strong, almost tearful, emotion in her voice when she stated that she found it very difficult to talk about her childhood.

Claire received little attention or assistance with her schooling. Her mother was too busy with her domestic duties and her father gave his attention to the older children. During her childhood Claire experienced little intellectual interaction with her parents. Although the family did share meals and sit together at a main table little conversation took place that was not of a domestic kind. Claire’s eldest brothers and her father conversed and

some intellectual discussion and debate took place but the younger members of the family were not included. Claire stated that neither parent encouraged curiosity or a love of learning in the home environment.

The triplets succeeded early out of fear rather than love of learning.

In 2nd class Claire suffered from severe attacks of asthma and missed much of that school year. Claire's parents were encouraged to move to another town where it was felt the air would be less polluted and more conducive to her health. So the family relocated to a small country town and Robert commuted to the nearby power station.

Claire attended a Catholic high school in the small country town and considers herself to be "an average student" declaring that "the others were smarter than me". This appears to be supported by her "average" school results and by her achievement in the Higher School Certificate. Claire can barely remember the subjects she completed for the HSC and only knows that she passed.

I cannot remember all the subjects properly it was too long ago, Music, Maths, English, Religion. Maybe needle work, did they have it then, what did they call it? Music was the only one I liked and was good at. I had a lot of trouble with Maths. I did not receive much encouragement from Mum or Dad. Dad tried to tutor me in Maths but it was too difficult. I didn't get the brains. A lot of them were brainy but not me.

Claire had some talent in music and enjoyed her learning experiences in this subject. She was a member of the school choir and school orchestra and is able to play guitar, piano and flute [later in her life she also learnt to play the harp]. Claire completed 5th grade piano but her sister was able to continue to 8th grade as her parents felt Sue had more talent. It seems that musical talent runs in the family as her older brother was a member of a well known Australian band.

The family environment was stable but not warm or stimulating. Yet Claire remained at home the longest of the siblings. She was not “brave enough” to leave home until she was in her early twenties.

The Adult World

After Claire left school she worked for Coles for a few years and then she became a bank teller.

My brothers and sisters all left home when they were eighteen except me, I left at twenty-three. They went to University but I got a local job and stayed in town.

At twenty-three Claire had gained the confidence to transfer to a Sydney branch of the bank. Overall Claire spent ten years with the bank but these years included three months leave to travel through Europe and England. Claire gives few details about this trip apart from saying she enjoyed it immensely.

Her husband was a Branch Manager of the bank and they married in 1986. Sadly her husband died in 1991 from lung cancer, one year after their son John was born.

I was twenty-eight when I lost Mark and I had to grow up fast. I was on maternity leave when he got sick. I was due back but he was nearly dying so I didn't go back. He had lung cancer. He was a bank manager and the bank looked after me and I got a spouse's death benefits so things weren't too hard financially.

Claire was caught in a deep depression from which she emerged with greater resilience and perseverance.

I had to be resilient to carry on. You just do. You go through a traumatic time and you are in shock for a while. It's like you are running on adrenalin or something. I didn't cry for six weeks, I broke out in a pink rash and I just became very nervous. I meditated to get over the depression.

She was learning “to cop it sweet” and was sustained by her strong religious faith. Claire didn’t want to return to the bank so she spent the next five years in a variety of jobs which included working at a horse-riding farm, working as a cook and working in a bar. During these years Claire completed a counselling course, which she financed out of her limited funds. Her parents had little faith in her academic abilities and told Claire she would not complete the course. However, she did complete the course and received an Advance Level Certificate (which she showed me). Claire has not yet worked as a counsellor although she is very proud of her accomplishment.

In 1996 Claire was again working at the horse-riding farm as a cook when she became involved in a relationship with the owner. Claire fell pregnant but was abandoned by her partner when she refused to have an abortion. Once again she was thrown back on her own resources and strength of character in order to survive and provide for her children. Claire moved back to Sydney and her daughter Beth was born the following year.

Each time I had to change I ended up learning more so it’s good I didn’t have to do one job forever. I know that I’ll bounce back even if I leave where I’m working now, I know that.

Children

Claire has two children John, eighteen years old, and Beth, eleven years old. Beth has been identified as being academically gifted through the Coolabah Dynamic Assessment process (already described). Beth is one of the two students in the programme who has been achieving academically in the classroom. She is also involved in extra-curricular activities that involve dance, drama and music. John is currently completing Year 12 and has been academically successful especially in the area of music and computer technology. He has combined the two talents in an elective subject that concentrates on

sound engineering. This subject is his career choice and next year he will continue his studies in this area at a college in regional New South Wales.

John has suffered from chronic eczema since he was a baby. After the death of her husband when John was only a year old Claire became more concerned with John's health and happiness rather than his cognitive development. At this point she was not even sure whether John would make it to school because of his health problems. The lack of a stimulating learning environment in Claire's childhood is apparent when she states,

I didn't realise that I had to teach them to read. The only thing I think I've done that other parents don't do is talk to them, I did talk to them a lot especially as babies. I spoke to them in words as though they could understand me, not baby talk. They both started talking early.

John did attend Primary school and was academically successful. Due to his health problems with eczema and an allergy to grass John was an "indoor person" and became quite studious.

He is exceptional on the computer because he spent a lot of time inside on it and he is very good at art. He would draw maps freehand back then- every country - and he is an excellent artist.

John won a scholarship to a private boys high school near where they reside and he has been very successful academically at this school. John has been asked to create the graduation multimedia presentation for his HSC year group.

Beth is also achieving academic success. She learnt to read quite early and is in the reading enrichment programme at her school. Claire spent more time reading to Beth when she was younger than she did with John.

I had little books and I used to read them to her at night but she learnt to read quite early. She got a lot of Outstandings and A's when she was in 2nd and 3rd class. She was reading at a 6th class level in 3rd class.

Claire feels that being a single mother is advantageous for her children.

It was kind of good in a way that there's not someone else trying to give directions. After Mark died John was used to just me then seven years later Beth comes along and he was alright with that. He had stability with me.

The Present

In 1998 Claire moved up to the coastal suburb where she now resides. She obtained part-time work as a waitress and is still in that employment. Claire mentions a number of times that she would like to find counselling work but has not really made any sustained efforts to do so. Her life is busy and sometimes difficult but Claire seems content with the position she is in at the moment, and with the sound progress and development of her children.

When Claire reflects on her life's journey she feels she has achieved in many ways. The overseas trip to Europe for three months was a major achievement because she paid for it herself and was independent in her travels. Raising two children on her own was difficult but satisfying for Claire. Both are succeeding academically and in many other areas of their lives. The completion of the counselling course was another activity that gave Claire a sense of achievement. Claire is currently applying for positions within this field of employment and is looking forward to a new phase in her life.

Case Study Three: Renee's Story

Renee is a married woman in her mid-fifties with three children. She and her husband are English immigrants. Renee lives in a semi-rural suburb of the same small city in New South Wales as Teena and Claire. Renee is a quiet, calm woman with a deep concern that her gifted children are not achieving to their potential. She was enthusiastic about supporting this research paper by sharing her story. Renee is able to give a detailed account of her life and learning experiences and those of her children.

Parents and Siblings

Renee's parents, Beth and Dan, have a very similar history in that they were both born in the same Irish village near Canamara. Dan's family moved to London in 1932 when he was sixteen years old. Beth's family moved there ten years later when she was twenty-two. Although they came from the same Irish village they did not know each other until they met years later at an Irish gathering in London.

Dan was "very bright" [Renee's evaluation] but he had little formal schooling as he was the eldest son and had to take much of the responsibility for the family earnings. When in Ireland he had to leave school at fourteen to help support the family. Dan was required to fulfil many intensive labouring duties including minding the sheep out on the mountains. When the family moved to London Dan started work straight away as a builder's labourer.

Beth's background is similar to Dan's. Beth was the eldest daughter in the family but her mother died when Beth was only four years old. She remained in the care of her father along with her two elder siblings. The youngest child was sent to relatives as he was too young for the father to care for him. Beth attended the village school until she was fourteen. Then she took over the domestic duties on the family farm, and helped in the fields.

Beth and Dan met and married in 1951. Renee was born in 1952 and her brother John in 1955. John attended the same Primary school as Renee but went to a secondary school run by the De La Salle brothers. He eventually gained a degree in languages and went on to become a Catholic parish priest.

Childhood and Schooling

The family lived in a middle-class suburb on the outskirts of London.

Mum and Dad scrimped and saved to be there. Dad was a builder's labourer and Mum did cleaning jobs and worked in a café to supplement the income. They couldn't afford a television until I was twelve so reading was my entertainment.

Her parents were strong Catholics so Renee and John were sent to the Catholic primary school, which was three miles away. They caught the bus to and fro every day. Beth and Dan were only able to afford this type of schooling as the fees for Catholic schools are funded by the government.

When I first started school I was the eldest in my class because of the age cut-off limits. The end of August was the cut-off, my birthday was two or three days before so I had to wait. By the time I started (at 6 years) I could read and write and I knew all my prayers so I only spent three months in Kindergarten and then they put me in Year 1.

Renee achieved good grades throughout Primary school consistently placing in the top five or six students. This was a significant result as the class sizes consisted of around forty-two students. Her excellent results earned her a desirable position at an academically successful girls convent secondary school in London.

There was always an expectation from her parents that Renee would achieve good grades and do well in exams and "heaven help you if you didn't". They valued education and had implicit faith in the teachers. However, they were very self-conscious about their own lack of education.

They thought they were unqualified to help but if I had maths problems way up into secondary school Dad would help me. He had the type of brain that could work out a problem in a logical fashion, he would come up with the answer. If there was something else I didn't know they would find a neighbour to help me.

For the first two years of secondary school Renee was very successful academically placing within the top five students in all subjects. She explains:

The smaller classes made a huge difference to me. There were about twenty-six students and the teachers were able to give us a lot of help. I did really well for the first two years. Maths and Science were my favourite subjects.

Unfortunately for Renee, the school expanded and class sizes increased. The administration decided to move the top four students up a year so she skipped Year 9. This proved to have a deleterious effect on her academic progress.

I skipped Year 9 which was disastrous especially with things like Maths and French where if you miss a year out with no extra tuition you never really catch up with the concepts. The class sizes were also much bigger, around 35 students. I plodded along. In my GCE's I got 7 O levels but only a couple of B's and mostly C's.

Renee initially worked hard at her subjects but being a quiet, reserved child she became lost in the bigger classroom. So by the time she reached her A levels year, when she was only sixteen, she had had enough.

From the age of three I've always known I wanted to be a nurse. I got the grades I needed to enter nursing by my A level year. Then the teachers told me I was too young to sit my A levels exam and I would have to repeat the year. I'd had enough! So I said, "Blow it!" and I left.

The Adult World

Renee worked in an office for eighteen months until she was old enough to start nursing. She was accepted by the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. This is a prestigious teaching hospital specialising in rare diseases, some so rare that only two or three cases exist in the world.

They did a series on the hospital for television last year showing the separation of Siamese twins. It did me no harm at all to train there, if you applied for a job and said you came from Great Ormond Street they knew you were well trained in a specialist area. It was a four year course which was a combination of general qualifications and specialist pediatric qualifications. I passed the exams with no problems but they didn't give grades then.

Renee spent another year working at the hospital before the travel bug struck. In 1976 she spent a year in Ireland specialising in intensive care and neonatal nursing. In 1977 Renee went to Holland to work in a special care baby unit. In 1978 she travelled to Perth where she remained for four years working at the Princess Margaret hospital specialising in the children's intensive care and renal unit. In early 1982 she moved to the Kimberley region for eight months and did community nursing.

It was an amazing experience which I wouldn't have missed for the world. It was very frustrating and a very slow process dealing with the aboriginal families. They were lovely and so nice but they would say "yes sister" and "we'll do that sister" but you would come back a month later and it's not done. They would just say "next time sister".

At this point in her travels Renee reluctantly (as she loved working in Australia) returned to England as her parents were aging and needed her help. In late 1982 Renee began working at a Cambridge hospital training as a midwife.

I'd always liked working with children. I'd done about twelve years in Intensive Care and you get to the stage where you think babies die and there are no normal

children in the world. There is so much misery and suffering I just wanted to do something with babies where you saw the positive side. I wanted to know that there are normal children. I suppose I burnt out really. It's heartbreaking at times.

Renee was successful in this training and received very good reports on her progress. However, she found it very difficult to be a student again and so didn't stay at the hospital for very long after completing the training.

I didn't stay at the hospital very long. I didn't cope very well with being a student again after being on my own for nine years and running things my way. I was 2 IC at Princess Margaret and I ran the renal unit. I loved the deliveries but the thing I enjoyed the most was the community work.

Renee applied for, and was accepted, to do community nursing with the Health Department as a health visitor.

You have your own case load. You watch the children from birth up to five years old and then they go to school and are handed over to the school nurses. Your case load is about five hundred families that you check every week, month or whatever, to see what they need. We did eye tests, hearing tests and developmental checks. I also gave neonatal lectures to the community and other nurses.

She completed a one-year university course that was the equivalent of a degree and continued to work in this area for another five years.

Marriage

During the time Renee was working as a community nurse she met her future husband Jack. He had a similar background to Renee in that he had Irish migrant parents who both came from the same village in Ireland. Jack grew up near a northern city of England, in "Cromwell country", a very anti-Catholic area, and as he was a "fat Catholic" it was difficult for him at school. Jack was accepted into a grammar school and achieved very good grades. However, his parents could not afford for him to remain there after the GCE exams. Jack, at sixteen, went to work for the railways and then was

able to secure a job with a company that paid for him to go to college and qualify as a quantity surveyor. This involved study and work experience similar to the Australian apprenticeship system. After qualifying Jack worked for large construction companies and travelled all over the world.

When Renee met Jack he was a widower with three children. They married in 1989 when Renee was thirty-six years old. Their first daughter, Kathryn, was born in 1991 in England but Renee did not feel that England was a good place to raise children.

When Kathryn was born I didn't want to bring children up in England. I thought there was a better lifestyle in Australia. Mum got cancer so that delayed the move. We came here in September, 1993. We liked this area [where they currently live]. We are both country people.

Jack had difficulties finding a job and out of desperation accepted a posting in South Africa for twelve months. It was an extremely difficult time for the family as Renee had two young stepsons and Kathryn, as well as being pregnant with her second child Paul. Jack flew back about every six weeks to visit but Renee carried the responsibility for the family welfare. Paul was born in 1994 while Jack was in South Africa. Unfortunately, a short time after his birth [he was six weeks old] Kathryn could not cope with the difficult living arrangements and she "lost the plot" adding to Renee's responsibilities.

After the twelve months contract finished Jack was able to obtain work back in Sydney and the family was able to regain some normality and a more settled lifestyle. Their second daughter, Susan, was born in 1996. Jack set up his own business and contracted as a quantity surveyor to large companies. Renee did all the administration for the business as well as completing domestic duties and caring for the children.

Children

Kathryn and Paul both talked early and could read before they went to school.

Kathryn read early – she got books with letters for presents. She would start writing names of things and she had little dictionaries, all before she started school. She had an amazing ability with maths before she went to school. Kathryn’s favourite game in the car was fractions, for example, how many quarters in two and a quarter or how many halves in three and a half.

Paul taught himself to read by the age of two. Paul and I (Paul was about two and half) went past a shop that had the word “pizza” on the window and no pictures and he said, “That says pizza”. At three years he wanted things that had numbers on them.

Renee knew from her studies for pediatric nursing that it was important to provide a stimulating learning environment from a young age. She knew that much of a child’s learning takes place before the age of five. So Renee provided lots of “input”.

You play games, math’s games, I Spy, read books and use educational computer games. These and Sesame Street, I think, taught them a lot. We did crafts and making things and painting. I wanted to provide a background that valued learning and ideas. I spent more time with Kathryn, Paul just taught himself.

This learning environment changed when Susan was young. There was less time for Renee to devote to providing stimulation due to business and domestic commitments. When Susan was seven Jack became very ill and there was even less time to spend on providing a stimulating environment.

Susan knew her letters and could read odd words before school but she had not developed cognitively to the level of her siblings. While both Kathryn and Paul were accepted into the Challenge Programme (workshops for gifted student) at their primary schools, Susan was not selected. Susan was underachieving and with low self-esteem when she was identified as a gifted student.

The other two had exceptional skills when they started school but Susan was more average. She was only seven when my husband became ill. It had a big impact on Paul as well. Susan was more like Paul, quiet with no confidence but she is changing. She is more confident, she is not being dismissed. The Lighthouse Project has had a huge impact on her.

It seems that in some ways the roles of the children are reversed. Kathryn is no longer achieving at school it has become a low priority for her. She is no longer enjoying school and feels confined by its environment. Paul got a huge amount of support at primary school being accelerated from Year 1 to Year 3, but at high school he is lost in the system.

Paul was sent by his primary school to the University of NSW to be assessed. He was three years ahead of his peers in maths. He has a dose of negative perfectionism at the moment. If he doesn't think he's doing well he doesn't try. He is going backwards rather than forwards at the moment.

Paul was 1st in the top class in Maths in Year 7 now he's not even getting A's. He's been a nightmare to get assignments done in the last year. Whereas he and Susan were quite similar at one stage, withdrawn and with little confidence, now she's getting stuck into everything with enthusiasm.

Susan, at this point in primary school, is starting to achieve academically. Renee hopes this will continue into secondary school.

Renee's stepchildren also varied in their academic achievements. Lucy (the eldest) is a lawyer with a Master's degree in Psychology. Mark is a Marine Biologist and has a degree in IT. Scott suffers from Asperger's Syndrome and he has few communication skills but a strong ability in mathematics.

The Present

Renee explains the main influences on her life's journey to be:

My parents' expectations and the fact that from early childhood I knew I wanted to be a nurse. Also, from a young age I wanted to travel to Australia. I had read about it in many books which stimulated my ideas about Australia. I suppose I romanticised it, and it hasn't let me down.

When asked about what she considers to be her achievements she immediately mentions her children (as would most mothers). However, Renee then went on to list what she feels are her other main achievements.

My nursing qualifications and the level I got to in my jobs. All the travelling I did.

Renee continues to do all the business administration as well as caring for the children.

She would like to work part-time but because she needs to be home after school hours it is extremely difficult to find work. Also Renee is needed as carer for her seriously ill husband. Jack was diagnosed with Leukemia in 2003 but fortuitously his brother was a bone marrow match and so was able to assist in Jack's recovery. However, Jack suffered from a severe attack of shingles shortly after this and his kidneys were unable to cope.

He is now on dialysis and his brother is being tested for kidney compatibility. With quiet strength Renee goes about the business of living and coping with the difficulties of her situation.

Case Study Four: Arna's Story

Arna is an ebullient, bubbly woman who loves to chat. She is ordered and organised at home and in her workplace. Arna lives in a beachside suburb of the coastal small city but it is a suburb that housed a methadone clinic for a number of years. This led to the suburb having a rather unsavoury reputation while it housed the clinic. The clinic is no longer there and the character of the suburb is slowly changing. Arna is married with three young children.

Parents and Siblings

Arna's parents are both still alive and currently live in the same small city as Arna. They used to live in a country town in New South Wales and this is where Arna spent her childhood and much of her early adulthood. Arna's mother, Pam, was born and raised in the same country town that Arna was raised in. Pam lived most of her life in the same street. She never liked school and left when she was about thirteen years old. Pam worked as a waitress in a coffee shop for many years even while she was raising her children. Later she cleaned houses until she retired.

Arna's father, Dean, was born in a small country town in New South Wales but was raised in a more remote mining town. Dean's father and uncles were alcoholics, which made life very difficult for Dean and his three siblings. Dean also left school early when he was about 15 years old and "did a bit of everything". He was running his own maintenance and repair business for a couple of years from 1982-84. In late 1984 Dean had a nervous breakdown caused by the stress of running the business. He was admitted to hospital for six weeks. After this he gave up the business and ended up working as a maintenance person at a TAFE. Dean is a musician and plays the guitar, he taught all his children to play the guitar.

Pam and Dean met in 1958 when Dean took a photograph of her walking up the main street of their home town. They still have this photograph and recently viewed it again at Dean's birthday gathering. Pam and Dean were married twelve months later. Arna is the youngest of seven children. Andy is the eldest and is a chef in a restaurant which is situated in a large mid-coast town. Amy and Tessa are housewives who live in other large mid-coast towns. Mary is a housewife caring for her mentally disabled son and very ill partner. John is "really, really bright ... but is currently not working, he's a house husband at the moment." Chris died from complications with measles before Arna was born.

Both parents were caught up in their day-to-day lives providing domestic and financial support to six children. They were too busy to offer any academic or intellectual support and showed virtually no interest in school or learning activities. Pam and Dean had a very strong religious faith whose tenets permeated their whole way of life. They worked for St Vincent de Paul on a volunteer basis for thirty-eight years. They struggled financially but donated whatever they could to this charity. This strong lived faith influenced Arna in many ways, as will be seen in her story.

Childhood and High School

Arna was born in a small country town in New South Wales. Arna remained in this area until she was twenty-eight years old. Arna is deaf in one ear (caused by a virus contracted pre-school age). However, it wasn't until she was about seven years old that her father finally discovered this disability.

My father twigged when he whispered to me in church and I had to turn to the back of the church so that I could hear him. I tended to be placed up the front of the class so that I could hear. I may have missed out in the first couple of years [of school].

Her father taught Arna to play guitar when she was young and they had a wonderful time together playing and singing. She remembers the tapes they made as a family where they were all playing and singing together. Arna also learnt the piano and went to Grade 2 level with formal training. When she was ten she started playing at church with a group of other students. Arna still continues to play at church as an adult and organises children's liturgies.

Arna went to the local catholic primary school:

I was just average all the way through. My best friend was smart and a good influence on me. I can't remember having any outstanding interest in school.

She can't remember having homework in primary school and she can't remember her parents ever helping or showing any interest in homework or school activities. Arna has a strong memory from her primary school years that exemplifies her parents' attitude,

My best friend's parents were professionals. Her mum was studying for a Law degree in between having six children. Her dad was in local politics. They always said to her, "You're going to Uni". I remember saying to my parents, "Are you going to make me go to Uni?"

Dad said, "I don't care if you work on a garbage truck as long as you're happy, darl."

I was disgusted! I thought they would say I was going to be a surgeon, or a genius or something. (Her friend ended up with several degrees.)

Arna continued her schooling at a Catholic high school. She always enjoyed English as a subject and liked to write, this liking continued through her high school years. She was well behaved but an average student, being placed in the average ability classes.

Arna was severely affected by her father's breakdown which occurred towards the end of Year 8.

I freaked out ... going from Daddy's little girl syndrome to being ignored. I was a ratbag but it's all hazy now.

In Year 9 Arna started to go "off the rails". She left the Catholic high school and at fifteen ended up in the local state high school. Her absenteeism became severe, "I didn't really do anything – I didn't attend."

When I think of it now it's frightening. I had wonderful friends at the Catholic high school, I have no idea what possessed me to throw it away. I wasn't thinking clearly.

Arna did receive her School Certificate but has no real idea of how this was achieved. She vaguely remembers that she achieved average results but is unsure how as she can't even remember having any books for the twelve months of Year 10.

Fortunately, what I think I learnt in two and half years at the Catholic high school just about carried me through. The teachers there were so concerned about me but I thought, "No get lost". I often say to Mum that I don't know who that person was.

Arna started Year 11 as some of her Catholic school friends were going to the state high school but she only lasted two weeks. She had been working part-time through the holidays at a restaurant and had become used to earning money and being in a workplace environment. Arna states that "By the time I was twenty it was out of my system and I was a workaholic."

The Adult World

Arna spent a year (1988) at the restaurant receiving informal training in food and beverage service.

I did my training there, it was not formal but as far as service standards and how to do things right it was very good. I still struggle at times now when I see staff who

don't do it right – I'm quite old school. I was the only person who wasn't eighteen working there. [She was seventeen]

In 1989 Arna started working at Coles part-time and was studying Welfare at TAFE. She wanted to get involved with youth work but a year later gave it up as she felt she wasn't mature enough to do this type of work. Arna then went to work in a large restaurant/conference centre. She went there to work in the front office but ended up as a conference coordinator and loved the work. Arna decided this was going to be her career and so to achieve better qualifications she started a course in Business Management in a western Sydney university in 1992.

I thought I would do a course at a university as a mature age student. I thought the course would be like the work I had already done but it was economics, quantitative methods, and others that were so hard to do. I kept thinking, "What are you talking about?" I failed the first semester as I had no idea but I blitzed Accountancy. I adored it. I had no trouble because I used to do stock control, orders, pay and organizing finances with my jobs. I had that real life experience. I did six subjects at university and worked thirty-five hours per week at a major conference center in the mountains.

After leaving University at the end of the semester Arna acquired a position as Assistant Manager at a large hotel in the area. She worked there for about nine months and then decided to run her own employment agency with a partner.

We knew the industry – we knew people who wanted to work and we knew employers and so we were ideally placed to run an agency. Six months later my partner wanted to leave so I bought her out. I was pregnant at the time and the business provided enough income for me to survive.

Arna's first son, Ryan, was born in 1996. The father never saw him.

I let the father know he was born but his father chose not to see him. But we wouldn't stop him later if Ryan chooses to see his father.

Not long after Ryan was born Arna met her husband Bob at a party. They started seeing each other and married in 2001. Bob had started his working life in the mines but chose to do external studies in town planning at a University. He won the Dean's medal and achieved high grades in his Degree.

Arna had already closed the business in 1999 as she had had another child, Faith.

However, being the workaholic she is Arna did not remain out of work long. She took on a job as Wedding Coordinator and other middle management roles in another large hotel.

In between breastfeeding I worked sixty hours a week. Bob was studying and doing the domestic duties, looking after the kids, cooking, cleaning and other things.

Bob received a traineeship with a council in the coastal city of this study so the family moved there in 2001. After the move to the coastal city Arna trained at a college doing RSA and other bar courses. She obtained a job in a conference center close to home and worked there for five years. Arna worked long hours there but as she was in charge of organizing the roster she was able to work flexible hours. This was necessary as Arna gave birth to her second son, John, in 2004. She and Bob were also renovating their home at this point and lived for a while at the conference center.

I'm suited to small businesses where I get a variety of jobs. I'm like my father – once he knows something, mastered it, he needs to move on. I'm coming up to two years with my new hospitality company. It's been fun. I've had exposure to lots of different departments and different roles. I enjoy it.

Arna has started a new business venture while maintaining her middle management position at the new company. This business involves training staff on contract. It started early this year and has gone from zero to fifty trainees in two months. Arna is very happy with its progress.

When asked about the main influences in her life Arna replies:

My older siblings and parents were role models. I looked at what they were doing and followed them. Work-wanting to work was a major influence. I want to achieve at my work and I put a lot of emphasis [probably too much] on getting your self-worth from work. Morals and values-there is too much emphasis on material possessions. My parents never had anything and gave it away if they had.

Children

Arna has three children, Ryan, Faith and John. Ryan is the identified invisible underachiever who took part in the Lighthouse workshops. He achieved well in Kindergarten and Year 1 but by Year 2 was already beginning to be distracted and underachieving. In Year 3 he settled a little but it isn't until this year [Year 6] that he has started to improve his academic achievement level. Ryan's attitude to school and homework has also improved and he is less distracted in class. Ryan couldn't write his name by Kindergarten but knew the Our Father perfectly.

We'd been teaching him the wrong things apparently. Religion was my main concern. We were probably better with books and things as time went by. Ryan might have missed things here and there.

Arna and Bob feel that Ryan's future lies in the VET area rather than at university.

We talked about the Vet courses and it would probably be better for Ryan. I can't ever see Ryan wanting to go to university. If he wants to give it a shot he's welcome to but I can't see it.

Ryan does have a passionate interest in history and will often discuss this subject with Arna and Bob. He surprises them both with his knowledge and ability to remember dates and facts.

Bob and I were discussing the story of the Leper King and I couldn't remember his name and Ryan said, "Saladin". He has a retention for all that stuff like you wouldn't believe and he loves history. It started with the Age of the Empire game and his history and geography knowledge is amazing. He teaches me.

Faith has always achieved at a high standard receiving “glowing reports” from her teachers. She is currently in Year 3 and achieves A and B grades. Faith spoke earlier than the boys at about two years old [but Arna is very vague about ages]. Faith had a slight speech problem which was picked up in pre-school and rectified.

Faith is very bright at school and does very well, she gets it from Bob. She stresses a lot. I told her that the only pressure you have is the pressure you put on yourself. Ryan is the opposite very laid back – he doesn’t get many right but he answers all the questions. Nothing much rattles him.

John is only four years old and he “doesn’t really do much, he’s average”. John likes to draw and is almost obsessive in his interests.

He loves bionicles and so he calls green “air” [is this abstract thinking?]. He’s almost obsessive, he won’t play with anything else.

When Bob was at home studying and looking after the children [Ryan and Faith] he read to them a lot. He would also show them maps and discuss some of his study and work in a simplified manner. Bob spent a great deal of time with the children creating a stimulating learning environment. At this point Ryan had just started school, Faith was at pre-school and John was not born.

The Present

Arna is very happy with the way her life is unfolding at the moment. She is extremely busy with her job, her business, her family and her church activities. Bob is a very supportive husband who shares many of the domestic duties with Arna.

When asked what Arna feels were her main achievements in life she answers

I think staying married and the work you put into it. You need to talk and work on it. My faith – trying to put a love of God into your kids. I'm well read on religious affairs. I've got a modern day miracle for everything. "Reason to Believe" books are about miracles in the Catholic faith here and now. I tell the stories to the kids all the time. Running a business- I don't know if it's an achievement or just a natural thing. It was all up to me and that was really good advice from a friend I worked with. So I guess work is an achievement.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND

DISCUSSION

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Themes

Four main theme clusters emerged from the data analysis. The themes are: family environment, family types, gender issues and intergenerational issues involving a synergy between parents and children. The participants' home environment was a strong influence on their levels of achievement, as well as their low socio-economic milieu. The family types, particularly the differentiated or creative family, affected the potential development of three of the participants negatively and one more positively. Gender issues including stereotyping and enculturation through socialisation were vital components in the construction of the female participants as individuals. The family dynamics experienced by the participants when they were children influenced the methods they used in creating a home environment for their children thus creating a cyclical pattern.

Theme One: The Influences of the Family Environment

The social status or socio-economic background of the family of a gifted child can be a strong influence on the realization of the child's potential (Clark, 2002; Renzulli & Park, 2002; Birdsall & Correa, 2008). All four participants' childhood contexts were in low socio-economic areas. In a study by Renzulli and Park (2002) that explored the phenomenon of 'high school drop-outs' it was found that many of the gifted students who dropped out (48.2%) were from low socio-economic areas.

The academic, financial and cultural impoverishment of low socio-economic areas provided little in the way of a stimulating learning environment. All the families suffered from financial difficulties and this resulted in the parents' inability to provide resources and extra-curricular activities. The lack of the valuing of learning and education in the

socio-economic environment is reflected in the negative attitudes of three of the participants towards educational achievement. Teena, Claire and Arna retell school experiences that involved rebellion, lack of stimulation, boredom and punishment. There are few positives in their school experiences. Claire can barely remember the subjects she studied except music which she loved because it gave her a creative outlet. Teena spoke of initial enjoyment but this deteriorated into a pattern of rebellion and punishment. Arna's experiences also followed a similar pattern of rebellion and punishment which led to an early exit from the education system. Renee is the only one who experienced some sense of academic achievement but she also was an early leaver from the education system.

The low socio-economic status of their childhood milieu is only one of the contributing factors to the participants' academic underachievement. The family's role in the success of low socio-economic gifted learners is most important (VanTassel-Baska, 2004; Antrop-Gonzalez et al., 2008). However, potential talent can be lost or sidetracked if the child experiences too much deprivation or neglect (Csikszentmihayli et al., 1993). The family environment varied, but for each of the four case studies there was deprivation and/or neglect, which led to a lack in the provision of a stimulating learning environment. Teena grew up in a family environment that was unstable, abusive, and lacked warmth and consistency. Claire and Arna's family environments were stable but lacked warmth and intellectual stimulation. Renee's family environment was warm and stable but it also lacked intellectual stimulation. Similar to Teena's family there was a valuing of education in Renee's family but there was no real demonstrated passion for learning.

Teena had very little intellectual support or stimulation when she was young. She was the unwanted and rejected child, and her socialisation patterns were unlikely to develop

self-confidence, intellectual stimulus or the motivation for learning (Butler-Por, 1993; Reis & Herbert, 2008). From a very young age she was told she was unwanted, that her mother had no interest in her or her development, that her mother had thought her childrearing days were over.

Teena had powerful and painful memories of her mother's early influence.. Teena suffered physical and emotional abuse from a young age. Although Teena did have intellectual growth and development as shown by her "A" grades at school she was never able to achieve to the level of her siblings. This could have been due, partially, to the early rejection by her mother and the consequent negative home environment. Teena commented on the lack of support from her mother and its effect on her,

My mum doesn't think that's important but I do. I'm a piece of dirt, without the cap and gown (degree). I'm not up there with the photos so I'm a ninny, weirdo freak. I used to worry myself sick because if I didn't do well I knew that my life would have been worse than it already was.

Freeman (2001) and Stipek and Weisz (1981) highlight the problem of not empowering an individual with control over their own learning, motivation towards learning is undermined and the gratification of mastering challenges is lost. Teena's 'locus of control' was removed when her mother denigrated Teena's academic and creative talents and tried to force Teena to follow the traditional academic path of her older siblings, 'the cap and gown' path.

Teena felt that she had little control over her life, that her mother dominated the direction of her life which resulted in Teena's feelings of worthlessness. Teena's low self-concept contributed to her poor academic achievements (as compared to her older siblings) and the suppression of her creativity. From early in her high school career Teena was encouraged to choose subjects that were more academic and did not foster her talents in

the visual arts area. They were held in higher esteem by her parents and little encouragement was given to Teena's areas of creative talent.

Teena spent little time playing games or enjoying stimulating activities with her parents, a contrast to the activities of the families in the study by Bloom (1985). Rather she was told to go to the beach and amuse herself. The four 'Aunties' were the adults who provided some stimulation for her academic and creative talents.

Claire's home environment was similar to Teena's in that there was very little intellectual stimulation offered nor was there a passion for learning. Claire also was a member of a large family that had exhausted the energies of the parents. There was little interaction with the parents in either games playing or the sharing of stimulating activities. The main source of stimulation offered in the home environment seems to be music. Some of the children had musical talent; Susan went to Grade 8 pianoforte and her older brother was a musician in a famous Australian band. However, Claire was not even encouraged in this talent as it was felt that her older sister had more talent and so should be the one to continue her studies. There was not enough income to allow for both to continue their studies. Claire, in her adult years, has overcome self-esteem and self-efficacy problems to achieve mastery in music as she performs well on piano, guitar and harp.

Claire's childhood, while not as abusive as Teena's, was very difficult. Her parents were strict disciplinarians who offered little warmth or support but rather she was told to amuse herself [as was Teena].

I didn't get much attention myself, Mum was too busy so she used to say, "Get out in the garden."

Freeman (1991) highlights the importance of parents not simply pointing out the 'garden' but rather sharing the discovery and delight to be found in exploring the

'garden' together. Neither Teena or Claire were given the time or the opportunity to explore the 'garden' with their parents.

Claire also suffered from the deprivation of 'locus of control'. Her parents controlled her access to the musical tuition she craved and she was constantly told she was either too young or too old to share in activities with her siblings. Claire was unable to find motivation or interest in her academic subjects and there was little support at home to encourage her motivation. Her self-concept was poor and Eccles and Harold (1992) and Renzulli (1999) highlight that if a child has poor self-concept they are unlikely to achieve, this seems to be the case for Claire within the academic sphere. Claire's self-efficacy was so poor that she could barely recall the subjects she completed at school let alone remember the grades.

I cannot remember all the subjects properly it was too long ago. Music, Maths, English, Religion, maybe needle work, did they have it then, what did they call it? Music was the only one I liked and was good at.

In contrast Renee's family environment was warm and stable with two loving parents who valued education. Although they valued education they did not provide an intellectually stimulating environment. There were only two children in Renee's family as compared to the other three participants but, as with the other case studies, the parents were too busy providing financially and domestically to provide intellectually. Renee did have access to much reading material in her younger years but there was not much else offered in the way of intellectual stimulation. Her parents' reinforcement of the value of education seems to have influenced Renee to achieve to a better academic level than the other participants. She was very aware that:

There was an expectation that I would achieve good grades and do well in my exams. My parents had implicit faith in teachers and education.

Renee's parents reflected Van Rossum's (1995), Bloom's (1985) and Willard-Holt's (2008) findings that parents are very important in passing on the value of achievement and always doing one's best. Although Renee loses sight of these values in her middle years they are reflected in her later years when she achieved at high levels in her profession.

Renee and her father shared ideas and academic discussions when he assisted her with her Maths homework.

They thought they were unqualified to help but if I had maths problems way up into secondary school Dad would help me. He had the type of brain that could work out a problem in a logical fashion, he would come up with the answer.

Renee's father in following his own interests was able to raise Renee's curiosity and created opportunities for Renee to achieve mastery in an area that was of special interest to him. He was demonstrating qualities of zeal, task commitment and perseverance when he assisted Renee with her Maths problems (Gross, 2004). Renee's report results from Form II show her very good abilities in Maths, and reflect the assistance given by her father in achieving mastery in the subject. Although Renee's mother did not provide direct intellectual stimulus she also demonstrated perseverance in completing a task through her endeavours to solve Renee's homework problems. Compare these parents to Teena's parents who were unable to model task commitment and perseverance due to a number of contributing detrimental factors in their personal and working lives such as ill health, aging and finances.

However, Renee admits that she didn't always work as hard as she should have at her school work. She seems to have been badly affected by the change in the size and status of the school after Form II (Year 8), as well as the grade acceleration. The student should be prepared for the change through low key counselling, by the school and by the parents, so that minor anxieties are not allowed to escalate into real problems (Bailey,

1997). Renee did not receive this assistance from either the school or her parents and she developed real problems with her academic achievements. Renee gained her GCE but failed to complete her A levels and Renee appeared to be unhappy with this academic underachievement.

Renee's warm, supportive environment assisted in the development of a good self-concept and self-esteem. Parents who are better communicators would be more significant contributors to their child's self-concept than parents who are not (Mendaglio & Pyryt, 2002). In her early school years she felt that she was motivated and capable of achieving academically. It wasn't until her 'locus of control' was removed in the acceleration that took place in Year 9 that Renee started to underachieve. The school should assess whether the students have any gaps in their knowledge or skills as a result of the acceleration and if any are found should help to remedy them (Bailey, 1997). Renee felt overwhelmed by the changes she faced and she had little support from the school. "I skipped Year 9 which was disastrous. I plodded along."

Two factors outside the family environment seemed to be the main catalysts for Renee's underachievement. She may have been affected by what Allport (cited in Lens & Rand, 2000) terms the "functional autonomy of motives". Through gaining mastery over challenges just beyond their reach the child gains a sense of achievement and confidence. Renee's feelings of mastery were lost as the school curriculum became too difficult for her after she was accelerated. Renee became lost in a mire of skills and concepts that were too difficult for her without the clarification and guiding hand of a teacher, thus, affecting Renee's belief in her self-efficacy. Possessing a low self-efficacy toward academic learning has the potential not only to inhibit the transition of academic giftedness to talent but also to mask giftedness and talent (Chaffey, 2005: 7). Renee would not regain a sense of mastery until she began her nursing studies.

Arna's family environment was also warm and stable but offered little in the way of intellectual stimulation or motivation for academic achievement. Arna also comes from a large family and being the youngest of seven children there was very little individual time given to her. Her parents were financially, domestically and religiously too busy to provide an intellectually stimulating environment. There were few materials or resources made available, nor was there a love of learning demonstrated in the family environment. Arna's parents did not offer any assistance with homework or studies and Arna's comment that she "can't remember having any homework" reinforces the lack of parental input in the academic arena.

The development of a child's self-concept and self-efficacy rely heavily on encouragement and support from the parents (Chaffey, 2006; Antrop-Gonzalez et al., 2008). Arna's social self-concept was encouraged and supported by the parents but not her self-efficacy. Rather her parents encouraged achievement in mediocrity.

My best friend in primary school was very, very smart and both her parents were professionals. They always said to her that she was going to University. I remember saying to my parents, "Are you going to make me go to University?" Dad said, "I don't care if you work on a garbage truck as long as you're happy, darl."

I was disgusted. I thought they would say you are a genius or you are going to be a surgeon!

Her environment lacked the "functional autonomy of motives" (Allport, cited in Lens & Rand, 2000). It would take a number of years (four years after she had left school) before Arna found the intrinsic motivation to resume academic studies. When she did she achieved mixed success.

Arna's parents did encourage and support her strong work ethic. By way of contrast to the parents of Bloom's (1985), Goertzl and Goertzl's (2004) and Gross's (2004) studies

Arna's parents did not combine the valuing of a strong work ethic with the importance of striving to fulfil your potential. Rather they reinforced the value that whatever you wanted to do in life, whether it was underachieving or otherwise, was an acceptable choice to make. The modelling of values is very influential on a child as they observe and internalise the actions of the parents. These values contribute to a child's ability to achieve a talent potential (Gross, 2004; Goertzl & Goertzl, 2004; Bloom, 1985; Renzulli & Park, 2002; Willard-Holt, 2008). Neither Arna nor her siblings achieved academically. Arna's father, similar to Renee's father, had a particular talent and interest which he shared with her. Her father had a great love of playing the guitar and he taught Arna how to play when she was quite young. Arna still remembers and treasures the times they spent together learning and playing the guitar as they were rare occasions where individual attention was paid to her. Arna continues to play and perform in her adult years.

The family environment for all the participants had a significant effect on their academic progress in their early and middle years. Their environments provided negative and positive catalysts that contributed to the degree of academic achievement or underachievement of each participant. Gifted students need positive motivation in order to realise the promise of their gifts, that motivation can be helped or hindered by the actions of others, including parents (Patrick, Gentry & Owen, 2006; Precket et al., 2008). The home environment needs to offer intellectual stimulation and value learning for gifted children to develop a passion for learning. A passion for learning is necessary for the academic achievement of gifted children. This achievement imbues the parents with a sense of accomplishment and recognition that the family dynamics are facilitating the child's talent development. A two way process is developed in the family dynamics which benefits both parents and child.

Theme Two: The Effects of Family Type

The research of Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) found that particular family types can be a vital influence on the positive development of gifted children. In contrast, Rimm and Lowe (1988) suggest that parenting styles are much less important than consistency in parenting. In this study, it was found that, together, family type and consistency in parenting created a positive learning environment that had a strong influence on academic achievement.

The family dynamics of the four participants varied, but in the case of Renee there was a warm and stable family type as well as much stronger parental consistency in the value of learning than for the other participants. Renee's family was an integrated family type (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993) where stable conditions occurred but there was little in the way of individual challenges. However, the stability and consistency provided was a positive and supportive learning environment in her early years. Renee, of all the participants, is the most successful academically.

Teena has a profound sense of underachievement in the intellectual domain. The family environment seems to be the catalyst for this sense of underachievement, in particular the environment her mother created. Teena is always seeking the approval and validation from her mother which has been withheld all Teena's life. Teena's family type is that of the differentiated family which can be very volatile and inconsistent. The differentiated family can produce gifted achievers who are able to overcome the challenges of this family type. However, more often this family type produces underachievers who cannot cope with the lack of stability and consistency (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993).

Through Teena's narrative the writer gained a strong sense of the depth of her frustration, anger and despair at the instability and neglect of her parents. Teena's reference to the child within has a metaphorical symbolism for her spiritual needs.

I was always the whipping girl. The little girl Teena, you know, still hiding in the cupboard

She is crying out for release from her 'cupboard' of entrapment. The family dynamics were factors that affected the development of her talents. Her self-concept was poor after the years of emotional and physical abuse. Teena has spent her whole life being rejected by her mother and being told "she had nothing 'upstairs', that she was a wicked girl who would never be as smart as her brothers or sisters". The family dynamics were so challenging that Teena couldn't overcome the obstacles placed in her path. Goertzl and Goertzl (2004:135) found that "there was no way of estimating" how many children who lived in this type of family became "neurotic, psychotic, delinquent or indifferent to such a degree" that they were unable to reach their potential. "No child succeeds unless he or she is strongly supported by adults, usually parents, and usually both parents" (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993: 150). Teena lacked this support.

Arna's family type was a mixture of warmth, stability and creativity but without the intellectual challenge of the differentiated family type. The family lost its stability when the father suffered a nervous breakdown and this had a profound effect on Arna contributing to her underachievement in the middle years of schooling. Again this family type offered little in the way of intellectual challenges but Arna was challenged creatively through her father's love of music. The parents in the studies of Goertzl and Goertzl (2004) and Bloom (1985) displayed support for creativity but they combined this support with the promotion of the drive for achievement. Arna's father assisted her mastery of the guitar but failed to value the drive for achievement which motivates persistence to gain high levels of expertise.

Claire's family type is similar to Arna's in that it was creative but while it was stable [unlike Teena's] it lacked warmth and intellectual challenge. She felt that her parents were so busy coping with the financial and domestic demands of a growing family that

they had little time to spend with her. This had had a profound effect on her self-efficacy as she was continually prevented from undertaking challenging or experimental activities. Claire was not provided with a stimulating learning environment nor was she encouraged in her intellectual strivings.

My parents were hard on us. I didn't get much attention. I can't tell you anymore. I don't want to think about it, it's too hard.

A creative talent will need modelling in the early years and sometimes a child can learn and retain the skills but the learning is rarely activated into overt performance due to negative sanctions (Clark, 2002; Kim, 2008). Both Claire and Teena suffered negative sanctions which inhibited the development of their creative talents until they were almost adults. Claire and Teena's creative talent flourished in their later years as a more conducive environment was experienced. They were able to develop creative talents that they valued and reconstruct themselves without the negativity of their parents.

Claire's intellectual development appears to have been affected by the size of her family and her position as a middle child. Gross (2004) highlights that birth order and family size can have a strong influence over the achievement of potential. Claire's parents had neither the time nor the inclination to create a stimulating, challenging learning environment for the younger children. The older children, especially the boys, seem to have been given opportunities to share the father's engineering interests and share dinner time discussions with him.

Claire missed out on the stimulus of sharing ideas and concepts and was given little attention of any type from her parents. Her father was a professional as were a high percentage of the fathers in Gross's (2004) and Bloom's (1985) studies. However, he failed to convey the joys of learning and achievement to his daughter. Rimm and Lowe (1988) and Rimm (2003) point out that the parents of underachieving children show an

inconsistency between words and actions. In Rimm and Lowe's (1988) study of underachievement the professional fathers failed to communicate the valuing of careers to their children.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the relationship between Teena and her father. He also was a professional, a dentist, who reinforced the value of learning and careers with his older children. By the time Teena was born her father was starting to age and was very ill with kidney disease. Although he did spend some time with her it was an indulgent, playful relationship rather than an intellectually stimulating one. Teena's father did not interfere with her mother's abuse of Teena and in some ways reinforced her sense of worthlessness and lack of self-esteem. He was always telling Teena that she had to work harder, that her results were not good enough for a migrant. He reiterated his own mother's words,

You have to try very hard at school, you have to be better than the rest.

Pringle (1970) found in his study of underachievement that one of the family issues was the parents' strong concern with academic development and little concern with emotional development. The writer denotes a parallel in the attitudes of Teena's parents. Neither parent is overly concerned with Teena's negative emotional environment but rather they just want her to achieve academically, to get 'the cap and gown'.

Similar to Teena and Claire, Arna came from a large family of seven children of whom she was the youngest. Neither of her parents were professionals nor did they value achieving in a career or in any type of higher learning. Renzulli and Park's (2002) study confirmed that the gifted high school 'drop-outs' involved in the study had parents with low levels of education.

Arna's parents while not actually neglecting her were more focused on their religious and charity activities. They promoted an atmosphere of self-deprivation in response to

their religious beliefs. While religious values are important, and still have a profound effect on the direction of Arna's life, they were not conducive to creating an environment that stimulated academic achievement.

Renee was the elder of two children, and this would have had an influence on her greater academic success. Birth order and family size can maintain a strong influence over the degree to which a child's innate capacities can be fostered (Gross, 2004). Although Renee's parents were under financial strain and worked long hours there was still some time to provide for her educational needs. Her parents were not burdened by the demands of a large family as were the other parents of the other participants. Small family size means there are fewer siblings to distract parents and they can focus on providing a learning environment for their child (Gross, 2004) as Renee's family type was able to do.

Theme Three: Female Identity and Socialisation Issues

Rimm and Davis (2004) highlight the importance of the mother's role modelling and the father's expectations in encouraging the achievement orientation of gifted girls. Parents' opinions matter greatly to adolescents, and the messages sent by subtle and obvious verbal and nonverbal interactions may encourage or discourage gifted adolescents throughout their lives (Reis, 2006; Willard-Holt, 2008). Career modelling by mothers motivates females to have higher educational aspirations. Girls need supportive family members and adults to assist in becoming high achievers (Speirs Neumeister, 2002; Antrop-Gonzalez et al., 2008).

The mothers of Arna, Claire and Renee had only low levels of education and so only had the opportunities to be cleaners, waitresses and housewives. Arna and Renee's mothers couldn't offer career modelling but did offer models of caring and connectedness.

Claire's mother offered a model of harsh, disciplined care. Teena's mother had been a

nurse before she was married but failed to inspire Teena in any way. On the contrary, Teena “felt totally abandoned” by her mother, she didn’t exist for her mother. Teena was told she was unintelligent and would never achieve.

I’m a piece of dirt, without a cap and gown. I’m a ninny, a dicky, weirdo feak.

Teena’s father never seemed to have any expectations of her beyond providing comfort and company for him in his illness. This type of relationship has overtones of gender socialisation, it is the girl who is expected to provide comfort and caring to her ill father not the boys. This father/daughter relationship is very similar to Arna’s relationship with her father where Arna was “daddy’s girl”. Arna’s father had few expectations of achievement just wanting her to “be happy, dar!” Again the expectation was that the girl would provide comfort and caring, making few demands on the father figure. The girls had been socialised strongly into ‘learned helplessness’ (Reis, 2002).

The girls were made to feel special, and in both cases the attention that made them feel special was withdrawn due to their father’s illnesses. Rimm (2003) discusses the effect of this ‘sense of specialness’ engendered in a child by one or both parents and the subsequent withdrawal of this special attention. She points out that in her study 81% of the gifted underachievers were considered ‘special’ by their families. In the Rimm and Lowe (1988) research when the ‘special’ designation was withdrawn it had the effect of making the child feel “attention neglected”. Arna spoke of her devastation when that special attention was withdrawn:

I freaked out...going from Daddy’s little girl syndrome to being ignored. I was a ratbag but it’s all hazy now.

Claire’s parents expected her to take on a mothering role for the younger children. In this large family with stereotypical expectations of the female, as seen in her mother’s traditional domestic role, Claire was socialised to accept responsibility for domestic

duties. She was also prevented from joining in more 'male' activities with her older brothers being told, "You're just a girl". Claire's father took part in debates and discussion with her older brothers but had little time for her or her sisters.

In contrast, Renee's parents did value education and expected Renee to complete higher education courses. Her father spent time and effort helping Renee to achieve at school and promoted a valuing of education. However, both parents accepted her desire to be a nurse without questioning whether she had the capabilities to achieve greater professional standing, maybe even a doctor! Renee explained that she did seek career advice but as consistent with the social mores of the time Renee was told to be a teacher, nurse or librarian (Willard-Holt, 2008). While not denigrating the importance of the work of women who make these occupational choices the point is that informed choices were not given to Renee. Reis (2002) explains that females take criticism much more seriously so if a counsellor or parent tells a girl that something may be beyond her capabilities, unfortunately she may believe them. As did Renee.

Teena also was given poor advice in her choices for the HSC course. She listened to the criticisms of her parents and selected courses that did not best suit her interests, talents or abilities. Reis (2002) explains that changes in course choices due to a lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed in the more academically rigorous courses can have devastating effects. Teena's mother advised Home Economics (a stereotypical choice for a female) instead of the Visual Arts course that would have complemented her talents.

According to Robinson and Noble (1992), Reis (2002) and Precket et al., (2008) many gifted girls are taught in life that competence and achievement will be accompanied by loneliness and ostracism. Both Arna and Teena very much wanted to fit in with their peer groups and be accepted. Arna became extremely rebellious and virtually 'dropped out' of school when she was fifteen years old, an age when peer group pressure and acceptance

have enormous influence. Callahan et al. (1994) found that middle school gifted females avoided displays of outstanding intellectual ability to conform to the norm of the peer group. Both girls lived in low socio-economic areas where academic success was not valued, and often derided by the teenage peer group. Although there were other contributing factors to her underachievement Arna talks about her friends at the state school and fitting in.

I had wonderful friends at the Catholic secondary school but I had to fit in and make new friends when I went to the state school.

Teena saw herself as a “surfie chick” far removed from the intellectual image of “the peabody”. Her friends were ‘surfies’ and this was the group from which she most wanted acceptance. Teena states:

I was never remarkable or top of the class but I always got A grades. Because I also wasn't a ‘peabody’. I was a surfie chick.

Speirs Neumeister (2002) found that independence and nontraditional attitudes toward gender roles enabled women to transfer their drive to achieve into actual accomplishment. Arna and Renee are independent women who had a drive to achieve in their careers. This drive was moderated and influenced by the traditional role modelling and stereotypical gender attitudes of their parents. Both women work in very traditional female careers, hospitality and nursing respectively, but did achieve high status within those workplaces.

Claire and Teena were quite dependent on their families until the vicissitudes of life forced them to become more independent. These two women conformed to their parents' expectation that females should fit the traditional motherhood roles. Claire and Teena have not ‘achieved’ in the workforce as have Arna and Renee, however, both Claire and

Teena viewed their achievements in a different light to the traditional patriarchal concept of achievement.

In some areas Teena has a strong sense of achievement. She expressed her satisfaction with her ability to think positively, in her strong sense of social justice and her work in helping others. In the case study interview with Teena she stated that in her eyes she is a successful person as she is compassionate, cares for and helps others, and is a loving mother. She is very happy with her creative accomplishments as well. Claire also felt that her achievements were worthwhile as she had met and overcome some very difficult challenges in her life.

I had perseverance, I had to be resilient, to carry on. You just do even if you go through a traumatic time.

Contextual influences such as family background and life experiences play important roles in shaping the multidimensional identities of women (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Who is it that has the right to deny these women their sense of accomplishment? Aren't achievements in the socio-affective domain just as valid as those in the academic domain? Women should be able to make informed choices where all the possibilities for their fields of talent are given to them, not just those considered suitable by parents, counsellors or teachers.

The choices will be shaped by the multidimensional identities of the women and their particular needs and talents. The choices should be valued as allowing gifted women to achieve to their potential, to value the unique dreams and aspirations for important work that women hold (Gilligan, 1982).

Teena has a gift in the socio-affective domain, and this has perhaps developed more strongly than her academic gifts because of the environmental catalysts in her life. Often through her life she has helped individuals who have suffered in some way. Teena's own

sufferings have contributed to her development of a strong ethos of compassion and care for others. Renee, too, has a strong talent in the socio-affective domain which was reinforced through the catalyst of socialisation and the career counselling she received. She also has a strong ethos of compassion and caring for others. Gilligan (1982:170) observed that “women’s sense of integrity appears to be entwined with an ethic of care, so that to see themselves as women is to see themselves in a relationship of connection.” The identity of these women is multidimensional and has been constructed by a number of influences including observed behaviours, socialisation, life experiences, family and school. Josselson (1996) through her research categorised her participants into four distinct groups that situated them in one stage or another on the path to identity formation: the Guardians, the Pathmakers, the Searchers, the Drifters. These categories are also applicable to the participants of this study. Given the caveat that labels of a one-dimensional construct may be inappropriate this categorization is an indicative reflection of the identity formation of these women.

Pathmakers are women who had undergone a period of exploration or crisis and then determined identity components on their terms. Their view is “I’ve tried out some things, and this is what makes sense for me” (Josselson, 1996: 35). These women have undergone identity crisis and are now self-confident. They had “chartered their own course” and designed lives that enabled them to balance work, personal interests, and significant relationships (Josselson, 1996: 37). Renee and Arna are two such women, strong, independent and “charting their own course”. They have moved from being academically underachieving children to motivated and accomplished women.

Searchers are women who were still involved in a period of struggle or exploration, trying to make commitments, but not finding success. They expressed their situation as, “I’m not sure about who I am or want to be, but I’m trying to figure it out” (Josselson,

1996: 35). They often felt guilty about having broken from the values of their childhoods, and remained fearful that they would not make the appropriate life commitments. Teena and Claire were on the path of the Searcher when the interviews took place. However, when the writer revisited them some time later (notes from a Lighthouse camp, March, 2008) they had started to move towards the Pathmakers category especially Teena. Both seemed much happier, with stronger self-confidence and a clearer direction of the paths they would follow.

These four women have suffered from society's socialisation of females but they have managed to make some headway against gender stereotyping. Josselson (1996: 32) attempted to describe the path of identity formation in women. She saw it as a process that evolved through the life cycle and occurred gradually. Through the process of sharing their experiences and understanding in this present study, the participants hope other girls and women will gain an understanding of their own identities and what has shaped them.

Theme Four: Intergenerational Dynamics

A positive emotional atmosphere allows and encourages a child to explore and develop while a negative emotional atmosphere inhibits this development. The children of the four participants are growing up in families where the dynamics are a mixture of positive and negative emotional atmospheres with the negative being the more dominant.

Teena's eldest son, Raf, spent his early years in a fairly positive family atmosphere. The marriage was still stable and her illness had not become so severe that it debilitated her. Teena was able to spend time providing a stimulating learning environment for him. She read to him, they watched educational programmes and she tried to encourage his curiosity. Raf read and spoke early earlier than the other two children. Teena related how she provided early verbal and visual interaction with Raf. He was able to make word

recognition at eighteen months. Raf has been achieving well academically at his primary and secondary schools. By the time Matt and Anna were born the marriage was not stable and Teena was becoming more and more debilitated with her disease. Although these two children were still exposed to some of the educational programmes the television had become a babysitter rather than an opportunity to share and interact. Her other children did not receive the same intensity of early modelling nor did they display the same ability of word recognition as Raf at this young age.

The negative family atmosphere became worse when the family moved in with Esther [Teena's mother]. The conflict between the adults had a profoundly negative effect on Matt [the child involved in the Lighthouse Project]. He is a very creative child like Teena and like Teena he is experiencing volatile and unstable family dynamics. Matt has little self-concept or self-esteem. If a child has low self-concept, amongst other factors, then they are unlikely to achieve to their potential (Eccles & Harold, 1992). He is a very quiet and withdrawn child who has little faith in his own abilities. Rimm and Lowe (1988) report that power struggles between the parents can lead to the child taking the path of least resistance which often leads to underachieving practices. For Matt the easiest path for survival was to opt out both socially and academically.

Through the Lighthouse Project Matt has been able to improve his self-efficacy and to gain mastery over a number of literacy and numeracy skills. The family environment has become more stable and consistent with the separation of his parents. Matt now appears much happier, smiling and making eye contact. There is even talk of him sitting for selective schools' exams although it is doubtful that he has made sufficient progress to achieve in these exams and perhaps it would only be setting him up for failure. A positive emotional atmosphere is being created for him by Teena, and positive

reinforcement of his self-concept is also being given. Hopefully this will lead to better motivation for him to achieve to his potential.

Renee also has three children and they too have experienced negative and positive emotional atmospheres which have affected their potential development. Kathryn and Paul are identified gifted children who benefited from the warm and stable family environment when they were young. Both Renee and her husband are professional people valuing learning and education. Her nursing training also gave Renee knowledge about the importance of providing stimulating learning environments for children in their early years. She provided a rich and varied environment and many opportunities for Kathryn and Paul to learn. Freeman (1991) reinforces the need for parental involvement if children are to succeed. Both Kathryn and Paul were very successful academically until they reached their later secondary school years. Unfortunately, a number of factors such as peer pressure, gender image, lack of differentiated curriculums at the school and the illness of their father have contributed to their recent academic underachievement.

By the time Susan, their third child, was born and needing parental support Renee was not able to provide it. The family business was growing, her domestic duties had increased with three children, and her husband Jack had become very ill. Susan was not exposed to the same type of rich and varied experiences that her siblings had enjoyed. She did not receive the same amount of attention and this seems to have resulted in a weaker self-concept and less confidence in her abilities. Mendaglio and Pyryt (2002) point out that self-concept is forged initially by the child's daily interaction with parents as the primary socialising agents. Without a strong self-concept Susan started to fade into the background at school and became an invisible underachiever. Susan, like Matt, was quiet and withdrawn, making little eye contact with other people.

After two years with the Lighthouse Project Susan, at this point, has shown growth in self-concept and self-efficacy and is starting to achieve academically. Renee provides positive reinforcement and is able to give Susan more attention and assistance as her domestic duties are lighter and the older children require less of her attention.

Susan is more confident, she is not being dismissed. She's getting stuck into everything with enthusiasm.

Susan at this point is starting to achieve academically. Renee is very consistent in her expectations and reinforcement of the value of education and achieving to one's potential. She continues to provide assistance with homework and assignments to all the children and is very concerned with the underachievement of her children. The underachievement of Kathryn and Paul is, perhaps, only a temporary aberration which may change as their aspirations in life change with maturity. Claire has two children, John and Beth, both of whom have been identified by their schools as gifted children.

Although the children have also experienced negative and positive emotional atmospheres, like Renee's children, a warm, stable home environment has assisted their development as academic achievers. Both children have only experienced a single parent household but Claire has managed to create a very stable home environment for the children. As she states:

It was kind of good in a way that I brought them up alone. There's not someone else trying to give different directions. After my husband died John got used to just having me. Then seven years later Beth comes along and he was alright with that.

Claire says that she did little in the way of creating a stimulating learning environment for the children but in actuality she did provide an environment that encouraged their intellectual and emotional development. John, due to his allergies, spent a lot of time with Claire sharing indoor activities. Claire didn't read to him much but she encouraged his interest in the computer and computer games and she gave him opportunities to

explore his art and music talents. Beth was given the same opportunities to experience a limited stimulating environment but Claire also spent more time reading to Beth in Beth's early years. Claire remembers how she took care to speak to the children often and in words they could understand but "not babytalk". Parents who provide a stimulating verbal environment are empowering their children with an essential tool for future talent development (Clark, 2002; Bandura, 1969).

While not providing the type of learning environment as did the parents in the studies of Bloom (1985), Gross (2004) or Van Rossum (1995), Claire did provide an environment offering some stimulus and challenges. These family dynamics are quite different to the ones she experienced as a child and one is left to wonder how she was able to do this with so little role modelling from her own parents?

Claire was able to encourage her children to pursue their natural inclinations, and encouraged independence and curiosity but what she failed to do was expect high performance and high achievement (Walberg, 1995). Her childhood learning environment had not made these demands on her and so she failed to demand high performance and achievement from her own children. However, John and Beth have both managed to become high achievers in the academic domain. Other contributing factors may have been their good self-concepts and self-esteem gained from a warm, stable and encouraging home environment.

Another contributing factor may have been the strong self-efficacy gained from success in mastering the academic challenges of the school curriculum. Claire related examples where both John and Beth displayed intrinsic motivation and the 'flow' experience in completing tasks (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Individuals are motivated to invest great time and effort on tasks which build competency, efficiency and self-efficacy (Lens & Rand, 2000). The striving for mastery can provide the kind of concentrated span that

creates the flow experience. Claire outlined the intense concentration, perseverance and joy that John displayed when he created a multimedia text for his Year 12 graduation. She described Beth's love for reading and writing her own stories and the concentration and pleasure Beth exhibited during these activities.

While Claire did not experience an environment that fostered her academic or creative talents she has been able to create one for her own children. Neither John or Beth are in the top group of achievers in their classes and maybe they are not performing to their potential, but they are achieving and this is partly due to their family dynamics.

Arna has three children: Ryan, Faith and John. Faith is "very bright" and achieves well academically at school. Ryan, although identified with potential by the Coolabah Dynamic Assessment instrument, is severely underachieving and there is some doubt about his abilities. The family environment is warm and stable but Arna confirms that she did little to create a stimulating learning environment for the children. Ryan was read to sporadically and was given little help in learning to read and write before he went to school. Arna admits that "we'd been teaching him the wrong things." Bob, her husband, made concerted efforts to stimulate the children's curiosity through the use of maps and material connected to his studies. He read to the children and spent time with them. Bob would also have been a role model for the value of education and learning as he was studying at university at this time. However, the effect of this stimulation and role modelling has been greater on Faith than on Ryan, as she is achieving while Ryan is not. Arna tried to teach Ryan to play the guitar but he was not interested and soon stopped. Ryan does have a passion for history and geography (perhaps some influence from Bob) but this interest has not been translated into academic achievement. Arna does not have high academic expectations of any of the children and seems more concerned with their faith development than the academic. Arna and Bob discuss a variety of concepts and

shares ideas and they involve the children in this discussion but little interest is shown by Ryan apart from the history subjects.

Ryan has low self-efficacy in regard to school work and since Year 2 has been a distracting force within the classroom. This is typically attention-seeking behaviour as underachieving, disruptive behaviour brings considerable attention from teachers and parents (Rimm, 2003; Assouline & Colangelo, 2006). Arna has worked long hours ever since Ryan was a baby and hasn't spent much time with him in a quality learning environment. Perhaps this is Ryan's attempt to gain more time and attention from his mother.

The family dynamics in Arna's household are not conducive to fostering a love of learning or a drive to achieve. Arna's childhood was spent in a similar environment where learning was not highly valued and she seems to be replicating that same environment. Bob, on the other hand, is making some attempts to provide a learning environment. However, the value of achieving to one's best ability and the need to persevere at a task to gain mastery, are not values either parent is espousing.

The participants' children have all been raised in a low socio-economic area that is designated by the NSW DET and Catholic Schools Office as educationally disadvantaged. Herskovits and Gyarmathy (1995: 95) report on a finding from their study that "more of the children predicted as gifted were from a higher socio-economic background." Gross (2004) in her study of highly gifted children found that the families were from high socio-economic backgrounds. In this current study, the participants' children have been disadvantaged by the lack of educational values and the impoverished cultural milieu that exists in this disadvantaged area. Each of the participants grew up in just such a disadvantaged area, and the cycle of disadvantage and underachievement is continuing.

Renee is an exception to this cycle in that she is quite affluent even though the family lives in a low socio-economic area. This fact combined with the higher levels of education that both she and her husband have achieved has had a positive influence on Renee's older children. They both were high achievers until just recently and their temporary underachievement seems due to factors which lie, at least partly, outside the family dynamics. VanTassel-Baska (2004) points out that families of successful gifted learners from low socio-economic areas encourage and monitor progress, communicate high expectations and standards for academic achievement. This is the case for Renee's older children.

Discussion

The intergenerational issues discussed in the Themes section have had a profound effect on the achievement levels of both the participants and their children. There seems to be a cycle of underachievement in all of the families, although not all of the children are underachieving. Other factors within the family dynamics such as birth order, finances and illness, as well as schooling and gender issues, have contributed to the variation of the levels of achievement within the families. The findings of this study on intergenerational issues result from the original research questions posed. This study shows that the synergy between parents and children affects learning potential, as does children's socio-economic environment.

The slow rate of improvement or lack of improvement of several children in the Lighthouse Project has led some people to question the effectiveness of the identification process. It has been noted by the teachers and the consultant involved in the Lighthouse Project that some of the students have not shown the improved achievement levels that are commensurate with the high learning potential that they were identified as possessing as indicated by the dynamic assessment. The IQ advantage did not seem to be

accompanied by a corresponding achievement advantage (Flynn, 1999: 5). An element of the Coolabah Dynamic Assessment is the use of the Raven's Progressive Matrices, which tests fluid intelligence.

The reliability of this non-verbal, culture-reduced testing instrument has been questioned by Flynn (1999) in his research on IQ testing. Flynn (1999) noticed that there has been an average increase of over three IQ points per decade for virtually every type of intelligence test. This finding has been termed the "Flynn effect" (Heylighen, 2000). The IQ gains are largest on tests with culture-reduced content such as Raven's Progressive Matrices, which measure on-the-spot problem-solving abilities (Flynn, 1994). Heylighen (2000: 2) points out that:

For one type of test, Raven's Progressive Matrices, Flynn found data that spanned a complete century. He concluded that someone who scored among the best 10% a hundred years ago, would nowadays be categorized among the 5% weakest. That means that someone who would be considered bright a century ago, should now be considered a moron!

Flynn was baffled by these results and found them difficult to believe. He suggests "that what has risen is not intelligence itself but some kind of abstract problem solving ability" (Heylighen, 2000, 3). This ability is clarified by Flynn (1994: 622):

They really are better at some sort of problem-solving ability that must have subtle effects on everyday life. It is as if juggling ability had dramatically escalated over the last 100 years, but no one had noticed until recently.

Sailer (2007: 6-7) concurs with Flynn and explains that "it is not proven that people are getting smarter overall but that they are getting smarter at the things IQ tests measure ... programming your cell phone is rather like answering questions on the Raven's Progressive Matrices IQ test: it's purely logical and there's only one way to do it." It is reported by Sailer (2007: 3) that Flynn now sees the Flynn Effect as not undermining IQ

testing but as validating it, as Flynn feels that people are becoming more intelligent as they “get more mental exercise”.

Crystallised intelligence tests place more emphasis on whether someone has acquired the skills, or general knowledge, or vocabulary we would expect an intelligent person to display. Perhaps this is a reason why there is the marked difference between high learning potential as identified by Raven’s and achievement in some individuals. These individuals may not have the skills or knowledge that would identify them as intelligent on crystallised intelligence tests. The Lighthouse Project candidates may not have scored so highly on a crystallised intelligence test and certainly they have not done well in any of the measures of achievement usually used in the school setting. The problems with the use of the Raven’s Progressive Matrices intelligence test could explain why there is a marked difference between their IQ and achievement levels for some of the children.

Three of the children whose mothers are the participants for this study, were also identified by teachers and other testing methods as having high learning potential. They have siblings identified as gifted through other testing methods such as those used by GERRIC, and the selective schools. Only one of these children has started to achieve at a level commensurate with their learning potential. Not all the children’s self-efficacy levels have improved as expected. This could cast doubt on the efficacy of the initial identification process. On the other hand, it could be that, when seeking an answer to the children’s lack of performance, other factors need to be taken into account, such as family dynamics.

It is important that as parents and educators that we consider carefully the motivations of gifted children. The writer agrees with Crocker (2002:8) as he writes:

There is a difference between being an underachiever because the system, or individuals within the system, have failed to identify the abilities and talents of

children for whatever reasons and children ‘choosing’ to be underachievers in some parts of their lives because other things are very important to them.

There needs to be a synergy between the parents and the school to provide an environmental catalyst that will assist in developing high potential into high performance. While parents may provide stimulating learning environments the school also needs to offer support to gifted children by implementing talent development programmes that not only support their curriculum needs but also their socio-affective needs. However, there may be other factors that are contributing to the underachievement of Kathryn and Paul at this time. Their parents and school must ascertain the reasons for the underachievement and work in synergy to meet the needs of these gifted children.

This study on intergenerational issues supports the work of other researchers, for example, Konza, (1997), Mares, (1997), Clark (2002), Gross (2004), in finding that there are strategies that parents or caregivers can implement that will assist their children in achieving to their potential. Some of these strategies have been outlined in Table C (Strategies for Parents of Gifted Children, Appendix 6, pp. 194ff.). Family type and consistency combined create a positive learning environment that has a strong influence on academic achievement. The stories of the participants support this point and it is reinforced by the experiences of the participants’ children. Where there was a positive learning environment reinforced by a consistent valuing of learning, perseverance and striving to do one’s best, there appears to be greater levels of self-efficacy, participation in learning, and achievement.

After analysing the data from the participants it appears, that in reality, the Middle Years are just as important an influence as the Early Years. The Early Years provide the grounding for talent development but the Middle Years provide the encouragement and support which are vital to the continuing development of talent. The development of the

child's self-concept and self-efficacy rely heavily on encouragement and support from the parents or caregivers. At the end of each Lighthouse camp the children always rushed to their parents to display their products and receive attention and praise. It would be easy for the parents to think that good and financial support are the main provisions needed in the Middle Years when in reality continuing moral support and enthusiasm is a key component to the talent development of their child.

This research has been approached from a feminist researcher's perspective, as each of the participants is a woman who has had to deal with gender issues. Their experiences are presented as narrative, which is a particularly suitable way of giving expression to a marginal or disadvantaged group of people who have been traditionally ignored or silenced (Drake & Ryan, 1994). In their narratives, Teena, Claire, Renee and Arna are given voice: they know they are valued, and they are able to share their experiences. The women's voices allow others to bear witness to the obstacles, the challenges and the strengths revealed in their stories. Their stories offer validation of who they were, and of who they have become.

It is vital that, in any study of women, the researchers are always conscious of the factors that construct women's identities, and that "consciousness cannot be separated from them. It is always and only theirs" (Smith, 1999: 71). Women's stories will always be connected with their view of the world and their place in it. Research involving women must not leave them unknowable to themselves, but rather must take into account the "complex matrix of self".

Gilligan (1982: 174) offers an alternative and compelling perspective to the traditional methodology of research:

The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing instead two different modes, we

arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognises how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought.

This study has some limitations that make it difficult to generalize from the findings. The four case studies provide rich detail and depth but are not sufficient to enable generalizations to be made. While it allows for the voices of women to be heard another study may have different findings if men were used in the case studies. This study was specific in choosing participants from a low socio-economic area whereas another study might utilize participants from a high socio-economic area and offer a comparison. There are a number of directions that future research could take which would add to the body of knowledge on underachievement particularly in the Australian context.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Andreani O.D. & Andreani A. 2000, New Trends in Research on Moral Development in the Gifted. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 467-484.
- Andreani O.D. & Pagnin A. 1993, Nurturing the Moral Development of the Gifted. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 539-553.
- Antrop-Gonzalez R., Velez W. & Garrett T. 2008, Examining Familial-Based Academic Success Factors in Urban High School Studies: The Case of Puerto Rican Female Achievers, *Marriage and Family Review*, 43 (1/2), 140-163.
- Assouline S.G. & Colangelo N. 2006, Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Adolescents. In F.A. Dixon & S.M. Moon (eds) *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education*, Prufrock Press, Waco TX, pp. 65-83.
- Babbie E. 1986, *The Practice of Social Research*, Wadsworth, California, pp. 3-17.
- Bailey S. 1997, Acceleration as an Option for Talented Students. In B.A. Knight & S. Bailey (eds) *Parents as Lifelong Teachers of the Gifted*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 43-50.
- Bandura A. 1969, Social-Learning Theory of Identificatory Processes. In D.A. Goslin (ed.) *Handbook of Socialisation Theory and Research*, Rand McNally College Publishing, Chicago, pp. 213-262.
- Bandura A. 1977, Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behaviour, *Psychological Review*, 84 (2), 191-215.
- Bandura A. 1977, *Social Learning Theory*, Prentice- Hall, London.
- Bassey M. 1999, *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Becvar D. & Becvar R. 2002, *Family Therapy: A Systemic Integration*, Pearson Education, Frenchs Forest.

- Berkowitz M. W. 1984, The Role of Discussion in Moral Education. In M.W. Berkowitz & F. Oser (eds) *Moral Education: Theory and Application*, Chapter 8, Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., Hillsdale.
- Birdsall P. & Correa L. 2007, Gifted Underachievers, *Leadership*, 36 (4), 21-23.
- Bloom B.S. 1985, The Nature of the Study and Why it was Done. In B.S.Bloom (ed.) *Developing Talent in Young People*, Ballantine Books, New York, pp. 3-17.
- Bruner J. 1987, Life as Narrative. *Social Research*, 54 (1), 11-32.
- Butler-Por N. 1993, Underachieving Gifted Students. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 649-664.
- Butler-Por N. 1995, Gifted children: Who is at risk for underachievement and why? In *Nurturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 252-259.
- Chaffey G.W. 2005, Understanding Achievement in Gifted Students. In M. Gross, B. MacLeod, S. Bailey, G. Chaffey, C. Merrick & R. Targett, *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers*, Module 4, GERRIC (UNSW), Sydney.
- Chaffey G.W. 2006, *Coolabah Dynamic Assessment Training*. Notes made available by author.
- Chaffey G.W. & Bailey S.B. 2003, Identifying high academic potential in Australian Aboriginal children using dynamic assessment testing, *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, 12 (1), 42-55.
- Chaffey G.W. & Bailey S.B. 2006, Coolabah Dynamic Assessment: identifying high academic potential in at-risk population. In Wallace & Eriksson (eds) *Diversity of Gifted Education: International Perspectives on global issues*, Routledge, London, pp. 125-135.
- Callahan C.M., Cunningham C.M. & Plucker J.A. 1994, Foundation for the Future: The socio-emotional development of gifted, adolescent women, *Roeper Review*, 17, 99-105.
- Cheek J. & Gough N. 2005, Postmodernist Perspectives. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Sage, London, pp. 302-309.

- Clark B. 2002, *Growing Up Gifted*, 6th edition, Merrill Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River NJ.
- Colangelo N. & Assouline S.G 2000, Counseling Gifted Students. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 595-607.
- Colangelo N. 2003, Counseling gifted Students. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ, pp. 373-387.
- Coleman L.J. & Cross T.L. 1993, Social-Emotional Development and the Personal Experience of Giftedness. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 203-212.
- Connelly F.M. & Clandinin D.J. 1990, Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry, *Educational Researcher* 19 (5), 2-14.
- Connelly F.M. & Clandinin D.J. 1989, *Narrative and Story in Practice and Research*, pp.2-24, report published by Electronic Document Registry Scheme, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto.
- Craven R.G. & Marsh H.W. 1997, Threats to Gifted and Talented Students' Self-Concepts in the Big Pond: Research Results and Educational Implications, *The Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, 6 (2), 7-17.
- Creswell J.W. 2005, *Educational Research. Planning, Conducting Qualitative Research and Evaluating Quantitative*, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ.
- Crocker T. 2002, Underachievement: Is Our Vision too Narrow and Blinkered? *TalentEd*, 20 (3), 1-9.
- Csikszentmihalyi M., Rathunde K. & Whalen S. 1993, *Talented Teenagers. The roots of success and failure*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Davies B. & Gannon S. 2005, Feminism/Poststructuralism. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Sage, London, pp. 318-325.
- Deutsch N.L. 2004, Positionality and the pen: reflections on the process of becoming a feminist researcher and writer, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10 (6), 885-902.
- De Vaus D. 2001, *Research Design in Social Research*, Sage, London.

- Dobert R. & Nunner-Winkler G. 1984, Moral Development and Personal Reliability: the Impact of the Family on Two Aspects of Moral Consciousness in Adolescence. In M.W. Berkowitz & F. Oser (eds) *Moral Education: Theory and Application*, Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., Hillsdale NJ, pp. 147-173.
- Drake S. & Ryan J. 1994, Narrative and knowing inclusive pedagogy in contemporary times, *Curriculum and Teaching*, 1, 45-55.
- Du Bois B. 1983, Passionate Scholarship: Notes on values, knowing and method in feminist social science. In G. Bowles & R.D. Klein (eds), *Theories of women's studies*, Routledge Kegan Paul, Boston, pp. 105-116.
- Dweck C.S. 1986, Motivational Processes Affecting Learning. *American Psychologist*, 41 (10), 1040-1048.
- Eccles J. & Harold R.D. 1992, Gender Differences in Educational and Occupational Patterns Among the Gifted. In N. Colangelo, S.G. Assouline & D.L. Ambrosio (eds) *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1991 Henry B. and Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 2-30.
- Elliott J. 2005, *Using Narrative in Social Research*, Sage, London.
- Ezzy D. 1997, Subjectivity and the Labour Process: Conceptualising 'Good Work', *Sociology*, 31 (3), 427-444.
- Fine M. 1994, Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 70-82.
- Flynn J. 1994 IQ Gains Over Time. In R.J. Sternberg (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Human Intelligence*, Macmillan, New York, pp. 617-623.
- Flynn J. 1999, Searching for Justice, The Discovery of IQ Gains Over Time, *American Psychologist*, 54 (1), 5-20.
- Flynn J. 2007, *What is Intelligence?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Freeman J. 1991, *Gifted Children Growing Up*, Cassell Educational, London.
- Freeman J. 1993, Families: the Essential Context for Gifts and Talents. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*. Pergamon, London, pp. 573-585.

- Freeman J. 2000, Parents and Families in Nurturing Giftedness and Talent. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 669-683.
- Freeman J. 2001, *Gifted Children Grown Up*, David Fulton Publishers, London.
- Gaarder J. 1995, *Sophie's World*, Phoenix House, London.
- Gagné F. 1985, Giftedness and Talent: Reexamining a Reexamination of the Definitions, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 29 (3), 103-110.
- Gagné F. 2003, Transforming Gifts into Talents: The DMGT as a Developmental Theory. In N.Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, pp. 60-74.
- Gallagher J.J. 1993, Current status of gifted education in the United States. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 877-891.
- Gerwartz J.L. 1969, Mechanisms of Social Learning: Some Roles of Stimulation and Behaviour in Early Human Development. In D.A.Goslin (ed.) *Handbook of Socialisation Theory and Research*, Rand McNally College Publishing, Chicago, pp. 57-212.
- Gilligan, C. 1982, *In a different voice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Goertzl V. & Goertzl M.G. 2004, *Cradles of Eminence*, Great Potential Press, Scottsdale AZ.
- Goldstein D., Stocking V.B. & Sawyer R.N. 1992, The Talented Adolescent: Data from TIP's First Decade. In N. Colangelo, S.G. Assouline & D.L. Ambrosion (eds) *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1991 Henry B. and Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 298-318.
- Greene, Kreider & Mayer 2005, Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in social inquiry. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Sage, London, pp. 302-309.
- Grenfell M. 1997, *Storying as a Research Technique: Narrative Reconstruction and Biography*. Made available by the author.

- Gross M.U.M. 2004, *Exceptionally Gifted Children*, 2nd edition, Routledge Falmer, London.
- Gruber H.E. 1985, Giftedness and Moral Responsibility: Creative Thinking and Human Survival. In F.D. Horowitz & M. O'Brien (eds) *The Gifted and Talented Developmental Perspectives Ch.10*, American Psychological Association, Hyattsville.
- Gubrium J.F. & Holstein J.A. 1998, Narrative practice and the coherence of personal stories, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 39 (1), 163-187.
- Gustin W.C. 1985, The Development of Exceptional Research Mathematicians. In B.S.Bloom (ed.) *Developing Talent in Young People*, Ballantine Books, New York, pp. 270-300.
- Hague W. J. 1998, Is there moral giftedness? *Gifted Education International*, 12, 170-174.
- Haensly P. 2001, Creativity, Intelligence, and Ethics: Why Do Our Gifted Children Need Them? *Gifted Child Today*, 24 (1), 33-35.
- Harper G. 1997, Society, culture, socialisation and the individual. In C. Stafford & B. Furze (eds) *Society and Change*, 2nd edition, Macmillan Education, South Yarra.
- Hartsell B. 2006, Teaching toward Compassion: Environmental Values Education for Secondary Students, *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17 (4), 265-271.
- Heacox D. 1991, *Up From Underachievement*. Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne.
- Herskovits M. & Gyarmathy E. 1995, Gifted Children's Early Years by Parental Interviews. In *Nurturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 58-62.
- Heylighen H. 2000, *Increasing intelligence: the Flynn effect*. Retrieved on 30th August from Pespmc1.vub.ac.be/FLYNNEFF.htm
- Hinchman L.P. & Hinchman S.K. 1997, Introduction. In L.P. Hinchman & S.K. Hinchman (eds) *Memory, Identity, Community: The idea of narrative in the Human Sciences*, State University of New York, New York pp. xiii-xxxii.

- Janos P.M, Fung H.C & Robinson N.M. 1985, Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, and Peer Relations Among Children Who Feel “Different”, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 29 (2), 78-82.
- Janos P.M. & Noble N.M. 1985, Psychosocial Development in Intellectually Gifted Children. In F.D. Horowitz & M. O’Brien (eds) *The Gifted and Talented Developmental Perspectives*, American Psychological Association, Hyattsville, pp. 149-196.
- Jones S.R. & McEwen M.K. 2000, A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 405-413.
- Josselson R. 1996, *Revising herself*. Oxford University Press, San Francisco.
- Kearney K. 2000, Life in the Asynchronous Family. *Home Educator’s Family Times*. Retrieved June 10th from www.homeeducator.com/FamilyTimes/articles/8-3article12.htm
- Kerr B. 1992, A 20-year follow-up of women Graduates of An Accelerated Learning Program. In N. Colangelo, S.G. Assouline & D.L. Ambrosio (eds) *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1991 Henry B. and Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 240-247.
- Kerr B. & Nicpon M.F. 2003, Gender and Giftedness. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ, pp. 493-504.
- Kim K.H. 2008, Underachievement and Creativity: Are Gifted Underachievers Highly Creative? *Creativity Research Journal*, 20 (2), 234-242.
- Kirschenbaum R.J. 1998, Dynamic Assessment and Its Use with Underserved Gifted and Talented Populations. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 42 (3), 140-147.
- Kohlberg L. 1976, Moral Stages and Moralizations: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach. In T. Lickona (ed) *Moral Development and Behavior*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp. 31-53.
- Kohlberg L. 1984, *Essays on Moral Development, Volume II. The Psychology of Moral Development*, Harper & Row, San Francisco.

- Kohlberg L. 1985, The Just Community Approach to Moral Education in Theory and Practice. In M.W. Berkowitz & F. Oser (eds) *Moral Education: Theory and Application*, Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., Hillsdale, pp. 27-87.
- Konza D. 1997, Understanding and Managing Your Gifted Child. In B.A. Knight & S. Bailey (eds) *Parents as Lifelong Teachers of the Gifted*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 71- 80.
- Leedy P.D. & Ormrod J.E. 2005, *Practical Research- Planning and Design*, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ.
- Lens W. & Rand P. 2000, Motivation and Cognition: Their Role in the Development of Giftedness. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 193-201.
- Lickona T. 1976, Research on Piaget's Theory of Moral Development. In T. Lickona (ed) *Moral Development and Behaviour*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp. 219-240.
- Lickona T. 1985, Parents as Moral Educators. In M.W. Berkowitz & F. Oser (eds) *Moral Education: Theory and Application*, Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.Inc, Hillsdale NJ, pp. 127-146.
- Lincoln Y.S. & Guba E.G. 1988, *Criteria for Assessing Naturalistic Inquiries as Reports*, paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Lincoln Y.S. & Guba E.G. 1989, Ethics: the Failure of Positivist Science, *Review of Higher Education* 12, 3-41.
- Lloyd L. 1997, How to Further Develop Your Child's Talents. In B.A. Knight & S. Bailey (eds) *Parents as Lifelong Teachers of the Gifted*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 101-109.
- Lowenstein W. 1978, *Weevils in the Flour*. Scribe, Fitzroy.
- Lupart J.L. & Pyryt M.C. 1996, "Hidden Gifted" Students: Underachiever Prevalence and Profile, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 20 (1), 36-53.
- Lye J. 2000, *The Problem of Meaning in Literature*. Retrieved November 7th from www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/meaning.html

- Mares L. 1997, Personality Characteristics and Achievement: How Parents Can Help. In B.A. Knight & S. Bailey (eds) *Parents as Lifelong Teachers of the Gifted*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 51-61.
- McNabb T. 2003, Motivational Issues. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ, pp. 417-423.
- Mendaglio S. & Pyryt M.C. 2002, *Self-Concept and Giftedness: A Multi-Theoretical Perspective*. A paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, New Orleans.
- Merrick E. 1999, An exploration of quality in qualitative research. In M. Kopala and L.A. Suzuki (eds) *Using qualitative methods in psychology*, Sage, London, pp. 25-36.
- Merrotsy P. 2004, Jane and Gekko: Two case studies of giftedness and pathological concerns, *TalentEd*, 22 (1), 9-21.
- Mission R. 1994, *A Brief Introduction to Literary Theory*, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Melbourne.
- Minichiello V., Fulton G. & Sullivan G. 1999, Posing qualitative research questions. In V. Minichiello, G.Sullivan, K. Greenwood & R. Axford (eds) *Handbook for Research Methods in Health Sciences*, Addison-Wesley, Sydney, pp. 35-56.
- Mischel W. & Mischel H.N. 1976, A Cognitive Social-Learning approach to Morality and Self-Regulation. In T. Lickona (ed) *Moral Development and Behavior*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp. 84-107.
- Monks F.J., Heller K.A. & Passow A.H. 1993, Reflections on Where we are and Where we are Going. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 852-860.
- Moon S.M. 2003, Counseling Families. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ, pp. 388-400.
- Neihart M. 1999, The importance of giftedness and psychological well-being: What does the empirical literature say? *Roeper Review*, 22, 10-17.

- Nelson K.C. 1992, Kazimierz Dabrowski: Poland's Gifted 'Outsider'. In N. Colangelo, S.G. Assouline & D.L. Ambroson (eds) *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1991 Henry B. and Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 362-64.
- Olszewski P., Kulieke M. & Buescher T. 1987, The Influence of the Family Environment on the Development of Talent: A Literature Review, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 11 (1), 6-28.
- Passow A.H., Monks F.J. & Heller K.A. 1993, Research and Education of the Gifted in the Year 2000 and Beyond. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 883-900.
- Partington G. 1998, From Play School to Peer Groups: Socialisation and Socialising Agents. In J.Allen (ed) *Sociology of Education*, Social Science Press, Sydney, pp. 101-120.
- Patrick H., Gentry M. & Owen S.V. 2006, Motivation and Gifted Adolescents. In F.A. Dixon & S.M. Moon (eds) *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education*, Prufrock Press, Waco TX, pp. 165-190.
- Personal Narratives Group 1989, *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory, Personal Narratives*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington IN.
- Peters W., Hongli M., Monks F. & Guohua Y. 1995, Self-concept of Chinese and Dutch gifted and non-gifted children. In *Nurturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 84-95.
- Peters W.A., Grager-Loidl H. & Supplee P. 2000, Underachievement in Gifted Children and Adolescents: Theory and Practice. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, 2nd edition, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 609-619.
- Peterson J.S. 2001, Successful Adults Who Were Once Adolescent Underachievers, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 45 (4), 236-250.
- Piechowski M.M. 1992, Transforming Growth. In N. Colangelo, S. G. Assouline, & D.L. Ambroson (eds) *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1991 Henry B. and*

- Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, pp. 180-203.
- Pletan M., Robinson N.M., Berninger V.W. & Abbott R. D. 1995, Parents' Observations of Kindergartners Who are Advanced in Mathematical Reasoning. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 19 (1), 30-44.
- Plummer K. 1983, *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the problems and literature of humanistic methods*, Allen & Unwin, London.
- Precket F., Zeidner M., Goetz T. & Schieyer E.J. 2008, Female 'big fish' swimming against the tide: The big-fish-little-pond effect and gender ratio in special gifted classes, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33 (1), 78-96.
- Pringle M.L.K. 1970, *Able Misfits*, Longman, London.
- Punch K.F. 2001, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 3rd edition, Sage, London.
- Punch K.F. 1988, *Introduction to social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Sage, Thousand Oaks CA.
- Pyryt M.C. & Mendaglio S. 1991, *Using Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration to Understand and Help Gifted People*, paper presented at the 9th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children, The Hague, Netherlands.
- Rayneri L.J., Gerber B.L. & Wiley L.P. 2003, Gifted Achievers and Gifted Underachievers. *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 14 (4), 197-204.
- Razack S. 1993, Story-telling for Social Change, *Gender and Education*, 5 (1), 55-61.
- Renzulli J.S & Park S. 2002, *Giftedness and High School Dropouts: Personal, Family, and School-related Factors*, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut, Connecticut.
- Renzulli J.S., Baum S.M., Herbert T. & McCluskey K.W. 1999, Reversing Underachievement Through Enrichment, *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 7, (4), 217-223.
- Ricoeur P. 2004, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Riessman C.K. 1993, *Narrative Analysis*, Sage, London.

- Reis S.M. 2002, Internal Barriers, Personal Issues, and Decisions Faced by Gifted and Talented Females, *Gifted Child Today*, 25 (1), 14-28.
- Reis S. M. 2006 Gender, Adolescence, and Giftedness. In F.A. Dixon & S.M. Moon (eds) *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education*, Prufrock Press, Waco TX, pp. 87-107.
- Reis S. M. & Hébert T. 2008, Gender and Giftedness. In S.I. Pfeiffer (ed.) *Handbook of Giftedness in Children: Psychoeducational Theory, Research and Best Practices*, SpringerUS, New York, pp. 271-291.
- Rimm S.B. & Davis G.A. 2004, *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, 5th edition, Pearson, Boston.
- Rimm S. & Lowe B. 1988, Family Environments of Underachieving Gifted Student, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 32 (4), 353-395.
- Rimm S. 2003, Underachievement: A National Epidemic. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River NJ, pp. 424-443.
- Robinson N.M. 1993, Identifying and Nurturing Gifted, Very Young Children. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 507-518.
- Robinson N.M. & Noble K.D 1992, Social-Emotional Development and Adjustment of Gifted Children. In M. Wang, M. Reynolds & H. Walberg (eds) *Handbook of Special Education: Research and Practice*, Volume 4, Pergamon, London, pp. 1-20.
- Sahin A 1995, The relationship between family structure and self-esteem in gifted children. In *Nurturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 96-100.
- Salkind N.J. 2006, *Exploring Research*, Pearson Education International, Upper Saddle River NJ.
- Samaritans Report 2001, *Analysis of Community Needs for the Central Coast Region of NSW*. Retrieved on June 5th from <http://www.samaritans.org.au/publications-research.asp>

- Sailer S. 2007, *Flynn Flips, IQ Tests Do Matter*. Retrieved on 30th August from Vdare.com/sailer/070903_Flynn.htm
- Schultz R.A. & Delisle J.R. 2000, Gifted Adolescents. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks, R.J. Sternberg & R.F. Subotnik (eds) *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 483-491, 2nd edition.
- Secada W.G. 1995, Social and critical dimensions for equity in mathematics education. In W.G. Secada, E. Fennema & L.B. Adajiiian (eds) *New Directions for equity in mathematics education*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 146-164.
- Senate Select Committee 1988, Gifted Children, Their Parents and Teachers- Characteristics and Concerns. *The Report on The Education of Gifted and Talented Children*, Ch. 5. Retrieved on April 3rd from www.alphalink.com.au/~drednort/sscchapter5.html
- Senate Select Committee Response 2001, *The Education of the Gifted and Talented*, Ch. 2 & 3. Retrieved on May 27th from www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_cttel/completed_inquiries/1999-02/gifted/report/contents.htm
- Shaun H. 2004, *To My Teacher*. Retrieved October 26th from www.hoagiesgifted.org
- Shkedi A. 2005, *Multiple Case Narrative*, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam.
- Silverman L.K. 1992, How Parents can Support Gifted Children. *ERIC EC Digest#E515*, 1-5. Retrieved June 10th from www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e515.html
- Silverman L.K. 1993, Counseling Needs and Programs for the Gifted. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 631-644.
- Silverman L.K. 1993, The Gifted Individual. In L.K. Silverman (ed) *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*, Ch.1, Love Publishing, Denver CO.
- Silverman L.K. 1994, The Moral Sensitivity of Gifted Children and the Evolution of Society, *Roeper Review*, 17 (2), 110-115.
- Sloane K.D. 1985, Home Influences on Talent Development. In B.S. Bloom (ed) *Developing Talent in Young People*, Ballantine Books, New York, pp. 439-476.

- Smith D.E. 1999, From women's standpoint to a sociology for people. In J.L. Abu-Lughod (ed) *Sociology for the twenty-first century: Continuities and cutting edges*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 65-82.
- Somekh B. & Lewin C. 2005, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Sage, London.
- Somers M.R. 1994, The narrative construction of identity: a relational and network approach, *Theory and Society*, 22, 605-649.
- Sosniak L.A. 1985, Phases of Learning. In B.S. Bloom (ed.) *Developing Talent in Young People*, Ballantine Books, New York, pp. 409-437.
- Speirs Neumeister K.L. 2002, Shaping an identity: Factors influencing the achievement of newly married, gifted young women, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 46, 291-305.
- Sternberg, R.J. 2001, Giftedness as developing expertise: A theory of the interface between high abilities and achieved excellence, *High Ability Studies*, 12 (2), 159-179.
- Stipek D.J. & Weisz J.R. 1981, Perceived Personal Control and Academic Achievement, *Review of Educational Research*, 51 (1), 101-137
- Strong Bonds 2007, *Family dynamics-Building Family Connections*. Retrieved November 9th from www.strongbonds.jss.org.au/workers/families/dynamics.htm
- Tannenbaum A.J. 1993, Giftedness: The Ultimate Instrument for Good and Evil. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London pp. 447-465.
- Terman L. 1925, *Genetic Studies of Genius, Volume 1. Mental and physical traits of a thousand gifted children*, Standford University Press, Standford.
- Tolan S.S. 1990, Helping Your Highly Gifted Child. *ERIC EC Digest #E477, 1-8*. Retrieved June 10th from www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e477.html
- Van Rossum J.H.A 1995, Talent in Sport: Significant others in the career of top-level Dutch athletes. In *Nuturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 43-51.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. 2004, *Basic Educational Options for Gifted Students in Schools*. Retrieved October 27th from www.cfge.wm.edu

- Vialle W. 2006, *Pink or Paris? Giftedness in Popular Culture*, Eminent Australian key note address at the 11th AAEGT National Conference, Concepts, Challenges, Realities, Freemantle, 27th-29th September.
- Vick M. 1998, Changing Schools, Changing Society. In J.Allen (ed) *Sociology of Education*, Social Science Press, Sydney, pp. 39-61.
- Walberg H.J. 1995, Nurturing children for adult success. In *Nuturing Talent, Individual Needs and Social Ability*, The Fourth Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, pp. 168-175.
- Webb J.T. 1993, Nuturing Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Children. In K.A. Heller, F.J. Monks & A.H. Passow (eds) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent*, Pergamon, London, pp. 525-535.
- Willard-Holt C. 2008, You Could Be Doing Brain Surgery – Gifted Girls Becoming Teachers, *Gifted Children Quarterly*, 52 (1), 313-330
- Yin R.K. 1984, *Case Study Research Design and Method*, Sage, London.
- Yin R.K. 2003, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 3rd edition Sage, London.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement for Participants

Dear (participant)

My name is Kerry Harding. I am working at St Josephs Catholic College and studying for a Med (Hons.) through the University of New England, New South Wales. Dr Peter Merrotsy in the School of Education, University of New England, is my supervisor.

I was wondering if you would be willing to take part in a research project I am working on for my degree. One of the things I want to learn about is your childhood experiences and how they affected your academic achievements at school. I also want to hear about your life experiences, achievements and influences. I am aware that your child is involved with the Lighthouse Project and so I thought you may be interested in assisting me in my research.

What you would have to do

Interviews:

I would like you to tell me your story. I want to hear about your life experiences especially the background you came from, your childhood experiences both at home and in school, and your adult life. The first interview would be at a time and place convenient to you to record your story. This would last about 1 to 2 hours. The second interview would be much shorter and would be used to clarify information or fill in any gaps in the narrative.

The information would be used in my case study research but your privacy would be maintained by the use of pseudonyms for all names and places given in the interviews. It is your privilege to refuse to answer a question or to stop the interview if it becomes too stressful. The interview is a collaborative activity in which I would respect your rights and feelings but hope that you would enjoy having someone listen to your unique story.

Use of digital recording device:

Because it is important that I get right what you say, I would like to record you on a digital recording device. No one but myself and my supervisor will be able to listen to the recorder and they will be kept locked up.

I would like you to consider being one of the participants in my study. If you agree and later decide that you don't want to carry on in the study, then you can change your mind. That will not be a problem.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research project is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact The Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Chair

The Human Research Ethics Committee

University of New England

Armidale NSW 2351

Telephone: (02) 6773 2070

If you think of any questions you want to ask me before you decide that is fine. Just ring me at home after work.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Kerry Harding

Ph.: (02) 43893892

This project has been approved by The Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE07/216 valid to 7/2/09).

Appendix 2: Letter to Participants

Dear (participant)

My name is Kerry Harding. You were involved in assisting me with my research for my MEd (Hons). I want to express to you my heartfelt appreciation for your enthusiasm and openness in the interview process. I have now completed the research and will shortly present my paper to the University for evaluation. Without your help none of my work would have been possible.

It is to be hoped that my research will assist other parents to create environments that will enhance the potential of their children to achieve. I am very grateful to be able to convey your 'voices' in my case studies and am sure that others will empathise with your experiences, with your resilience and your courage.

I want to reassure you that your privacy has been maintained and that pseudonyms for names and places have been used throughout the study.

With many thanks

Kerry Harding

Appendix 3: Practical and Ethical Considerations for the Research Interviews

Before beginning the data collection process, participants will be given verbal and written explanations of the research study and its purpose. The letters will explain that participation is purely voluntary and that the participant can withdraw at any time without explanation, they just need to notify the researcher of their intentions. One of the selected participants did decide to withdraw when he realised how much time was involved in the interview process. This was unfortunate as he was a fascinating individual who had already related a few of his life experiences in informal conversations. As well, the methods and procedures by which the data will be collected, used, analysed and stored was explained to them. The participants were given the contact numbers of the University supervisors if they wished to make any queries or complaints, and the researcher's contact information if they wish for any further clarification.

The data was collected through the use of taped interviews. The confidential nature of the interviews and the gathered data was frequently emphasised. Permission for taping was given orally before the commencement of the data collection. The participants were given the choice of location for the interviews so that they felt they had some control over the process. They need to be in a comfortable setting conducive to an extensive and insightful interview. For example, one participant preferred to meet at home during the morning as it is quiet and without distractions from her school age children. When we needed to meet for a second interview we adjourned to the nearest coffee shop, as her children were home for the holidays.

The researcher phoned the participants a few days after each of the interviews to check how they were feeling and if they wished to continue with the data collecting process. Time may be a mitigating factor in the data collection process as the parents are busy people involved in work and family. Two interviews were needed for each participant to clarify some of the data, to acquire more detail or to present further questions after an initial transcription was completed by the researcher. All the participants were very cooperative and generous with their time.

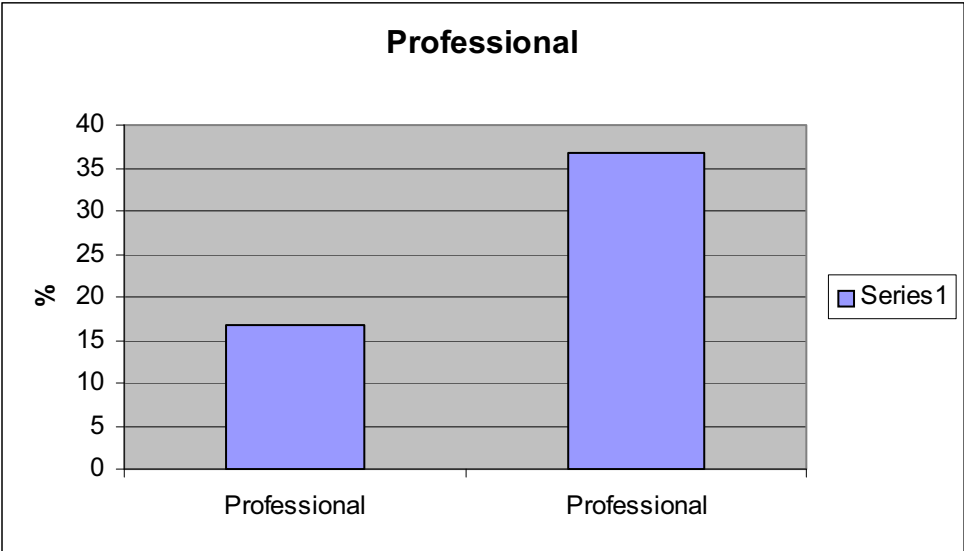
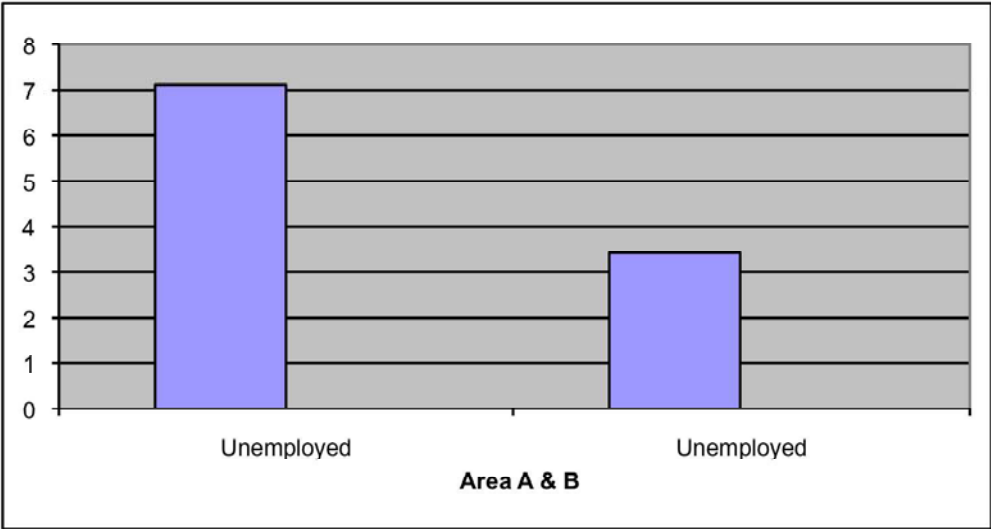
The letters to the participants issued at the beginning of the study included details of contacts and advice to the participants on where they could seek redress and/or support should they feel unsafe or unhappy with the process or the researcher.

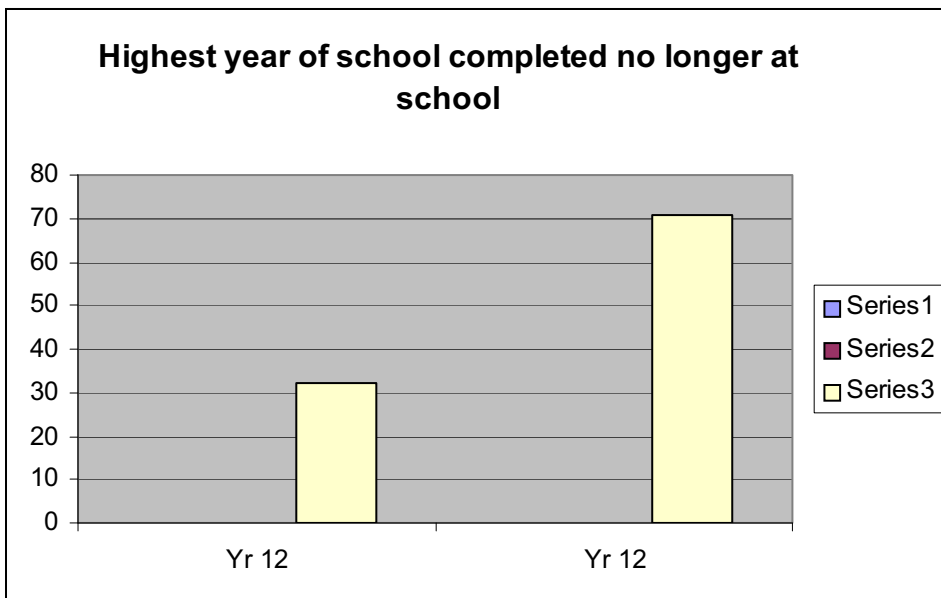
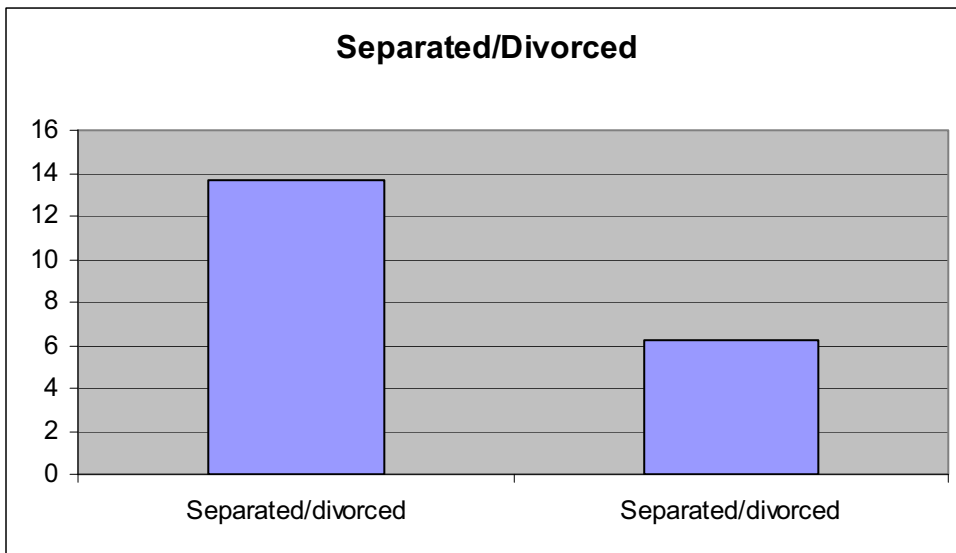
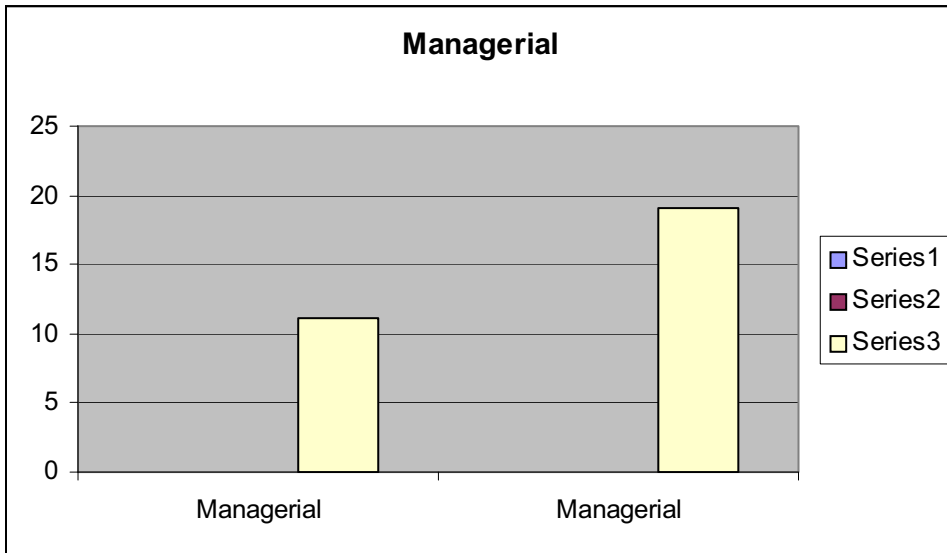
Appendix 4: Statistical data

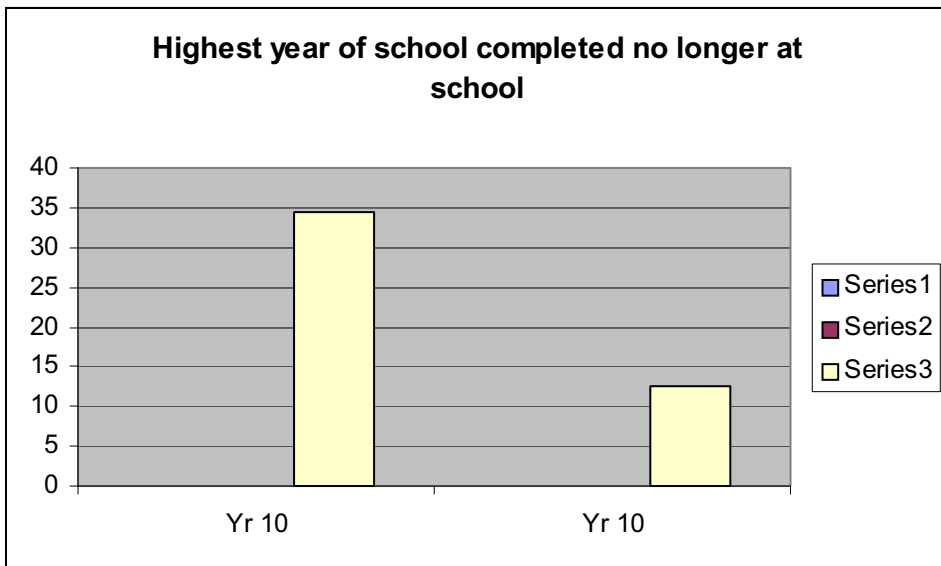
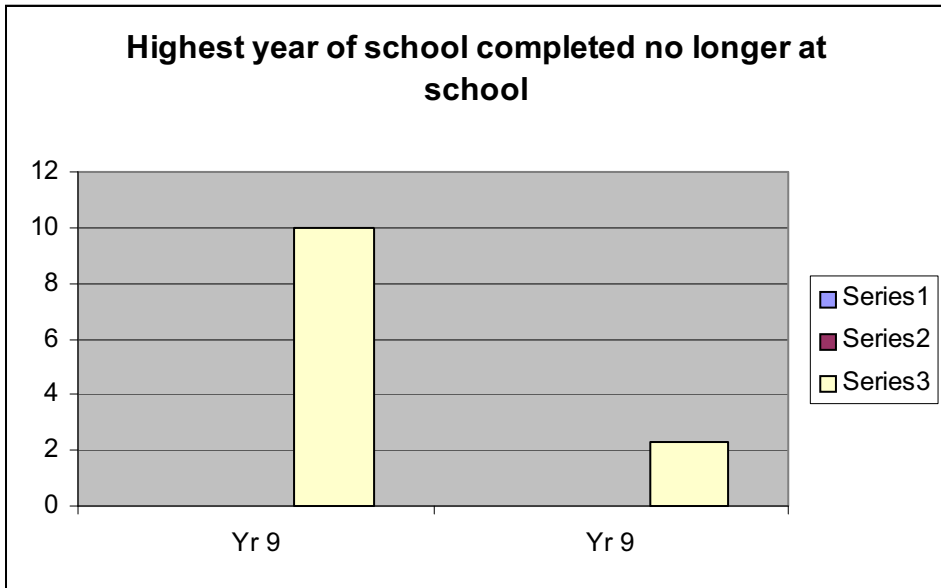
Table A: Statistical data comparison of the low socio-economic (research) area and a high socio-economic area

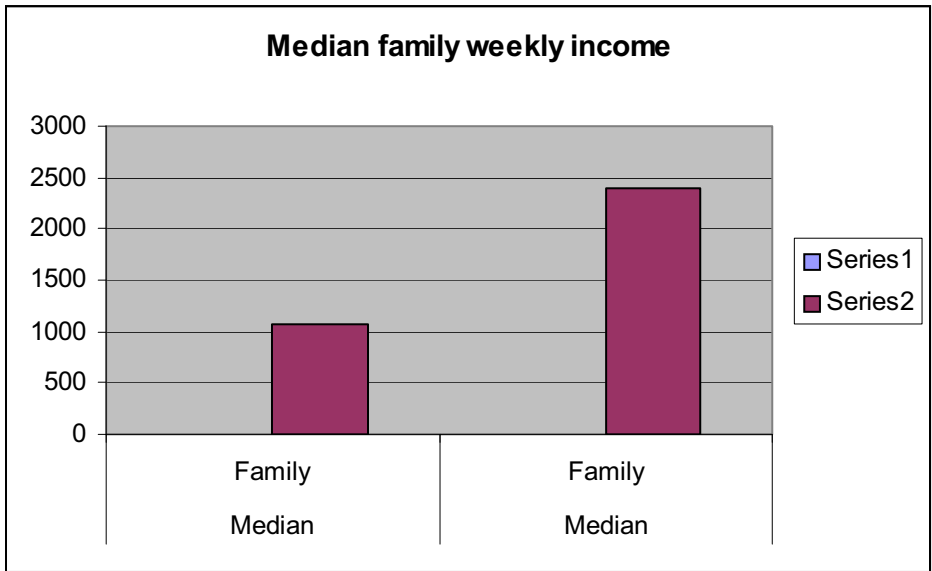
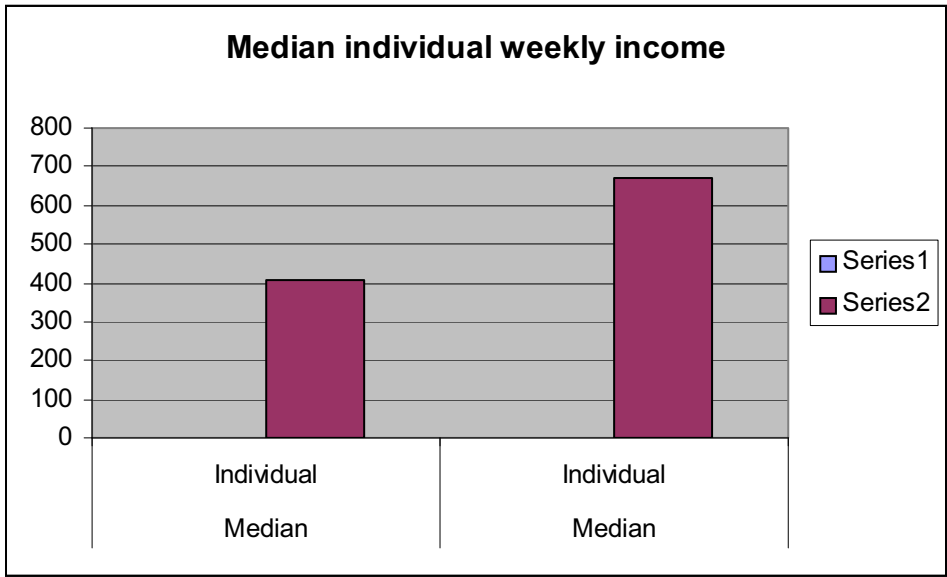
	Area A – Percentages					Area B - Percentages				
	English	Italian	Spanish	German	Cantonese	English	Cantonese	Mandarin	Korean	Italian
Language spoken at home	90.7	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	82	3.1	1.4	0.9	0.7
Religious affiliation	Anglican 30.1	Catholic 26.4	No religion 15	Uniting 4.8	Presbyterian 3.5	Anglican 27.4	Catholic 22.8	No religion 15	Uniting 8	Presbyterian 3.2
Marital status	Married 49.7	Never 28.6	Separated/divorced 13.7	Widowed 8		Married 58.9	Never 28.3	Separated/divorced 6.2	Widowed 6.6	
Labour force	Full time 55.7	Part time 30.8	Away from home 3.7	Unemployed 7.1		Full time 58.8	Part time 32.7	Away from home 2.9	Unemployed 3.4	
Occupation	Professional 16.8	Trades 16	Clerical/Administration 15.1	Managerial 11.1	Labour 11	Professional 36.7	Trades 6.2	Clerical/Administration 15.4	Managerial 19.1	Labour 3.8
Highest year of school completed no longer at school	Yr 12 32.4	Yr 11 5.7	Yr 10 34.4	Yr 9 10	Didn't go 0.4	Yr 12 71	Yr 11 4.3	Yr 10 12.7	Yr 9 2.3	Didn't go 0.3

Visual comparisons of Area A and Area B









Appendix 5: Statistical data on school results

Table B: Statistical data on school results for 2006 and 2007

School Certificate English results in percentages

School 1			School 2			School 3		
English	2006 School	2007 School	English	2006 School	2007 School	English	2006 School	2007 School
Band 6	5	9	Band 6	4	5	Band 6	6	6
Band 5	35	43	Band 5	25	33	Band 5	25	28
Band 4	43	38	Band 4	50	41	Band 4	40	39
Band 3	12	9	Band 3	18	19	Band 3	17	20
Band 2	2	1	Band 2	2	0	Band 2	7	5
Band 1	0	0	Band 1	1	1	Band 1	3	1

School 3

English	2006 School	2007 School	English	2006 School	2007 School
Band 6	4	5	Band 6	6	6
Band 5	25	33	Band 5	25	28
Band 4	50	41	Band 4	40	39
Band 3	18	19	Band 3	17	20
Band 2	2	0	Band 2	7	5
Band 1	1	1	Band 1	3	1

School Certificate Mathematics results in percentages

School 1

		2006		2007		2006		2007	
Maths		School	State	School	State	Maths	School	State	School
Band 6		2	6	5	6	Band 6	1	6	3
Band 5		11	14	24	16	Band 5	6	14	10
Band 4		33	21	18	24	Band 4	22	21	28
Band 3		27	30	38	32	Band 3	44	30	39
Band 2		22	24	14	22	Band 2	24	24	17
Band 1		2	3	0	1	Band 1	4	3	1

School 2

School 3

		2006		2007	
Maths		School	State	School	State
Band 6		1	6	3	6
Band 5		6	14	10	16
Band 4		22	21	28	24
Band 3		44	30	39	32
Band 2		24	24	17	22
Band 1		4	3	1	1

School Certificate Science results in percentages

School 1

Science	2006		2007		2006		2007	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Band 6	1	5	2	4	Band 6	2	5	1
Band 5	26	25	27	24	Band 5	17	25	26
Band 4	40	33	47	39	Band 4	44	33	47
Band 3	25	26	22	25	Band 3	32	26	21
Band 2	5	8	2	7	Band 2	5	8	3
Band 1	0	2	0	1	Band 1	0	2	0

School 2

School 3

Science	2006		2007		2006		2007	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Band 6	2	5	1	4				
Band 5	17	25	26	24				
Band 4	44	33	47	39				
Band 3	32	26	21	25				
Band 2	5	8	3	7				
Band 1	0	2	0	1				

Higher School Certificate English results in percentages

School 1

School 2

English Standard	2006		2007		2006		2007	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Band 6	0	0.03	1	0.07	0	0.03	0	0.07
Band 5	11	3	4	3	0	3	0	3
Band 4	58	31	72	35	37	31	38	35
Band 3	32	47	22	39	56	47	48	39
Band 2	0	15	0	16	7	15	11	16
Band 1	0	5	0	6	0	5	3	6

School 1

School 2

English Adv.	2006		2007		2006		2007	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Band 6	11	6	17	9	5	6	1	9
Band 5	33	33	53	38	39	33	33	38
Band 4	54	44	23	43	50	44	63	43
Band 3	2	16	6	10	3	16	3	10
Band 2	0	2	0	1	3	2	0	1
Band 1	0	0.15	0	0.07	0	0.15	0	0.07

School 1

School 2

English Extension	2006		2007		2006		2007	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Band 4	22	17	29	22	0	17	0	22
Band 3	78	67	57	59	88	67	100	59
Band 2	0	15	14	18	13	15	0	18
Band 1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2

Higher School Certificate Mathematics results in percentages

School 1

School 2

		2006		2007		2006		2007	
Maths Gen.	School	State	Maths Gen.	State	Maths Gen.	State	School	State	School
Band 6	10	3	Band 6	4	Band 6	3	5	3	2
Band 5	33	15	Band 5	19	Band 5	15	22	15	28
Band 4	30	32	Band 4	37	Band 4	32	42	32	49
Band 3	22	17	Band 3	25	Band 3	17	20	17	20
Band 2	3	15	Band 2	12	Band 2	15	11	15	2
Band 1	1	7	Band 1	4	Band 1	7	0	7	0

School 1

School 2

		2006		2007		2006		2007	
Maths	School	State	Maths	State	Maths	State	School	State	School
Band 6	0	15	Band 6	15	Band 6	15	6	15	0
Band 5	15	24	Band 5	24	Band 5	24	33	24	26
Band 4	62	26	Band 4	30	Band 4	26	33	26	53
Band 3	23	18	Band 3	18	Band 3	18	17	18	21
Band 2	0	9	Band 2	8	Band 2	9	6	9	0
Band 1	0	8	Band 1	4	Band 1	8	6	8	0

School 1

School 2

		2006		2007		2006		2007	
Maths Exten.	School	State	Maths Exten.	State	Maths Exten.	State	School	State	School
Band 4	0	30	Band 4	32	Band 4	30	13	30	20
Band 3	67	41	Band 3	42	Band 3	41	40	41	20
Band 2	33	20	Band 2	21	Band 2	20	27	20	60
Band 1	0	9	Band 1	4	Band 1	9	20	9	0

Higher School Certificate Science results in percentages

School 1

School 2

	2006		2007		2006		2007	
Senior Sc.	School	State	School	State	Senior Sc.	School	State	School
Band 6	8	7	NA	4	Band 6	0	7	NA
Band 5	58	26	NA	24	Band 5	50	26	NA
Band 4	25	35	NA	39	Band 4	50	35	NA
Band 3	8	23	NA	25	Band 3	0	23	NA
Band 2	0	6	NA	7	Band 2	0	6	NA
Band 1	0	3	NA	1	Band 1	0	3	NA

School 1

School 2

	2006		2007		2006		2007	
Physics	School	State	School	State	Science	School	State	School
Band 6	0	8	0	8	Band 6	0	8	13
Band 5	25	30	0	26	Band 5	44	30	37
Band 4	25	33	100	33	Band 4	56	33	38
Band 3	50	21	0	22	Band 3	0	21	13
Band 2	0	7	0	7	Band 2	0	7	0
Band 1	0	2	0	4	Band 1	0	2	0

School 1

School 2

	2006		2007		2006		2007	
Chemistry	School	State	School	State	Science	School	State	School
Band 6	0	9	14	11	Band 6	0	9	11
Band 5	8	27	29	28	Band 5	30	27	28
Band 4	62	28	57	30	Band 4	10	28	30
Band 3	15	26	0	22	Band 3	60	26	22
Band 2	15	8	0	6	Band 2	0	8	6
Band 1	0	2	0	2	Band 1	0	2	2

Appendix 6: Strategies for Parents of Gifted Children

TABLE C - FAMILY ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

EFFECTS

STRATEGIES

EARLY YEARS

Cognitive development

responsive learning environment – rich and varied materials for play and learning e.g materials, common household items, outdoor materials, books, musical instruments
 realising there is **NO WRONG WAY TO LEARN** and allowing the child to be individual in their learning styles
 positive emotional support
 responding to a child's interests and participating in these activities eg. identifying insects, building sandcastles, throwing a ball
 allow the child to be curious and set up an environment to stimulate and satisfy curiosity
 answer their questions seriously, and if you don't know the answer show them how and where to get the answers
 encourage them to practise and expand their basic skills
 parents show a passion for learning that is modelled in their own lives

Development of the inner locus of control and a positive self-concept

developing and reinforcing the belief that the child can affect their environment e.g responding to a baby's cry or other signals
 showing them they are loved unconditionally
 make the child as comfortable as possible with their individual differences, don't use them as show pieces
 set clear limits and goals based on the child's individual abilities
 be liberal and flexible but not permissive

Language development prior to two years

use a variety of language patterns e.g. affirming and repeating, questioning, rhyming
 other sensory opportunities and visual encounters e.g. shopping trips where you talk and explain
 play language games
 read aloud
 ask open-ended questions
 make scrapbooks of familiar items, animals, birds etc using pictures and words.

Three years plus are now thinkers

encouragement of exploration and independence
fair discipline

warm, safe, stimulating and varied environment e.g. use pictures of artworks, posters, charts etc.,
surprise bag, libraries, museums, the seaside
show affection and responsiveness

Goal-directed behaviour

the child should feel satisfaction with their efforts, parents give a positive response to their efforts
give support for reaching out and attempting something challenging
safety and acceptance
build a bond of trust between child and parents

Persistence and resilience

parents model and reinforce the value of doing one's best whatever the task
organising and establishing priorities that are valued by both parents
consistency in parental modelling e.g. child needs to see both parents persevering with a task that is
difficult or boring
praise for completing a difficult or boring task
emphasising the value of achievement, and setting short and long term achievement goals

Moral development

through discussion and modelling parents can promote the importance of values and beliefs
parents model behaviours such as generosity, care for others
modelling of situations where caring, compassion or helpfulness towards others is demonstrated
moral storytelling
foster mutual respect

Family types

complex – stable, supportive and consistent but where the child is encouraged to develop their
individuality by seeking out new challenges
differentiated – not always stable or consistent but where the child is encouraged to develop their
individuality by seeking out new challenges
(both types are seen as strong contributors to talent development)
family discussions where parents discuss their feelings honestly
good communication
spending time with individual children, even if its only for 10 minutes

MIDDLE YEARS

Cognitive development

more focus is placed on the particular talent area of the child
lengthy practice times to perfect skills
emotional support
motivational support
warm, stable consistent home environment
modelling commitment and respect for school
set clear limits
good communication- it may be in different ways e.g short notes that express pride or appreciation
continuing to model a love of learning
maintaining a consistency of values and goals by both parents
careful selection of teacher, school or coach that will enhance the child's talent development
providing education opportunities in addition to the school e.g. concerts, museums, coaching clinics

Value of achievement

assist in the recognition that failures are just stepping stones on the way to success
reward with praise for the ability and the effort
set short and long term goals
parents model through the organisation of the family's daily routine e.g. children must finish what they start and do the best they can

Perseverance and resilience

continue the training from the early years by encouraging the child to continue a challenging or boring task
become involved in the daily practice routine and try to make it productive and enjoyable

Ability to delay gratification

set an enjoyable goal, not too far in the future, to be worked towards e.g. saving money for a desired object, completing certain tasks during the week before going to the movies at the weekend
modelling by parents in their own lives

Inner locus of control

discuss distressful situations, let the child come to an understanding of the reasons leading to the distressful situation (not just laying the blame elsewhere), what was her contribution to the problem
parents should not step in immediately, or lay the blame elsewhere, without first exploring the contributing factors to the distress

Positive self-concept

make it clear that the child is loved and accepted for themselves, independent of what they do and regardless of their success or failure
parents accept their children as individuals, are loyal sources of support, and openly express acceptance

Motivation

continuing to encourage the movement from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation e.g from the gold stars for reading books to the love and enjoyment of reading; from the praise of a teacher for completing a piano piece to the sheer enjoyment of creating wonderful music

Moral development

discussions of current moral dilemmas and issues in contemporary society
assist children to take on real moral responsibilities
encourage the child to learn to think for themselves
allow the child to learn to make their own moral choices by firstly presenting them with choices and then discuss those choices
continue to foster mutual respect and moral respect

LATER YEARS

Talent development

encourage the child to take charge of their talents
encourage the transition towards the ‘master’ in the talent domain
development of individuality and independence
emotional support is still essential
provide a motivating and understanding environment
assist in administrative negotiations
continued support for gifted girls to avoid the sex-role stereotypes
continued reinforcement of their high ability levels (for girls)
emphasis on learning goals rather than performance goals

The continued encouragement of achievement, love of learning, perseverance and resilience, motivation, positive self-concept and moral development.

Appendix 7: Audit of thesis

To Whom It May Concern

Following Bassey (1999), I have conducted an audit of Kerry Harding's thesis *insert final title in italics here*.

I find that Kerry has constructed an audit trail that is careful to detail, readily accessible and easy to follow.

The interview data and the quantitative data are well documented and are recorded in a form that will last for a long time. They are appropriately stored in a secure and dry place that would be accessible to other researchers if needed.

The transcripts of audio-taped interviews are a careful and detailed written record of the conversations between the researcher and the subjects of the study. The triangulation of data adds considerably to the validity and robustness of the record.

The interpretation of these data is a fair presentation of the content of the written documents, and is consistent with the tone and intent of the study subjects.

The Case Studies, developed from the interpretation of the data, draw a picture of Teena, Claire, Renee and Arna that is consistent with the qualitative and quantitative data. Their voices are clearly evident within their narratives. Their stories faithfully detail their life journeys and their reflections on their experiences.

The checking of the Case Studies by the subjects of the research confirms the faithfulness of the researcher in collecting, interpreting and presenting the data.

The body of data, and its interpretation and development into four case studies, form, in my opinion, a valuable archive for gifted education.

Dr Peter Merrotsty
October, 2008

Reference

Bassey, M. 1999. Case Study Research in Educational Settings. London: Open University Press.

Appendix 8: Summary of the Findings

1. The low socio-economic milieu of the participants had a negative influence on their academic development. In two cases the participants actually ‘dropped out’ of high school.
2. Deprivation and neglect within the family environment leads to underachievement. The unwanted, abused or neglected gifted child has little reason or encouragement to achieve academically. Non-achievement can gain the attention a child is desperately seeking, even though it may be negative attention.
3. Removal of an individual’s ‘locus of control’ contributes to poor self-concept and feelings of worthlessness. It contributes negatively to the construction of identity for the participants and seems to contribute to at least two of the participants remaining as searchers on their pathways to identity formation.
4. The home environment needs to offer intellectual stimulation and value learning for gifted children to develop a passion for learning. A passion for learning is necessary for the academic achievement of gifted children. This achievement imbues the parents with a sense of accomplishment and recognition that the family dynamics are facilitating the child’s talent development. A two way process is developed in the family dynamics, which benefits both parents and child.
5. Gifted children need to spend time with their parents when the child is encouraged to explore, question and delight in learning. This, in turn, stimulates the children’s cognitive development as well as self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy.
6. Family type and consistency in parenting are both needed to create a positive learning environment. An integrated family type is conducive to academic achievement if

supported by a stimulating home environment. A differentiated family type will have a negative effect on achievement if it is too volatile, inconsistent and abusive.

7. Creative talent will have difficulty flourishing in a family type that is negative and unsupportive of the talent development. However, while not reaching its full potential the creative talent may lay dormant and flourish in the individual's later years as a more conducive environment is experienced such as occurred in Teena and Claire's life experiences.

8. Even though a gifted child's parents may hold professional occupations unless the parents reinforce the value of achieving higher education levels the child may not grow to value academic achievement. The valuing of professional occupations must be made overt by the parents and needs to be coupled with the many other factors that contribute to family dynamics that facilitate achievement.

9. The socialisation of gifted girls into gender stereotyped roles can affect their desire and ability to achieve to their potential. Parental reinforcement of the traditional gender roles has a profound effect on the self-efficacy of gifted girls and consequently their career choices. The shaping of gifted girls into multidimensional identities is strongly influenced by the role modeling of their mothers, the positive verbal encouragement by both parents, and the high expectations of parents.

10. Social acceptance by the peer group is of paramount importance to some gifted teenage girls. They are enculturated to the view that appearing intelligent and achieving academically is linked to loneliness and ostracism. Acceptance is shaped by the language the girls use and the language used about them.

11. Women's perspective of achievement or achieving to their potential is often at odds with the more traditional patriarchal view of achievement. Some women value

achievement in the socio-affective domain, and in their resilience and ability in meeting and to meet and overcome life's challenges as significant achievements.

12. Intergenerational dynamics are cyclic. The participants lack of provision of a stimulating learning environment, and poor role modeling of the values of learning and education echo their own childhood experiences. The participant's failure to espouse the values of perseverance, commitment and achievement stem from the failure of their own parents to do so. The one participant [Renee] who does espouse these values had parents who also held these values.

13. There are other factors within families which can contribute to gifted underachievement. Birth order, finances, family size and illness are such factors. Large family size, where there are financial difficulties as well, affects the ability of the parents to provide a stimulating learning environment. This seems especially true for the younger children as the parents have neither the time nor the energy to provide intellectual encouragement. Families experiencing financial difficulties also coupled with negative emotional and intellectual environments can lead to the children's academic underachievement.