

# THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT

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Family is the first and often most powerful influence on a developing child, impacting the existence and quality of educational opportunities, promoting productive mindsets and meaningful values and beliefs, and encouraging cognitive, social, psychological, and emotional growth. For a gifted child, the influence of family can determine whether talent is recognized and allowed to flourish. In this chapter, we present research findings on the psychological aspects of family functioning as they affect talent development. We also discuss parenting within a general conceptual and developmental model for talent development.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

### Characteristics That Influence Talent

Figure 30.1 presents a model of family influence on the developing, talented child. It depicts how family values and parenting interact with and respond to child characteristics and result in actions that affect the acquisition of beliefs, values, and motivation that contribute to achievement and success, moving the child along the road from potential to competence, expertise, and, ultimately, adult creative productivity.

Characteristics of the child, including his or her giftedness, also influence parenting and family dynamics. However, it is not just the immediate family context that is influential. A family's history and stability can affect the way and the degree to which a family can support the development of a child's talents. These influences may include

historical involvement in a particular domain, such as music or politics, which not only reflects collective family values and priorities, but also often positions the family to be able to significantly assist a child entering those fields (Albert, 1994).

Family history also affects opportunities for talent development through the stability of past generations and the accumulation of educational resources (e.g., tacit knowledge about and experience with educational systems, knowledge of opportunities outside of school and higher education), social capital (e.g., social relationships and connections), and financial resources (e.g., accumulated wealth and expendable finances; Albert, 1994; Bourdeiu, 1992) that can be brought to bear on the developing child. A longer history of stability can enable family to move from an exclusive focus on meeting day-to-day needs to increased focus on the future, as well as allow a greater allocation of family resources to developing the talents of the child (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008). Consequently, gifted children whose families are experiencing instability, whether for economic or other reasons, may be especially at risk for the misrecognition and development of their talents.

Families can also affect beliefs and values about acceptable talent domains and paths. For example, because of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, families may hold the view that traditional routes to success (e.g., higher education) will not yield the same occupational and financial rewards as they do for more advantaged or nonminority individuals. Instead, these families push their children along

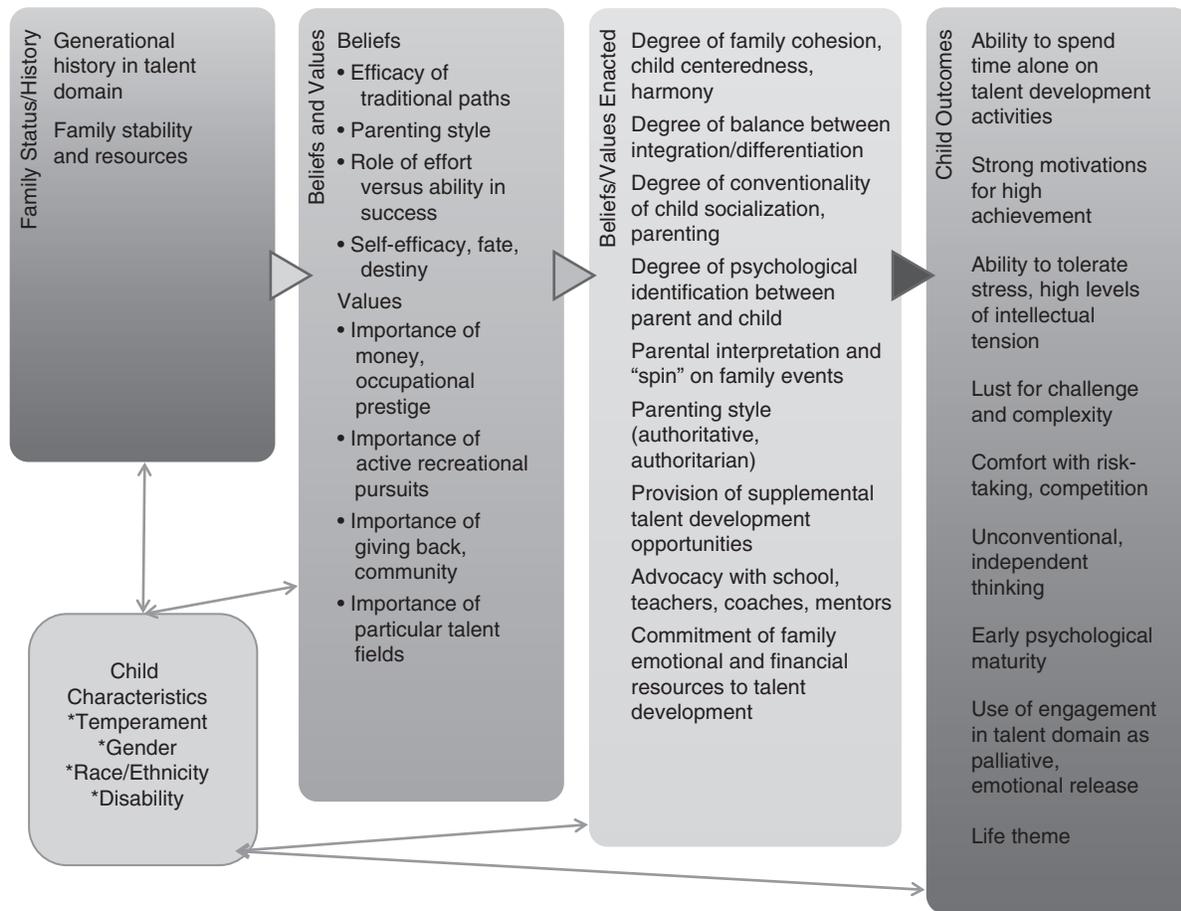


FIGURE 30.1. Family functioning and outstanding performance.

nontraditional paths or careers with earlier and more lucrative payoffs (e.g., sports, entertainment; Albert, 1994; Liu & Clay, 2002; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004). Similarly, immigrant families may promote a gifted child’s entry into professions with more financial stability (e.g., medicine, engineering, law, dentistry) to raise the family’s socioeconomic status. Families with multiple children may implicitly use birth order (Albert, 1980, 1994) as an organizer for expectations regarding preferred domains of achievement, categorizing children as “the athlete” or “the scholar,” often with significant pressure for the first-born child to enter the family business or generational career path. Gender is similarly a psychological organizer affecting parental expectations for choice of domain and level of achievement, as well as the allocation of family resources for talent development (Arnold, Noble, & Subotnik, 1996).

A child with disabilities can cause family dynamics that can either impede or support talent development. Parents may be overly protective of a child with disabilities, which can reduce opportunities for talent development (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008). Alternatively, a disability may engender strong motivation on the part of the child to succeed, despite significant challenges. Talent development activities can provide solace and comfort, and offer a child a way to garner attention and stand out from peers and siblings (Goetzel & Hansen, 2004). Families of children with disabilities may also commit to even higher levels of support.

Characteristics of families, such as generational history and stability, can affect the degree to which families are able and willing to recognize and support the talents of their children. In turn, characteristics of children influence expectations, parenting, and allocation of family resources for talent development.

## Communication of Values

Parents communicate beliefs and values that can differentially affect outcomes, such as high academic achievement or creativity (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008). These may include the value of hard work, persistence, and high achievement; the importance and value of traditional educational paths; beliefs about self-efficacy, destiny, and control over events; beliefs about the importance of money, status, and social standing in defining success and happiness; the importance of being involved in one's community, staying connected, and sharing talents through community contributions; and the importance of active-recreational pursuits and a well-balanced life (Barni, Ranieri, Scabini, & Rosnati, 2011; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Fuligni, 1997)

Parents implicitly convey their beliefs and values through actions, such as providing access to educational resources in the home, bringing children's interests to the center of family activities, encouraging and facilitating participation in outside-of-school activities, selecting special schools, providing direct teaching, helping with homework, providing cultural enrichment activities, and modeling resiliency and persistence (Witte, Kiewra, Kasson, & Perry, 2015). Consonance between verbally expressed values and parental actions is optimal for high achievement, especially critical to the recognition and development of gifted children with special needs (Speirs Neumeister, Yssel, & Burney, 2013). In contrast, inconsistency between espoused and enacted values can contribute to underachievement among low-income, minority students with high potential (Sampson, 2002), and children of well-educated parents (Rimm, 2008; Siegle, 2013).

The literature on families of intellectually gifted children is consistent in finding that their homes tend to be child-centered (Bloom, 1985; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008) and characterized by an authoritative parenting style (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016). This is a relatively robust finding across multiple studies and with culturally diverse samples of intellectually gifted children in the United States (Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000; Hébert, 2000; Sampson, 2002) and outside of the United States (Chan, 2005; Dwairy, 2004). Authoritative parenting is nurturing of children,

but it is also demanding, characterized by the use of reasoning and open communication, high expectations for achievement, and consistent and fair discipline. Research indicates that among gifted children, authoritative parenting is correlated with higher cognitive ability as measured by IQ scores (Rudasill, Adelson, Callahan, Houlihan, & Keizer, 2013), and higher levels of social competency (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius, Lee, & Thomson, 2014). Authoritative parenting is also associated with a healthier form of perfectionism—specifically, mastery or self-oriented perfectionism (as opposed to other-oriented perfectionism; Neumeister, 2004).

Family cohesion that incorporates close and harmonious relationships among members and strong identification between parents and children (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008, 2016) has also been found to be a consistent characteristic of families with high academic achievers and intellectually gifted children. Research also reports that families of intellectually gifted children are adaptable (i.e., they are able to adjust to unexpected or stressful circumstances; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2014). Children whose families are characterized with higher levels of cohesion and adaptability have better social and emotional adjustment and higher levels of social skills (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2014). Higher family cohesion and adaptability are also associated with the use of more productive strategies for coping with giftedness including seeking social support from others and applying problem solving strategies to social situations (Callahan et al., 2004).

Some research has found that families of intellectually gifted children can have very high levels of cohesion, which is generally considered to be maladaptive for optimal child development, although these higher levels were not found to be problematic for gifted adolescents who may need to depend more and longer on their families for support of their high aspirations and achievement activities (Taylor, 1998). Similarly, families of intellectually gifted children were found to have more rules and consequences and a higher level of organization than the norm but this was counterbalanced with flexibility and adaptability as needed (Olszewski-Kubilius

et al., 2014), suggesting that families may establish more rules and impose greater organization as a way of managing and supporting family members' involvement in multiple extracurricular, talent development activities.

Balance appears to be an important theme within the families of gifted and talented adolescents. Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) characterized families that can support their talented children in domains such as music and mathematics as *complex*, which the authors defined as having a balance of *integration*, or close bonds and connections between family members (i.e., cohesion), and *differentiation*, or the expectation that each family member will develop unique talents and seek out challenging talent development opportunities. These two forces (one connecting family members and the other pushing them toward individual paths) depicted families whose children persisted in pursuing their talent areas during the adolescent years.

Regarding other aspects of parenting style, research suggests that some specific patterns of parental-child interaction, especially with young children, can foster early motivational patterns that are conducive to talent development (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016). For example, in their prospective study, A. E. Gottfried and Gottfried (2004) found that parents of high IQ children tended to use strategies that were task intrinsic (i.e., cultivating curiosity, inquisitiveness, and task engagement) rather than task extrinsic (i.e., external rewards and punishments), which were associated with higher levels of achievement motivation. Similarly, parents of intellectually gifted children, who ranged in age from 4 to 17, were found to use what the authors characterized as *autonomy supportive motivational practices*, which consisted of supporting and capitalizing on their children's interests to engage them productively, rather than using controlling strategies such as rewards and punishments (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2010).

There is also research evidence (Albert, 1980; Mackinnon, 1965; Roe, 1953) that various socialization styles and family communication and interaction patterns differentially reinforce the development of creativity versus high academic achievement. Families of high academic achievers

are characterized as having harmonious family relationships (e.g., cohesive and child-centered) with parents who socialize their children to conform to societal rules and expectations, and encourage them to pursue traditional educational and career paths. In contrast, the family relationships of adult creative producers were characterized as tense, yet secure, with sometimes distant or competitive relationships between parent(s) and child. Families of creative individuals were inclined to allow greater freedom to their children, supervised them less closely, placed less emphasis on teaching societal conventions, were less demanding of conformity to parental values, and allowed for greater expression of independent ideas and unique paths. Researchers hypothesize that family dynamics that include looser parent-child bonds, weaker parent-child identification, and less conventional socialization cultivate an earlier psychological maturity and independence in children (see Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008 for a fuller discussion), thereby potentially fueling the development of a creative mindset.

To better understand how various family dynamics affect children, family attributes and parenting style have been studied in families of underachieving gifted students and highly creative adults. Not surprisingly, these families are frequently characterized as chaotic and dysfunctional (Hébert, 2001; Peterson, 2001; Siegle, 2013) with parenting that can be either neglectful (Peterson, 2001), overly strict or lenient, or inconsistent (Hébert, 2001; Rimm, 2008; Siegle, 2013). Alternatively, such family dynamics have produced individuals highly motivated to achieve to negate low family expectations or perceptions of their talent (Ochse, 1993; Piirto, 2004). Taken together, the research on families of achieving, underachieving, and creative individuals suggests that the influence of parenting style is complex and interacts with other variables to affect child outcomes.

There is some limited research regarding the values and beliefs of families of gifted and talented individuals (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008): (a) parents of eminent musicians, artists, scientists, and athletes emphasized winning, success, persistence, excellence, and being productive (Bloom, 1985); (b) families of creative architects encouraged

cultural and intellectual pursuits and emphasized success, ambition, diligence, and development of one's talents (Mackinnon, 1965); and (c) parents of artistically talented Singaporean students stressed the importance of respect, hard work, and discipline (Garces-Bacsal, 2013). Research has also found that parents of intellectually gifted children encouraged independent work in the talent area; assisted with homework; limited television viewing; advocated for appropriate school services; sought outside-of-school programs; assisted children with the organization and completion of larger, more complex assignments; and provided supplies and additional learning materials at home (Albert, 1978, 1980; Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Garces-Bacsal, 2013; Garn et al., 2010; Getzels & Jackson, 1962; A. W. Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst, & Guerin, 1994; Lee-Corbin & Denicolo, 1998; Mackinnon, 1965; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 1989; Wu, 2008).

For most of the previous research, there is little diversity within the samples. Sampson (2002) studied African American children who were high achievers and found that parents stressed the importance of education and structured family life around study and school activities, encouraged participation in extracurricular activities, communicated to their students that they were in control of their own destinies, and articulated a hopeful and optimistic view of the future. In contrast, a disconnect between verbally expressed values that stress education and supportive actions (e.g., making a quiet space for homework) on the part of parents was found to characterize the families of lower achieving African American students (Sampson, 2002).

#### **RELEVANT THEORY AND PRINCIPLES: HOW FAMILY DYNAMICS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

Many prominent researchers who study talent development agree that characteristics of the individual (e.g., dispositions, beliefs, values, and especially motivation) are the most important components of adult creative achievement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985; Ochse, 1993; Winner, 1996), and contribute to adult creative achievement even more than

ability. "The unifying similarity among geniuses and innovators is not cognitive or affective but motivational. What is common among them is the unwillingness or inability to strive for goals everyone else accepts—their refusal to live by a presented life theme" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985, p. 114).

How do circumstances within the family interact with individual proclivities to produce the motivational patterns and dispositions necessary for high levels of achievement and creativity? The research literature provides some clues as to the family dynamics that may contribute to the development of important characteristics of successful, creatively productive adults, including an ability to spend significant time in self-guided, talent developing practice and study; a preference for unconventionality and independent thinking; coping skills for stress, anxiety, and high levels of intellectual tension; and a tendency to express and resolve emotional issues and find personal meaning through creative work in a chosen domain. It is probable that these family dynamics differ across families from different socioeconomic backgrounds and the lack of opportunities because of parental stress or low SES may lead to discrepancies in later achievement outcomes.

#### **Ability to Spend Time Alone in Self-Guided Talent Development Practice and Study**

Successful, high achieving adults have spent untold amounts of time acquiring the content knowledge and methods needed for high levels of expertise in their talent fields; some say this involves approximately 10,000 hours of study or practice (Ericsson, Nandagopal, & Roring, 2005), with the number of hours required inversely related to ability level in the domain (Hambrick et al., 2014). Supportive, cohesive families enable children to expend their physical and psychic energy on deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 2005) and study (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Parents assist by helping children identify their talents and interests; finding teachers or coaches that provide the right level of support and challenge, so as to build and sustain motivation; encouraging and supervising practice; facilitating study and talent development activities at home and outside of school; providing

emotional support when interest wanes or setbacks occur; and coordinating time and logistics so that children can focus on learning and striving for long term goals.

Families that set high expectations for individual achievement, engineer environments to support study and practice, and model productive use of time produce children who are more likely to seek to continuously challenge themselves to reach higher levels of competence in their talent field (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Witte et al., 2015): “Complex family environments breed complex, autotelic personalities—in other words, individuals who habitually react to a boring situation by seeking stimulation and challenge and to an anxiety-producing one by increasing skills” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993, p. 159). With development, individuals must increasingly manage their own talent development and learn autonomously, which includes goal setting, deliberate practice, strategies to stimulate creative thinking and incubate and percolate ideas, balancing intense periods of work with rest, and managing anxiety and stress (Neihart, 2016; Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005).

Research suggests that being able to spend time alone productively is critical to talent development and can be a major challenge, particularly gifted adolescent students (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993) and gifted students from poverty, who may not have time or physical space to be alone, or the resources to engage in practice, study, or self-determined projects. Retrospective studies of creative producers reveal that self or other imposed solitary time (e.g., from poverty, marginalization, rejection, physical handicaps, controlling and restrictive parents) was used to the benefit of their talent development for wide-ranging, voracious reading, writing, tinkering, or practice (see Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008 for more discussion). Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) found that teens who stayed invested in their talent domains throughout high school managed to spend time alone engaging in study or practice while keeping connected to friends (e.g., talking on the phone, engaging in social media, texting). Kerr and McKay (2014) found that a “habit of solitude” (p. 98) was characteristic of eminent women.

## Coping Skills

Another characteristic of adult creative producers is an ability to deal with, and a preference for, situations that are complex, ambiguous, and anxiety or tension producing, which researchers have variously described as *discordance* (Feldman, 1994), *asynchrony* (Gardner, 1994), *marginality* (Gardner, 1994; Simonton, 1994), or *risk taking* (Gardner, 1994; Simonton, 1992). Gardner (1994) further suggested that creative people prefer to live at a high level of tension and will find ways to increase the level of asynchrony in their lives. Are their conditions within families or parenting that enable children to develop a high tolerance for tension, intellectual or otherwise, a preference for intellectual risk taking, and an ability to manage stress?

Creative productivity in adulthood can involve a variety of stresses for multiple and varied reasons: marginality of the talented person as a result of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or field of work; operating on the edges of one’s competency level (Neihart, 2008) or the fringes of one’s field; working within highly competitive situations (Bronson & Merryman, 2013); putting forward novel work for analysis and critique by recognized experts in a field; and working on important but extremely complex problems (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, there is some research from retrospective studies to suggest that children who experience tension-filled childhoods because of high parental expectations, poverty, parental loss, family discord, or other circumstances may develop coping skills at an early age, possibly making them better suited for the stresses they encounter on the road toward eminent careers (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008). Of course, the type of difficult circumstances matters, but these findings suggest that acquiring coping skills to deal with challenge and stress may give individuals an edge over others in terms of navigating the inevitable demands of a path toward very high levels of expertise and creative productivity in the future. Other researchers (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Therivel, 1999a, 1999b) asserted that a balance of support and challenge, or supports that serve to offset or compensate for negative environmental circumstances

(e.g., a mentor or helpful extended family member) may be optimal in terms of developing attributes such as risk taking and resiliency needed for eminent careers. Supports may not always be obvious or available and individuals may vary in their ability to garner supports (e.g., mentors), accounting for why some individuals from seemingly similar environments succeed, whereas others do not (Rinn & Bishop, 2015). See Table 30.1 for descriptions of optimal and challenging family environments.

### Unconventionality and Independent Thinking

Another characteristic of adult creative producers is the tendency to be unconventional, to reject societal traditions, to feel freer to follow a unique path, and even perhaps, desire to shake up the status quo (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008). As discussed previously, any circumstance that affects parents' abilities or willingness to teach children about society's codes, rules, and traditions (e.g., parental absence or dysfunction, parental choice and beliefs) can facilitate less conventional thinking and greater openness to novel ideas (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000, 2008). Therivel (1999a) explained that in the absence of parental teaching about the routines, traditions, or taboos of society, referred to as *societal scripts* (Therivel, 1999b), a child will create his or her own, which can result in creative insights.

Less conventional socialization by parents can also result in early self-sufficiency and independent action and thought (Albert, 1978), which can assist in resisting negative cultural stereotypes on the basis of race or gender (e.g., nonconformance to feminine

norms or the culture of romance; Kerr & McKay, 2014). Circumstances that loosen affectionate bonds or disrupt the developmental process of parent-child identification can result in a cognitive freeing, setting the stage for early individuation that gives the child greater freedom to choose a unique or unconventional path and adopt an identity different from parents (Albert, 1994; Ochse, 1993; Winner, 1996). In its extreme form, some individuals go beyond unconventionality and desire to disrupt the status quo within a domain (Ochse, 1993; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008).

A family environment that fosters independent thinking and is unconventional in the socialization of children will not necessarily promote creative thinking or achievement unless, as Simonton (1992) noted, "the freedom gained is maximally exploited—the time and energy that would have been spent on learning societal norms can be diverted to the acquisition of creative potential" (p. 286). Additionally, the fostering of freedom of expression and independent thinking within a family is not enough unless that creativity is simultaneously coupled with engagement and opportunities within a domain of interest and intense motivation.

### Finding Personal Meaning and Emotional Release in Talent Development Activities

The tremendous motivation and persistence required for very high levels of achievement frequently have an emotional component, and individuals who are willing to devote countless hours to their craft or domain often do so because they derive personal meaning from it (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008). Some research suggests that childhood

TABLE 30.1

#### Family Functioning and Outstanding Performance

	Optimal family environments	More challenging family environments
Creative/productive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents value performance in a domain.</li> <li>Parents possess domain-specific expertise and contacts.</li> <li>Parents have and expend resources to support talent development.</li> <li>Parents create a supportive home environment that supports individual members on their talent-development journeys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child stumbles on and is enthralled with a domain.</li> <li>Child uses domain to manage or cope with family dysfunction.</li> <li>Child sees domain achievement as a way to escape a difficult environment.</li> <li>Child finds mentors outside the family who provide support in developing talent in a domain.</li> <li>Child responds to downplaying talent or ridicule with added drive and determination.</li> </ul>

traumas provide the grist of a multiplicity of novels, poetry, paintings and other artistic expressions (Piiro, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 1996). Through a chosen creative outlet, the individual finds expression for intense emotions, reworks problems with better outcomes, and obtains comfort. An individual may also take refuge in practice or in the activities of the domain to avoid or cope with difficult or stressful circumstances in their life, especially if such activities are perceived as safe and manageable, that is, very different from the ones they are experiencing in their lives (Ochse, 1993). Achievement may also be fueled by the desire to gain attention, respect, and acclaim or to compensate for loss or rejection in childhood (Simonton, 1994).

Individuals may pursue a career or line of work as a way of coping with a significant childhood trauma or event. The traumatic event is reinterpreted by parents or others as a broader, existential problem that the child then chooses as his life work, a process referred to as transformational coping (Csikszentmihalyi & Beatti, 1979). Rhodes (1997) distinguished between D-creativity, which arises from deficiencies in acceptance, love, and respect, and B-creativity, which results from intrinsic motivation. D-creativity may be the initial stimulus for creative activity but can transform into B-creativity, particularly as emotional needs are met, healing occurs, and “control of the environment and the symbol systems used for expression” (p. 253) within the talent area are acquired. Therivel (1999a) concurred that “great challenges” within the talented individual’s environment can be counter balanced with “great assistances” (p. 99). Kerr and McKay (2014) used the terms, passion and falling in love with an idea, to characterize the personal, emotional investment that eminent producers have for their work.

Achievement, particularly creative achievements, can serve as an important outlet for expressing and soothing emotions. Additionally, finding personal meaning in one’s work cultivates the intense motivation needed for significant future contributions to the domain. Whether this is psychologically healthy for individuals or beneficial in terms of their talent development depends on several factors, including aspects of the individual’s personality and environmental circumstances.

## RESEARCH REVIEW

### A Conceptual Framework for Talent Development Within the Family

Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell (2011) proposed a model of talent development designed to apply across all domains including performance-oriented domains (e.g., singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, athletes) and production-oriented domains (e.g., composers, choreographers, writers, scholars). The model includes several fundamental principles: domains of talent have unique trajectories; regardless of domain, giftedness moves from potential, in its earliest stage, to competency and expertise, and it culminates in eminence; and progress through stages is a result of appropriate talent development opportunities inside and outside of school and the acquisition of key psychosocial skills.

### Parenting That Supports Talent Development

Exhibit 30.1 lists parental actions and roles that support the fruition of talent and gifted ability from a developmental perspective. It illustrates that some parental roles are continuous throughout a child’s development (e.g., emotional support), and others (e.g., proactively providing talent development activities and resources) change significantly in nature over time.

**Transforming potential into competency.** In the early stages of talent development, it is important that parents provide opportunities for children to participate in a variety of different domains through home activities, family excursions, and enrichment programs that focus primarily on exposure and playful engagement. Parents need to be keen observers to discern interests and fuel them with additional opportunities, while also allowing young children to dabble. Parents can act as catalysts of interests by teaching “on the fly,” by facilitating access to enrichment opportunities, and by encouraging their child’s independent pursuit of interests, which foster the development of sustained attention, self-efficacy, and task persistence, and are critical for future stages of talent development. Parents set the stage for important attitudes toward effort with appropriate types of praise and feedback to children, and by relying on

### Exhibit 30.1

#### The Family's Role in Transforming Potential Into Creative Productivity

##### **Transforming potential into competency**

- Parents provide initial exposure to varied talent areas (e.g., sports, music, art, mathematics, etc.) in playful, enjoyable ways—initially very nonjudgmental—as part of family activities and family life.
- Parents seek out opportunities through museums, family excursions, and community programs to provide enrichment and exposure to various fields, and capitalize on demonstrated interests.
- Parents observe and support sustained interest and motivation.
- Parents use task intrinsic (enjoyment, curiosity, engagement) versus task extrinsic (rewards, punishments, incentives) motivational strategies where possible and appropriate.
- Parents monitor verbal responses to children, emphasizing role of effort to cultivate a growth mindset.
- Parents seek teachers that initially emphasize enjoyment of talent area.

##### **Transforming competency into expertise**

- Parents provide children with teachers who can further develop competencies and technical skills.
- Parents supervise on lessons and practice, connect with teachers and coaches, and provide the link between children and teachers.
- Parents coach children through setbacks that might thwart progress in a talent field and provide emotional support through difficult times.
- Parents construct children's social network to support talent development—they connect children with other peers with similar interests via play dates, social opportunities, and special programs, and actively manage and construct peer relationships.
- Parents augment their own social network with others involved in a talent field to get information on best teachers, related opportunities, etc.
- Parents seek input of teachers regarding children's progress and development, access further services for child such as additional testing/assessment, acceleration, and enrichment.
- Parents allow children to continue to “dabble” to some extent, sampling different domains and activities, to define and coalesce interests and motivation.
- Parents monitor stress level of children to cultivate coping strategies that retain focus on talent development activities.
- Parents play a role in arranging children's schedule (e.g., school, practice, other activities) to allow enough time for talent development, yet provide a blend that promotes mental health.
- Parents judiciously arrange family life to support talented children and their talent development activities.
- Parents alter school schedule to focus on talent area if necessary and advocate for children.
- Parents, through their own work, demonstrate a love of learning, how to cope with obstacles and setbacks, persistence and motivation.
- Parents secure outside of school programs, contests, competitions, etc. that are additional opportunities for talent development.
- Parents reinforce children's emerging identity in a talent field.

##### **Transforming expertise into scholarly productivity or artistry**

- Parents enjoy children's success.
- Parents continue to support children emotionally, especially through difficult times, setback, transitions.
- Parents support young professionals whose paths require internships or unpaid work to garner and access such opportunities and may assist with financial resources, if possible.

task intrinsic motivational strategies versus rewards, punishments, and incentives. Schools and communities can also play an important role in providing early talent development enrichment opportunities and identification for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

**Transforming competency into expertise.** The movement from competency to expertise requires increasing commitment to deliberate learning,

study, and practice in the talent area. Parents play an important role in garnering appropriate activities or opportunities within and outside of school activities, including teachers, coaches, and mentors matched to the child's interests and talent area. Parents' coordinate home and school logistics to enable their child to focus time and psychological energy on the talent domain. Parents can assist with verbal messages that emphasize improvement and learning and foster openness to new ways to approach problems

rather than relying exclusively on successful strategies, thereby cultivating a growth mindset that includes a belief that intelligence is malleable and can increase with effort (Dweck, 2006).

At this stage, children respond to and need extrinsic rewards (e.g., grades, awards, accolades for performances) and intrinsic rewards (e.g., self-efficacy and self-confidence due to growing competence), but it is important that parents promote a balance so that practice and study are not entirely driven by parental demand or external affirmation (Olszewski-Kubilius, Subotnik, & Worrell, 2015). Parents can also assist in increasing motivation and persistence, and by forming a “scholar identity” by facilitating access to additional, similarly talented and interested peers, as well as professionals working in the talent domains; this is often accomplished through involvement in outside-of-school talent development activities (weekend and summer programs, competitions, etc.). The development of a supportive social network of other similarly talented and interested peers and supportive adults can be initially orchestrated by parents, with responsibility assumed by the child over time.

It is critical that students learn to embrace challenge and confront, and resolve fears about competition, bolstered by confidence and equipped with a toolbox of varied learning and coping strategies. An essential tool is grit, or a long-term commitment to future goals (e.g., becoming a physician or psychologist) coupled with the day-to-day tenacity to meet immediate, shorter-term goals that build to longer term goals (e.g., completing AP classes; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012). Parents can help students understand how more immediate objectives and hurdles (e.g., AP classes) relate to longer term goals. Throughout children’s lives, parents (and teachers) act as emotional coaches, helping children acquire attitudes and beliefs (e.g., about effort, locus of control) that support achievement and coping strategies that enable them to rebound from perceived failures and setbacks. Schools and community organizations need to recognize their role in providing outside-of-school learning opportunities, including mentoring by adult professionals for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

**Transforming expertise into eminence.** At this stage of talent development, parents’ role as mediator or provider of talent development activities is greatly diminished. Parents and family members continue to provide emotional support and guidance as young adults make decisions about careers, marriage, children, etc. Depending on the talent field, parents may continue to provide financial support as young adults pursue internships or residencies.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Families of all children, including those you are gifted and talented, are highly varied. Optimal family environments include parents who value a domain and can assist, at least initially, in early talent development via their own expertise and contacts. In addition, families that have social and material resources can help children access and participate in special schools and outside of school opportunities. Society has a responsibility to ensure that these opportunities are available to children from all socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds who possess the interest and motivation to study, practice, and train.

Although the research suggests the nature of optimal family supports for talent development, there are many individuals who achieve at high levels without them, or even despite negative family environments. This fact points to the many varied paths that lead to adult achievement and creative productivity. It also indicates the enormous complexity regarding how values, mindsets, beliefs and, most important, motivations are formed within varied family contexts. More research is needed to elucidate these relationships, with a focus on the family as a complex system composed of individuals with varied temperaments and personalities, each experiencing and being shaped by the family context in their own unique way. Additionally, a more nuanced framework for understanding outcomes in adulthood, including achievement in a domain but also mental health and life satisfaction, is needed to understand how the family variables and patterns are connected to various aspects of adult life.

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