

***“If you talk, you are just talking.
If I talk, is that bragging?”***

**PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTS WITH YOUNG
GIFTED CHILDREN
IN NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree

of Master of Education

in the University of Canterbury

by

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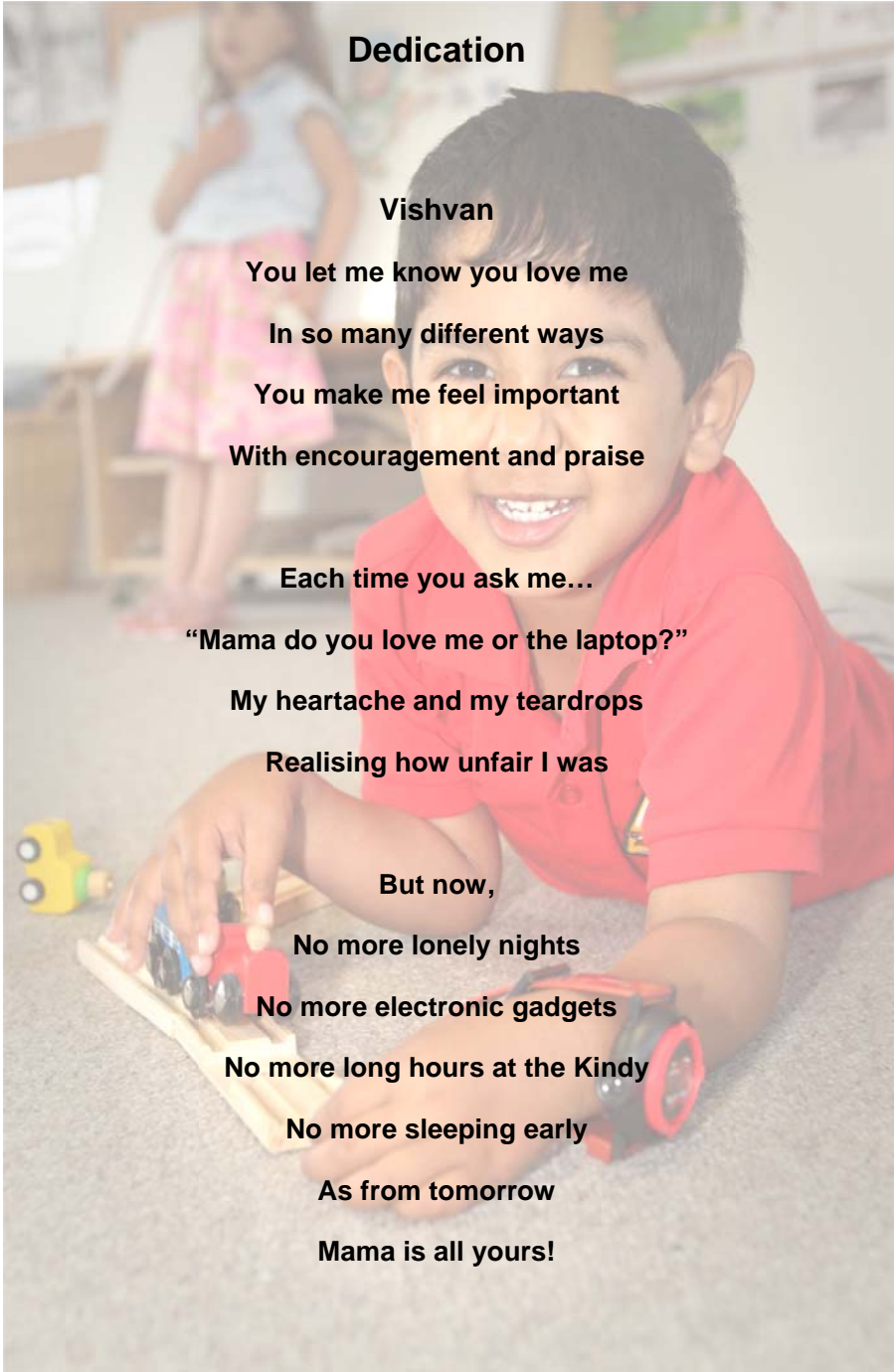
2012

Table of Contents

Dedication	iv
Acknowledgement	vi
Abstract	vii
Glossary	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Context of the study	1
1.1.1. Malaysian Gifted Curriculum (PERMATA PINTAR)	2
1.1.2. Overview of Malaysian Early Childhood Education (PERMATA PINTAR)	2
1.1.3. Who can participate in this camp?	4
1.1.4. Researcher’s Concern	5
1.2. Purpose of the study	5
1.3. Justification of the study	10
1.4. The Research questions	13
1.5. The organization of this thesis	17
1.6. Summary	18
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.0. Introduction	19
2.1. What Giftedness means?	21
2.2. Overview of the previous studies on parenting gifted children	23
2.3. New Zealand Context	28
2.3.1. Gifted Education in New Zealand	30
2.3.2. New Zealand research on families of gifted children	32
2.4. International Literature on families of gifted children	38
2.4.1. Cognitive characteristics of gifted children	39
2.4.2. Social and emotional issues of gifted children	42
2.4.3. Understanding of gifted children behaviour	44
2.4.4. Gifted labeling	46
2.5. Parents’ concerns with parenting gifted children	48
2.5.1. Parents’ beliefs and practices	52
2.6. Education	56
2.6.1. Teachers’ and Parents’ Perspectives	60
2.6.2. Parents’ Expectations of Teachers and School	65
2.7. Parents Internal and External Barriers	69
2.8. Conclusions	72
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	74
3.0. Introduction	74
3.1. Current Research Paradigm	76
3.1.1. Qualitative Research	77
3.1.2. Theoretical Perspectives	78
3.1.3. Rigour in qualitative research	81
3.1.4. Research Design	86
3.1.5. Research Method	91

3.2. The Settings	93
3.2.1. Introduction	93
3.2.2. Sample	93
3.3. Data Collection	96
3.3.1. Introduction	96
3.3.2. Methods	96
3.3.3. Semi-structured Interview	97
3.4.3. Document Analysis	102
3.5. Data Analysis	103
3.5.1. Introduction	103
3.5.2. Overview of data analysis	103
3.5.3. Analysis Process	104
3.5.4. Document Analysis	109
3.6 Ethical considerations	110
3.6.1 Introduction	110
3.6.2. Explaining the purpose of the research	110
3.6.3. Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality	112
3.7. Methodological Limitations	112
3.8. Summary	113
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOVERY OF GIFTEDNESS.....	115
4.0. Introduction.....	115
4.1. Introduction of families of the gifted children	116
4.1.1 Janet and Edward	117
4.1.2 Kate and Lou.....	117
4.1.3 Sandy and Roger.....	118
4.1.4 Lily and Gary.....	118
4.2 Parents' concern before and after the discovery of giftedness.....	119
4.2.1 Introduction	119
4.2.2 Dilemma before the discovery- Parents' perspectives	119
4.2.3 After the Discovery- "Should I get excited, or worried?"	128
4.2.3.1 Introduction.....	128
4.2.3.2 Parents' real life experience	128
4.3 Outcomes after discovery.....	131
4.3.1 Introduction	131
4.3.2 Excited and Relieved	131
4.3.3 Confusion	133
4.3.4 Frustration, Fear and Anxiety	134
4.4 Summary	136
CHAPTER FIVE: THE JOURNEY OF PARENTING A YOUNG INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILD.....	137
5.1 Introduction.....	137
5.1.1 My child is gifted	138
5.1.2 Commonality: Providing support for the gifted	140
5.1.3 My Child is not gifted one day, but every day	145
5.1.4 Parents' perspectives towards child's learning.....	146
5.1.5 Parents' perspectives towards their own learning	150

5.1.6	Parents' perspectives as an advocate	152
5.2	Living with gifted	153
5.2.1	Introduction	153
5.2.2	Challenges in parenting gifted children	154
5.2.3	Managing Challenges	168
5.3	Summary	171
5.4	Rules and boundaries.....	172
5.5	Being a successful parent.....	176
5.5.1	Understanding gifted and self-discovery	176
5.5.2	Supportive and Responsive	178
5.5.3	Guidance and Discipline	179
5.6	Summary	181
	CHAPTER SIX: PARENTS' GREATEST JOY; GREATEST PAIN	184
6.1	Introduction.....	184
6.2	Surviving within the society	186
6.2.1	Introduction	186
6.2.2	Parents' Distressful moments	186
6.3	Gifted family support	188
6.3.1	Introduction	188
6.3.2	Parents' perspectives on family support	189
6.3.3	Parents' perspectives on friends' support	191
6.3.4	Parents' perspectives on education support.....	193
6.4	Parents' Expectation	204
6.4.1	Introduction	204
6.4.2	Education Context	205
6.4.3	Social Context	211
6.5	Summary	214
	CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	216
7.0	Introduction.....	216
7.1	Researcher's Reflectivity	217
7.2	Key findings	223
7.2.1	Parents' concern with gifted children's intense behaviours	223
7.2.2	Parents' concern with gifted children's educational experiences	228
7.2.3	Parents' concern over misunderstandings by other parents and friends	233
7.3	Limitations and Recommendations.....	237
7.4	Implications of this research	240
7.4.1	Implications for a Malaysian Special Education Support Group	242
7.5	Conclusions.....	244
	References	247
	Appendices.....	259



Dedication

Vishvan

You let me know you love me

In so many different ways

You make me feel important

With encouragement and praise

Each time you ask me...

“Mama do you love me or the laptop?”

My heartache and my teardrops

Realising how unfair I was

But now,

No more lonely nights

No more electronic gadgets

No more long hours at the Kindy

No more sleeping early

As from tomorrow

Mama is all yours!

Dedikasi

Vishvan

**Acapkali kau membisikkan padaku
Tentang tulus kasih dan sayangmu
Kau buatku rasa persis seorang Ratu
Dengan manis pujian dan penghargaan**

Namun...

**Setiap kali kau tanyakan
“Mama, adakah sayangmu padaku atau pada computer ribamu?”**

**Baru ku sedari
Tidak adilnya aku selama ini**

**Mulai ini
Tiada lagi sepinya malammu
Tiada lagi computer ribaku
Tiada lagi kau tertunggu-tunggu di taska menantiku
Tiada lagi awalnya waktu tidurmu
Kerna besok
Aku hanya milikmu**

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and eternal debt to my supervisors, Associate Professor Dr Missy Morton, Senior Lecturer, Jenny Smith and Vicki Needham for their continuous and patient support, guidance, and expert supervision throughout the course of this research study. Their insight, ideas, and knowledge of this subject matter were of great assistance in maintaining the research in its proper perspective

I thank my family so much for their support and advice, especially my mother Madam Janaki Ponnar. My deepest gratitude goes to you too Raj for your countless financial support. Thank you so much.

I am lost for words when trying to find a way to thank my siblings for their support, for how can a person repay people for their support, and for their unselfish love and encouragement. Sheena, Roy, Jeyanthi, Latha, Rajes, and Radha, you were always there to offer countless hours of coming to my aid, assistance, and hope. Not to forget my brothers-in-law and sister-in-law, your support, and love are the most precious things in my life.

Last but not least my utmost gratitude goes to my best friend, and apple of my eye, my one and only son, Vishvan. Through high times and low times, 'kutty' you kept cheering mummy. You have shown me the sun where there were clouds and flowers when there were thorns. You have been a tremendous supporter, with concerns, and prayers from my first day of my study till to my last. Thank you, son for allowing me to make my dream comes true.

To all the people who helped me, especially the Malaysian Scholarship Officers, from the Scholarship Department, thank you so much for offering me this scholarship and giving me the opportunity to further my studies here in this beautiful land, New Zealand. My profound appreciation goes to four generous and kind-hearted parents from

Auckland and Hamilton. Thank you so much for participating in my research.

To Judy William, Louise Tapper, Odile De Comarmond, Abdullah Mohd Nawi, Graeme Ferguson, and Pinelopi Zaka, I am grateful for your intellectual insights and advice. I must not forget College of Education staff members, and librarian, to whom I extend my deepest appreciation. I hope one day I can apply the knowledge and skills that I have gained to help other people, and in so doing, prove worthy of all the love and support that I have received.

Abstract

Investigating parental and family environments is not a new subject, but is a growing interest amongst psychologists, counsellors, and educationists. The purpose of this study has been to provide a rich description of the perspectives and experiences of parents raising gifted and talented children in New Zealand.

Parents who live and care for a child with special talents or abilities face a great number of different stressors compared with parents who have a 'normal' or 'average' child (Clark, 2008; Delisle, 2001; May, 2000). Research suggests that recognizing and dealing with gifted children's advanced intellectual, social, emotional and motor skills which are different from average ability children pose challenges in parenting gifted children (Moon & Hall, 1998; Moon, 2003; Moon, Jurich & Feldhusen, 1998; Silverman & Kearney, 1989).

There has been little research conducted into the experiences of parents with young gifted children in New Zealand. This thesis therefore seeks to find out the parents' views on and their experiences of having young gifted children and understand how and what meaning they construct around living with their children. The purpose of this study therefore has been aimed at listening to the voices of parents whose children are identified as intellectually gifted and also to look at the actual experience of these parents who have the greatest influence in their gifted children's lives.

Using a qualitative phenomenology study, four parents with a young intellectual gifted child were interviewed about their parenting experiences. The perspectives and experiences of these parents have been analyzed from multiple perspectives. In-depth interviewing and analytical memos have provided a rich picture of the experiences and perspectives of these parents with their gifted and talented children. It is

from these insights that some clarity has been gained about the understanding and challenges that these parents faced when raising gifted and talented children, and how they are interpreted by the participants

This thesis explores the participants' understanding of parenting a young intellectually gifted child, discusses similarities to and differences from general parenting, and describes the outcomes of the four parents in this study. It highlights four systematic problems that complicate their parenting: (a) community lack of support (b) education inequalities (c) difficulties in the gifted support service, and (d) social stigma. This thesis also draws attention to the need for counsellors, psychologists, and expertise in gifted education to address the issues and get an understanding of the challenges that the parents of the gifted children are faced with when they are parenting a child with special needs.

Glossary

Parents

- Describes the biological parents of the gifted and talented young children.

Young children

- Describes children in the early stage of development. Generally, refers to infants aged 0-1, toddlers aged 1-3, juniors aged 4-8.

Gifted

- This term refers to spontaneous untrained abilities that place the individual in the top 10% of same-age peers in that particular domain. Through a developmental process of formal and informal learning, these abilities or gifts may be transformed into talents or achievement (Gagné, 2004).

Talented

- The outstanding potential. Talented individuals are those who show outstanding achievement in the various domains such as academic subjects or individual sports. (Gagné, 2004).

Experiences

- The amount of experiences parents have with their gifted and talented children over the duration of their relationship. This could include the usual parenting experiences of their daily routines with their children, and parents' awareness of their children's academic progress, talent development, and advocacy.

Perspectives

- A particular way parents consider the knowledge they gained in their usual parenting experiences having young intellectually gifted children. It includes parents' acknowledging the educational support for the children's talent development and academic achievement, parents' views on the emotional intensity and sensitivity of their young gifted children and parents' view on the social support services for families of gifted children.

Services

- Can be health care services, social care services (counselling, financial benefits, allowance), education services (head teacher, classroom support, special education needs co-coordinators, educational psychologists), and multi-agency services (parent partnership officers, child development centre, early childhood centres, Mensa, gifted associations)

Support

- Policy (government, policy makers, schools, teachers,), institutions (workshops, seminars, teacher-parent partnership), family (husband, wife, relations, offspring), community (neighbours, gifted associations, childcare)

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

As I am a Malaysian teacher with an interest in providing support to Malaysian parents and their gifted children, I am interested in investigating the issues on parenting a gifted child in other countries. Because New Zealand is well known for its early childhood education I decided to carry out my research in parenting young and intellectually gifted children in New Zealand. Along with my findings and research experience, I hope to establish appropriate support for Malaysian parents with gifted children when I return.

1.1 Context of the study

Research specific to gifted education in Malaysia is noticeably scarce. Little quantitative and virtually no qualitative research with or about parents of gifted children is currently available in Malaysia. What research there is more on the social and emotional aspects of gifted adult students. However, these studies do not document the parents' understanding of giftedness, challenges, opportunities, perspectives, or experiences that are associated with giftedness. In fact, it can be

presumed that published literature on parents' views on giftedness is virtually non-existent in Malaysia.

1.1.1 Malaysian Gifted Curriculum (PERMATA PINTAR)

The Permata Pintar project is a program for gifted and talented children established in Malaysia. The project was established to cultivate good thinking skills amongst a selected group of students in Malaysia. The Permata Pintar project is the work of one of the top public universities in Malaysia, namely the National University of Malaysia or *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM) and the co-founder was the Nation's first lady, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. The project is tutored by The Center for Talented Youth at John Hopkins University, United States.

1.1.2 Overview of Malaysian Early Childhood Education (PERMATA PINTAR)

In March 2007 Permata Negara patron, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, established the Permata project to develop Malaysia's human capital, building up a network that now comprises some 600 Permata Negara centres for early childhood education. In 2009, the Permata

Programme was expanded to include three strands of gifted and talented education:

- Permata Pintar for academically gifted children
- Permata Seni for those with talent in the performing arts and
- Permata Insan for those with 'spiritual ability'.

Permata Pintar was launched in March 2009 as a partnership between the Government, higher education, and relevant Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). A National Residential Camp for 405 gifted learners aged 9 to 15 took place in December 2009. The participants were selected through an IQ (Intelligence Quotient) test.

The camp was set up by the Permata Division in the Prime Minister's Office and the National University of Malaysia (UKM), with support from the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at John Hopkins University in the United States. Eight university lecturers were trained by CTY to deliver courses in subjects such as mathematical reasoning, biotechnology, and cryptology. Selected students chose two areas of study from three broad categories, science, mathematics, and

creative writing. They also took part in outdoor, sporting, and artistic activities.

It can be observed that, the Malaysian national education policy has classes for normal children, and a special class for children with impaired vision, impaired hearing, and, children suffering from autism, and Down syndrome where all aspects of impairment and weaknesses are taken into account. Initially, the Central Government forgot about the children with extraordinary intelligence.

Extraordinary intelligence refers how much in advance the child can think beyond his or her chronological age, and the speed of learning. By having these projects and various programmes, the Education Ministry hopes to bring about a significant change for the better in the development of Malaysian children in the future.

1.1.3 Who can participate in this camp?

Participants aged 9 to 15 years old can take the test to get a place in the camp. There is no written information for young gifted children aged three to eight to be involved in this project.

1.1.4 Researcher's Concern

I am convinced that such programmes can produce a knowledgeable society. However, I am concerned about the children aged under eight years. If nine-year-olds can take the test, it would be great if the opportunity were also given to those young ones who are still at the preschool stage. I also believe that there are parents in Malaysia who have had a bright child in the early stages, but they were not exposed to the programme. As the gifted camp was located in the urban area, there is the possibility that the children from rural areas and their families were overlooked. Also there may have been other barriers such as language, transportation, or lack of informative messages regarding this programme for the gifted that could prevent the child from taking part in the programme.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of parents of young intellectually gifted children in order to gain a broader understanding of the parenting journey and complexities throughout the journey. Increasing our knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon serves to provide useful

information for educators, policy makers, parents, and family as well as identifying topics for further research. This thesis is based on the data gathered in the Hamilton and Auckland regions of New Zealand.

I had my first experience of understanding giftedness when I did my degree course in one of the local Malaysian universities. Owing to the shortage of courses at that time, I was left with a limited choice of courses for my final year and I chose Giftedness in Education. The reading modules and lecture notes, together with my own research and understanding about gifted education, were the first stepping stone for me to want to know more about the world of gifted children. From the literature studies, I became very interested in this field.

I wanted to know what parenting was like for those who have gifted children. The reason I chose parents was due to my own personal interest. As a mother of a typical young toddler, at times I have experienced challenging and joyful moments in my own parenting. As a single parent my parenting journey was very lonely and although having my son with me was all I wished and prayed for, at times parenting him alone was very exhausting and stressful. I began to

read many parenting books and I learnt that parenting any child can be stressful for first time parents. Furthermore, parenting a child who needs special care or special needs adds another burden for the parents. Therefore, having to raise a preschooler on my own, I was very curious to find out about parenting young gifted children.

I was then offered the chance to do my Masters in Education at the College of Education in the University of Canterbury New Zealand, an opportunity that has helped me to further my understanding and knowledge of gifted education. Although I was keen to find out the lived experiences of these parents, I was confronted by gaps in my own knowledge so I sought to increase my formal knowledge by taking up a thirty point course subject in gifted education.

My readings for the assignments, especially the literature review, helped to increase my formal knowledge. To increase my practical knowledge, I began to communicate with my lecturer. She was an experienced person working with parents who have gifted children, and she also has gifted children of her own. I approached the literature with the same mindset that I had when I took up the thirty

point course, and parents were at the forefront of my thinking. Therefore, I was curious about the experiences of the parents with a young intellectually gifted child.

What was parenting like for them? How did they perceive their outcomes of parenting a young intellectual gifted child? From their point of view, how did they perceive the support they received? What kinds of support did they require from the society and community in which they lived? I quickly learned that compared to the wealth of general gifted education research, there was a relative lack of research involving parents with young intellectually gifted children, and research which explores parenting from the view points of these parents was extremely rare either in Malaysia or New Zealand.

The next hurdle I encountered was the gap between research and practice. I found articles about parenting interventions, parenting strategies, helping parents in parenting and outcomes for parents with gifted children, but struggled to incorporate the findings into my study. Many of the articles seemed to have the aim of validating interventions, gifted parents involvement in their child's talent

development, or gifted programmes rather than offering viewpoints of parents' lived experiences with their gifted preschooler (May, 2000; Moraswska & Sanders, 2009; Schader, 2008).

I searched the literature hunting for articles with direct application to my work with parents with young intellectually gifted children. The more literature I read, the more gaps I noticed. I also noticed that many assumptions were made about parents with young intellectually gifted children, even though their voices were noticeably absent in the gifted parenting literature. Assumptions were made regarding the nature of parenting. When investigating the ways of parenting, assumptions were also made regarding children with special needs and the impact on the parenting support.

Webb, Gore, Amend, and DeVries (2007) pointed out that educators often assumed that gifted children do not need any special help because “they are so bright, they can surely develop their abilities on their own” (p.17). The true challenges in academic, social, and emotional areas are overlooked and misunderstood by them. This assumption can complicate the parents' lives when they try to seek

educational support, for example acceleration and programmes for gifted children (Webb et al., 2007). This made me investigate the issue further as I grew concerned about how these gaps and assumptions were impacting on parenting support.

As suggested by Moraswka and Sanders (2009) I used the literature gap as a starting point for my research. The basis of this thesis was my desire as an educator and a parent, to learn about the lived experience of parents' upbringing of their young intellectually gifted children and how exciting and/or challenging life was for these parents. Also, my desire was to find out if parents of the gifted children require support in their parenting, and if they do, what kinds of support they required.

1.3 Justification of the study

One of the most significant current discussions in gifted education is about factors that influence educating a gifted child. In gifted education, parents play key roles in nurturing their children, especially young gifted and talented children. Parents are often seen as their teachers (Harrison, 1999; Porter, 1999; Plucker & Callahan, 2008).

They provide intellectual stimulation for gifted children at home by engaging and planning activities that can help to develop the child's cognitive growth (Christian & Snowden, 1999; Silverman, 2000c).

Gross (2003) and Silverman (2000a) pointed out that supportive parents are essential for every gifted child because if they do not find acceptance outside the home parents could be the alternative source of their needs and demands (McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004; Gross, 1993; Harrison, 1999; Porter, 1999; Tannenbaum, 2003). To identify and nurture the talent of a child who is gifted, the first step is acknowledging his/her educational needs (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Riley & Karnes, 1999; Tannenbaum, 2003,).

Parenting gifted children is different from parenting non-gifted children in a variety of aspects (Adler, 2006; May, 2000). There are many compelling reasons to study the parenting of gifted children. Many parents of gifted children feel that they need to interact with other parents of gifted children where they can share the problems and experiences they have with their gifted children (Harrison, 1999; Porter, 2005).

As I have mentioned earlier, in most educational systems, the emphasis is on the academic needs of the gifted children. However, it is also important to look at the actual experience of the people who have the greatest influence in the gifted child's life. It is clear that gifted children do not grow up alone but in families who influence their development. Therefore, it is important for us to listen to the voice of the parents and investigate their experiences in rearing a gifted child. We must examine whether these parents receive all the kinds of support they need when it comes to parenting a child with a high intellect.

This qualitative study explores the perspectives and experiences of parents with young gifted and talented children in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This study is aimed at listening to the voices of parents whose children are identified as gifted. I investigated the ways we understand parents' perceptions of having young gifted children, their experiences, and challenges in their parenthood, the opportunities, as well as their unmet needs, and also the support that they need from the society and the environment in which they are living. This thesis reports on my study.

1.4 The research questions

The questions of parents' experiences and their perception were prominent in the small body of literature that explores parenting young intellectually gifted children. Considerable discussion surrounds the questions: "How is parenting for parents having to raise a young intellectually gifted child?" and, "Do parents of gifted children require support in their parenting?"

According to Silverman (1998) parents of gifted children often puzzled over how to meet their children's needs. Silverman pointed out that the gifted child has some advocates to support them in their talent development, but unfortunately, their parents are often left alone to deal with their problems and seek psychological services for help in dealing with issues such as the educational system. Several studies also suggested that as much as the gifted children need advocates in their lives, their parents also need advocates to support them in many ways especially in their parenting (Frame & Fornia, 2001; Hertzog & Bennett, 2004; Moraswka & Sanders, 2008; Plucker & Callahan, 2008).

As an educator, my interest in investigating the experiences of parents' of gifted children's and their perception of having a young intellectually gifted child was driven by my desire to be an advocate for these parents. I intended to listen to their lived experience, their excitement and challenges in their parenting journey, and help them send out the message about gifted families to the society at large, as well as addressing the service support that they needed in parenting. Service support could be from psychologists, educators, and society.

It was not sufficient for me to know that "Parenting young intellectually gifted children is filled with intense moments or challenging compared to parenting the non-gifted children" or, "Parenting young intellectually gifted children is full of excitement and joy just like parenting any other children." If parenting young gifted children were challenging, I wanted to know the factors contributing to the challenging moments, where the problems lie and how parents manage those problems. If parenting were very exciting and filled with joy, I wanted to know what factors contribute to the positive parenting, so that I could incorporate those factors into my prior knowledge and educational practice.

Given the numerous gaps in research, I found myself questioning the common assumptions embedded in the questions, “Does parenting a gifted child pose challenges to these parents?” and “Do parents of gifted children need psychological services because of having a bright child?” I have chosen to enter into the research debate that surrounds those questions, but not by seeking a yes or no answer. A basic twofold approach does not do justice to the complexities of either the parenting process or the lives of those with young intellectually gifted children. Instead, I have chosen to question the underlying assumptions.

- What is it like parenting a young intellectually gifted child?
- What factors influence parenting a gifted child, especially the young and intellectually gifted?
- Is parenting a young gifted child different from parenting any other child? If so, what is the difference and what remains the same?
- What kinds of support do the parents of gifted children need in relation to their parenting?

By exploring those questions, I hoped to gather information which would help me to address the overarching question that inspired me to do this research:

- 1) “What are parents’ experiences, perceptions, and understanding of having young intellectually gifted children?”
- 2) “What are parents’ perspectives on the support services for gifted families in New Zealand”?

1.5 The organization of this thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters, a reference list and appendices.

Chapter One provides an introduction to the thesis

Chapter Two reviews existing research involving parents with gifted children, highlighting numerous gaps in the research. This chapter explores the concepts of parenting gifted children and discusses the issues in families of gifted children. The chapter also reviews research exploring the many factors that influence parenting gifted children.

Chapter Three begins by describing my intended purpose in doing this study. Then the nature of qualitative inquiry as well as the characteristics of interviewing are discussed along with how my study was designed and carried out. I then discuss the ethical considerations such as the ethical approval process, the recruitment

process, the consent process, the data collection process, the data analysis process and the data presentation.

Chapter Four describes my findings. This chapter presents the first theme on participants understanding of giftedness and how they view the notion of giftedness here in New Zealand.

Chapter Five explores the question, “What are parents’ perceptions, understanding and experiences of having a young gifted and talented child?” It highlights findings which describe the similarities and some key differences and difficulties in parenting a gifted child.

Chapter Six presents the way participants understand that advocating for the child’s needs has the potential to influence their relationship with their social contexts. This chapter highlights the themes important to each participant and those that are consistent across all four families.

Chapter Seven discusses ways to incorporate these findings into parenting experiences. The chapter begins by discussing the research questions and highlighting implications for parenting intellectually young gifted children. Next the chapter discusses the strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations, invitations and ideas for future research.

The reference list points the reader to the works referred to in this thesis.

The appendices provide the reader with other information relevant to this thesis.

1.6 Summary

In most educational systems, the emphasis is on the academic needs of children. Listening to the perceptions and experiences of parents of gifted children is also important in gifted education. For this research I chose to focus on a family environment to investigate the perceptions and experiences of parents with young gifted and talented children. It is very important to listen to the voices of parents of gifted children, which have been missing from academic literature in Malaysia and less so in New Zealand. A goal of this research was to find out how the parents of gifted children experience the opportunities and challenges of having a gifted child in the family.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Finding information on parents perspectives and experiences in parenting gifted children proved challenging. Although information was plentiful, many articles contained advice, best practices, and suggestions rather than research. Finding specific information about parenting young intellectually gifted children was also difficult, as many parental or family journals tend to focus on parenting strategies or parents' involvement in their child's talent development rather than focusing on the perceptions and lived experiences of families with gifted children especially the young intellectually gifted.

Most information present in this literature review came as a result of submitting several search items through four primary databases, Expanded Academic ASAP, ProQuest, SAGE Premier, and Taylor & Francis. The search phrases included "parenting gifted children," "families of gifted," "young gifted", "counselling gifted" or "gifted and talented." Some of these word combinations were too specific to yield

any results. More successful searches were produced from “counselling,” “parenting”, “young gifted,” “advocacy for gifted”, and “parents’ engagement”.

Most of the empirical research in parenting was documented in professional journals in family counselling, childcare and special subject areas. However, there was still a lack of empirical research on parenting young intellectually gifted children. As a result of this only a small body of research literature focusing on parenting young gifted children has been produced in the study.

Because of the limited extent of research, it was necessary to review the overseas literature that focuses on parenting gifted children in order to establish a base, and to help to identify parents’ concerns and issues in parenting gifted children, especially the young intellectually gifted, for this study. These issues will be seen to revolve around the central issue of the parents’ perspectives and their experiences of having to raise a young intellectually gifted child.

As intimated in Chapter One I decided that these issues are best resolved by interviewing families, asking their viewpoints in parenting

a gifted child and how they went about carrying out their parenting tasks. Significantly, this literature review demonstrates that much of the existing research has been mentioned earlier. In order to place this work in context and establish an understanding of the topic, an overview of the previous studies on parenting gifted children, and issues that concern parents in their parenting is highlighted. As a start, a brief introduction on giftedness is presented along with a well known psychologist's view on parents' involvement in a gifted child's talent development and further issues relating to the present study are discussed.

2.1 What Giftedness means

Giftedness is not a clear cut concept, nor is it easy to determine (Gagné, 2004). Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) clearly indicates the role of parents in talent development. According to Gagné, the terms gifted and talented are often used interchangeably when describing gifted children. The author further explained that gifted and talented are distinct terms.

Gagné (2004) pointed out that giftedness is a natural, intellectual, creative, socioaffective, or sensorimotor ability demonstrated by the

top 10% of a child's age peers. He defines talent as the mastery and demonstrations of skills in a field of ability, again within the top 10% of the population (McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004; Plucker & Callahan, 2008).

Gagné (2004) developed his definition of giftedness in conjunction with his developmental model of giftedness and talent, which describes the process of development of children's innate gifts into talent. Gagné's model includes parents as an important agent in children's lives and in the development of children's gifts. The author identified that not all children who are born with natural abilities develop the gifts. He said gifts are developed into talents through the processes of informal and formal learning.

This learning is affected by two groups of catalysts and by chance. Catalysts are divided into two groups called intrapersonal and environment catalysts. The intrapersonal group contains physical and mental traits, as well as goal management, awareness, motivation, and volition. The environment group consists of surrounding individuals such as parents, family, peers, teachers and mentors as well as provisions for educating gifted children.

Gagné's (2004) model represents parents as an important model that has a direct impact on the gifted developmental process. Parents are clearly seen as having an influence on a gifted child's development through the environment they provide for their family and the way they interact with gifted children. Gagné's model is linked in this study to indicate the role of parents in gifted children's talent development.

2.2 Overview of the previous studies on parenting gifted children

To understand the issues concerning parents of gifted children, two reviews of research literature involving parents of gifted children were conducted by Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) and Keirouz (1990). Despite being thirty year old studies, the issues highlighted in both reviews are still relevant and important in relation to gifted parenting studies. Moraswka and Sanders (2009) stated:

Although there is evidence that gifted children and their parents experience unique challenges, there is a lack of research about the nature and extent of difficulties experienced...there is a lack of empirically supported parenting strategies to help parents in parenting their gifted child (p. 163)

Moraswka and Sanders's (2009) recent studies pointed out the issue that, there is also a lack of empirical research on the experience of parenting a gifted child. Hence, Section 2.2 provides an overview of the literature on difficulties experienced by parents of gifted children from the past thirty years up to the current literature.

Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) conducted the first review. According to the authors, there are a number of literature studies that have focused on the ways that families influence the achievement and talent development of high ability children. In addition, many recommendations were suggested to foster children's positive attitudes towards their learning opportunities either at home or in community environments.

However, the authors found that there was "a lack of experimental research providing specific direction for parental involvement" (p.25). They pointed out that, apparently, there was a great deal of advice provided for parents to aid their child's talent development, but little research, or specific direction to support is highlighted.

Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) found evidence to support the inclusion of parents in the process of identifying gifted children as well as their education and talent development. The authors identified that parents of gifted children were an important component of the identification process because parents could see their children excelling at non-academic behaviours at home. However, they also highlighted that parents seldom knew what to look for as gifted behaviours. The authors suggested that, parents need to be educated about the characteristics of gifted children before they fully participate in the identification process.

Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) further elaborated that despite not knowing the child's gifted characteristics, parents often involve themselves with the children outside of the school setting. It means parents foster positive attitudes towards their child's learning by providing enrichment in the home as well as seeking out other opportunities for talent development in the community.

In summary, Colangelo's and Dettmann's (1983) review found that parents of gifted children were confused about their roles as parents

in the home and school settings. According to the authors, parents need to provide the right kind of environment and educational opportunities to develop their gifted children's talents.

Likewise, Keirouz (1990) conducted the second review of literature based on families of gifted children. The author critically examined problems that parents had identified in the course of their parenting a gifted child. Keirouz's review focussed on the influence of gifted children and other systems on the parents. When examining family roles, Keirouz found that 'gifted' labelling affected the parents, siblings, and gifted children. According to her, parents are either proud that their child is gifted or they deny the label because of the feeling that it may be a burden to raise an exceptional child.

Keirouz (1990) found that parents' self-esteem was affected when they found that their child was labelled as gifted. Parents reported feeling guilty because they did not believe they could meet their gifted child's needs for educational or intellectual stimulation. Then, she found that parents were also confused and concerned about their child's social and emotional development compared to the child's

intellectual development. Parents reported that they were concerned over the child's levels of ability which varied over all skills and were confusing as well, making it difficult for the parents to understand. Some parents were concerned about their child's high level of energy, low need for sleep and untidiness.

Keirouz (1990) drew our attention to parents' interactions with their family, peers, school and community systems in her literature review. She highlighted that parents were concerned about peers or community members having negative stereotypes. Some parents reported concern about bullying and teasing as well as rejection of their gifted children due to the gifted label. Keirouz found that parents tended to be overly critical of the schools' efforts to provide the right educational placement for their gifted children and became concerned about the gifted program and standardized testing used in the schools for gifted identification.

Colangelo's and Dettmann's (1983) and Keirouz's (1990) literature reviews provide a good basis for research related to parents of gifted children. However, to be noted here is, that both reviews do not

provide adequate information about the experiences of gifted parents or their perceptions of having to raise a gifted child in the family. The reviews reported by Colangelo, Dettmann and Keirouz are a synthesis of older articles right up to the year 1990 which highlights the empirical evidence related to parents' concern over parenting a gifted child. Therefore, there is a call for research to investigate parents' perceptions and their experiences in raising gifted children in the family (Alsop, 1997; Silverman & Kearney, 1989; May, 2000; Moraswka & Sanders, 2009). As has been stated earlier, there is very little research to examine the topic of this study. However recent studies examining the general needs of parents of gifted children are highlighted in the next section.

2.3 New Zealand Context

Riley, Bevan-Brown, Biknell, Carroll-Lind, and Kearney (2004) have drawn our attention to the literature of gifted education in New Zealand. This team of researchers reviewed the literature on gifted education and found that there is a vast amount in the field of gifted and talented education that focuses on the provision and identification of gifted students. However, within New Zealand there is a paucity of

research nationally. The researchers argued that the empirical research related to identification and provision for the gifted and talented, either quantitatively or qualitatively, is scarce and stated:

“comparative and evaluative research was sparse and its dissemination was to a limited audience...there have been a handful of articles written about programmes for gifted children but these are long on description, unsupportive opinion and unsubstantiated and/or qualitative evidence of giftedness...of the twenty-two publication articles from 1997-2001 the majority raise and discuss important issues related to gifted identification and provision for gifted and talented students but none of these report the results of empirical studies of giftedness” (p.2).

Along with the absence of New Zealand-based research on the provision and identification of gifted students, New Zealand-based research on parenting young gifted children was also scarce during the time of this study. Therefore, relevant issues pertaining to the topic of the present study from overseas research and some from the New Zealand context were taken into consideration and are discussed in the next section.

2.3.1 Gifted Education in New Zealand

Early childhood, primary and gifted education has been areas of national interest and policy development in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2005). The importance of parents' support for children's learning is acknowledged within early childhood education and gifted education fields (Margrain, 2005). However, the egalitarian approach and Tall Poppy syndrome has appeared to negatively impact on identification of and support for children with special abilities (Margrain, 2005). The metaphor 'tall poppy' describes a social phenomenon in which gifted children's genuine merits are resented or 'cut down' (Margrain, 2005, p.4) because their talents or achievement elevate them above or distinguish them from their peers.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2000) initiatives indicated that the concerns of families of gifted children should be addressed. This could be because many writers suggested parents appeared to be frustrated with the schools' weaknesses in skillfully meeting the development needs of gifted children (Margrain, 2005; McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004a; McDonough & Rutherford, 2005). Therefore, the New Zealand Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Education

Advisory Group on Gifted Education published the guide *Gifted and talented students: Meeting their needs in New Zealand schools* for teachers and parents on how to provide for the Gifted and Talented (Moltzen, 2004a). In fact there was also a Gifted and Talented Community placed on TKI (Te Kete Ipurangi, an online resource for teachers, parents and community). The online resource in the guide suggested specific strategies and information about the gifted to teachers, parents and the community at large (Moltzen, 2004a).

In line with the Ministry's concern with the families and communities of gifted children every effort was made to help the family of the gifted learners (McDonough & Rutherford, 2005; Riley, 2005; Riley & Karnes, 1999). A publication to engage families and communities was developed to give parents brief information on the characteristics of gifted children and to promote a broad concept of giftedness and talent. Parents could find information such as a contact person, regional and local offices to be reached if they had any enquiry about their children.

TKI Gifted and Talented Community has been established and provides links to key differences and resources as well as a forum for parents to ask specific questions of experts in the field (McDonough & Rutherford, 2005). It also meant the Ministry could now look into how parents, and families were recognising their gifted and talented children as they play the most important role in developing the giftedness of their child.

2.3.2 New Zealand research on families of gifted children

As the literature review demonstrates there is a call for more rigorous research on the education of the gifted talented (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Biknell, Carroll-Lind, Kearney, 2004), but one study that focuses on parents perspectives and experiences of having a young gifted reader was undertaken in 2005. Valerie Margrain conducted a case study involving young precocious readers, the family and early childhood teachers. Margrain's (2005) study could be best described as a summary of parents experience in supporting young gifted readers in their talent development.

Margrain's (2005) study is a valuable contribution to understanding parents of gifted children. The author has described the day-to-day experiences of parents of gifted children in supporting the reading talent of their child and stated:

“Involving the children with daily life and activities that parents did was an important aspect of parenting...parents involved children in everyday activities and community outings and valued the social and cognitive opportunities in early childhood education” (p. 167).

Margrain's (2005) compilation of parents' experiences and their role in parenting adds to our understanding of the issues addressed by parents of gifted children in the present study. The article by Margrain (2005) presents a great deal of information that has several points of merit. First, this author was the first I could find who solicited information similar to the present study. Secondly, the author was interested in discovering the “every-day practices” (p.509) that families of the gifted children use to foster young preschoolers' reading. Thirdly, the results show that parents play an important role in gifted children's talent development. Finally, the author presents the

common assumptions that underpin the gifted label and the impact of the label on gifted children and their family.

Margrain (2005) portrays the influence of parents in their children's talent development. Parents' expectations and monitoring gifted children's reading performance was found to be one of the effective parental strategies to nurture the gifts of young gifted children in the study. Margrain's article supports the parental role in nurturing giftedness and whether or not parents actually enhance their children's intellectual capacity appreciably, it appears that parents in Margrain's study provided an atmosphere that bolstered their children's motivation and realisation of potential.

Other important findings in the study were the process of choosing schools and tension in advocating for their gifted child's needs. The author found that for many families choosing the right schools for their gifted preschooler seemed to be a 'stressful experience' (p. 236). The author illustrated the difficult experiences of parents finding a supportive school and also highlighted ways parents masked their

children's gifted label. Parents were very much concerned with being labelled as pushy parents. One of the participants commented:

Mother: *I feel embarrassed; people will think I have been one of those pushy parents... (p. 239)*

Existing research suggests that most parents of gifted children fear the label gifted. Parents fear being marked as elitist or pushy by others especially parents of the non-gifted children (Alsop, 1997). International research suggests that most parents of gifted children face similar issues in parenting and the differences are in terms of parents' expectations and confidence in their ability to manage and assist their gifted child (Wu, 2008; Dwairy, 2004; Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, and Tavegia , 2005; Moraswka & Sanders, 2008).

In 2010, Margrain conducted her second study which focused on the parent-teacher partnership for gifted early readers in New Zealand. The author invited local parents of gifted children to participate in her study and the issue identified was the misconception that society had of families of gifted children.

Parents in Margrain's study were reported to be responsive to their gifted children's learning and seen as agents who help and promote their gifted children's reading talent. However, society, especially educators, often labels parents as 'pushy' or 'hothousing' (p.44) when parents demand better educational support. There exists a widely accepted Tall Poppy syndrome stereotype not only in New Zealand, but also in other parts of the world including the neighbouring country, Australia (Moltzen, 2004b; Henshon, 2007). The stereotype holds that gifted individuals will not require discipline or encouragement with regard to his or her learning in the school setting, believing that giftedness is the same as being a high-achieving student (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007).

The danger of these stereotypes is in mischaracterizing what giftedness really is. One must understand that not all children are born gifted, and not all identified gifted children are advanced learners (Moltzen, 2004a; Porter, 1999). It is not so much about being an advanced reader or someone recognized with high intellectual ability as it is about being a person who learns and experiences life

differently from the vast majority of people. These misperceptions are furthered by the way schools and society identifies giftedness.

Margrain (2010) mentioned that lack of educational support for gifted children from the school and teachers provided a negative climate in the teacher-parent partnership and, along with the sense of frustration and lack of understanding about giftedness, made it difficult to adhere to the teacher-parent partnership. Margrain's article could be best described as a summary of parents' experiences in supporting young gifted readers in their talent development. There was less description of parents' lived experiences such as their viewpoints in parenting their young gifted child, despite supporting the child's reading talent, their daily engagement in their child's activities, or the challenges they faced in parenting a young gifted reader.

Margrain's (2010) research presents a valuable contribution to understanding parents of gifted children, because the author has described the experience of parents of gifted children in supporting the reading talent of the child as well as addressing parents' expectations within the society in which they lived. This compilation of

parents' experiences adds to our understanding of the issues addressed by parents of gifted children.

2.4 International Literature on families of young gifted children

One of the challenges or complexities of parenting a gifted child is determining whether or not the child is actually gifted. Porter (1999) pointed out that when a child is young, parents may have some idea that their child is different from his or her peers, and may even suspect their child is gifted. However, not many parents have an idea of what giftedness means (Frame & Fornia, 2001; Moon, 2003; Pfeiffer & Mares, 1991; Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007).

Parents of the gifted children are often confused about their role in identifying the gifted child and many parents have indicated that they actually do not know what to look for in their children (Solow, 1995:2001). Even when parents are willing to identify giftedness in their young children, to get accurate results would be a difficult task (Fisher, 1998; Moltzen, 2004c; Porter, 2005). However, Porter (2005) and Moltzen, (2004c) argued that, once parents and educators

become aware of the characteristics associated with advanced development, they will be able to recognize gifted learners.

Therefore, looking at a list of young gifted traits or characteristics is a quick first step to determining whether a child is gifted or not. Gross, Macleod, Drummond & Merrick, (2003) and Moltzen, (2004c) have listed a common set of characteristics traits in young gifted children, which Harrison (1999) states can be helpful indicators for parents to identify throughout their child's developmental stages.

2.4.1 Cognitive characteristics of gifted children

The most obvious characteristic of gifted children is their cognitive skills. Moon and Hall (1998) and Robinson (2008) pointed out that gifted children are different in degree, and have unique thinking strategies. During early age, these children can acquire and process information as well as problem-solve better compared to the average ability child. They are excellent in "memory, both short-term and long-term, long attention span, and having an extensive vocabulary (Robinson, 2008, p. 185)

Research suggests that a distinguishing trait of gifted children in the preschool years is precocious language acquisition (Clark, 2004; Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2004; Margrain, 2010; Pfeiffer & Mares, 1991). Studies have found that gifted preschoolers often demonstrate greater self-awareness and are more socially advanced than their peers (Cross, 2011). These children have also been found to have cooperative play patterns (Gross, 2004), to select older playmates, and to seek the companionship of adults (Freeman, 1998).

Moltzen (2004c) mentioned that young gifted children are often very high in energy. Their high energy is often misunderstood as “hyperactivity, their persistence is often regarded as nagging, their imagination is regarded as not paying attention, their passion as being disruptive, their strong emotions and sensitivity as immaturity and their creativity and self-directedness as oppositional (Freeman, 2010, p.297).

Freeman (2010) posited that many gifted children are stimulus seekers. This means gifted children require more stimuli than the average ability children. If they are not sufficiently stimulated, they

tend to seek out or produce stimulation for themselves (Harrison, 1999; Gross, 2004; Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Porter, 1999).

Gifted parents describe gifted children as often having a high activity level, less need for sleep, unusual alertness in infancy, and intense reactions to noise, pain, and frustration (Silverman & Golon, 2008; Delisle & Galbraith; 2002). One parent commented in Silverman and Kearney's (1989) study on parents of the extraordinarily gifted:

When other babies were getting 12 hours of sleep, I was lucky if he slept 6 hours. I figured he was smarter than other children his age because he had been awake twice as long" (Silverman & Kearney, 1989, p. 52).

A child's emotional intensity may emerge as a significant family stressor. Often, parents with a gifted child who has high intensity face difficulties in managing their child's behaviour and feel that they cannot keep up with their child both intellectually and physically (Carolyn, 2009; Delisle, 2001; Gross, 2004; Heller & Schofield, 2008).

2.4.2 Social and emotional issues of gifted children

Yewchuk (1999) describes gifted children as being in more danger of becoming socially isolated, because it is harder for them to find intellectual peers within the same age group. Many gifted children have the social skills, which are necessary for engaging cooperatively with others, but if they do not have peers with whom they can engage their relationship skills, those might not develop (Moltzen, 2004a; Porter, 2005). Frame and Fornia (2001) describe gifted children as tending to be sensitive and some are even super sensitive. Silverman (2000a) describes gifted children as often having a heightened sense of justice and intense concerns about death, changes in the environment, place high expectations on themselves, and feel devastated when others dislike them.

Clark (2008) describes gifted children as sometimes needing help in learning to accept who they are. Parents need to help these children to value themselves as unique persons (Davis, 2006; Gross, 2004; Webb, Gore, Amend, DeVires, 2007). Often, gifted children know that they both similar and different from other children their age. However, some gifted children may feel others do not understand and think like

them (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002), in some cases it may result in their feeling isolated and lonely (Porter, 2005; Smutny, 1999), many gifted children have unrealistic expectations about themselves and they tend to be perfectionists (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Moon, Jurich & Feldhusen, 1998).

At a young age, gifted children's intellectual development is often more advanced than their motor development (Sousa, 2009). They may have ideas of carrying out a project but, due to their age and experience, young gifted children may have difficulties practising the skills. Hence, it leads to frustration that can make some of them give up (Sousa, 2009). Some are very competitive as they experience winning, but they also need to learn to cope with losing without quitting (Adler, 2006; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Moltzen, 2004c). Some are very curious and tend to ask a lot of questions because they need to get a deeper understanding of the subject (Silverman, 1993) and others have a keen sense of humour, but in some situations, they feel other children their age fail to understand their humour (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Moltzen, 2004c; Porter, 2005).

Some other gifted children tend to have heightened sensitivities and take things personally and get hurt easily (Moon, 2003; Pfeiffer, 2008; Pfeiffer & Mares, 1991; Silverman, 1993). Parents and teachers are the most influential groups in helping gifted children to appreciate themselves and help them to understand their similarities to and differences from other children of their age (Delisle, 2001; Clark, 2008; Gross, 1993).

2.4.3 Understanding of Gifted Children's Behaviour

One of the most common myths about gifted children is that they are the bright-eyed eager students in the classroom (Clark, 2008; Porter, 1999; Smutny, 2004). They are the ones who pay rapt attention to every word the teacher utters and love to do their homework. While this may be true of some gifted children, it is far from typical gifted behaviour. In fact, many gifted students behave in quite the opposite manner, they may be inattentive and often do not do their homework, or they may do it and neglect to turn it in (Clark, 2004; Harrison, 1999).

Often not all gifted children are born geniuses and succeed in their life; there are some who are not gifted in every area and not successful at everything (Clark, 2004; Gross, 2004; Porter, 1999; Smutny, 2004). Owing to this unevenness in development, abilities, and talent, parents of the gifted children usually get confused and frustrated because some parents often feel inadequately prepared to raise a gifted child without knowing what to do and how to raise a child with unique characteristics. Often this situation leaves parents questioning their own parenting role (Silverman, 1998).

Most parents do not know how they should respond to their children's behaviour because some parents according to Solow (1995) lack a framework for understanding the development issues that affect their children. There was also a concern that Solow raised in his study about parents' reasoning about their gifted child's social and emotional development. Solow, felt many parents of the gifted children did not know enough to handle their child's behaviour and were at a loss in how to understand certain behaviours and feelings their child displayed in certain contexts.

Lack of understanding of the nature and significance of gifted children's intellectual differences can result in their being seen as weird or bad. Not understanding, gifted children may lead to ignoring or denying their differences and this can lead to social isolation and emotional problems that can cause disciplinary problems for the child and also concerns for the parents (DeLeeuw, 2002; Silverman, 2002; Solow, 1995).

2.4.4 Gifted labelling

Another issue that concerns parents of gifted children is problems and challenges associated with being gifted. Solow (1995) noted that some parents are not given positive guidelines for successfully parenting a gifted child and most of them are given negative admonitions from professionals and friends. Silverman (1998) in her article represents the views parents of gifted children get from others, for example, "Don't teach them at home or they will be bored in school..." "Don't put them in school early or they'll be misfits", "Don't put them in classes with other gifted children or they will become snobs", "Don't let them know they are gifted or they will get swelled

heads”, “Don’t let them alone too much or they will not develop social skills” The do’s are few and far between (p.74).

These responses seem to be unreasonable and some parents often do listen to the negative feedback from friends and family members and those negative responses the parents of the gifted receive from their surroundings affect their function and responsibility in their parental process. This is where counsellors with special training in the psychology of giftedness are needed to assist parents in understanding and nurturing their gifted children (Silverman & Golon, 2008).

Foster’s (2000) research was based on families of gifted children and was a case study examining children’s and parents’ perception of labelling and placement. In her discussion, Foster found that gifted labelling affected the parents, siblings, and gifted children. Foster (2000) found that parents seek emotional, social, and academic support from others. Parents in Foster’s (2000) study talked about their level of stress when they were unable to provide the necessary support for their gifted children, stating two primary issues that

concern parents of gifted children. Firstly, parents feel pressure over the educational politics. Secondly, trying to understand their gifted child's attitudes was a problem for the parents. Foster stated:

Many parents explicitly told me they wanted more resources and information. Reese's mother stated, "I guess the thing about raising a child who is identified gifted, there really isn't yet information that is geared to parents to deal with this on an emotional level, to deal with it concretely, in terms of how do I support my child (p.164).

Foster (2000) found that parents' self-esteem was affected when they found that their child was labelled as gifted. Parents reported feeling guilty because they did not believe they could meet their gifted children's needs for educational or intellectual stimulation. Then, Foster found that parents were also confused and concerned about their child's social and emotional development compared to the child's intellectual development.

2.5 Parents' concerns with parenting gifted children

Clark (2008) noted that many parents of gifted children fear that they will have neither the emotional or intellectual coping skills to raise and support their child. This feeling of inadequacy can affect the

interaction within the family. Additionally, the parenting practices of parents towards their gifted child will be based on how they have raised or seen a normal child. When parents notice that their child possesses unique characteristics and behaviour compared to a normal child, often that will turn out to be a difficult situation in terms of anxiety and frustration. Parents appear not to know how to deal with this.

Moraswka's and Sander's (2008; 2009) studies were focused on providing services to parents of gifted children. The authors conducted their research in Australia with parents of gifted children to: a) determine the factors that contribute to emotional and behavioural problems in gifted children, b) better understand and describe the parents of gifted children, and c) guide the development of a parent guidance group.

Moraswka and Sander's (2008) study set out to identify whether gifted children had behavioural and emotional adjustments which were similar to average ability children. Then they set to find out the effect of the environment on the parents' styles of rearing, followed by

parents' confidence level that reports the overall findings in relation to parenting gifted children.

Moraswka and Sander's (2008) study showed that gifted children pose typical behaviour to the non-gifted counterparts in relation to "conduct problems, hyperactivity, and prosocial behaviour" (p. 822). However, gifted children's emotional and peer related problems contradict the findings. Parents indicated that the emotional and peer related problems have a significant impact on their gifted children's functioning.

The findings for the effect of the environment on parents styles of rearing indicated that parents reported issues such as "anxiety, sadness, anger or fear" (pp. 821-822) in the clinical range. The overall findings indicate that parents face difficulties in managing gifted children's behavioural problems, and emotional adjustment. The research concludes that the primary concern in developing a guidance program for parents of gifted children is to increase parents' confidence in managing their gifted children (Moraswka and Sanders, 2008).

Likewise, in their 2009 article, Moraswka and Sanders used the *Triple P-Positive Parenting Program* to identify parents' views on their parenting and strategies that they wish to apply in their parenting. This study was the continuation of the authors' previous 2008 study and one open-ended question for all the participants in their study was used: "What areas, strategies, or ideas would you like to see covered in an evidence-based parenting program" (p.167). A few themes emerged from the program. However, themes such as managing gifted children's behaviours, coping with their emotional and social difficulties, deciding on the best educational environment, motivating them in their talent development, helping their social relationships, and balancing their needs with other children and parents were not addressed.

In summary, parents of gifted children may have needs that they hope to get in the course of their parenting; however, Moraswka and Sanders' (2009) study did not focus on asking parents themselves about their needs in having to raise a gifted child, but rather used one question to evaluate parents' performance in relation to their

parenting. Probably, the issue can be addressed through a qualitative study.

2.5.1 Parents' beliefs and practices

Some research has identified the influences of acculturation factors and cultural understanding on parenting ethnically diverse gifted students. For example, Dwairy (2004) examined the parental styles and mental health of Arab gifted students. In this study, the researcher was investigating the authoritative (warm and accepting) and authoritarian (controlling and demanding) parenting styles on 118 gifted Arab students. The results of the findings in the study revealed that the authoritative parents' children displayed higher self-esteem and fewer identity disorders than children of parents who tend to be more authoritarian.

According to Dwairy (2004), authoritarianism within Arab society is not necessarily associated with children feeling oppressed, rather it is in their culture that children are expected to adhere to their parents and teacher's expectations and regulations. Obedience is a central educational value and disobedience is considered a severe offence and involves a severe punishment (Dwairy, 2004).

Dwairy (2004) identified that, there is a negative effect with the authoritarian parenting style in Arab gifted children such as tenseness within the family, the child suffering from emotional problems and also depression. According to Dwairy, an authoritarian parenting style is more stressful than supportive. Parents are supposed to be supporters of their children rather than stressors. Therefore, Dwairy proposes that an authoritative parenting style is a crucial factor influencing the gifted child-parent relationship and the gifted child's well-being. Dwairy highlights that supportive and open family relationships are important to the child's adjustment. It is apparent in Dwairy's findings that family support is an important factor that yields different outcomes for gifted children.

Wu (2008) in his research about parenting beliefs and practices on children's talent development at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, interviewed parents and children to gather qualitative descriptions of perception, attitudes and experiences. Wu studied the beliefs and practices of Chinese parents of gifted children and commented that different cultures present different tools of parenting styles. Chinese parents' high expectations and ways they set academic standards for

their children are regarded as an authoritarian parenting style by Western culture.

According to Wu (2008) in Chinese culture, an authoritarian or controlling parenting style is welcomed. Wu argued that the assumption of an authoritarian parenting style, which is viewed negatively by the Western cultures, has more positive effects in their traditional Chinese culture. Wu pointed out that academic achievement may differ from one culture to another. Thus, it cannot be generalized as a whole. Wu also believed that, in Chinese culture, an authoritarian parenting style is perceived as the loving concern of parents for their children.

Wu's (2008) conclusions concerning Chinese authoritarian parenting puts emphasis on the child's hard work and effort as well as parents involvement in children's learning. According to Wu, parenting beliefs and values vary in different ethnic groups in different countries. Generally, children's high achievement is influenced in different ways by certain parenting beliefs and practices in different cultures.

In Wu's (2008) study, he found that Chinese American parents believed that talented performance in gifted children can be achieved if parents are involved directly in their child's education and have higher expectations for their children. According to him, parents also claim that children need to be nurtured in such a way that they respect the parents and understand how parents work hard to educate them.

Wu's (2008) findings reported that parents in his study had more control and influence in their children's future. Wu believes that parents in his study were still deeply influenced by Chinese traditions and he further commented that some parents in his study paid great attention to their children's academic performance, but they failed to support the children's innate abilities.

On the other hand, some parents believed that their children could perform better in talent development in the future. Parents perceived that talent can be nurtured and developed. Therefore, at present, they were more concerned about the child's academic achievement rather than the talent (Wu, 2008). He concluded parents should pay more

attention to the needs of their children rather than deciding what would be the best for them. Parents should sit with the children and talk to them about their future as well as communicate with them in a friendlier manner so that the child will be able to voice out what he or she thinks. According to Wu, it is the parents' responsibility to provide a happy childhood for their children rather than raising them in more authoritarian ways.

2.6 Education

The home environment strongly influences a child's successes in adult life (McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004b). The authors pointed out that many children develop talent in areas such as "music, performing arts, special interests and sport outside school" (p. 506) without the endless support of parents. One major difficulty most parents of gifted children demonstrate is advocating for their child's needs in school (Clark, 2004; Harrison, 1999; McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004b; Porter, 1999).

Once a child begins school, the parent-child relationship is modified and influenced by the new environment, culture, and social setting (Clark, 2008; Gross, 2004; Smutny, 1999). Parents and children will

come into contact with individuals such as teachers, school personnel, and other parents from various cultures and values (Gross, 2004; Porter, 2004). These new environments and the influential individuals contribute to parents and children's development as individuals.

As parents begin the process of choosing preschools, they often imagine the experience that they would like their children to have (Harrison, 1999). Their expectation for their children's education tends to be based on the child's home learning experience and parents often expect those experiences to be further enhanced in school with the support from practitioners (Jolly, Matthews, & Garn, 2010). However, literature suggests that often parents and teachers are not on the same wavelength when it comes to educational placement, especially for gifted children (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2002; Delisle, 2001).

Generally, young gifted children read above grade level (Fisher, 1998; Smutny, 1998) and are interested in obviously intellectual pursuits. Some perceived gifted children are 'straight- A' students who score highly in tests or in the National Examination (Tolan, 1998). The danger of these stereotypes is in mischaracterizing what gifted really

is. One must understand that not all children are born gifted, and not all identified gifted children are advanced students (Harrison, 1999; Kingore, 1998; Silverman, 1998; Porter, 1999; Rotigel, 2003).

It is not so much about being an advanced reader or someone recognized with high intellectual ability as it is about being a person who learns and experiences life differently from the vast majority of other people. These misperceptions are furthered by the way schools and society identify giftedness (Helen & Schofield, 2008; Fisher, 1998; Silverman, 1993:1998)

It has been long recognised that young gifted children are simply not referred for programs for the gifted or have been denied admission because the instrument used to access their ability is inadequate (Fisher, 1998) or teachers focused only on the child's deficiencies rather than the child's strength in a single talent area (Kingore, 1998). Referrals generally constitute the first step in an identification process and include any nomination or screening activity designed to determine which children should be included in assessment procedures to determine eligibility for gifted programs services.

A failure to look to young gifted populations for referrals has been cited as one of the reasons these children are underrepresented (Moltzen, 1999). Two factors have a significant influence on this under referral process- a) teacher attitude toward this population, b) the type of pre-school or primary school these children are likely to attend (Tolan, 1998). The researcher has indicated that teachers and school professionals continue to have low expectations of the young gifted child population (Moltzen, 1999). The low expectation is influenced by the traditional perspectives. These children are regarded as homogeneous units with all members sharing the same set of values and beliefs and having the same characteristics (Tolan, 1998).

The inability of educators to recognise “gifted behaviours” exhibited by young gifted children has also contributed to their low rate of referrals (Moltzen, 2004a). Silverman and Golon (2008), for example suggested that because teachers do not recognise the unfamiliar behaviours of young gifted children, they are less likely to refer them for gifted program evaluation.

2.6.1 Teachers' and Parents Perspectives

Sankar-Deleeuw (2002) undertook one of the most comprehensive investigations of the parents' and teachers' views on early identification and programming for gifted preschoolers. The author's article explores the commonalities and discrepancies between parents and teachers' conceptions of giftedness and views on identification, early admission, and programming for young gifted children.

Sankar-DeLeeuw (2002) pointed out that her study shows that parents are more likely to perceive a need to have individualized programmes for their gifted children. However, teachers were not showing interest in adhering to the subject matter. Some teachers' in the study viewed giftedness as a complete package. Even though the percentage of teachers agreeing to early identification was quite high (78%), the agreement to have individualized programmes or acceleration for the young gifted was only 50%.

Teachers in Sankar-DeLeeuw's (2002) study commented that gifted children should not be tested in one domain (intellectually) but rather the child should also be consistent in other domains such as the

physical, social and emotional. Teachers explained that young children who are recommended for acceleration may be too immature socially, physically, and emotionally to achieve at the higher level of placement. Sankar-DeLeeuw reported that parents of gifted children in her study have described their young gifted children as “divergent thinkers, highly focused, curious, early readers, persistent, high verbal ability, large vocabularies at early age, and unusual ability to make abstract connection in learning” (p. 172).

Parents usually observed the traits mentioned earlier and reported them to the teachers. However, Sankar-DeLeeuw (2002) noted that teachers tend to look for more diverse traits that were not reported by the parents including “discordant development, emotional immaturity, socialization difficulties, and a tendency of being pushed by parents” (p.172). This disparity often caused conflicting views between the teacher and parents of gifted children in general (Margrain, 2010).

On the other hand, Lovitt (1999) presented results from their study of parents with children with disabilities. The findings reported that parents who enrolled their children in private and public schools were

disappointed with the school's special education programme. The parents reported having unpleasant experiences in attaining proper remediation for their children. When the authors sought parents' opinions on the Individualized Education Programme (IEPs) process, one of the participants in the study commented: "parents should be asked more about what they think their child needs, rather than relying solely on input from a teacher or psychologist" (p.10). Lovitt (1999) suggested that a lack of knowledge of educational rights and procedures might have led to parents' frustration when they sought educational support.

In Leung and Mak's (2010) study examining teacher's attitudes and understanding of inclusive education in Hong Kong, the authors pointed out a few factors that caused barriers in teachers' understanding of inclusive education. Leung and Mak (2010) pointed out that teachers give higher priority to improving their classroom management skills and teaching strategies, than to increasing knowledge and learning in which to help their students. The authors suggested that this situation arises in light of the influence of the traditional point of view that teachers are merely responsible for

providing classroom education to students rather than understanding the needs of students. Leung and Mak (2010) suggested that cooperation between teachers and parents would improve if both groups understand children with special needs and plan a better education for them.

Alsop (1997) conducted the parenting assessment survey to examine fifty-one families of gifted children in Australia. The study attempted to focus on the needs and support for counselling of parents of intellectually able children. The study focused on the parents' experiences in parenting intellectually gifted children. Findings show that parents reported the lack of a support network for them as well as for their gifted children. Parents' in Alsop's study echoed their negative experiences when advocating for their gifted children's educational placement. Parents also reported that the community's and educators' lack of general understanding of gifted education and gifted children's characteristics apparently strained their parenting coping skills. Therefore, parents sought alternative support such as counselling to help them in their parenting.

In her discussion, Alsop (1997) summarized that parents need to have a better understanding of the education system, and support services provided for gifted children and their families. Parents need to be guided because her findings reported:

“parents’ belief systems may have reflected a poor understanding of education in general...it would not be unreasonable for parents to make an assumption that once a child had been identified as exceptional-albeit that of enhanced intellectual potential-professional services would be available to them” (p. 32).

Alsop (1997) noted that when parents of gifted children perceive their parenting role as effective and helpful to their children’s growth and talent development, they are likely to become more involved with their children’s education. In summary, the need for counselling and lack of guidance affects parents’ beliefs and assumptions towards the general education and available support services for gifted families and their children.

Snowden and Christian (1999) pointed out a similar suggestion to Alsop’s. The authors explained the parents’ knowledge in gifted children’s educational development. Parents in the study focused on

promoting educationally important cognitive skills for their gifted children as for example, parents were seen providing their children with choice when they planned activities for them. Parents encouraged their children to use their skills to their fullest potential. Parents helped their children in their psychomotor, social, and emotional development. Hence, parents facilitate cognitive development for their children.

2.6.2 Parents' Expectations of Teachers and School

Hertzog and Bennett (2004) conducted a study on parents' perspectives on the learning needs of their gifted children and how parents went about meeting those needs. Parents in the study reported that they did not feel they had much control over their children's education in the school. This means parents in the study felt there was a lack of a direct relationship between the parents and teachers in relation to any information or educational program their children received.

Hertzog and Bennett (2004) reported that parents were either excluded from getting involved or not invited for consultation regarding their child's educational needs. Hence, the study found that

parents tended to provide extracurricular education outside the school to cater for their child's educational needs. Parents talked about their needs and approaches to parenting gifted children, parents' role in gifted children's talent development, and that their concerns in parenting could be effectively recognised. One of the parents stated in the authors' study:

"I don't have any control, I feel I can only make suggestions and hope the teacher uses them" (p.8).

The authors found that parents of gifted children were confused about their roles as parents in the school settings. The authors highlighted the parents' need for support especially from the educators. Experiencing an unsupportive partnership with the teachers and school, parents in Hertzog and Bennett's (2004) study reported seeking support from outside networks that appeared to address their child's needs. These networks include community resources and personal networks, such as other parents of gifted children and family members.

In addition, Colangelo and Davis (2003) pointed out that it is important to provide an opportunity for teachers as well to learn and understand the culture of their students in which they work because it will help

them to improve their teaching as well as benefit the students. Unfortunately, one observer has already drawn attention to the paradox in educational systems for gifted children.

A study by Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, and Tavegia (2005) involving 12 African American families' from low, medium, and high socio-economic status pointed out that parents in their study have different perceptions of their children's school management and teachers. Huff et al (2005) reported that parents of the gifted African American children expressed concern over their child's education and found it difficult to work with a complex school system. Based on the findings, the authors have commented that many parents from the low and medium socio-economic background of the gifted children did not have positive feelings about their relationship with teachers, principals, and school counsellors who were supposed to be those who give good services to their children.

Parents in Huff et al.'s (2005) study commented that they were not satisfied with the gifted programmes because they were not appropriate for their children's aptitude and achievement levels. Also,

parents thought that some teachers in the school needed to be trained to interact with parents. Parents commented that teachers in their children's school were unaware of individual differences in terms of their children's talents and were also inexperienced about a student's uneven development. Parents in their study expressed the desire to have teachers who were more sensitive to the individual and emotional needs of gifted African American children. The authors found that parents expressed their concern over their children's needs which were not met and it was difficult for their children to receive a good education.

Huff et al. (2005) reported that some parents especially from the high socio-economic status groups enrolled their children in private schools for better education and some parents from the medium and low socio-economic opted to send their children to other schools that offered better opportunities for them.

2.7 Parents Internal and External Barriers

Frame and Fornia (2001) examined the psychosocial dilemma faced by gifted children and their families. The authors summarized saying that families with a gifted child may have a variety of external and

internal factors that contributes to their struggles in parenting. Not all parents of gifted children experience the same internal or external barriers, but commonalities have been found in research on this population (Moraswka & Sanders, 2008). The internal barriers include making decisions about children's educational opportunities, managing gifted children's emotional and social issues, coping with underachievement and lack of motivation, and dealing with the emotional intensity of the gifted children and their heightened sensitivity (May, 2008; Moon, 2003; Silverman & Golon, 2008).

Silverman and Golon (2008) pointed out that families with gifted children often feel lonely or isolated. Parents usually share their joys and concerns about raising their children with other parents, neighbours, and family members. However, parents of gifted children often reluctant to share and discuss their children's experiences with other because often others do not understand their concern. Research suggests that parents of gifted children often face difficulties negotiating with other parents or the community they are living in (Alsop, 1997; Fornia and Frame, 2001; May, 2000; Silverman & Golon, 2008; Moon, Jurich, & Feldhusen, 1998).

Parents of gifted children are often regarded as elitist or pushy (Adler, 2006; Margrain, 2010; Silverman & Golon, 2008). Parents encounter difficulties negotiating with other people when special academic programs or special attention is given to parents of gifted children and not to parents of average children (Frame & Fornia, 2001). Webb, Gore, Amend, DeVires (2007) and Adler (2006) reported that parents of gifted children expressed their feeling of loneliness and isolation because they felt other parents, especially the parents of the non-gifted children, did not understand the difficulties and challenges associated with raising a gifted child. Similarly to Margrain's (2010) study, Adler's participants also reported being perceived as pushy parents. Delisle (2001) wrote:

When parents begin to say their child began reading at 18 months, or that she asks questions about the origins of human life at the age of three... they begin to get funny looks. Some people listening to such parents' think they are lying or making up stories just to make other children look bad. Others think these are evil parents who push, push, push their child for their own selfish satisfaction. Still other (and they are often relatives) ignore the comments altogether, refusing to see the profoundly gifted child as being anything other than a typical child who is just "a little bit smart" (p.2).

Delisle (2001) pointed out that due to the aforementioned reactions, parents of gifted children often isolate themselves from other parents. When communicating with individuals or with a group of people, especially parents of the non-gifted children, these parents tend to say little about their child's progress fearing they will be stereotyped as 'that type' of parent (p.2).

In studies by Eris, Syefi, & Hanoz, (2008) on the perceptions of parents with gifted children in Gifted Education in Turkey, parents reported their experiences of having received unfavourable reactions towards their child's giftedness from their extended family members, neighbours, parents of the non-gifted children, school principal and the teachers. Parents in Eris, Syefi, & Hanoz's (2008) study also stated their concern over how they were described as pushy parents and that their children were teased as nerds or as being hyperactive. When anticipating such reactions from the environment in which they live in, these parents may prefer to hide their child's giftedness. In some cases, some parents prefer not to communicate with other

parents in order to avoid judgment from other parents on their way of parenting (Alder, 2006; Alsop, 1997; Silverman, 2002).

2.8 Conclusions

There are many issues concerning parents of gifted children when it comes to raising a gifted child. As discussed previously, not all gifted children are typically a problem for a family. Likewise, to assume that gifted children do not present unique challenges and problems in the family would be another misleading statement which has been discussed extensively within the literature of gifted families.

Some parents fear they are inadequately prepared to provide the right education for their gifted child. They worry about how their child will fit into society if he or she is labelled as gifted, as well as the social and emotional support available for their child. Others experience increased tension when they realise that they need to deal with the special needs and behaviours of their children who often possess heightened sensitivity and a lot of energy, both physically and emotionally. Another dilemma for parents is finding someone to discuss and share their problems about their gifted children, because

often others do not understand their concerns and think that parents of the gifted children are making up the stories.

Lack of understanding about giftedness and support provided for families of gifted children often leads to frustration and annoyance for parents of gifted children. As discussed earlier, parenting a child with unique characteristics and unpredictable behaviours can be a roller-coaster ride for some parents (Moon, 2003; Silverman & Golon, 2008; Silverman, 2000c). Parenting a gifted or talented child may be stressful for some parents of gifted children. However, if the burden can be shared by others, especially family members, and friends, initially, it can provide success with internal factors such as happiness and self-satisfaction for these parents.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

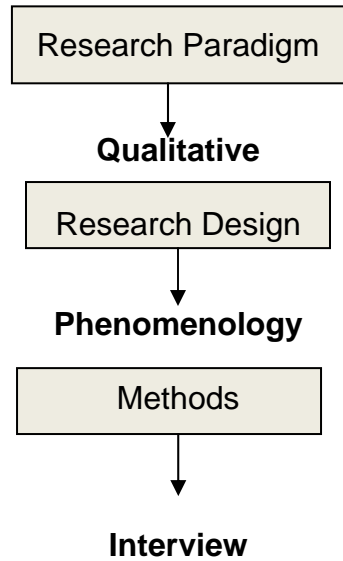
This study will use the methodology called qualitative research. Merriam (2009) stated that to understand the nature of qualitative research one should look at the philosophical foundations. However, she also stated, “there is almost no consistency across writers in how this aspect of qualitative research is discussed” (p. 8). She further stated “in true qualitative fashion, each writer makes sense of the underlying philosophical influences in his or her own way” (p. 8). Therefore, I begin this chapter by conveying an understanding of qualitative methodology and following this presentation, I provide a full description of my research. I conducted a qualitative research of parents’ experiences and perceptions of raising a young intellectually gifted child.

Qualitative research is primarily “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam,

2009, p.13). Therefore, I have chosen to do a qualitative type of research because the nature of my study is based on the reality of participants' lives and experiences as parents of young intellectually gifted children.

This chapter will describe how the study was conducted, including a description of the methods used, the process of data collection, samples, ethical consideration, and analysis of data. At the beginning, I will discuss the research design, followed by the research strategy, and research methods. In the next stage, I will describe the sample of my study, the data collection method, the process of data analysis, and finally the ethical considerations. As an opening to the chapter, I will firstly discuss the current research paradigm.

3.1 Current Research Paradigm



(Figure 1)

The methodological approach taken over the course of this study is qualitative. My research strategy is phenomenological research, and I chose the interview for my research method. Figure 1 illustrates my research plan. I chose to do a qualitative type of research because the nature of my study focuses on the parents' perspectives and experiences of raising a young intellectually gifted child. Therefore, I will discuss the fundamental characteristics of qualitative research within the next section.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), qualitative researchers believe in the assumption that the world in which humans live is constructed socially and moves around the interaction between individuals and life surrounding them. Likewise, Will (2007) notes that the social world in the eyes of the qualitative researcher is multi-faceted and there is no such thing as a singular universal truth. Litchman (2010) pointed out that qualitative research is concerned with describing, interpreting and understanding the meanings behind social occurrences or circumstances from the perspectives and experience of the participants.

On the other hand, Creswell (2009) states the reasons for conducting a qualitative study:

“the study is exploratory, not much has been written about the topic or population being studied and the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants” (p.4).

This study will focus on the parents' perspectives and experiences on raising gifted children in an attempt to contribute to what is known

about raising a young intellectually gifted child in the family. This investigation is hoped to add more understanding about what produces challenges to parents raising a gifted child. Again, as Creswell (1994) noted, for qualitative studies, the research problem needs to be explored because:

“little information exists on the topic. The variables are largely unknown, and the researcher wants to focus on the context that may shape the understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 10).

The variables of how many families have wonderful experiences or difficulties in parenting young gifted children in New Zealand are largely unknown and I wanted to focus only on four family environments that could help me to shape the understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, a qualitative approach seemed more suitable for this specific topic.

3.1.2 Theoretical Perspectives

In education research, there are a few types of research paradigms practised by researchers. A paradigm represents:

“A world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible

relationships to that world and its part”
(Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193).

Qualitative research has been associated with interpretivism, whereby reality is considered subjective and is constructed by people, according to their context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lather, 2006). This generally explains that qualitative research is a way of developing an in-depth understanding of individuals from the data, and from the interaction of the researcher and the participants to construct a reality that is reflective of the participants' perceptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative researchers generally use interviews, observations, and document analysis in order to acquire data. However, there are no set rules about this. Questionnaires or surveys may be preferred as the means of data collection and a research design may actually be a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

As Bogdan & Biklen (2007) stated “the question is not whether a piece of research is or is not absolutely qualitative; rather it is an issue of degree” (p.29). However, a study will generally reflect one

orientation from the assumptions and paradigms that guide the research (Creswell, 2009; Litchman, 2010; Will, 2007). Therefore, for my study I used an interpretive, qualitative design.

Interpretive study relies on the participants' views on the subject being studied (Creswell, 2009) and its data is based on the individual's experience and perceptions influenced by the context of the situation and the social environment they are living in. These are in line with the direction of my research where I am studying the experience and perspectives of the parents of gifted children in New Zealand.

Parents' perspectives and experiences of raising a young gifted and talented child are subjective in nature, as they depend on the context, which will vary for every parent, especially as they may come from multiple cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds. I therefore observed and listened to the participants in this project.

I was interested in finding out parents' views and experiences, and understand how and what meaning they construct around living with a young intellectually gifted child. The methodology appealed to me because of its emergent nature and also because it allowed for my

personal engagement with the participants. I felt this process would allow me to elicit more sincere and open responses from them so, a qualitative approach seemed more suitable for this research project.

3.1.3 Rigour in qualitative research

Merriam (2007) stated that “to have any effect on either the practice or the theory of a field research studies must be rigorously conducted” (p. 210). “Rigor is the means by which we show integrity and competence: it is about ethics and politics, regardless of the paradigm” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 390). In this study rigor for my qualitative research was attained through the application of trustworthiness and credibility.

Firstly, trustworthiness was achieved by my ability to treat my participants with respect. According to Creswell (2007) researchers can easily infect the validity of a qualitative investigation if they have any biases. I followed Creswell’s recommendation that the researcher should state their role in the analysis of the data. I am a foreigner from another culture and I was not a gifted child and neither is my son.

I did not know any of the members of my participants' family personally before I started this study. However, as I am an Asian, in our culture we have the reputation of highly valuing another's culture, and education. Therefore, I must admit that I do have great respect for my participants. I was empathetic to their concerns and understood their views. I also ensured that their voices are fairly represented (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) through my research findings. I am proud of these parents who were the subjects for my investigation.

Secondly, to ensure credibility, I strove to achieve it by monitoring mutual understanding during the interviews and by offering participants the opportunity to read the transcripts, making any necessary corrections or additions. Chamraz (2005) suggested that to achieve credibility in research, researchers take into account several criteria:

- a) Has the researcher achieved intimate familiarity with the setting or topic?
- b) Are the data sufficient to merit the researcher's claims?
- c) Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and the

researcher's argument and analysis?

- d) Has the researcher provided enough evidence for his or her claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment and agree with the researcher's claims?"

(Chamraz, 2005, p.528)

As such, I have endeavoured to achieve credibility with readers of this manuscript by providing enough evidence to allow readers to assess my work. Also, the data which I have gathered were from multiple sources that employed triangulation in this study. I have also tried to find the convergence between the literature and my research of the subject parents. However, I did not use the quantitative method. With regard to achieving credibility through multiple sources, I compared and cross-checked my interview data along with my participants to see if there were any changes to be made. Then I wrote analytical memos to get a better understanding of parents' experiences and their worldview. I also allowed my supervisors and my colleagues who were familiar with the topic to read and comment on my work. This

was done to examine whether my findings were plausible based on the data (Merriam, 2007).

Finally, another strategy that I used for ensuring credibility in my study was through member checking. Merriam (2007) explained that the process “involved in member checks is to take your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation “rings true.” (p.217). I carried out the same technique in my study. An example is given below. Table 1 explains the comments given by my participants when I sent them the interview transcription. Participants commented and gave feedback on my interpretation of the interview data. Table 2 shows the researcher needing an explanation of the participant’s interpretation.

Table 1: Process of member checking

Name	Participant Comments	Action Taken by researcher
Kate	"I think you need to check on the grammar because you seemed to get it wrong what I have said"	Clarified and re- wrote the sentence
Edward	"I don't want this to be published because I don't want it to be..."	Noted the comments. The highlighted statements in the interview were omitted

Table 2: Process of member checking

Name	Researcher Comments	Feedback given by the Participants
Edward	Can you please explain what were you trying to say/what do you mean by this line"?	"Oh...I was mentioning about the...."
Roger	Can you please explain further for this statement....why did you say this, what is your thought over.....	"I wanted the education...." that's what I meant and I really want this to be noted in your research"

3.1.4 Research Design

My present study was conducted using the qualitative research method, based on a phenomenological research approach. Using this approach, I will focus on the parents lived experiences and how their understandings of those experiences shape their view of the concept or phenomenon (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Doing this research, I attempt to identify, “the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study” (Creswell, 2009, p.13).

Using a phenomenological approach, my study examined the perceptions of parents’ experiences of raising a young intellectually gifted child, and considered how these perspectives might have been influenced by their own life histories, their experiences in upbringing and their early involvement with the concept of giftedness and their interactions within the community in which they lived.

Throughout the analyses, my findings are juxtaposed with current research and other literature that describes parents’ perceptions and their experiences of having to raise a young intellectually gifted child

in a family in order to consider how the findings might be used to change people's assumptions about gifted children and their parents.

Hence, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) pointed out that phenomenological researchers must bracket their subjective experiences with the phenomenon so as to understand and separate their emotional responses to the data from their interpretations of it. This is not to say that the purpose of bracketing is to remove the researcher's emotional responses to the phenomenon under study. On the contrary, "emotions show what is important to pay attention to and emotions lead to the origins of interpretation" (Drew, 2004, p.219).

Therefore, phenomenological research incorporates not only "the meaning of the phenomenon for the participants but the researcher's own responses" (Donalek, 2004, p.517). Phenomenological research emphasizes the individual's subjective experience (Mertens, 1998). Generally, phenomenological research seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience (Merriam, 2009; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Litchman, 2010).

My purpose in choosing phenomenology is to describe the perceptions of parents having to raise a young intellectually gifted child and understand the lived experiences of my participants. The question that I had on my mind during the research planning stages was, "What is the parents' experience like raising a gifted child"? My intent was to not to make any assumptions about the ways of parenting a young gifted child, rather my focus was merely on understanding how participants interpret the experiences of raising a young intellectually gifted child.

Phenomenological studies are those, in which human experiences are, examined through the detailed descriptions of the people being studied (Merriam, 2007). In my research project these were the parents of the gifted children. Understanding the lived experiences marks the phenomenology as a philosophy based on the work of Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton and Tavegia (2005), and Wu (2008) as much as it was a method of their research.

The work of Huff et al. (2005) asserts that the knowledge and understanding gained by adopting a phenomenological perspective

can help parents to provide information and talk about their experiences of being parents of gifted children, and voice out the issues that concern them, for example their children's academic, social and emotional problems with the school, managing relationships within the families and also managing relationships with the community. Incorporated within the philosophy of being parents of gifted children was the parenting challenges based on the physical, social, psychological, emotional and educational needs of parents of the gifted children. Challenges therefore emphasize the whole person rather than one particular element.

Phenomenology therefore attempts to understand all aspects of phenomena in preference to concentrating on one specific concept (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen noted that the phenomenology approach is well suited to purposeful sampling. This type of sampling permits the selection of participants whose qualities or experiences permit an understanding of the phenomena in question, and are therefore valuable.

This was the strength of purposive sampling. With these research ideas as my guide, I used purposeful sampling, selecting four parents as the focus for this research. I have made an examination of four couples namely, Janet and Edward, Kate and Lou, Sandy and Roger, and Lily and Gary (their names are not real, because to protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used). The questions that I sought responses to were:

- 1) What are parents' perceptions, understanding and experiences of having a young intellectually gifted and talented child?
- 2) How do the services and support in the gifted and talented community have an effect on parents' perceptions, understanding and experience in parenting gifted and talented children?

The design of my study limited the choice of families I could undertake research in. In this research project, the family needed to have children aged three to eight years of age who have been formally identified as gifted and talented. Formally identified means the child has been assessed by a professional who is an expertise in the field of gifted education. The choice of participants, semi-

structured interviews, analytical memos and the development of identifiable themes from these served to increase the validity of participants' response to the research questions. The research method employed and used in conjunction with the others "increased the reliability" of what was described. This is known as triangulation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.143).

Therefore, in order to obtain relevant information on the parents' perspectives and experiences of raising a young intellectually gifted child, a qualitative design is very much suited purely for the reason discussed. Firstly, the concept is 'less' investigated in New Zealand and the amount of previous research is also limited. This is very true when exploring the parents' attitudes with regard to the nature of differences that create challenges in their parenting.

3.1.5 Research Method

Data for a phenomenological study may be collected by a number of methods, such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. Therefore, in the present study I have chosen interviews for my primary method and document analysis for the secondary. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stated:

In focusing the interview on the experienced meanings of the subject's life world, phenomenology has been relevant for clarifying the mode of understanding in a qualitative research interview (p. 26).

My choice of interview method and document analysis developed when I was planning my research design. Reading previous studies and by reviewing the literature, I realised that to be a qualitative researcher, I needed to plan my research questions based on my research paradigm (qualitative), as well as planning my method of research based on my research design(phenomenology).

Therefore, my choice of interview method was inspired by the choice of my research design. Since my study attempted to understand parents' perceptions and their experience raising a young intellectually gifted child, through interviews I sought to obtain descriptions of the participants lived experiences with respect to their interpretation of the "meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 27). I will further discuss the interviews and document analysis in Section 3.4.

3.2 The Settings

3.2.1 Introduction

In the next paragraphs, serious consideration was given to participants and the setting of the research. Certain criteria were used in choosing participants for this study. My major tasks were to find parents who had a young intellectually gifted child aged 3 to 8 years of age and formally identified as intellectually gifted by a professional; for instance, a child specialist, psychologist or practitioner in the field of gifted education.

3.2.2 Sample

I recruited parents from an urban area because remote areas could not be included in my study owing to restrictions on my ability to travel. The study was a small exploratory qualitative study and was carried out with the expectation that the amount of data gathered would be manageable and with the hope that, it would give enough information to provide a basis for further larger studies in the future. For this study I aimed for more than four participants, but owing to limited time available and various choices of participants I had to make the decision on keeping my sample size small. It was for this reason alone that, I decided to interview four participants and

concentrate on instances that illuminated my research questions. Therefore, choosing four parents as the maximum was considered sufficient for my study. Since my field of study focused on the giftedness in early years, choosing parents who have young gifted and talented children would be the best selection for the study.

The participants involved in the interviews comprised one from the region of Auckland and three from Hamilton, New Zealand. The four participants were volunteers selected through the Facebook network with the name of Gifted Parenting Support of which the researcher was a member and had access to. The participants were first contacted through e-mail and had the content of the study explained to them in detail.

The interested participants were given the consent letter and information sheet prior to making any final decision regarding their participation in the study. Those who had agreed to participate in the research were again contacted through e-mails and phone calls to set the date and place for interviews. During the data collection phase of this research process, I kept the participants informed and discussed

my early thoughts about my interviews. Where further interviews were involved I allowed my participants read through their transcribed comments and asked for their reflections.

Fontana and Frey (2005) state that the interview is actually contextually based and the story that is reached through collaboration between the researcher and the respondent is not merely telling what has happened because the what depends greatly on the “ways, negotiations, and other interactive elements that take place between the researcher and the respondent” (p.714).

This research was not an experimental research into parenting strategies and I do not intend to suggest any methods of parenting or making judgments on the effectiveness of the parenting role, but about describing how the role was undertaken. Thus my research focused on gaining knowledge from all contributions and not in finding fault with parenting methods.

Therefore, asking participants for reflections and allowing them to discuss the information as it was collected led to the construction of new meanings for both researcher and the respondents.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Introduction

There are a variety of techniques that can be used to gather information. The major consideration for choice is “fitness for purpose” (Manion, Lawrence, Cohen & Louis, 2000, p.56). The main purpose of this study was to look at individual parents’ perspectives and their experiences in parenting young intellectually gifted children and their attitudes toward the service and support provided for the gifted and talented learners. Therefore, the appropriate approach for data collection in this study was through the Individual interviews and document analysis.

3.3.2 Methods

Based on the research methodology, I used two methods of data gathering: the primary method was the individual interviews which were semi-structured, and the secondary was document analysis. These data gathering methods and analysis of data were further

supported by the analytical memos on which I wrote my thoughts and feelings as I reread the responses in the transcribed interviews. The parents also supplied me with the written documentation they had engaged their children with and this added to the picture I was gaining from my other data sources. With these methods of data collection, it allowed me to construct meaning from the participant's perspectives about the role of being parents to a gifted and talented child. It has also provided me with insight into how in my position of an educator I can better support the family of gifted children.

3.3.3 Semi-structured Interview

According to Fontana and Frey (2005) the interview is a popular method used in research as it is one of the most effective ways to perceive and comprehend other humans' thoughts and views. There are three types of interview – 1) Structured where all questions are predetermined and covered in fixed sequence; 2) Unstructured where the researcher only sets the theme or area to talk about and lets the discussion flow; and 3) Semi-structured where some questions are prepared prior to the interview, and during the interview, the researcher can probe to gain more in-depth information (Hinds, 2000).

The interview method was chosen as it encouraged discussion about participants experience with their child. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), “interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard” (p.349). I chose to use individual semi-structured interviews as this was the best method to gather data on each individual’s personal attitudes and perspectives. Furthermore, I could not anticipate what kind of answers would be given by the participants. By doing semi-structured interviews I was able to ask additional questions when I felt that I needed further explanation or information from the participants.

Generally, qualitative interviews attempt to allow researchers to understand the world from their participants’ points of view and also to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, as well as to uncover their lived world based on scientific explanations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 2007). Therefore, as in my research, I tried to understand and explain how my participants from a particular context experience having a gifted and talented child in their life. Hence, interviewing the participants seemed to be the most

appropriate method to achieve this objective. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) have suggested that obtaining a rich data based on various perspectives and examples would be successful if the research is conducted in an appropriate way.

The interviews were conducted at the participants' homes where the participants feel comfortable to share their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and understandings about parenting young gifted and talented children. As a means of ensuring that respondents had time to think about what I would be asking, the questions were emailed to everyone three days in advance. There were two interviews in this study and they were conducted individually. The questions asked as part of these interviews were designed to explore each participant's experiences and perspectives raising a gifted and talented child. Such questions allowed people to tell me about events that were important to them and the meanings they attached to these events. The predetermined questions asked were:

- a) What is it like parenting a young intellectually gifted child?
- b) What factors influence parenting a gifted child especially the young intellectually gifted?

- c) Is parenting a young gifted child different from parenting any other child? If so, what is different and what remains the same?
- d) What kinds of support do the parents of gifted children need in relation to their parenting?

The initial interviews provided the information on which to base further interviews. The first interview was to motivate respondents to share their knowledge on the parenting tasks. The questions in the following rounds of interviews were more specific and related to the information gathered from the first interviews. The second was to elicit further information that relates directly to the trends emerging from the analysis of the first interview data. Conducting two interview sessions, allowed the participants to reflect on what they had said previously. The framing of the second interview questions revealed some of my initial thoughts I had following the first interview. The second questions were:

- a) You have stated in a previous interview that you feel...Can you please tell me more about this?
- b) ...was a word you used often when you talked about challenges in parenting gifted children. I would like to explore that a little more with you. Can you talk about that please?

After the first interview, questions were slightly adjusted and obtaining the feedback from the participants allowed me to clarify, change and elaborate more on what was recorded earlier. Interviews were audio recorded, in order to fully capture what was said. Participants were aware of the use of the audio recording device, but it was positioned in a discreet place in such a way that neither respondents nor myself were distracted. I transcribed the recordings and the process took much longer than I expected.

The first reason was due to the language background. As an Asian, I had difficulty capturing what was said and explained by the respondents. I had to listen several times and it took me hours to listen to the conversation and write the information. Another barrier was that, as I had little knowledge of the context within which I was operating, it required a considerable amount of correcting. However, I felt that this actually was a useful process for me as I have learnt how to process the data and helped me to clarify much of what was recorded. Another important opportunity the digital recorder offered me, which proved useful when the transcribing took longer than

expected, was being able to play these back regularly on my computer, and giving me the opportunities to learn to use the media file and help develop my thinking on my recorded data.

Once I had transcribed the interviews I began writing memos on these. Analytical memos helped me to process what was said and discussed by the respondents and I was able to collect my thoughts of the interactions between the respondents and myself. I was also able to identify the emerging themes and think about what it was that I was learning throughout this study.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

There are various kinds of documentation that may be used during the course of data collection. For example, the child's personal records, and portfolios', parents' personal records such as journals, letters, or diaries, official documents such as the child's assessment records, certificates of achievement, photographs or internal and external communications, such as those used within a school system, or produced for public consumption. Document analysis was intended as a means of data collection at the outset of the current study. The document analysis method is thought to be an ideal method for this

study. However, this did not work out and the reason will be discussed in Section 3.5.4.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Introduction

In qualitative research, data analysis involves the synthesis of information compiled from various sources, for example, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. The researcher's task is to prepare a coherent description of findings based on the data. In my study the research data set consisted of transcribed interviews. I have transcribed both my participants' interviews manually.

3.5.2 Overview of data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2006) note that the researcher may formulate theory from emerging data over the course of the research, incorporating personal interpretations along the way. Mutch (2005) indicates that, new insights may arise if a researcher is knowledgeable about the area of study, inspired by the data that have been acquired or actively seeking new perspectives or ideas to formulate their research findings. Mutch again indicated analyzing data can be the most difficult aspect of this type of research as it

requires the researcher to take up a process of inductive reasoning and theorizing rather than following the technical process.

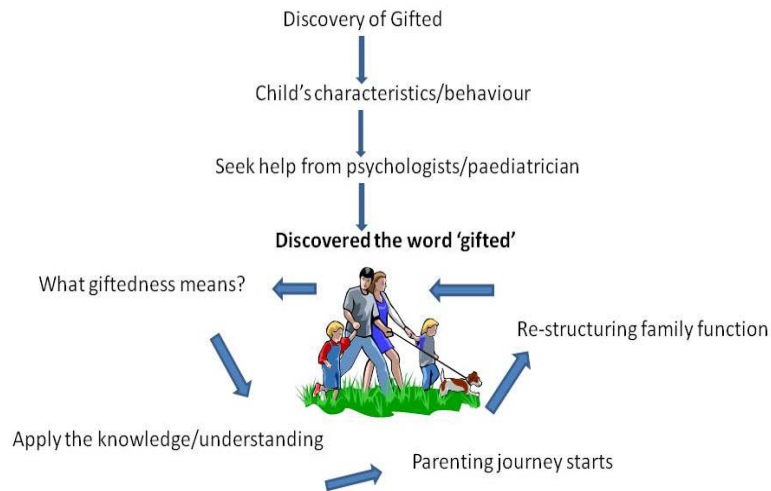
Bogdan and Biklen (2006) state that, to do “ongoing analysis and interpretation, one must have an eye for the conceptual and substantive issues that are displayed” (p.160). Therefore in this study, I identify concepts, and activities that relate to parenting as I have experienced what is said. By doing this I have known what to focus on in a deeper way and can ask more directive questions in the interviews.

3.5.3 Analysis Process

Description is a process whereby data are organized according to themes. Accurate description requires that the researcher gives an honest account of the study, although ordering data and deriving meaning will demand selection and interpretation on the part of the researcher (Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006).

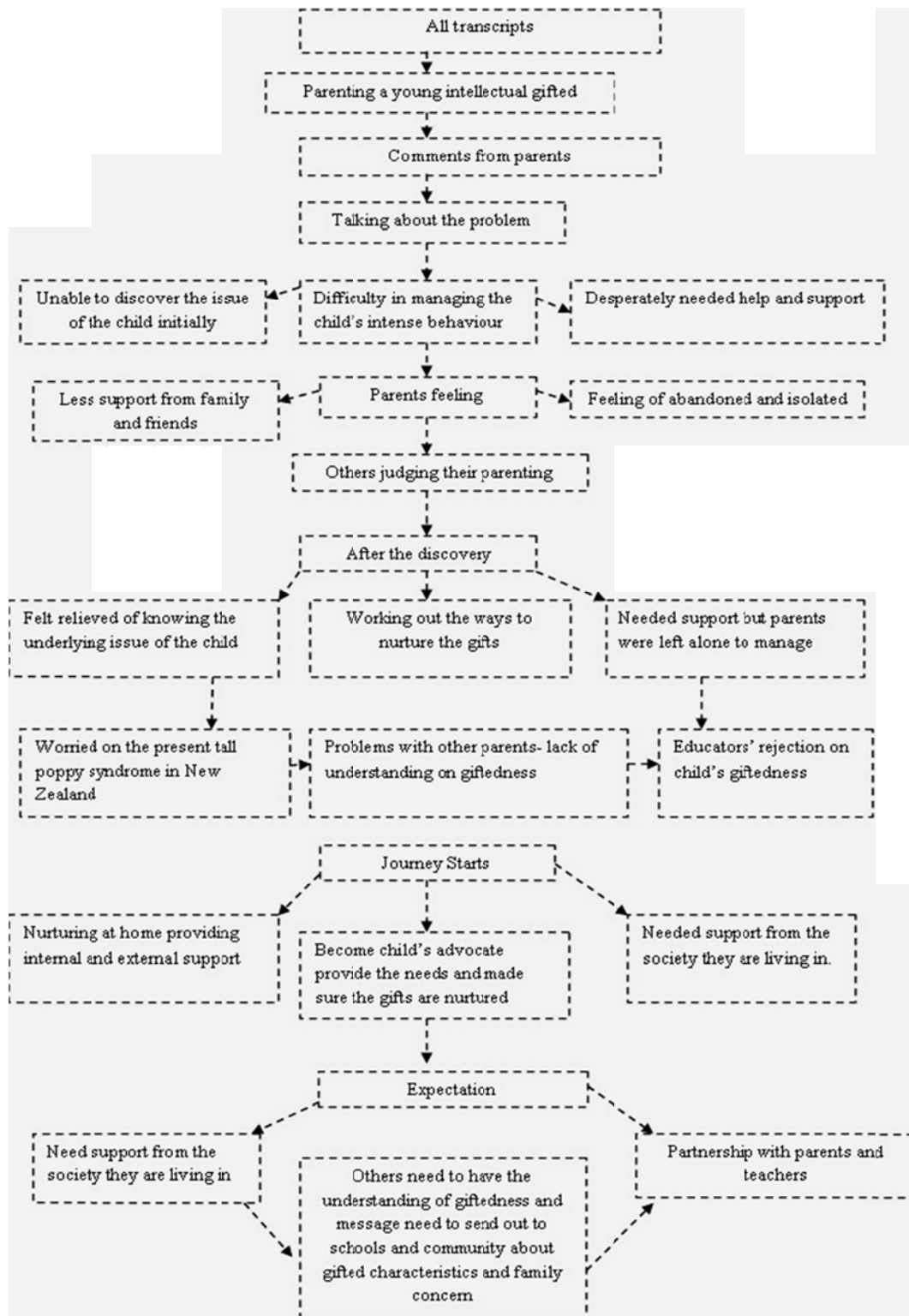
By effectively developing analysable units of data and creating categories, the researcher sets the stage for interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Therefore in this study, the data has been read, reread

and listened to many times so that I, the researcher understand it better. Coding was the initial method of identifying what emerging themes had been apparent. By re-reading the set of comments and analytical memos and becoming familiar with the data, I developed a visual device. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggested that, graphics and charts such as diagrams, continua, tables, and graphs can be employed in all stages of analysis (See Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

I developed possible coding categories and sketched out the relationships in the form of cartoon characters. For example, when looking at the perspectives and experiences of parents having a young gifted and talented child, I started off by looking out for words and phrases that were unfamiliar to me. For example, I was anxious to know why one of the respondents used 'roller-coaster' to describe her daily activity. I picked the word and fitted it together under some major code, for example, under the code 'managing relationships within the family members'. I also categorized the information into sub codes which break these major codes into smaller categories (see *Figure 3*). For example, parents have voiced their views on their relationships with their family members, school, community, friends, extended family members and also social support service group.



(Figure 3)

When I discovered the particular categories and how parents have different perspectives on each of them, I coded the perspectives of these parents briefly under each category. For example under the managing relationship with school, I coded 'frustrated', 'lack of support', 'lack of understanding of giftedness' and under the managing relationship with family category, I coded 'stressful', 'challenging', 'tired', and 'confused'. This process was carried out by physically writing these on coloured strips of paper that I then grouped and regrouped on a large surface, looking for those ideas that went together and those that seemed to be outliers (see figure 4). I then incorporated these pattern codes with my other sources such as the document analysis and literature review.



(Figure 4)

The data has been consistently revisited to see the relationship between different pieces of data (refer figure 3). It is from this process, that emerging themes have become apparent. In writing up this research I have chosen quotes from the data gathered to support my understanding of the role of parents raising a gifted and talented child and those with whom they interact.

3.5.4 Document Analysis

The reason for including document analysis was to obtain the parents' perspectives on the child's achievement due to his or her giftedness or on the general daily task of the child at school such as the portfolios, or the child's record. This was to serve as a supplemental source of data. Background information about the children requested from their parents included a brief description of activities experienced by the parents with the children, either at home or school, information about the level of achievement in the various subject areas or the child's participation in an international and local competition for young gifted.

It was suggested that the parents might also wish to comment on the child's achievement, emotions, perceptiveness, and acceptance of

and by others. Parents' responses were, however, disappointing. And only one parent supplied information. Although it was intended that acquired data would be considered during the analysis stage of the research, the documentation that was provided proved to be of limited use. Therefore, the use of this method had to be discarded.

3.6 Ethical considerations

3.6.1 Introduction

According to Merriam (2007) in qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the “dissemination of findings” (p.230). Merriam further stated that, the “researcher-participant” relationship and “research purpose” determine how much the researcher reveals about the actual purpose of the study. She also explains “how informed consent can actually be and how much privacy and protection from harm is afforded the participants” (p.230). Hence, in the next section, I have explained the ethical consideration undertaken in my study.

3.6.2 Explaining the purpose of the research

I used a range of strategies to ensure that ethical matters had due consideration. Permission to carry out this study was granted by the

University of Canterbury, College of Education Ethics Committee. Once granted I then approached the New Zealand Gifted Association, Play Centres, Public Libraries, Montessori Centres, Kindergartens, and the online network under the name Gifted Parents Support Group.

I received quite number of responses from parents around the regions of Auckland and Hamilton. My selected participants were volunteers from the Gifted Parents Support Group. All of these volunteers were given an introductory letter explaining the study in detail. This was to make sure that the participants had a clear picture of what actually I had planned to do together with them in the study.

An ethical issue related voluntary participation and coercion is that some parents might feel obliged to participate. I addressed this issue by stating clearly in the information letter, and consent form and verbally explaining to them that my research study has no relation with their personal life and that information gathered will not be used to explore or harm their family members. Their right to withdraw at any point in this study was clearly stated on the permission form.

They were also given one week's time to decide whether they wished to participate or not in my study. All the four parents agreed to be my participants and they signed the formal agreement to participate and returned it to me by posting it in the envelope which I had provided.

3.6.3 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Privacy for interviewing was maintained by interviewing each participant separately in this study. As for anonymity, I asked the participants whether they wanted to reveal their identity and all of them were not interested. Therefore, I used a pseudonym for all participants. Confidentiality was guaranteed in my study.

To ensure confidentiality, only my supervisors had access to the data. Data were stored in my computer and it is password protected. The back-ups of the data were stored on pen drives and locked in a safe place. Any information derived from the data which might expose or harm the participants were not included and kept in a safe place.

3.7 Methodological Limitations

This was a subjective study situated in a particular context and therefore lacked generalisability. Only four couples were interviewed from two regions in New Zealand. Therefore, care must be taken not

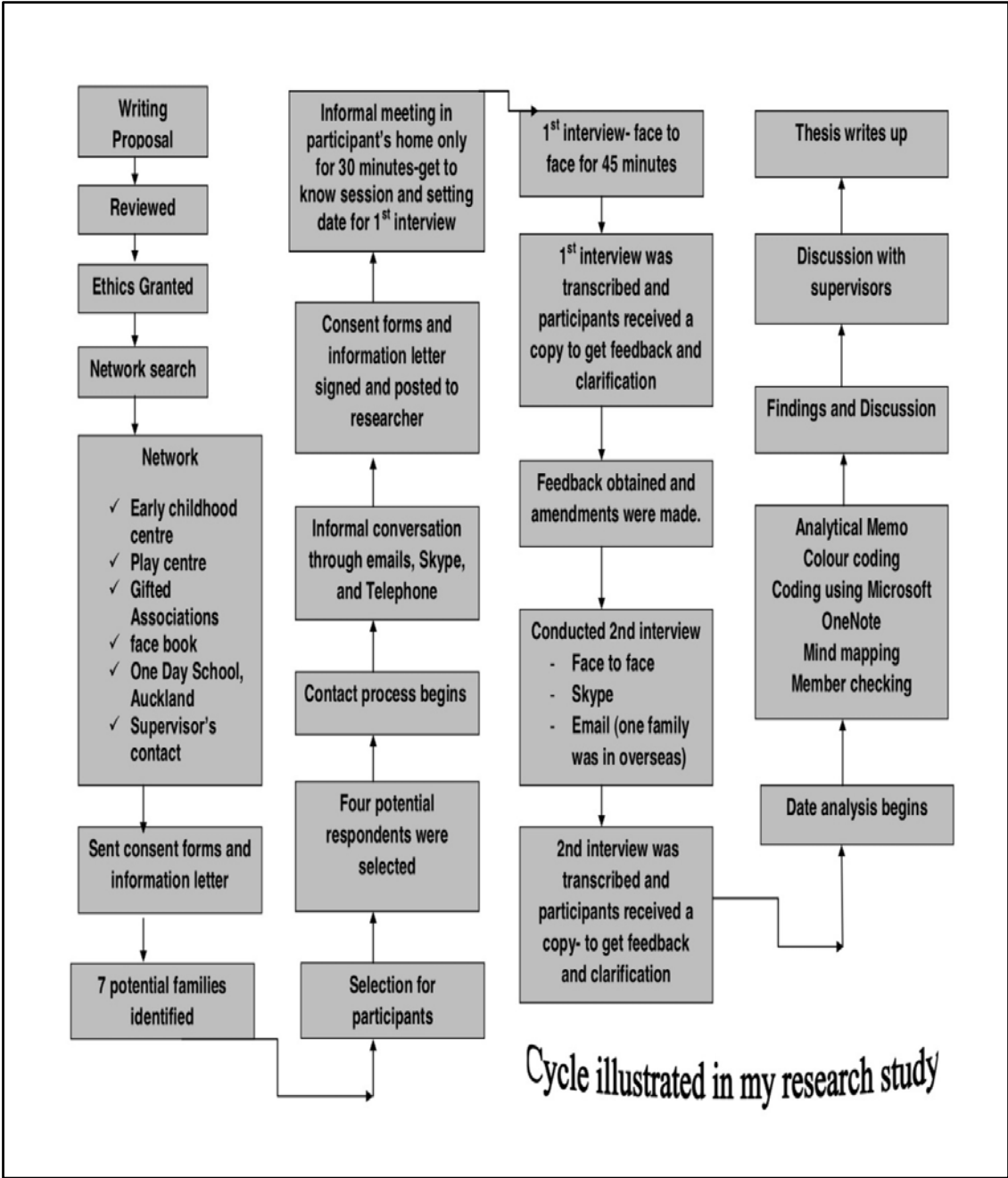
to draw generalizations from the findings obtained. Any qualitative researcher who chooses to conduct a research study must recognize that the data obtained from a subject pool may not necessarily be representative of a broader spectrum (Creswell, 2007). The concern around generalizations was one that I governed attentively. Since there were relatively few participants and a limited time frame, broad generalizations were not made in this study. However, the data supplied by the parents were valued and appreciated as an insightful means of informing on parents' experiential issues.

3.8 Summary

The research presented in this study adopted a phenomenological methodology. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews. The trustworthiness and credibility of the data were ensured as far as possible using data triangulation (interviews, analytical memos and relevant literature); member checks (returning interview transcripts to participants to verify that the data represented their viewpoints and concerns) and peer review (allowing my supervisors and colleague to review my findings to find out whether it is plausible data). The findings from this study are presented in the next chapter, followed by a discussion of findings in relation to the

parenting of gifted children, as well as implications for further research. Table 4 illustrates the cycle of my study.

Table 3: Illustration of the research study.



CHAPTER 4:

Discovery of Giftedness

“Oh My God...I figured it out. So this is what it is”
(Kate, transcript 1/1)

4.0 Introduction

Chapter four and five address the results of this thesis. Each chapter followed the format of firstly addressing the results and then a discussion. The results and discussion relate to the two research questions:

- a) What are parents' experiences, perception, and understanding of having a young intellectually gifted child?
- b) How do the services and supports in gifted community have an effect on parents' experiences and perceptions in parenting young gifted children?

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the reader to the participants and to explore their understandings of giftedness and how parents perceived the notion of giftedness in regards to raise young intellectually gifted children. Researcher considered familiarity with

participants and their understandings to be foundation for exploring the remainder of the findings.

4.1 Introduction to Families of the Gifted Children

Family	Children	Age	Place of Identification
Janet (Mother) Edward (Father)	Peter	7	Woodcock Johnson Test, Auckland
Kate (Mother) Lou (Father)	Tim	6	One Day School, Auckland
Sandy (Mother) Roger (Father)	Andrew	8	Woodcock Johnson Test, Auckland
Lily (Mother) Gary (Father)	Jack	7	Gifted Education Centre, Rotorua

Here is a small reminder of the participants' identification and their children's names. Pseudonyms were used for the parents and also the children to protect their identity. There were only four families involved in the study.

4.1.1 Janet and Edward

Janet and Edward's interview conveyed the experiences associated with raising an identified intellectually gifted son with an IQ of more than 148. Janet communicated the challenges and emotions she had experienced raising a gifted child. The lack of financial resources to be able to purchase equipment and send their son to the One Day School seemed to be difficult for these parents. Besides, having to deal with Peter's challenging behaviour added more constraints to their parenting.

4.1.2 Kate and Lou

While Peter's parents focused on the lack of financial resources and their son's challenging behaviour, the focus of Kate and Lou's interview was on the trials and tribulations that they endured while navigating the educational system. Kate is a strong advocate for her child when it comes to educational needs. She emphasised the importance of family and friends and acknowledged how unsupportive they were with her raising her gifted son. Kate also conveyed her experiences associated with the challenges and positive parenting she had experienced while raising another gifted five year old daughter.

4.1.3 Sandy and Roger

The focus of Sandy and Roger was also on the trials and tribulations they endured while navigating the educational system. Sandy and Roger emphasised the importance of sustaining the family structure and acknowledged that 'time' was very important in their family. According to Roger, the quality time the family spent together had brought a lot of changes in their family system. On the other hand, Sandy emphasised the importance of nurturing and sustaining her children's giftedness at home because of the negative responses she received from the school. Both parents realised that staying positive was what was best for them and their children.

4.1.4 Lily and Gary

The other parents' interview focused on their son's social situations which was a traumatic experience for Lily and her husband Gary. The transition from early childhood to primary school had been very confusing and stressful for them. The parents were often frustrated at their son's lack of response to them and it took a very long time for them to figure out how to teach their son about people's reactions and responses.

4.2 Parents' Concerns Before and After the Discovery of Giftedness

4.2.1 Introduction

The analysis was drawn from the parents' interviews. Parents' experiences and observations in parenting their child from the infant stage up to the transition from early childhood to primary stage were discussed. Being parents of an intellectually gifted child had never been easy for all the participants in this study. A key concern expressed in all the interviews centered on the ways in which the parents' role was being challenged physically and emotionally. The issues discussed in this section revolve around parents' experiences managing and coping with their children's uncomfortable behaviours before they discovered that their child was indeed gifted.

4.2.2 Dilemma before the discovery- parents' perspectives

Kate's perspective

Kate reflected on what went wrong in her parenting and deliberately found it difficult to acknowledge the issue. She experienced turmoil when she was unable to discern a clear or consistent pattern in relation to her son's behaviour.

Kate: *“I knew he was bright, and I knew he was alert but it was his behavioural stuff that really drove me to figure out something” (Transcript, 1/2).*

Kate began to realise that she knew something was wrong either in her parenting or with some behavioural issues concerning her son that she may not have been aware of. Without knowing the answer to her son’s behaviour as such, Kate struggled with her emotional feelings and frustration.

Kate: *“We had a visit to some friends’ house...and Tim was ...particularly full on and the mother, my friend made some comments about Tim’s behaviour which really hurt me” (Transcript 1/1).*

Kate was exhausted listening to others comments. She desperately wanted to know what had actually gone wrong with her upbringing, and probing for the answers within herself or from others were the most difficult moments she had experienced in her parenting, she said. Hearing others’ comments on her child’s behaviour added another burden and it was so stressful for Kate and her husband.

Kate: *“Well for Tim...to be honest it was all bunch of really challenging behavioural stuff which I struggled with for a long time to understand. I thought that there was something wrong with my parenting that something I wasn’t doing right because he was just so challenging all of the time*

*and very...very intense full on child with no break
for me... (Transcript, 1/1)*

Kate explained that the presence of her son on any family occasion or a visit to a friend's house was uncomfortable for the guests. Kate felt hurt and stressed when others never tried to understand what she had been going through in her parenting.

Kate: *"It made me realize that other people just don't have the experience that I do" (Transcript, 1/2).*

At times, Kate felt the whole scenario was quite confusing and challenging.

Kate: *"It's a challenge for my parenting because the way I was parented was not like that at all and I have found myself talking to Tim the way I talked to my parents wasn't so helpful" (Transcript, 1/3).*

To understand the negative responses from others and to be able to manage a child with unmanageable behaviour can be very stressful for parents of gifted children (Silverman, 2000; Smutny, 1998). Porter (2005) pointed out that sometimes parents of gifted children were able to identify the stages of developmental differences between their child and other children of the same age. However, the barriers for the parents to understand those differences and the underpinning issues

in relation to the child's intense behaviour may be due to their lack of knowledge in understanding about giftedness and the characteristic of the gifted children.

Janet and Edward's Perspective

As for Peter's parents before the discovery, they had gone through a hard time finding out why their son's behaviour was unmanageable compared to other children of the same age.

Janet: *"...he's got a 17 to 18 year old mind in a 5 year old body. He is never been physically able...his intelligence doesn't match his physical age and he always been here and there and like emotionally not understanding unless he's kind of been through that experience...intellectually it's been very difficult to kind a matching up him as a whole person" (Transcript, 1/4).*

Janet's concern was echoed by someone who can understand what she was experiencing.

Janet: *"I kind of talked to my friend about the whole reasoning and ...I thought there was something wrong with him more" (Transcript, 1/2).*

It was found that Janet was aware that Peter had high cognitive levels compared to his peers but as a mother she was unable to find the

reason he was so unmanageable apart from being intellectually smart. The need to get her son tested for his rapid learning and intense behaviour came only after the discussion between Janet and Peter's teacher from the thinkers club. Silverman and Golon (2008) described that very often parents of gifted children seek help or support from family members or friends when they experience difficulties in understanding their children and coping with their behaviours.

Janet stated: "The encouragement of Peter's teacher at the thinkers' club" (Transcript, 1/1) made her to realise that it was the right time to get Peter assessed formally to clear their uncertainty. Janet said that the teacher noticed Peter's ability during the classroom activities and informed them about his ways of thinking which were far beyond a typical five year old.

Lily's Perspectives

For Lily's family, putting their child to sleep was the most difficult task that both husband and wife experienced. Experiencing sleep deprivation was the hardest moment in the course of their parenting.

Lily and Gary went through turmoil because they could not understand why their son was not sleeping and why he was different from other babies.

Lily: *“he was 18 months then and he just never slept” (Transcript 1/2).*

Lily and her husband developed strategies to manage their son’s sleeping just like any other parents but that never worked. The need to get a child specialist’s support was the final option for these couples.

Lily: *“We spoke to our pediatrician desperately to find out how to get our child to sleep...Ump he told us that he didn’t switch his brain off” (Transcript 2/1).*

However, the feedback from the pediatrician was unexpected and scary for them.

Lily: *“We were mortified, as this was no solution to why our child slept no more than a few hours in any given 24 hour period. We did not accept this to be the case as it didn’t help us to survive our situation as extremely sleep deprived” (Transcript, 1/2).*

Lily desperately needed help and sought someone who could help her identify her son's sleeping disorder. At that point, the only person Lily relied was her mother who was a special education coordinator.

Lily: *“My mum is a teacher and she is a SENCO and she had a quite a bit of understanding of it and she said “Oh maybe this what gifted was and insisted me talking to [anonymous] over in Rotorua. So I rang her up and said “help” and she said possibly that is what going on...” (Transcript, 1/1)*

Upon discussion with her mother and the psychologist, Lily decided to assess Jack when he was seven years old. Silverman and Kearney's (1989) study found that having a gifted child with high intensity can cause family stresses. Lily underwent a similar experience before her son's was identified as gifted.

Sandy and Roger's perspectives

Almost all the parents had difficulty understanding their child's uncomfortable behaviours. However, Sandy and Roger, described that they knew their child was somehow gifted from an early age. Sandy explained that, throughout her son's developmental stages,

she had observed Andrew's physical and cognitive levels which were different from other children of the same age.

Sandy: *...I saw things that Andrew did from a very young age, from the time he was born, when he was like just three months old and he tried to communicate verbally at very early age and at six months old he showed signs of being very analytical that... he would analyze the environment hugely...from about 18 months old, he took an intense interest in books, a ferocious reader...had a very long concentration span...he was reading fluently...he could do blends and all sort of those things... (Transcript, 1/3).*

Sandy and Roger noticed their son's characteristics and his ways of thinking were beyond the age of other children of the same age. However, they did not get him assessed until he was six years old. The decision to get their son assessed came only after they received negative comments from the teacher.

Sandy: "I don't want the teacher just telling me anecdotally that there was something wrong with my child... I wanted to identify" (Transcript, 1/4).

Sandy then saw an article about the One Day School on her son's school resource board. She spoke to Roger eagerly and wanted their son to get tested.

Sandy: *“I want him to be tested because I want to know if there is a problem with my child”*
(Transcript, 1/4).

The aforementioned interview excerpts encapsulated these parents' unawareness of the term giftedness. In plain and simple language, their view can be summarised as follows: Not all parents know what giftedness means. You can't expect the parents to know about giftedness unless they have prior knowledge as well as experiences working with gifted children, or they have experiences with family members who had been identified as gifted. You can't assume that they are bad parents and measure their parenting with everybody else's because they know their child better than we do. However, parents only get their child tested when they feel there is something wrong with the child in relation to his or her behaviours. The focus of getting the child tested for his or her intelligence never came up for these parents.

4.2.3 After the Discovery- “Should I get excited, or worried?”

4.2.3.1. Introduction

There was significant debate in the literature regarding the parents’ dilemma in the upbringing of young gifted children before or after the discovery of giftedness. Moraswka and Sander’s (2009) and Solow’s (1995) study described the dilemma of parents having to raise a child with special needs. The studies highlighted parents concerns in raising gifted children, regarding education, family adaptations, and neighbourhood and community issues. Underlying this debate was the question of whether parents in this study experienced similar issues. Therefore, it was important to explore parents’ viewpoints after the discovery.

4.2.3.2 Parents’ real life experiences

Lily’s Experience

Knowing that their child was indeed gifted from the assessment results added to the parents’ mood in this study. As Lily expressed:

Lily: “...when we were confronted with the reality that our child was teaching himself to read at age two we started to realize that perhaps the pediatrician was right, as we were sure that was perhaps a little different than what was expected. It was exciting for us to see this happening and

also reassuring that perhaps we weren't just terrible parents and that he really didn't turn his brain off after all" (Transcript 2/1)

As for Lily, she related how secure she felt after talking to her mother and a child specialist. Upon discussion with these professionals, she validated her observations of Jack. Later, she was informed by the psychologist that Jack's lack of sleep and his intensity were because of his being intellectually gifted.

Kate's Experience

Kate indicated, "Oh My God...I figured it out. So this is what it is" (Transcript, 1/1). Kate realised that her search for a reason for her son's unmanageable behaviour was finally discovered.

Kate: *"...I knew this is it...he did heck of lot of things earlier than any other child that I could see around us...I mean he was my first child so I don't have the bench mark but for Tim, I could see that he was talking earlier, he was recognizing letters earlier, he was recognizing words earlier, all these things that my friends' children weren't doing" (Transcript 1/3).*

Sandy's Experience

Sandy on the other hand expressed her experience of dealing with issues that concerned her son.

Sandy: *"I knew he was special...it's nothing to do with Asperger or Autism...um he is not a child with issues either...that answers everything doesn't it" "...being six months in school...ah all his huge amount of enthusiasm, energy...um pretty much gone...It's all gone. It's knocked out of him" (Transcript, 1/4).*

Sandy showed a feeling of regret for not getting Andrew tested at the outset. She stated: "ah...we should have thought about this earlier...you know..." (Transcript, 1/4).

Janet's Experience

Janet expressed her uncertainty when she was told that her son might be gifted

Janet: *"...a colleague said to me, you know he is gifted...I was like woh, woh...hang on a minute. I didn't want to make him any different even though he was different...um [pause] I was so confused and didn't actually believe he was gifted" (Transcript, 1/1).*

Three families celebrated the ‘newly’ gifted tag on their children, while one family was left with confusion. Janet seemed to be confused because she did not want to make her son look different from other children. Silverman (1998) described that some parents of gifted children often felt inadequately prepared to raise a gifted child. This was owing to not knowing what to do and how to raise a child with special characteristics. Solow (1995) suggested that the issue of confusion and not knowing how to raise a gifted child was due to the parents’ lack of proper guidelines and framework for parenting.

4.3 Outcomes after the discovery

4.3.1 Introduction

Adler (2006) stated that stress in parents of gifted children can arise from a desire for feelings of being lonely when family members and friends constantly fail to understand and support parents of gifted children. Parents in this study spoke about their concerns in relation to the discovery of their child’s giftedness.

4.3.2 Excited and Relieved

The discovery of giftedness was the stepping stone for all the parents in this study. Parents started researching more about giftedness.

Sandy: *“After the assessment, I came home...jumped on the internet, googled throughout the day and tried to get some understanding of the term...you know...I knew this is going to change, I was relieved...immensely relieved that I had found a name for it and had found a group of people who “understood” me and our issues” (Transcript, 2/1).*

Initially, Sandy went through a hard time finding out what went wrong with her parenting. However, after discovering her child's underpinning issues were due to him being gifted, she felt relieved because she knew now that her son had special needs. Sandy was excited because she managed to find a group of people who went through similar experiences to her.

When there was a need to get a child assessed formally, for some parents of gifted children waiting for the result was like being as nervous as ‘a cat with a long tail in a room filled with rocking chairs’. For Lily, waiting for the result was nerve racking. Lily was anxious and worried about the outcome of the results. Knowing her son was gifted, she felt relieved just like other parents in this study.

Lily: *“When he was assessed formally this year, we were still nervous that he might not show as being gifted even with everything we had*

witnessed, worried that it would blow our chances of any support at school. As it was, the result of the assessment showed him as gifted and we were relieved more than anything that we then had hard evidence to back our plight for more support at school” (Transcript, 2/2)

4.3.3 Confusion

Parents in Margrain’s (2010) study reported being responsive to their children’s learning. Similarly, parents in this study also played an effective role in their children’s learning. However, the community seemed to have a negative perception of what parents were doing with their children. Lily found that her ways of providing sufficient attention to her son after his gifted discovery was misinterpreted by others.

Lily: *“When we tried to get support with accessing appropriate reading materials from our local kindergarten where we visited for playgroup, they told me that if he learnt his phonics in a week, clearly I didn’t do enough with my child. Having told them about many of the activities we did such as biking, walking, going to the park etc, they told me perhaps I did too much! At this stage as parents we were left feeling confused about what was going on, and anxious that no one understood and we didn’t have any support and perhaps weren’t going to” (Transcript 2/1)*

4.3.4 Frustration, Fear, and Anxiety,

Often, parents of a gifted child have fears about how to nurture their children's gifted abilities (Adler, 2006). However, for parents in this study, fear of what society will think about their child's gifted label was seen as one of their concerns. For one family, frustration over the promises made for the gifted children and their educational opportunities concerned them. For others, anxiety in relation to their capability of raising a gifted child was the issue. This is discussed next.

Frustration

Kate and Edward expressed their feelings of frustration over the lack of support from the people whom they trusted. Kate was frustrated with her family members who failed to understand her son as being gifted. Edward was frustrated with the lack of support and promises made for gifted children's education.

Kate: *“My parents always sound supportive on the phone although I wonder how much of that actually they got....when I spend lengthy periods of time with them...they did not get any of it at all and they were quite rude to Tim and quite dismissive toward him and very unsympathetic and very unsupportive with me...”(Transcript, 1/6)*

Edward: *“One thing I get frustrated is with the election promises...what the opposition wanted to do for the gifted education, when we voted in...um [pause] they got the power, there’s still nothing for us” (Transcript, 1/9)*

Fear

Sandy spoke about her fear in relation to unfavourable reactions by others towards her child’s giftedness. Lily expressed her fear of inadequacy in knowledge. The fear existed in Lily after she observed her son’s speed of learning and his knowledge level.

Sandy: *“I didn’t want to believe it and when I think about it I don’t want to believe it because if you go out there in our society in New Zealand and say you have a gifted child, people will look at you like who do you think you are. You know people would judge you immediately when you say your child is gifted” (Transcript, 1/1)*

Lily: *“He is more well read than either myself or my husband. I am aware that he would love to learn science at a college level that I cannot provide and this saddens me that I cannot do this for him as my understanding will never be at that level. He is far more adept at learning more rapidly than I and as such there is no way that either my husband or I can keep up with his knowledge, level of speed of learning in his areas of interest” (Transcript 2/4).*

It appeared in this study that all the parents have less information on what they should do after their children's gifted identification. As for them, the word 'gifted' was new. Hence, to understand what it means took a very long time for these parents. Janet stated: "it was a long journey for us to understand what giftedness is, that our child is gifted and what the consequences of this would be" (Transcript, 1/1).

4.4 Summary

One key theme was presented in all four families: (a) Parents' concern before and after the discovery of giftedness. This theme was to assist readers to work through the problems or issues that all the parents in this study had overcome throughout their parenting. The researcher's viewpoint can be summarised as follows: giftedness for these parents was viewed with excitement, anxiety, fear, confusion, and frustration. Inherent in having a young gifted child was a need for on-going support. The researcher expressed concern when this need was not understood by others and considered that society's acceptance or lack thereof, played a key role in the social experiences of parents raising a gifted child.

Chapter 5:

THE JOURNEY OF PARENTING A YOUNG INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILD

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to address the family stories that provided the firsthand accounts of what it is like to raise a child who is young and intellectually gifted. This theme described the emergent nature of and the challenges associated with giftedness. How do parents' experience raising a young intellectually gifted child? Addressing the needs of gifted children has been researched vastly in the field of gifted education. However, addressing parents' experiences, perspectives, concerns, and challenges in their parenting has been paid less attention.

The researcher intended to focus on the qualitative meaning in understanding the perspectives and experiences of families about parenting gifted children. However, there were some key issues discussed about how the journey added more burdens and challenges, especially to the parents of the gifted children.

The lived experiences and perspectives of raising gifted children by four parents of intellectually gifted children from different families were examined in this study. Each parent's experiences and views were explored in phenomenological studies based on in-depth interviews. The participants in this study viewed their journey of parenting as an avenue to obtain understanding about their children's giftedness as well as a platform to provide the adequate support and needs for the children. Despite the individuality of their experiences, the parents shared some commonalities in their parenting task. The differences in their views were reflected not only in their unique lived experiences, but also the various daily activities in parenting.

5.1.1 My child is gifted- "You know mummy tomorrow today will be yesterday"

Porter (2005) and Freeman (2010) described that the primary difference between a smart child and a gifted child was in the depth and intensity of certain traits. For instance, smart children ask questions that have answers. However, gifted children ask questions about abstract ideas, concepts, and theories that may not have easy answers. Here was what parents had mentioned makes their children gifted.

Kate: *“You know mummy tomorrow today will be yesterday” “How do we know that we are awake, mummy and we are not just dreaming?” and I went, hold on let me think it through...”* (Transcript, 1/7).

Lily: *“Mum, that’s a cabover truck. After they finish building the road they are going to build an airport for that plane to land on Mum...um.. I have noticed that he is looking at every single detail on the page and focusing on other aspects such as what could happen next”* (Transcript, 2/2).

Janet: *“...things like a spiral graph um [pause] he started a little passion of this spiral graph and says “I will show you mum, how you bend a line, you can make a line bend you know” um...I was surprised with his invention...”* (Transcript, 1/6)

The aforementioned experiences by the parents with their gifted children were a sign of the children demonstrating their insatiable curiosity about their world (Porter, 1999). Kate explained that she noticed that her children often ask a lot of questions. They were not just ordinary questions she said. Those were frequently penetrating questions that caused one to stop and think or wonder where in the world this question came from.

As for Lily, she knew her son was able to read at the age of two. She described that she is aware her son thinks and acts beyond his chronological age. On the other hand, Janet expressed that her son enjoys working things out on his own and that surprised her sometimes.

A consideration of parents' beliefs about their children's cognitive levels was seen as evidence in this study. Davis and Rimm (2004) posited that gifted children were different in degree. They simply acquired and processed information and problem-solving better, more quickly, more efficiently, and at earlier ages compared to the non-gifted children.

5.1.2 Commonality: Providing support for the gifted

Parents in this study understand that being intellectually gifted relied on the cognitive ability of the child. When the child's needs were not met in school, parents found other ways to nurture their gifts. The option to send the children to the One Day School was seen as the favourable choice for all the parents in this study.

Janet: *“At the school, he gets bored with the repetition and spoon feeding” possibly because “his giftedness*

wasn't nurtured um [pause] they tried to stamp him down" (Transcript 1/3).

Janet found that the One Day School helped Peter get through the week because they felt that the school was not providing enough stimulation to cater to Peter's needs. Janet described that Peter seemed to be bored in school before having an interesting and challenging day in the One Day School. Janet felt that Peter's school was not helping to nurture his abilities, but the One Day School was helping him to achieve his potential.

Janet: *"He started to begin to get recognition for his abilities, positive feedback and encouragement, and the staff over there were really good" (Transcript, 1/4).*

Peter's father talked about the activities conducted in the One Day School that enhanced the learning of his gifted son.

Edward: *"...they do stuff...ump challenging tasks that test your thinking skill...um [pause]...it's exciting to see your kids can create um things that let you think how they created that!" (Transcript, 2/2).*

Both parents found that the One Day School helped them to identify their son's gifts. They felt the activities conducted in the One Day School were valuable in terms of teaching and learning. The applied

knowledge provided an opportunity for Janet and Edward to nurture Peter's gifts at home.

Janet: "We learned so much from him...ump the teachers were good, the activities were challenging for him..." (Transcript, 2/1).

Kate's Perspectives

When Kate realised that Tim was not getting the necessary intellectual needs at school, she gave her suggestions to Lou to find a solution for the problem. The alternative option was the One Day School. Kate described her children's work in the One Day School and noticed their reading activities were not based on their ability to read, rather the focus was more on critical thinking.

Kate: *"...there are various activities um [pause] for example dissect where someone brings along the animal parts and children will dissect them or there might be something about plants and the kids will dissect the plants, you know it could be anything" (Transcript 1/12).*

Listening to Kate's description of what her children did at the school, the researcher concluded that Kate knew what was best for her children. Kate filled the gaps when she realised that her children's gifts should be developed and nurtured not only at home but also through other resources.

Sandy's Perspectives

As for Sandy, her son's intellectual ability was not given attention by the teachers in his pre-school and primary school. Sandy indicated that Andrew did not do any kind of academic study in his pre-school. Sandy stated: "he is a physical child, so he plays all the time" (Transcript, 1/2). Sandy believed that Andrew was able to develop his own performance, and he also has the thinking potential to assimilate complicated matters easily, but the preschool was not recognising his abilities. Thus, the only choice she had was to send him to the One Day school.

Sandy: *"The One Day school is our saviour. The school makes him feel alive and that makes us feel alive too. The old system never did anything for us so there are other systems such as the One Day school that helps us" (Transcript, 1/15)*

Lily's Perspectives

Lily had the same thoughts as the other parents in this study. She sent Jack to the One Day School because she believed her son's educational needs were not met either in the early childhood setting or the primary.

Lily: *"We know his needs aren't met at school and we have to find the way to meet them elsewhere, I mean for instance the One Day School. We made a decision*

that we have to find money and he has to be able to go because...um [pause] it's half of his well being and it has to come down to who is going to survive and be happy and how to save him” (Transcript, 1/4).

In summary, a need for educational support, and frustration over the lack of support from the school were associated with gifted children's learning. Gifted children often have more advanced metacognitive skills than non-gifted children, and they are often able to apply strategies to contexts that are different from those in which the strategy was originally taught (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVires, 2007). All the parents believed that if the present system was not able to provide the needed support, alternatively they had to find their own ways to support their gifted children's learning. Parents considered that sending their children to the One Day School was an alternative option that may support their learning when schools weren't meeting their needs. However, the system of the One Day School was that children attend the school once in a week and on the remaining four days they will be studying in the general education system. That seemed to be a problem for all the families in this study.

5.1.3 “My child is not gifted one day but every day”

The One Day school was run by a non-profit charitable trust, the Gifted Education Centre and incurred a financial cost. When the study began, Edward was a full-time student, whilst Janet was in fulltime employment. Although the financial situation of this family was quite different from the other three families, Edward and Janet balanced their available time and energy to support their gifted son. Even though at times it was a juggle for them physically and emotionally, this family was keen to promote positive outcomes of having a gifted child in the family. However, their concern was that the One Day school acted as a survival mechanism only for one day and on the remaining four days their son seemed to be struggling in the general education school system.

Janet: *“Your child isn’t gifted for one day in a week, they are gifted every day um...[pause] we stopped going to the One Day School when they shifted the location...and [anonymous] stopped teaching it. We lived up in Cambridge and it’s too much for us to be travelling for one day, dropping them off or going to work, picking them up. So it’s too much for just one day in a week” (Transcript, 1/12).*

Edward: *“It is quite difficult when you don’t have that income and to be able to provide the extra*

things that you like your child to do...well at least his mother (Peter's) has been very supportive and providing what she can for the needs to help both of the boys do extra things" (Transcript, 1/9).

Janet expressed that the cost of travelling to and fro as well as the fees for just one day were too much for her family. Although the One Day school seemed to be a better alternative for all the parents in this study, as for Janet and Edward it was managing their time and arranging transportation that seemed to be very stressful for them. However, there was no mention of 'regrets' by them of having a gifted child and even though Edward openly and honestly confessed having financial problems he only expressed his frustration for his inability to provide enough stimulation for his gifted son.

5.1.4 Parents' perspectives towards child's learning

The element in supporting the learning of intellectually gifted children was not focused only on academic pursuits. Parents were found to be engaging their children's learning in a variety of ways and approaches. Supporting the children's learning was considered a venue for nurturing their gifts as well as forming a healthy relationship with the child (Hertzog & Bennett, 2004; May, 2008; Porter, 2005; Solow, 1995).

***Janet:** “I allow Peter do his own learning and thinking at home...ump we generally respond when needed to his interest or preference...um [pause] encouraging him to do it himself or supporting him by finding ways to do what he is planning on doing or wanting to do err...like karate interest, finding a class err... allowing him to use computer research techniques, taking him to extra classes, very rarely do we perceive ourselves as forcing him to do anything unless it is something we find him resisting...um [pause] because he has a confidence problem or an emotional issue related to the topic. We will find a way for him to find joy in the activity...um [pause]...(Transcript, 2/1).*

Heller and Schofield (2008) described that parents were important agents in the life of any gifted children and they hold the responsibility for nurturing both the child and their gifts. In relation to this, parents in this study were seen to be very supportive and responsive to their children's learning.

***Lily:** “Encourage him to try things and be persistent as he has the tendency to be a perfectionist, but he also has sensitivities that limit what he copes with...um[pause] encourage him to explore and express his ideas about what he is interested in, particularly as it is hard for him to find friends to share this with” (Transcript., 2/2)*

Included in the concept of supporting gifted children's learning was a need for quality time. Not only did Kate and Sandy have a role in determining the emotional, physical, and social support for their gifted children, they also had a role believing in gifted children spending time with their father.

Kate: *“If he is not getting necessary intellectual needs meet at school then I will do something at home to counter that...um [pause] I have to make sure that he gets time one on one time with his dad...Lou plays rugby with him every day after coming home from work...he needs special one on one treatment particularly with his dad”* (Transcript, 2/2).

Sandy: *“Roger does lot of one to one with Andrew like physical stuff that gets him to release some of the energy... Roger has to look at all kinds of physical. He takes Andrew to rugby, because he coaches rugby teams and he does one on one the boy stuff and I try to focus on [anonymous]...do the girl things like do ballet and teach ballet umps read to her...Roger plays board games at night before bed and that fits Andrew...Roger and Andrew were bonded over board games like scrabble, yard sticks, chess, and top up the time”* (Transcript, 1/10).

In summary, parents viewed that parenting an intellectually gifted child was not merely supporting the child's cognitive ability, but rather teaching the child to master other skills as well. Parents understand that parenting a gifted child involved work on their part too. They were working together with the children to nurture their gifts. The activities carried out by the parents with their gifted children were seen as a professional gifted parenting practice without any signs of authoritarian parenting.

Wu's (2008) and Dwairy's (2004) study described parents of gifted children as having more control and influence in their children's future. At the same time the authors pointed out that parents should respond to their children's needs and expectations in a warmth and more supportive manner rather than imposing directive and restrictive styles of parenting. This was proven evidence in all the families. Parents appeared to be more warm, supportive and responsive towards their children's learning.

5.1.5 Parents' perspective towards their own learning

Two parents viewed their own learning as a tool to understand their child better. Part of Kate's learning process was also due to her involvement with gifted education. Between her work as a mother and a homemaker, she decided to take up gifted courses. Kate said that the more her conception of giftedness developed, the better the understanding she gained of her children.

Kate: *"I actually did a course this year on gifted education because I wanted to understand what their needs were, so that I could feel more comfortable and confident about going to schools for instance, dealing with my family and friends and helping addressing their needs (Transcript 1/5).*

Lily also took up gifted courses similar to Kate. She indicated, "I started to do my training when his needs aren't met in schools." (Transcript, 1/1). She described that she needed the understanding of giftedness so that she could relate those experience to nurture Jack.

Lily: *"I've got quite a bit of understanding in terms of research and um[pause] looking at the theories and the models of Renzulli's and Gagne's model... um... some is from my own study that I'm going to conference [pause] um that only came because it's been driven by the need to understand him better" (Transcript, 1/1).*

Edward indicated that Peter's learning was nurtured in a practical way. He spoke of the practical knowledge when he communicated and involved himself in activities with Peter.

Edward: *“He is really into technology um [pause] ICT he loves it and sat on the computer the whole day um... that's what he is doing um...he shows me some techniques as well [laugh]” (Transcript, 1/9).*

Edward said that, he responded to Peter's interest and obviously, his son's interest was not driven by Edward, but rather he followed his son's lead. Janet stated: “I enjoy engaging in his creativity; sometimes in public people think we are crazy” (Transcript 2/1).

In summary, these parents believed that they have acquired gifted knowledge not only through formal knowledge, but also from practical knowledge as well. Parents in this study were seen to be engaging and involving themselves in their children's learning development. Hertzog and Bennett (2004) study suggested that parents of gifted children often fostered their children's learning through activities that involved parents' participation.

5.1.6 Parents' perspectives as an advocate

In the first instance a gifted child's special talent or abilities may not be recognised by others. It would be difficult to get others to understand the child's gifts unless one has experienced them. Therefore, parents were seen as the first agents who understand gifted children's unique characteristics and talents (Porter, 2005). With that, they acted as their children's advocates and provided the necessary support for their cognitive and talent growth.

Kate: *"I am simply an advocate for my child. I am sure others see me as pushy, elitist, living vicariously through my son, however, I am nothing more than a parent of a child with special needs, who has had to up-skill to become an educated advocate for his needs um... I am simply here to help him with his educational, emotional, social and intellectual needs. I know my child better than anyone else does and I am prepared to go out to bat for him in order for him to have his needs met. Others who label me misinterpret my motivations"* (Transcript. 2/2)

Lily: *"We are our child's advocates. That is the role of a parent, to work on your child's behalf to make sure that they are safe and their needs are being met"* (Transcript, 2/1)

Roger: *“I speak for my son [pause] he needs our support and who else can be there for him if not we, the parents?” (Transcript, 2/3)*

Gary: *“If they can’t help then we have to do it by our own...ump we advocate for his needs [pause] err [pause] though it’s difficult sometimes but yeah he needs his parents’ support and we are always there for him” (Transcript, 2/2)*

In summary, having supportive parents and being an advocate for their children, especially battling for their educational needs were seen as effective parenting (Pfeiffer, 2008). Parents clearly made a point of their availability to support the needs of their children when others were not available to aid them (Peterson & Moon, 2008).

5.2 Living with Gifted Children

5.2.1 Introduction

Parenting gifted children was a challenge for parents because gifted children do things differently compared to non-gifted children (Adler, 2006; Alsop, 1997; Davis, 2006; May, 2008; Silverman, 1993). Being young and gifted they are often intense and sensitive (Webb, Gore, Amend., & DeVries, 2007)- when their needs are not met in school or

they do not get the attention they need. Hence, they tend to underachieve, disrupting the class and posing behavioural problems (Clark, 2004; Porter, 1999; Silverman & Golon, 2008). Children are not born knowing words to describe their feelings, therefore, parents helping their children to recognise their feelings and focusing on the underlying problems that concern their unmanageable behaviours were considered important in this study.

It was very intense and challenging for parents in this study to manage those elements in regard to their parenting. Parents considered that they held the responsibility of understanding their gifted children's traits and behaviours in order to communicate with them and teach them to learn to manage their behaviours associated with their feelings.

5.2.2 Challenges in Parenting Gifted Children ~*My day-to-day adjustment.*

When Parenting becomes a rollercoaster ride

Given the demands of her work as a mother and homemaker, Kate is aware her responsibilities towards her children and her family. She viewed herself as having an active role in the parenting process.

Parenting for her was like a ride in a rollercoaster. And, according to her, parenting a gifted child was not easy it was “exhausting” she said.

Kate: *“To be honest I was alone in the roller coaster...trying to be aware all the time of what’s going in your house and who needs attention and I feel a little bit on a roller-coaster from the time I get up in the morning which is five o’clock. The kids get up at six but from the time the kids get up at least I feel like I’m on a roller coaster all day just to get things done and to deal with all the various needs and at the end of the day, at seven o’clock when they are in their bed, I just fall on the couch and you can’t get me to move” (Transcript, 1/5)*

According to Kate, having a child with special needs was quite a heavy responsibility. She spoke about her daily routine taking care of her children and her personal life of being a housewife.

Kate: *“...I’m always the one who is thinking about what they have to do, where they have to be, what they are going to need, have they got this, have they got that” (Transcript, 1/5).*

Communication helps my parenting

Kate believed that discussing and solving problems together as a family seemed to be the best way to have healthy family relationships which lead to good parenting.

Kate: *“After discussing with Lou the last few months we seem to come out from the other side of that and things were sort of calmer because of it and Lou has been really understanding a lot more about what I’m needing”*(Transcript, 1/5).

As for Lily, shared values including supportive spouse, respect and mutual understanding were seen as important in her parenting.

Lily: *“Gary is very supportive and ump very happy to take a step back and let me learn and pass on what he really needs to know (laugh)...yeah”* (Transcript, 1/7).

Communication was the basis for establishing healthy relationships between husband and wife. Communication, according to Webb, Gore, Amend, and DeVries (2007) was a fundamental component of any relationship. Lily and her husband developed healthy and positive relationships by communicating about the ideas and ways to raise their child who was recognised for his intense and heightened sensitivity.

Child's intense behaviour

Peter's parents had to deal with their son's unmanageable behaviours, especially in public and sometimes at home that provoked uncomfortable events for Janet and Edward. Janet recalled Peter's behaviour in his karate class

Janet: *“He developed a huge dislike of losing and lots of people can handle that but he can't. He actually started to throw his tantrums and starts crying and stomping on the ground” (Transcript, 1/6).*

The problem, rather, was that Peter in common with many other young gifted children has an urgent need to understand a situation before he felt able to cope with it (Porter, 1999).

Janet: *“We play games with him...can be any game he has to lose one and win one, so we kind of win over him...he cries when we beat him, he cries like its the end of the world” (Transcript, 1/7).*

This problem was compounded by the fact that, being gifted, Peter may unaware of the actions that he had mistakenly committed in his game.

Janet: *“He kind of understands why he keeps on losing but it's because he keeps on losing, his emotion...then he can't think, then he starts going all over the place...” (Transcript, 1/7).*

Literature suggests that it was common with young gifted individuals that if they were made to go over and over the same stuff they had already learn, they became bored and lost their motivation, and some may get tired of doing the same type of problem repeatedly (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Moltzen, 2004a; Porter, 2005). Janet was confronted with those dilemmas managing her son's behaviour which happened to be similar to any other parents of typical children. However, Peter's pattern of emotional intensity was obviously not like that of any other children of his age. Janet spoke about one incident that they will always remember.

Janet: *“He was very uncoordinated and didn't walk until he was 16 months...ump [pause], he started riding a bike as the same age as our bigger boy and seriously totally crashed by the time he was five...ump we said to him we're going to take off the trainer wheels and ump... [pause] he was really resistant about taking off the trainer wheels, we took off the trainer wheels and he kept on falling off and he told us he was not going to ride the bike again until “I turn seven” and he didn't ride it again until he was seven” (Transcript, 1/8)*

Janet explained about her son's gap between his intellectual and emotional age. Janet described one shocking event in Peter's Karate

class when Peter did not behave his actual age, Janet explained. They spoke about their experience controlling his intense behaviour during the Karate class.

Janet: *“He can’t lose, he won’t shake hands, ...ump throws his tantrums and starts crying...he acts like a three year old and it was a problem for us” (Transcript 1/7).*

Despite having to adjust to Peter’s behaviour Janet often undergoes a similar situation at home too. It was quite tiring and intolerable, Janet explained. She recalled another incident when the family set a reading competition. She stated:

Janet: *“He thinks he can read a lot ...he was reading very fast and he reads the book five times at a time, five times quicker than myself...but I’m a fast reader and I can just skim the reading” (Transcript, 1/7).*

Peter’s high energy mixed with low tolerance for frustration and pressure signalled his behavioural problem to Janet. Peter avoided comprehending the content in the books and he was defeated by his mother. Janet was not able to control her son at that time. She explained:

Janet: *“It was quite huge ...he was just about screaming and banging” (Transcript, 1/7).*

Janet felt that Peter possibly avoided comprehending because he disliked losing and he wanted to complete his reading more quickly than his mother. Edward interrupted and said, "He was screaming" (Transcript, 1/7). Janet and Edward were concerned about Peter's emotional issues.

Edward: *"He has done that a couple of times and he starts blaming the computer or the internet because the questionnaire never happened in the book" (Transcript, 1/7).*

Janet: *"He does the same thing with Karate...he would say the referee was cheating, that guy punched me in my stomach...you know that blah...blah...blah he would work himself up to the point that he is hysterical" (Transcript 1/7).*

Kate and Lily described their children's characteristics and how they went along with it.

Kate: *"He needs quiet time that affected his day, because he can get really angry and really tired...when he is tired he gets angry and everybody leaves him alone because he is very emotionally sensitive and gets frustrated and yeah..." (Transcript, 1/4).*

Lily: *"Our son gets overwhelmed and 'people out' very quickly. While he loves the company of his family, he finds it tiring being with others...ump*

[pause] trying to understand social situations and nuances is tiring, but I have also more recently witnessed that he often finds it is difficult to work with other children who don't think like he does as the play doesn't flow...”(Transcript, 2/1).

Much research suggested that gifted children were also alerted to small changes in their environment (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Freeman, 2010; Harrison, 1999; Silverman, 1998; Porter, 2005; Smutny, 1998). Lily described Jack's emotional intensity. She further mentioned that Jack often had unusually heightened awareness of people, animals and things around him.

Lily: *“After the earthquake he wanted to fund raise because we've got a lot of family down there...and he biked at eleven [] in the pouring rain after having gone around collecting..you know getting all the sponsorship ump...absolutely all his energy were into it and making sure that he could make a difference and he has been like that right from his early years...ump huge amount of feelings” (Transcript, 1/2).*

Jack seemed to be aware of a difficult situation within his environment. However, Lily indicated that, “it took a long time for him to cope with it emotionally” (Transcript 1/3). It was quite difficult for

Jack's parents to understand and absorb Jack's intensity of feelings and perception over things happening around him.

Lily: *"...when he was two, his grandparents' dog died and we didn't think that would be a really big deal. It took him more than a year to work past every picture he drew of the dog and of him being sad...ump and he would cry every night....all the emotions, what grief is and it got to the point that he would be drawing the sad face of him and the dead dog but mum and dad were happy and he was upset that we were okay and we were happy and we weren't seen that we actually didn't care you know...it's quite really bad for us and to us he was really more matured than his age...for the ways he is receiving it..." (Transcript, 1/3).*

Managing super sensitive child

Silverman and Kearney (1989) described that gifted children often have a high activity level and intense reactions to noise, pain, and also taste. Lily described t Jack's sensitivity.

Lily: *"...he was extraordinarily sensitive...in terms of a long time for us to realize how sensitive he was to sound and he is still very sensitive to feeling in his mouth and touching things. He wouldn't touch his food; we couldn't get a drop of water on him. We found it very difficult to understand whatsoever of his sensitivities..." (Transcript, 1/9).*

Although Jack was very sensitive to “feeling in his mouth and touching things” (Transcript, 1/8), for Lily finding ways to help his sensitiveness was the most difficult part of his early age.

Lily: *“We have to approach his food very differently which is probably what other people don’t do...it’s very much tiny and coming to a state when trying to get the different foods and being aware of the fact that he gets [] out very quickly. (Transcript, 1/4).*

Lily explained that sensitiveness was not just a one off case. She further described that Jack was also quite sensitive to noises and sounds.

Lily: *“We put earphones on him and we took photographs of him doing work at 1.30 am writing down doing things in the middle of the night and that time it was raining and the rain hurt his ears... “Oh we wish we can understand any of that and we got frustrated you know” (Transcript, 1/3).*

Dilemma

Davis (2006) mentioned that young gifted children are often very high in energy and often misunderstood by others. Those with high energy were often labelled as hyperactive or disruptive and some perceived

them as immature. Having to go through the same dilemma, all the parents shared their experiences managing it.

Janet: *“At times this is draining and tiring...ump [pause] when in others care, explaining his characteristics can be responded to with their anxiety...[pause] at times through frustration he will cry and have a tantrum, explaining how to deal with that can be annoying” (Transcript, 2/1).*

Lily described that Jack’s sleeping pattern was not being understood by them or others. The urge to find out the reason as well as listening to others judging their ways of parenting was an unbearable experience for her. For a long period they struggled to find out the reason. Others, especially their friends, started to judge their parenting style and it became more stressful for this family.

Lily: *“No one really knew what was going on, everyone was just assuming that we were terrible parents that we couldn’t get our child to sleep...that was stressful” (Transcript, 1/5).*

Kate described managing Tim’s behaviour as difficult for her. The problems that he brings from the school often lead her to find ways to motivate and keep encouraging him.

Kate: *“Tim is the only one who really needs specialist help, he is more sensitive and the one who has more issues and ump... [pause] all these issues manifest or become more intense when he is at school” (Transcript, 2/2)*

Roger felt that educators and schools failed to recognise their son’s gifts. According to the father, his son is often labelled a problematic child at school. As a father, anticipating such reactions, disturbed him emotionally, he said.

Roger: *“Andrew’s intellectual ability is not nurtured in school and the teachers often associated him as a child with behavioural issues” (Transcript 2/1).*

Supervision and consoling

Very often parents of gifted children were confronted with difficulties managing their children’s high levels of energy and tremendous need for stimulation, which could easily exhaust the parents (Harrison, 1999; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Porter, 1999; Silverman & Golon, 2008). The intense sensitivity and emotional intensity may result in difficulties managing a gifted child (Adler, 2006). It was extremely important to the parents in this study that they were available for their

children. Therefore, this availability takes the form of supervision, and consoling, Janet said:

Janet: *“We are trying to tell him, losing is okay, it’s okay to lose as long he loses graciously or lose....if you are going to fight at the time, you’ve got to think about what is happening not just stand there” (Transcript, 1/8).*

Impact of the ‘Gifted’ label

Bullying, teasing and demotivation among peers, put a gifted child under pressure (Delisle, 2001; Moon & Hall, 1998; Schader, 2008) and as for the parents it was heartbreaking (Silverman, 1998; Moon & Hall, 1998) seeing what their child was going through. Janet spoke about the impact of the gifted label on her son.

Janet: *“...rejected ‘nerd’ the kids call him...he was too hard so he didn’t have many friends...ump he got picked on, teased. He got in a few fights, bullied and when it comes to group work; he was purposely left out by other students, (Janet, Transcript 2/2).*

Janet: *“I know he is not accepted at school...because he likes to manipulate things and often gets into trouble” (Transcript, 2/2).*

Janet said that she realised what has been going on in Peter's life. She dealt with him as an individual and kept him motivated most of the time. As parents, Janet and Edward felt it was their responsibility to help Peter overcome the impact of the gifted label. Janet also described that compromising with teachers' comments sometimes was heartbreaking. She expressed, "They often make him look bad, and this makes me sad" (Transcript, 2/2). She said that she knew her son was bright and believed in his giftedness, but she did not think that her son was able to act maturely like other gifted children because of the nature of his giftedness and being young. Gross (2004) found that in some cases the profoundly intellectually gifted children 's psycho-social development may differ "radically" from their age peers (p.41) owing to their feelings and perceptions of the world that influenced their thoughts and actions.

Roger and Sandy explained that very often they dealt with Andrew's external issues, most likely those that Andrew brought from school. Sandy said there were quite a number of issues that both parents have dealt with at the school regarding Andrew's well-being and his educational needs.

Sandy: *“When I pick him up from school, he will be quiet and little bit tearful and I know something has gone down at school” (Transcript, 1/13).*

Sandy knew that Andrew did not fit in academically or socially in his primary school. She worried that he might lose interest going to school because of the rejection and teachers’ acceptance of his gifted labelling.

Sandy: *“He doesn’t settle down always... his communication we don’t know, other interaction he doesn’t mention...we don’t know what’s going on...he gets upset most of the time” (Transcript, 1/12).*

Keirouz (1990) and Foster (2000) described that gifted labelling often affected parents of gifted children. Owing to the labeling, parents were often concerned about their children’s social and emotional development compared to their intellectual development. Parents in this study experienced a similar situation and were concerned with the issues too.

5.2.3 Managing Challenges

To some extent, parents have experienced intense behavioural problems with their gifted child. As such managing such intensity

seemed to be very challenging for parents in this study. They considered various approaches and ways to overcome the issues. Here is what parents have described

Encouragement and Motivation

Janet and Edward decided to find ways to encourage and motivate Peter at home. They planned some indoor and outdoor activities at home such as playing board games, computer games, rugby, karate, and in order to feed his brain more, they sent him to the One Day School, and Thinkers Club. They made him feel that rejection was only temporary. They also convinced him that he was not a 'nerd' but he was special in his own ways and others do not have an understanding of it.

Sandy said the only way she helped her son cope with his school issues was by encouraging and motivating him.

Sandy: *“Hey buddy...I think that it sucks for you but the system is right and it works like that
“(Transcript, 2/1).*

Sandy mentioned that, looking at public education in a bigger picture, she doubted her son would understand what was happening in the

real world of general education. She felt Andrew has to get used to the present school system. However, it was not easy for her to make him understand.

Sandy: “ *He picks up injustice really fast...he sees the system that he lives within is really unjust...when he asked, I never get any recognition mum, why is it?...I can’t answer that for him”* (Transcript , 2/3).

Sandy is aware that Andrew experiences emotional struggles but she tends not to focus on it rather she showers him with lots of love, motivation and good values, she said.

Roger: “*yeah...to avoid him have those feelings, I used to...err...engage him in sports like rugby and swimming...ump focusing on the physical side of him”* (Transcript, 1/8)

Understanding

Lily felt as a mother she believed in teaching her son how to deal with his feelings by responding, talking, and reasoning if certain things were meant to have happened, why they happened, and how he should find ways to understand or solve those issues. Perhaps doing so it would help in his self-discovery, Lily said.

Lily” *“It has taken a long time for him to get to grip with emotions and people’s reactions and responses however he now handles these well for the most part. And in some instances even now he requires us to be explicit and state how we are feeling and why” (Transcript, 2/1).*

Lily’s feelings about Jack’s issues concerned her very much. To overcome her feelings, she often says to herself that every problem has solution and in her case, her son’s emotional intensity and sensitiveness were because of his being gifted. Having such a thought, she was able to find ways to help and support him.

Model appropriate behaviour

Kate believed in being responsive to her children’s needs which were important and needed to be taken into consideration.

Kate: *“I have to model appropriate behaviour, set firm but fair boundaries, give him options and choices, really listen, read between the lines...um [pause] ask questions and give myself a big pat on the back and when I get it right and a bit of slack when I get it wrong (Transcript, 2/1)*

5.3 Summary

What was it like to live with a young intellectually gifted child? And, how did parents manage the child’s behavioural problems, emotional

intensity, and sensitivity? Silverman (2000) stated that to be acknowledged as parents of gifted children means being taken seriously regarding their observations, concerns, views, and understanding in connection with the child's needs. For example, in a situation when the parents noticed that the child showed some uncontrollable behaviour, parents need to find out the reasons and respond to the child. Taking their observations and insights into consideration, parents need to find ways to restore the child's well-being. What Silverman had suggested appeared to be what parents in this study had carried out in their parenting.

5.4 Rules and boundaries- “You make your own rules when you leave home, while you are here adhere to my rules” (*Roger, transcript 1/9*)

On other issues, parents of gifted students have concerns over family structure and rules in the family. Parents may have difficulties determining whether to treat their offspring as a child or as an adult. Furthermore, at times, the child may have greater perceptions than the parents and use this strength to manipulate the parents, which can cause problems in disciplining the gifted child (Keirouz, 1990).

Kate believed in setting limits, she kept a careful eye on how, and with whom her children spent time.

Kate: *“There have been issues with his friends...ump...[pause] he tends to be a little bit silly sometimes and he hangs out with all those silly boys ...ending up doing silly things.... so we actually had to intervene and suggest that he not play with the two kids in his class and that he starts working towards friendship with some other kids who actually want to be around. When we talked to him, he doesn’t want to be around those silly kids, but he found it difficult to [] himself from them and forge more healthy relationship. So we sort of have to help him with that and try to talk to the parents and tried to ask the parents of the other boys whom we wanted him to be friends with and we have to ask their help just to make it happen (Transcript,1/11).*

It was clear to the researcher that Kate did not allow Tim to form any kind of friendship which brings negative influences to his well-being. As she said earlier, both her children need guidance and discipline. Perhaps Kate thought that by approaching parents of the other boys may alleviate the negative influence. By looking at the bigger picture of her son’s future and his well-being, Kate felt her children must be taught about good companions and bad influences.

Wu's (2008) study found that authoritarian parenting was welcomed in the Chinese culture because children tend to learn to respect parents' and understand that the authoritative practices would model a bright future for the child. Similarly, Kate felt that being a parent, being responsive, understanding and caring may look like a complete package of parenting, but the content should also be sealed with some discipline and monitoring, she said.

Kate described her family rules especially for her children.

Kate: “ *ump...well I make sure for a start that he doesn't get any television. Very...very limited television for a special treat he might get to watch half an hour. TV maybe once or twice a week. But Television and Tim just do not mix. He becomes really controlling. He wants to control what channel he wants to watch and which may not appropriate for his sister and if I limit him to watch two or three channels he would still not happy with that and would insist on watching the other five channels. So I have learnt that, life is much simpler without the television. (Transcript, 1/4)*

Kate played her role well by setting the limits to her children on what to do and not. She was seen to be firm with her decision making and described it was effective for her parenting. Through her imposing

such rules in the house, the children will soon learn who has the say for the do's and don'ts, she said.

Roger on the other hand, reflected on his sets of rules in his family. He believed that children can be part of the decision-making when it appeared to be relevant to their own lives. However, Roger said, it was only to a certain extent. He perceived that once a decision was made it cannot be changed. Sandy interrupted, "We treat them as a friend not as a child..." (Transcript 1/9). Roger said, he partially agreed with that. He said "When you speak about the level of being a friend to your child, I'm quite stern on that (Transcript, 1/9). He felt that children should know who holds the power in the house. He explained that he did consult a lot with his children but at the end of the day, he has the final say, "To treat them as a friend you still want them to follow the rules" (Transcript, 1/9). Roger also spoke about the freedom that his children will get when they were mature enough to go out and find their own ways.

Roger: *"I often say to him "Mike its cool you want to do that, when you leave home, you can do that, that's fine. You make up your own rules when you leave home. When you leave here, these are the*

rules you should follow. That's it" (Transcript, 1/9.)

Roger described that individual differences and interests were allowed to flourish in the family rather than being suppressed. He felt it was not a matter of everyone conforming to the same standards or doing things in the same way but knowing that his children will find their own ways someday, it was wise for him to teach his children the family rules and regulations while they were still under his care.

5.5 Being a Successful Parent

5.5.1 Understanding Gifted and Self-Discovery

At times, Kate tried to convey many lessons to her children through discussion and explaining the modelling behaviour. However, compromising in certain areas she actually made herself stressed "everything is a discussion...long discussion as to why do we have to do that...why can't we this instead everything is complicated" (Transcript, 1/3). Kate demonstrated *self-discovery* in her parenting:

Kate: *"I've begun to realize that I've just taken my foot off the pedal more and I've relaxed a bit more and I just thought this is just 'HIM' and I've just got to let him run with that and to be perfectly honest, the changes been with me not*

being...ump... not trying to control him as much. So I'm just letting him be himself and understanding a lot more about what's actually going on" (Transcript, 1/3).

Despite all her efforts, providing the needs and care for her children, Kate said, she realised that her efforts would benefit all of them if she understands her weaknesses in her parenting. She worked out the solution not only for herself but also for her son

Kate: *"last couple of months because he doesn't react in particular way and this is something going on...I'm here to learn and he is teaching me every single day that ump...It's okay for him to be the way he is incredibly intense and incredibly difficult sometimes and incredibly challenging and ump I just have to figure out my ways of dealing with it..."(Transcript, 1/3).*

Kate was seen to care deeply about her children. She recognised her children's intellectual capabilities but placed greater value on balancing her care as well. What was so clear to the researcher during the interviews was that, Kate did not want use the gifted label on her children.

Kate: *"I think labels can be very limiting because you can immediately just start treating them differently, for me I look at my two children differently. They are different from each other in*

different things; the only thing is they both are gifted” (Transcript, 2/3)

Kate said she was not interested in engaging in anything that would make both her children look different from each other. She described that she strongly focused on the individual values and tried to nurture them to become somebody respectful in society.

On the other hand, Lily felt that her personal experience raising Jack was learning how to deal with his sleeping patterns and sensitivity. She described Jack as a “terrible sleeper, awake for hours at night” (Transcript, 2/1). It was one of the challenging events she has experienced parenting her gifted son, Jack.

Lily: *“For us the hurdle in our relationship is Jack’s sleep. That was really distracting...ump but we became tighter as a unit... obviously it was really hard... It’s been a real learning curve for us...yeah”*

Included in the concept of understanding parenting a gifted child was a need for quality time. Not only did Roger have a role in determining the emotional, physical, and social support for his gifted son, he also has a role believing in spending time with his children. Roger described the importance of quality time.

Roger: *“I don’t believe in buying toys or buying those plastic things and getting gifts...that is not important. Um...to give your children the time...be with them...um...do things together and engage yourself in their life I think that is more important”* (Transcript, 1/8).

5.5.2 Supportive and Responsive

Kate believed that having supportive parents and providing a good home environment eventually would help to shape children’s lives and their well-being.

Kate: *“I have to model appropriate behaviour, set firm but fair boundaries, give him options and choices, really listen, read between the lines, ask questions...”* (Transcript, 2/1).

“Support learning” was what Lily indicates.

Lily: *“...his knowledge is broad and deep and the most amazing facts seem to come out unexpectedly...he would spend no more than half an hour working on his phonics...the rest of the time we would play with seeds and machines, biking, going to the park, reading books, baking...yeah stuff like that”* (2/2)

Responding to children’s needs was recognised as a supportive element in a gifted child’s development.

Janet: *“...we generally respond when needed to his interest or preference... we encourage him to do it himself or supporting him by finding a way to do what he is planning on doing or wanting to do...for example his wanting to learn Karate...we found a class for him, allowed him to use computer to research techniques...” (Transcript 2/1).*

5.5.3 Guidance and Discipline

Kate explained that her children needed guidance and discipline. She believed in herself and clearly explained that as a mother it was her responsibility to guide and care for her children, as well as assist them in acquiring the learning and knowledge about the world they were about to see.

Kate: *“I’m going to be able to help them...um become the best individual they can be which might simply be having a really healthy self-esteem and I don’t care what they do, or who they become or how many degrees they have as long as they feel good about themselves... the fact that they got this gifted label, that doesn’t meant that they need to run off and get a Nobel Prize you know...I just want them to understand themselves and understand how the world works and be comfortable in it (Transcript, 1/7).*

Similarly, Roger and Sandy also agreed on the guidance and disciplines. Roger believed that mental stimulation and coordination

were important for his son. He knew his son was just like other typical boys and has a lot in common with them. However, the only unique thing about his son was his being gifted. Despite being a typical boy and gifted, Roger made sure his son lived a normal life just like other children. He kept nurturing his gifts not only academic but also physical activities.

Roger: *“He is very good at sports as well and he is not only academically gifted, he does excel in a number of sports...we got him involved because we thought sports would be a perfect outlet for his physical and mental energy...ump now kids don’t see him as academic ‘nerd’ you know...they love to be with him because he is good at sports”* (Transcript, 1/6).

5.6 Summary

Three key themes were present in this chapter

- a) Parents’ awareness of providing support for their gifted children with regard to their learning.
- b) Parents’ perspectives of living with gifted children; the challenges they had experienced throughout their parenting journey.
- c) Parents’ setting rules and boundaries in their parenting.

Frame and Fornia (2001) described that although gifted children often speak at an adult level, emotionally they were immature. They tended to be extremely sensitive to how others perceived them, have strong emotions and reactions as well as unhealthy perfectionism. The authors described that in order to achieve a balance and happy family lives, families of gifted children normally needed to adjust and readjust their lives from when the gifted children were young to their adolescent stage. Much research has suggested that parents challenges are not only limited to the internal issues such as managing gifted children's emotional and social intensity, providing protection, discipline, financial problems, and parental boundaries that parents set from time to time but also external issues (Adler, 2006; Alsop, 1997; Silverman, 1998; Moraswska & Sanders, 2009; Solow, 1995).

Advocating for gifted children's educational needs, overcoming different perspectives and responses from others in relation to their parenting style, and isolation due to lack of society support were seen as the internal barriers for parents of gifted children (Davis & Rimm, 2004; DeVries & Webb, 2007; Silverman & Golon, 2008). These

themes were consistent with what the literature has highlighted. It was of particular importance to note that the parents in this study demonstrated similar experiences of parenting. All the parents in the study have mentioned that in the course of their parenting they experienced difficulties managing their gifted children, however, those difficulties were not seen as a barrier in having a gifted child in the family.

Like any other parents with non-gifted children, parents of gifted children were very positive accepting the gifted label. They provided the necessary support and needs for their gifted children despite having to experience struggles and difficulties managing their children's emotional intensity and sensitivity.

Chapter Six

PARENTS' GREATEST JOY; GREATEST PAIN

*“It’s a lonely experience being
a parent of a gifted child”
(Janet, Transcript, 1/12)*

6.1 Introduction

Research has suggested that teachers and other community members play a large part in gifted children’s development (Goodhew, 2009; Hertzog & Bennett, 2004; Moraswka & Sanders, 2008; Peterson & Moon, 2008). However, this has not been the case for parents in this study. Not only have they recognised their children’s giftedness, organised their family system, and managed

their intense gifted child, but the parenting journey was quite lonely for these parents. Having difficulty communicating with the people and within the society in which they lived seemed to be the most challenging from the parents' perspective.

Although this chapter highlights key issues in the social context of parenting gifted children, the researcher does not mean to imply any suggestions or find fault with anybody through this study. The researcher does not view the issues pointed out by the parents as a dividing wall between the parents, teachers, and community; as a wall assumes that parents of the gifted children needed more support than any other parents. The researcher's professional experience and educational knowledge helped to guide and inform the interpretations of the findings rather than serve as a vehicle to pass judgment.

As Janet stated in the quotation above, parents of gifted children often felt lonely in parenting gifted children. This notion was supported in the literature as well. Adler's (2006) and Alsop's (1997) study described that parents of gifted children were concerned that, owing to limited knowledge of giftedness, other parents failed to look into the

various issues pertaining to raising gifted children. Like Janet, parents in the study felt isolated, rejected, and perceived that there was little support for them in the community in which they live.

6.2 Surviving Within the Society

6.2.1 Introduction

Parents usually share their joys and concerns about raising their children with other people. For example, discussion about parenting practices or ways to discipline the children will be the typical conversation shared with family members, friends, and/or neighbours. However, literature suggests that parents of gifted children often feel isolated and reluctant to share and discuss their parenting experiences. The reason is that, others do not seem to understand their concerns when parenting a gifted child which is obviously different from parenting the non-gifted child (Adler, 2006; Margrain, 2005:2010; Moraswka & Sanders, 2009; Porter, 2005; Schader, 2008; Silverman & Kearney, 1983). Thus, parents of gifted children often felt isolated and left alone to parent their gifted children.

6.2.2 Parents' Distressful Moments

For all the parents in this study parenting a gifted child seemed to be “...a lonely road and experience” (Janet, Transcript 1/12). The process of explaining their child’s giftedness to family members, friends, and teachers was seen as very distressing and protracted, involving a complex negotiation between parents and the society. Most of the parents described the feeling of being entirely lonely and frustrated over the attitudes to them and their child.

Janet: “*It’s a lonely experience being a parent of gifted child. Very lonely I think. People just don’t understand, and you can’t expect them to understand...*” (Transcript 1/12).

The loneliness and frustration described by parents arose from their attempts at managing to parent an intellectually gifted child at which they had no experience.

Lily: “*...in the early stages when no one really knew what was going on, everyone was just assuming that we were **terrible parents** that we couldn’t get our child to sleep..*” (Transcript, 1/5).

Roger and Sandy indicated their fear of the negative responses from others towards their son’s gifted label.

Roger: “*I play damn low key don’t ever mention it*” (Transcript, 1/11).

Sandy: *“I think we are fearful ...to be honest because of the society who views it, we are fearful even to go there” (Transcript, 1/11).*

For some families having gifted children may not be a major stressor for them. However, managing the needs of the child, attending to the needs of other family members, sharing the parenting experiences with other parents, seeking support and service for the family and children were seen as challenging moments for any parents. They may also develop stress for the parents. (Davis & Rimm, 2004; May, 2008; Schader, 2008; Silverman & Golon, 2008).

6.3 Gifted Family Support

6.3.1 Introduction

All parents of gifted children needed opportunities to share the frustrations and joys of their parenting experiences with each other. Maintaining a support system of extended family and friends was noted as important when it comes to parenting a child with special needs (Silverman & Golon, 2008). After acquiring formal social support from the psychologist to fulfill the physical and psychological needs of the child, parents in this study typically sought informal

social support. In the journey of searching for the social support to aid in parenting their child, parents addressed the problems they had experienced with family members outside of the home, friends, support groups, educators, and the society.

6.3.2 Parents' perspectives on family support

Although mothers and fathers tried very hard to connect with their child, they found it very difficult to connect with the people with whom they lived. Kate found it difficult to communicate with her family members. She said that, initially it was so stressful explaining to them that Tim's unmanageable behaviour was an indication of his being gifted and not simply because he was a preschooler who needed discipline. She expressed:

Kate: *"I have a sister who is a psychologist and when I was trying to talk to her about Tim's needs, she tried to tell me that Tim sounded a little like he has Asperger and another time she said to me "oh he just doing negative [] behaviour". She really does not understand what is going on with Tim and she is not interested in understanding it. (Transcript 1/6).*

This cry for support was an indication of the feelings of loneliness that Kate has raised. Adler (2006) stated that stress in the parents of

gifted arose from feelings of loneliness when family members and friends constantly failed to understand or help and support them in their journey of parenting their children.

Kate: *“...my parents were quite rude to Tim and very unsympathetic and unsupportive with me. I said to my father that it was one thing for him to treat me that way because he always been dismissive towards me. I never really felt that he liked me but it’s another thing to take it out on my kids...they don’t understand what giftedness means.” (Transcript, 1/6)*

The feeling of abandonment was reflected in Kate’s description of her parents’ reaction towards her son. The responsive attitude shown to her and her son was truly heartbreaking.

On the other hand, for Edward and Janet, they experienced positive responses when they sought support from their family members. Edward proudly mentioned how supportive his family members were compared to Kate’s.

Edward: *“family support is always there, they have seen him right the way through...ump he has grown up with them and they have seen him as he*

was growing and noticed his special abilities...yeah” (Transcript, 1/10)

Similarly, Lily mentioned that her mother was very supportive because she was a SENCO teacher and she knew what Lily was going through in her parenting.

Lily: *“My mum knew and she has the understanding of it...she is very supportive and I often seek her advice” (Transcript 2/1).*

What the researcher found in this study was being parents of a gifted child seemed to be a joyful experience for all the parents in this study; however, the experience can turn into a painful event for some parents when there is no support from the people whom they trust and care about.

6.3.3 Parents’ Perspectives on friends’ support

During the interview, parents were questioned on the support parents received from their friends. All the parents in this study indicated that they lost communication with most of their friends after their child was identified as gifted. Lily is aware of what people think of giftedness and gifted families. Once a child has been identified as gifted, people

tend to look at the child and the family in a different light, she explained. She was concerned about the kinds of assumptions that her friends had about her and her family.

Lily: *“When you have kids your friends sort of just disappear. We have lost our friends because they either don’t have faith in what we were doing or they thought we were pushing things on our child to make him learn and that wasn’t appropriate” (Transcript 1/5).*

From her experience, she realised that many of her friends were critical about her child and at times, she felt so sad listening to their accusations.

Lily: *“They often think we are elitist and pushy parents. I heard from other parents...ump labelling my children gifted and myself ‘braggy’... (laugh)” (Transcript 2/2).*

She said the negative consequences were too much to put up with and to confront them with the reality was a *“waste of time”* (Transcript, 2/2).

Edward said he hoped to receive moral support from the community in which he lived. Sometimes it was quite frustrating because others

seemed to not understand what giftedness means and tended to compare their average ability child with his gifted child.

Edward: *“Sometimes friends can get kind of resistant...lot of competition...they give a lot of justification for why their child’s achieving is as much as Peter...we don’t really care because we know Peter is gifted. We don’t tell people and rub it in their face...”you know Peter has special abilities and operating at your level you know...”* (Transcript 1/10).

Most people considered the term gifted referred to children with high intelligence, Edward commented.

Edward: *“Society tends to label these kids as smart...err or genius”* (Transcript, 1/10).

Edward complained about the Tall Poppy syndrome in New Zealand. He spoke about how people stereotyped gifted children as smart and intelligent kids.

Edward: *“People just don’t understand or get the meaning straight, that’s the problem with our society”* (Transcript, 1/10).

Judging from Edward’s voice, the researcher assumed that he was very frustrated and angry about the kinds of assumptions that people make about his family and the way they judged his son, Peter.

6.3.4 Parents' Perspectives on Education Support

When Andrew went to the primary school, Sandy was there with him watching the teacher writing a sentence on the board with some spelling keys.

Sandy: *“When the teacher asked, Can anyone tell some of the letters that have got A sounds, Andrew quickly put his hands up and said “ch” for chair” (Transcript, 1/2).*

Andrew instantly had the blend of the letters and was able to answer the teacher, Sandy explained.

Sandy: *“The teacher looked at me in a kind of astonishment and said to me “Have you been doing a lot of work with him? and I said “Well, I had read with him and done things but he naturally picks things up, it’s just naturally” (Transcript, 1/2).*

However, initially everything flowed perfectly for Andrew in the first couple of months, but after nine months in his primary school, Sandy noticed some behavioural changes in him.

Sandy: *“He was getting frustrated...and we started to get frustrated for him, the teacher was presenting him as a child with issues or problems” (Transcript, 1/5).*

The sour and bitter relationship between her and the teacher started when Andrew pointed out his teacher's mistakes during her teaching.

Sandy: *“The teacher spelled a word wrongly, Andrew corrected her, he got told off for that” (Transcript 1/5).*

Although there were other children in the classroom who needed to learn, the teacher could have used a different strategy to stimulate Andrew's cognitive ability rather than de-motivating and insulting him in such a manner, Sandy explained.

Sandy: *“When Andrew was in his primary, he was told to sit down on the mat and be quiet and not to talk. The teacher had this hand signal that she puts her hand in front of his face to tell him to be quiet” (Transcript 1/5).*

When Sandy recalled her story, the researcher noticed her teardrops.

Sandy: *“When he got told off for that, he was ump...chastised in front of his peers” (Transcript, 1/5).*

The emotional feeling and frustration on her face clearly expressed the painful event she had experienced with the teacher.

Sandy: *“Andrew thinks that everyone thinks like he does” (Transcript, 1/6). She felt, “the*

classroom teacher needs to see the strength in Andrew and find strategies...” (Transcript, 1/6).

She described how unprofessional the teacher’s attitude and reactions towards her son were. She found Andrew was not motivated at all by the classroom teacher. At times, the feelings of confusion and being unsure what was the actual issue between Andrew and his teacher disturbed her, Sandy explained.

Roger: *“I actually think ...I feel ump...she finds him as a threat to her teaching ability” (Transcript, 1/5).*

It seemed prior to what she had experienced in Andrew’s classroom and observing the emotional changes in him, Roger felt his son was a threat to her. The stages of advocating for their child’s needs in school were a painful experience and full of frustration and rejection, Sandy explained.

Parents considered that their experience and knowledge about their child’s giftedness were not understood by the class teachers, thus it made it difficult for them to discuss the issue further with the school or the teachers. When Sandy and Roger were unable to resolve the

issues with the class teacher they attempted to talk with the principal and tried to explain the situation with the hope of getting a better perspective and support from him. Again, the attempt failed, Sandy said.

Similarly, knowing that Tim's needs were not met, Kate decided to send Tim to the One Day School programme. However, getting permission from the school principal was a bad experience for Kate. Kate reported that the principal knew Tim had been formally identified as gifted and the evidence was produced to him. However, Kate commented that the discussion between her and the principal was not successful and in fact, the response given by him was quite heartbreaking.

Kate: *"He told us that I was making a big...big mistake and said why the rush?" (Transcript, 1/9).*

It was tiring waiting for some changes to be happening and waiting for someone to recognise Tim's needs, and obviously, nobody has stepped in, Kate said.

Kate: *"Tim was not getting his fair share here, he wasn't getting his needs looked after, I think that*

was what we were really concerned about”(Transcript 1/9).

Kate suggested that they would be very happy if the teachers in the school could recognise and stimulate Tim’s cognitive ability in the classroom together with other children.

Kate: *“all the other children needed a chance which we respect...that the other children have to learn” (Transcript 1/10).*

If the teacher put an effort in supporting and helping Tim so that his educational needs will be met, then she or other parents of gifted children would not have to spend so much money sending their children to the One Day School or other places that catered for their needs, she said. Her intention was for the teacher to support her son’s educational needs in the classroom by stimulating him with more challenging tasks and at the same time balancing the other children’s needs as well, she explained in a very frustrated tone.

Similarly, Lily spoke about her experience in getting recognition and educational support in Jack’s preschool. Lily described the big indicator of Jack’s giftedness was his reading. As discussed earlier,

Jack was teaching himself to read at the age of two. Lily explained that by the time Jack went to school he was quite professional at reading. However, she commented that the energy of reading at home wore out when she encountered negative feedback from Jack's pre-school teacher on his reading ability. Lily concluded that the whole journey of parenting a prolific reader was drained out the moment Jack went to his pre-school.

Lily: *“When the teacher told my son that he doesn't have to read until he goes to school, he just completely closed down and wouldn't even read around us and at home he would just say “Nop, I don't need to do it...nop that's what they said” (Transcript, 1/5).*

Lily experienced stress and frustration because the teacher seemed to discourage Jack from reading and when he comes home, he was not continuing his reading, Lily explained. For Jack, when his teacher told him he does not have to read until his transition to primary, Jack seemed to keep that in his head and took the teacher's statement as words of wisdom, Lily said. She indicated that Jack's reading talent became private and the teacher commented to her saying *“most children come in here knowing how to read” (Transcript, 1/5)*. Lily commented, it was indeed true and most children do come to

preschool preoccupied with reading skills, however the level of Jack's reading was not as advanced as other children's, Lily further explained.

Although the researcher could feel the sense of frustration in the participant, Lily seemed to take it easily and said *"No more argument over that... (laugh)"* (Transcript, 1/5). She explained that she never discussed the subject matter further and kept a low profile with the school and the teachers. She explained the reason why she kept silent after that incident.

Lily: *"I had few harsh lessons in Jack's kindergarten unfortunately...because when I went to them and try to talk to them and ask for support, it end up reflecting badly on him and it affected his care which was very unfortunate..."* (Transcript, 1/5).

That was a bitter experience that Lily had at Jack's preschool. However, Lily expressed that she did receive the educational support for Jack when he went to his first primary school.

Lily: *"...at his first school he had a wonderful new entrant teacher who took him for who he was and extended him to everything she could possibly support, even asked us if we have a network to support us which I thought was wonderful...ump*

the following two teachers did not want to know about it. The second teacher acknowledged he was requiring support in his learning needs but gave us projects to do at home” (Transcript, 1/5)

However, things were going downhill when she realised that other teachers refused to accept Jack’s gifts. Lily spoke about the learning environment in Jack’s classroom with another teacher.

Lily:“...Nothing happened in the class and the other would not acknowledge anything at all, as far as she was concerned he shouldn’t be in that class, he should be in a year down...she did not even want to talk to us when she got the assessment and did not want to follow it through for any purpose, any discussion or anything...”(Transcript, 1/5).

While finding the need to challenge teachers’ perspectives, Lily felt it was also necessary to keep on side with the teacher.

Lily: “I’m saying that she is new. She only been out of training school a couple of years so you know...she had a huge amount for her [] and she was learning a lot for herself...yeah”(Transcript, 1/5).

In effort to maintain a positive relationship with teachers in school, parents mostly spent some time considering the teacher’s position, Lily said.

Kate experienced tension discussing the matter with her son's teacher. She spoke about how the teacher disagreed with her discussion. She explained:

Kate: *"...I had a conversation one day with one of the teachers there and she said to me "oh Kate you don't want a gifted child, you want to strive for a high achiever" as though I have some sort of say in that matter and as though somehow I was manufacturing it and creating a child which was like this...I realized that they have no idea of the expanded definition of giftedness" (Transcript 1/8).*

Sandy shared similar experience with Andrew's teacher.

Sandy: *"There was a group of teachers who were in the staff room and talked badly about us, saying that we had a high opinion about ourselves and who do we think we were saying that Andrew was gifted...this old teacher at the school said "you can make a test for whatever you want to say, they are **rubbish**, the test is **rubbish**". (Transcript 1/13).*

These comments highlighted the considerable personal feelings especially of all the mothers in this study due to the unsuccessful conversations. These feelings were seldom expressed publicly. Instead, they were carried alone within the private world of the

parents. Most parents in this study appeared to expend a lot of effort trying to understand the teacher's position; however, they did not consider that the teachers attempted to understand their situation as parents. Parents found that their own detailed knowledge of their children's cognitive ability was frequently devalued by teachers. When teachers failed to accept the fact that their child was intellectually gifted, they felt patronised.

Janet *"His giftedness wasn't nurtured...They tried to stamp him down, once his teacher told us "if he has any thoughts that kind of needed to be explored, and we would do but he has to do it our way" (Transcript, 1/2).*

Although the difficult partnership had a significant impact on the parents and their children, parents in this study described teachers as seeming to be unaware of the extent of parental dissatisfaction and distress and how it impacted on the parent-teacher partnership.

Janet *"...at times this is draining and tiring. Talking to school, getting them to provide extension can be frustrating. Teachers have failed Peter with this non acceptance of his ability. The teacher said he is not gifted because he didn't get 100 on a test, but only 95 and he isn't as gifted as we thought. She has an obvious misunderstanding on giftedness and inability to extend him accordingly" (Transcript ,2/1)*

The issue that needed to be highlighted here was by looking at the gap in the relationship between the teachers and parents in this study. Without the support and a healthy partnership with the educational professional, parents believed that their child's giftedness will not developed and academic strength will not be recognised because the opportunity for the parents to get involved with the school system was not effective.

6.4 Parents' Expectation- "Special kids get the policy they deserve. That's it. But we keep struggling!" (*Sandy, Transcript 2/3*)

6.4.1 Introduction

Many researchers have provided recommendations for social support service for gifted children and their families respectively. Alsop's (1997), Dettmann and Colengelo's (1980), Keirouz's (1990), Solow's (1995), and Silverman's (1991) recommendation for a practical framework for parenting was successfully published and recognised in the gifted research field. The aforementioned scholars have recommended various approaches to guide parents in regard to parenting their gifted child. In relation to that, by understanding the

nature of parenting a gifted child, parents in this study expressed their expectations in regard to the social support from the society in which they lived. What kinds of service support do they require in having to raise a gifted child especially from the education sector? As Davis and Rimm (2004) pointed out there were many potential pressures in regards to parenting a gifted child. Finding the educational opportunities for the gifted children and seeking social support were a part of them.

6.4.2 Education Context

In the context of discussing parents' expectations in relation to parenting their gifted child, this was what all the parents have described.

Kate: *“Ump...for me as from parents' perspectives the most important thing is educating teachers that parents actually know what they are talking about (Transcript, 1/13).*

Lily: *“Having the network with other families and other students with the same thing will be even better (laugh)...I would say my big thing...ump having a way to be able to communicate with your schools and having a mediator to help parents work with the school...umph that is something that I think that need to be out there in the community” (Transcript 1/6).*

Sandy: *“Children spend most of the week days at school, school need to support them because they are spending more time there...it’s going to take years for a momentum change...ump the changes should think to value these kids and take them as a part of our society...the system needs to acknowledge that and put them on the pedestal” (Transcript 1/15).*

Janet: *“We need an alternative education system...ump at least some kind of gifted programmes that would be in mainstream...not a huge cost like One Day school...” (Transcript 1/12).*

A notable conception was that educational resources and programs associated with special education usually outweighed the gifted education. What parents felt was the feelings of compassion and sympathy the society had for children with disabilities were not shown for their gifted children. Parents in this study commented that gifted children were not treated equally with the special needs children because generally people perceived gifted children as the smart ones who can succeed anyway and do not need much help or attention (Smutny, 1998).

Sandy: *'Special kids get the policy they deserve from the Ministry that's it...but we keep struggling (Transcript 2/3).*

Parents felt the society and government are not giving the same opportunities to the gifted children as they are providing for the special needs children. All the parents in this study felt that the inequality rested on the failure of policy makers in providing the adequate support for the gifted children and their family. Sandy further expressed:

Sandy: *"...look at our kids they are dying in our system and government doesn't want to do []...children who have autism and learning needs, they get extra reading tuition, extra support, extra staff, they get everything, I have seen them getting lots of extra support and resources but I can't get damn IEP for my child"(Transcript, 2/3).*

Parents believed that policy makers had attempted some educational plans and structured some organization to take charge of this minority group; however, they felt that there were schools in New Zealand who do not have the set of guidelines or procedures on gifted and talented children, even though it is a requirement (Riley et al., 2004). Even if some schools have it, they do not offer a guarantee of what is happening in every classroom because some teachers do not have

the understanding of giftedness, and for some others if they found that there were children in the classroom needed extended learning, then the pedagogy would be different than for the average children.

Lily: *“...We went around looking for a school and we spoke to this lady and she said , they don’t do IEPs which took me back a bit “really”?...and we cater for it in class, we make sure what they do is they use their teacher aids for [] groups which is great. I thought that it is good..ump even if they are not doing IEP, they are doing some sort of assessment for them” (Transcript, 1/6)*

On the other hand, Edward suggested that streaming should take place in the primary school in the same way as it works in the secondary level.

Edward: *“I have seen year nine capable students would achieve excellence at Level 1 NCEA...if the secondary school can do streaming and allow year nine students to take Level 1 NCEA assessment, why can’t they do it at the primary levels? It would be great if they could do that...ump possibility of streaming these bright children” (Transcript 1/12).*

A primary concern for parents in this study was the placement of their gifted child in the classroom with the average ability children. Parents felt that the instruction seemed to be slower or easier for the gifted

children and that obviously does not contribute to the growth of their child's intellectual development.

Edward: *“I believe that all students should be taught to be at the level operating them..but if the school can provide that ump..it would be great (Transcript 1/12)*

Research suggests that the school environment can make a huge difference to a gifted child. It has been noted that children can be overlooked and in extreme cases, their frustration can cause them to be seen as aggressive troublemakers (Davis & Rimm, 2004; McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004; Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Pfeiffer, 2008). Parents believed that if the child was placed with other high IQ children, most likely it could make a huge difference to the child in relation to his or her behavioural issue. Sandy expressed.

Sandy: *“...Although the teachers in the earliest days used to comment that he is a trouble maker and doesn't make friends...ump I wouldn't say he has trouble in making friends, he is actually...ump from the social perspectives, he operates at different levels than them. It is difficult for him to understand why other kids are not thinking like him” (Transcript 2/3).*

In summary, what parents felt is their child was bored, unhappy, and under challenged at school. When this happened, the child caused

conflicts with his teacher and that concerned all the parents in this study. Parents were also concerned about their child's educational placement in the schools. Furthermore, denial of their giftedness by teachers and reluctance to cater for their needs through a differentiated curriculum were worrisome to all the gifted parents in this study.

Another issue that parents were particularly concerned about was on the disagreement that occurred between the educators and themselves when they sought clarity in provision of gifted education and what support there was to meet the needs of their gifted children. Parents in this study commented that the website established by the Ministry was informative and resourceful. In fact, the number of programmes and curriculum options available for the gifted children appeared interesting to the parents. However, parents were concerned at the implementation of the aforementioned programmes in present schools.

Almost all the parents in this study sought support from the educational sector, as well as getting proper educational options for

their gifted children, such as acceleration and enrichment, pullout programs or cluster grouping. Parents expected support from the teachers to meet their children's educational needs. These expectations may be the most important factor for the parents when this study was undertaken.

6.4.3 Social Context- If you talk about your child, it is just talking...if I talk is it bragging? (*Sandy, transcript 2/4*)

Parents felt that others were unable to help them mentally or attempt to understand the challenges they faced in their everyday lives raising a gifted child.

Lily: *“it was more the external issues we had because others just don't understand what we were doing” (Transcript 2/3).*

Sandy: *“...I am not a pushy mother...I just want the best for my child...ump I talked about Andrew to my office colleague...and...ump behind my back, they said I'm bragging...It's funny you know...if you talk about your child, then for you it's just talking, but when I talk is it bragging?...ah they just don't understand you know....” (Transcript 2/4).*

Kate:“...I am sure others see me as pushy, elitist, living vicariously through my son...I am nothing more than a parent of a child with special needs, who has had to up-skill to become an educated advocate for his needs...to me it is little different from a child with three legs or one eye: I would find a pair of trousers or glasses that fit...I am simply here to help him with his educational, emotional, social and intellectual needs. I know my child better than anyone else and I am prepared to go out to “bat” for him in order for him to have his needs met. Others who label me misinterpret my motivations!” (Transcript 2/1)

As discussed earlier, the parents in this study sought informal social support from their family members, friends, and also other support groups around their living area. Parents required help from these networks to share and discuss their problems, seek advice, and find ways to combat their stress, however, the most disheartening events for some parents in this study were explaining to others why their child was different from other children of the same age. Janet explained:

Janet:“I was uncertain how to respond to others who don’t know or understand Peter or his giftedness. For example, responding to those in preschool, out in community such as in the library, to doctors, friends...answering their questions felt like there was something wrong with Peter...why is

he doing that, why he is doing this...ump for example... seeing him sitting on a chair pretending to drive a car and saying the street names...”
(Transcript 2/2).

Some parents chose to isolate themselves and reported that they believed it was difficult for society to accept the fact that their child was gifted. Sandy explained:

Sandy:“*This is the New Zealand society, the Tall Poppy Syndrome...in the US success is celebrated in individuals, here in New Zealand...you know it’s general and society wants to press it down and it affected the child and the parents as well”*
(Transcript 1/15).

Sometimes when the gifted child misbehaved in public or at family functions parents were the target of blame. Parents often took the total responsibility for their child’s behaviour (Gallagher, 2008). Therefore, if a child misbehaved, and had tantrums parents were accused of not disciplining their child. This event often created conflict between the parents and individuals. Parents knew better about their children than anyone else and to explain the actual issues in relation to their children’s behaviours sometimes ended up in conflict. Kate expressed her frustration:

Kate: “...over the last six months I have re-instigated our friendship and am still not at the position where I talked to them about parent issues...ump we had a friendship you know...but I just don’t talk to them about too many issues regarding the kids” (Transcript 1/10).

In this study, the researcher found that all parents fought tears when hearing the comments made by others about their gifted children and themselves. Although it was quite difficult for them to grasp what was happening in their lives, they held to positive thinking and put forward their children’s well-being and education support. There is a saying, “*it takes a village to raise a child*” but in this study the parents felt that nowadays people had no time left to support each other, as some parents were too busy comparing themselves and their children to each other and competing about who is better or worse.

6.5 Summary

This chapter suggested that parents of gifted children were often in need of support. Society plays a key role in their social acceptance and in the provision of support. Although all the parents expressed these similar themes, their differing perspectives had different nuances. Some parents received support from their family members,

and some were left with insult and rejection from them. Some reported lack of support from friends. Parents also spoke about society's responses to them. They believed that the society had limited understanding of the actual meaning of giftedness and gifted children's characteristics. In fact, the social stigma that was associated with the Tall Poppy syndrome, especially in New Zealand made it more difficult to explain. The theme in the study confirmed that parents were subjected to negative experiences in school, society and the community in which they live.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

An important element when aiming to meet the needs of parents of gifted children is to document the parents' understanding of giftedness, the challenges, and opportunities they associate with giftedness, and their views on giftedness. It is important to listen to the voices of parents whose children are identified as gifted and help us understand their perceptions of the opportunities and challenges as well as their unmet needs. In this section, I summarize the key findings of the research in relation to the aims and limitations of the research. I begin with a general discussion about the research reiterating my interest in the topic and looking at the use of a qualitative approach. The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge of parenting young intellectually gifted children in a New Zealand context. This was achieved by probing the perceptions, experiences, understanding, challenges, and concerns of the parents participating in this study. While key findings from the literature review

were reflected in the stories and interviews of the participating parents, several additional themes emerged.

This chapter begins with the researcher's reflectivity. It then discusses the two findings that emerged from the themes through the research questions which prompted me to carry out this research. Next, the chapter discusses the limitations and concludes with implication of this research.

7.1 Researcher's Reflectivity

I embarked on this research into what New Zealand families of gifted children experience in parenting a young intellectually gifted child, not only because of my maternal position or the undergraduate courses that I undertook in gifted education but also because of my genuine interest in investigating family experiences in parenting.

My own personal experience of parenting a young toddler successfully created my initial interest in this topic. However, it was the reading I was doing that identified that there were very different outcomes when parenting an average ability child and a gifted child.

The lack of any New Zealand and Malaysian voices in this research indicated to me that there was a need for research into the issue. The literature review conducted for this study identified a number of key factors that were associated with parenting gifted children. Across all the existing research, the context of parenting young intellectually gifted children was identified as the critical component (Moltzen, 1999).

A search for an appropriate educational placement for gifted children, support for gifted families, and lack of community support were shown to be key influences on the parenting outcomes for parents of gifted children (Moraswka & Sander, 2008). In addition, parents also experience challenging and stressful events in an unsupportive environment (Alsop, 1997). In New Zealand the Tall Poppy Syndrome or egalitarianism attitudes underpin resistance to differentiated provisions for gifted children (Moltzen, 1999).

Moltzen identified two core interpretations of egalitarianism that have worked against the interests of bright young New Zealanders. The first is the “oft-cited creed” that people are born equal and the second

is a commitment to “equality of educational outcome” (p. 1). For a country with an equally pervasive reputation for innovation and excellence, the Tall Poppy Syndrome creates a challenge and cuts down the gifts of the nation’s gifted children who stand out above the rest (Moltzen, 2004). I was curious as to whether these interpretations would be reflected in the interviews and stories told by New Zealand families who believed they were the victims of this ‘disease’.

All the parents in this study believed the Tall Poppy syndrome exists in New Zealand and they had experienced the Tall Poppy syndrome directly. Some parents in the study suggested that they would not choose to label their children gifted because people might think that they are expecting too much from the education system and that may affect their relationship with the school management and their child’s relationship with the teachers such as Edward, Lily and Sandy’s views.

This study into investigating parents’ perceptions and experiences of raising a young intellectually gifted child was designed to explore and describe the perspectives, experience, and understanding of New

Zealand families who believed parenting a child with special needs is not an easy task or responsibility. Parents also believe that they have a strong influence in the talent development of their gifted children.

The purpose of this study was to increase social understanding and teachers' knowledge of the issue. To achieve this, the study explored and described four key areas- What is it like parenting young intellectually gifted children? What factors influence parenting a gifted child? Is parenting a young gifted child different from parenting non-gifted child, and what kinds of support do the parents of gifted children need in relation to their parenting? A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen for this study as it had been established there was a gap in existing knowledge that is the lack of any New Zealand voice. The primary concern was on the lack of knowledge and understanding in the New Zealand context about the issues associated with lived experience of parents raising young intellectually gifted children.

What was needed in this study was a straightforward description of the New Zealand parents' perception in parenting a gifted child by

answering the questions of how, what, and why relating to family experiences and concerns. This is congruent with the goal of qualitative phenomenological research (Merriam, 2009). As this study is drawing to completion I have actively reviewed the data that was gathered, and reflected on the relationship between this and what took place in the interviews. As the researcher I am satisfied that, the processes were clear and the methods of engagement with my participants succeeded in creating an environment in which to share their knowledge and concerns.

All the families have indicated they are in agreement with the findings of the study and the portrayal of their perceptions and concerns. My own sense of the interviews was that families said what they wanted to. Further, I believe the processes used were consistent with the principle of qualitative interpretive research, so I presented the findings from the study as themes identified in the data, and used quotes from participants to illustrate their perceptions, experiences, understanding, and their personal concerns in parenting young gifted children in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Interestingly, the themes that emerged from the interviews, and stories told by the participants reflected the key findings of the literature review. The context studied was seen as crucial, with parents describing the joyful and painful moments in their course of parenting their young intellectually gifted children. The community context in which parenting took place was seen to be very stressful, with unavailability of social, educational, and family support. Getting people to understand giftedness and gaining their acceptance of the label 'gifted' is the major influence in parenting gifted children. Previously, these aspects have only been alluded to in the gifted literature. It was exciting to see the emergence of greater detail and insights into parenting young intellectually gifted children in a New Zealand context. The key findings from the subjects are contextualised to the Hamilton and Auckland area and are as follows.

- a) Parents' concern with gifted children's emotional overexcitability.
- b) Parents' concern with gifted children's educational experiences.
- c) Parents' concern with misunderstanding by other parents and friends.

7.2 Key findings

The experience of the parents in this study reflects what Silverman and Golon (2008) write, “While gifted children have parents and some teachers who advocate for them, their parents may have no advocates at all...parents of the gifted need as much support as their children” (p. 199). This research provides social information important to teachers, psychologists, and other parents as well as information for policy makers and the community at large. While these findings cannot be considered definitive, owing to the small sample size, the significance of the findings is in the description of the New Zealand parents’ perceptions and experience in parenting the young gifted children they portray.

7.2.1 Parents’ concern with gifted children’s intense behaviours.

Having to raise a gifted child, parents should have an understanding of giftedness. In order to parent a gifted child, parents need to understand and work with both the psychological and intellectual facets of the child’s giftedness (Silverman, 1993; Moon, 2003). Parents in this study initially had difficulties managing their children’s emotional overexcitability. Gifted children often have special needs associated with their social, emotional, and intellectual aspects.

Owing to these needs, some parents of gifted children experience increased tension managing their gifted children's behaviours (Silverman, 1993). Davis (2006) suggested that gifted children have characteristics and behaviours that differ from those non-gifted children. Experiencing those behaviours, parents of gifted children were often left in confusion and wanted to know if their children were as normal as other children (Moon, 2003).

Another area of difference emerging from this study was that parents only tested their children for giftedness when they received negative comments from others about their child's misbehaviours and sensitivity issues. This is a contrast to the findings in the literature review. Gross's (2004) and Sankar-DeLeeuw's (2002) study highlighted that often parents are the first agent to identify if a child is gifted at a very young age. In this study the findings show that before the children in this study were labelled as 'intellectually gifted', their parents were not able to identify whether the child's emotional intensity and sensitivity were due to the child's being gifted. Almost all the parents decided to get their child tested after experiencing the difficult moments managing the child's emotional intensity and

heightened sensitivity. Parents have described their children's emotional intensity as occurring when the child demonstrated uncontrollable attitudes in public (running around and screaming), having tantrums and having difficulty in adjusting to winning or losing in a game, being intensely uncomfortable with noise (covering ears and crying due to the noise level) and fussy eating.

Parents in this study perceived that it was very difficult to manage a gifted child's emotional intensity and sensitivity compared to a non-gifted child. All the parents have agreed that managing their children's emotional intensity and sensitivity are the most challenging aspect in their parenting. Davis (2006) described that because of gifted children's asynchronous development (the uneven way in which their physical, social and intellectual states develop), parents of gifted children are often susceptible to stress. Stress for parents exists in the form of the child's change in sleeping patterns or fussy eating, school avoidance (refusal to go to school due to boredom) or the child's lack of social skills and major changes in the child's personality (stubbornness, rudeness or having tantrums unnecessarily).

Silverman and Golon (2008) found the issues mentioned associated with gifted children's emotional intensity and sensitivity are the common concern of all parents of gifted children in general. It appears to be true in this study too. Lily and Gary's family went through difficult moments putting their son to sleep and they also had to be very careful with his food. For Sandy, Roger and Kate, their motivation and encouragement were the means to keep their children at school because the children refused to go to school, possibly owing to boredom or lack of motivation. For Janet and Edward, encouragement and being responsive to their son's needs helped to keep their son in control because of his tantrums. The findings from this study are similar to those found in the literature.

The findings revealed that parents were struggling with their gifted children's emotional and sensitivity issues before their children were identified as gifted. Parents in this study appear to have limited background knowledge about gifted characteristics or gifted education. The thought of getting their children assessed came only after they received suggestions from close family members and

friends who seemed to have strong background knowledge about special needs children.

Gifted children generally exhibit their strengths at early age (Clark, 2004; Cross, 2002; Porter, 1999). Thus, parents should have observations that are more accurate. However, this study indicated that almost all the parents had limited knowledge about giftedness and gifted children's characteristics which impacted on their parenting process initially (before the identification). However, this does not mean the study is suggesting that parents have failed to acknowledge their child's issue associated with giftedness.

In contrast, this study has emphasised that parents need to find information regarding their children's behavioural issue. The most obvious finding of this study is when parents had their child assessed for giftedness after they received negative comments from others about their child's emotional intensity. Talking with individuals or close friends who do not have any experience in managing a child with emotional intensity is not a good way to find a solution for all the problems. Parents need to talk to a psychologist or counsellors who

are expert in children's development. Additionally, there are quite a number of published books that explain about family environment.

There are also online resources that provide information about children and their families that focus primarily on how to best to nurture and support children. Hence, parents can take up this information and identify their children's strengths and weakness. This study emphasises that when parents have knowledge and understanding about their children, it serves to complement their parenting skills, helps them avoid negative behaviours and improve their approach to their child. Parents can facilitate their learning about available resources and books, while also providing a chance to network with other families sharing the same situation.

7.2.2 Parents' concern with gifted children's educational experiences.

Even though parents of gifted children in this study have experienced pressures and concerns related to their children's giftedness, it is important to note that all the parents in this study accepted their children's gifted label positively. However, all of them appear to fear

attaching the label to their children owing to New Zealand's egalitarian ideology. The impact of egalitarianism in the preschool and primary setting was apparent when parents sought educational support for their gifted children. The educator's rejection of the gifted label, especially for preschoolers, was apparent and it was highlighted in the literature review through Sankar-DeLeeuw's (2002) and Moltzen's (1999) studies. It is important to keep in mind that parents were the most influential agent in their children's talent development. However, when they attempted to advocate appropriate educational services for their children, they were regarded as 'pushy' or 'elitist' by the community especially in the school and neighbouring community (Alsop, 1997; Bahar, Seyfi, & Hanoz, 2008; Margrain, 2010).

In New Zealand owing to the Tall Poppy Syndrome, the system declares every child is gifted (Moltzen, 1999). That is, all children are gifted and all of them have their own special talents and gifts. Having to follow this egalitarianism in New Zealand's early childhood and primary school settings, parents struggled to find the right educational placement for their gifted children (Silverman, 2002; Porter, 2008). Margrain's (2010) study highlighted the difficulty and the stressful

moments which parents of gifted children have experienced in choosing schools, as well as getting the appropriate support from the school authorities. Parents in this study appear to highlight similar issues as the literature suggests.

Parents in this study expressed concern that some teachers and schools are reluctant to accept their children as being gifted or accept the evidence that proves that their children are indeed intellectually gifted. This study provided insights into the parents' experiences in advocating for their children's educational needs. Parents have voiced their frustration at teachers' lack of knowledge in gifted education. Teachers' reluctance to cater to their children's needs through a differentiated curriculum and the unavailability of trained teachers in the gifted field, especially in primary schools concern these parents.

Parents reported that the external educational centres such as One Day School provide better opportunities compared to their children's negative educational experiences in their general classrooms. Parents reported teachers' complaints about their children's behaviour in the classroom and parents believed the behavioural issues arose

possibly due to boredom or lack of motivation. Parents also reported the negative experiences also related to teachers avoiding giving challenging tasks or offering Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) especially for children with special needs.

The teacher-parent related concerns identified in this study were found from talking solely to the parents. Therefore, although the specific findings within this research may not be applicable to all parents of gifted children, what this study emphasises is that teachers should be the researchers who ask questions and seek answers by talking to the parents of gifted children. Talking to parents about their interest and preferred educational strategies for their gifted children is important.

As mentioned earlier, research on parents' experiences raising a gifted child is sparse, yet it is understandably very important to these parents that educational support for their gifted children is indeed provided in New Zealand. Parents may approach the schools and ask

whether the school has a policy (a set of guidelines the Board of Trustees has written) or procedures (a set of guidelines the senior staff has written) on gifted and talented children. Parents can also go online and find the information about schools. Sometimes the policy documents can be downloaded from the schools' websites. Having a copy of those documents, would be a great basis for parents to discuss with the principal or teachers about any opportunities that the schools have provided for gifted children.

A teacher who is knowledgeable about gifted education and gifted children may help the parents to understand the teaching policies for gifted children. Moreover, teachers can explain to the parents the approach that they carry out in the classroom for gifted children. Making parents understand the actual environment in school and also allowing them to participate in their children's learning could likely lessen the misunderstanding and tension in the parent-teacher partnership.

7.2.3 Parents' concern over misunderstandings by other parents and friends.

It is well recognized in the literature that parents of gifted children are often left alone in their parenting (Adler, 2006; Alsop, 1997; Delisle, 2001; Moraswka & Sanders, 2008; Silverman & Golon, 2008). In this study, parents spoke about their lonely parenting due to the communication breakdown between the parents and interaction with other people. All the parents in this study felt that others especially family members, friends or educators failed to understand their problems, concerns, and issues in having to raise a gifted child. The issue was highlighted in the literature review.

Keirouz (1990) reported that one of the parental stresses in relation to parenting gifted children is likely to develop from the neighbourhood or community influences. In this study, parents have spoken about their experience in connecting to their social context. Almost all the parents have voiced that misunderstandings occurred with other parents and friends soon after their child's was identified as gifted. Unfavourable community reaction towards giftedness by friends, some family members, and other parents was one of the concerns of parents in this study. Parents reported the use of hurtful names (e.g

'nerd', 'geek', 'hyperactive') for their children was quite disheartening for them. Anticipating such reaction from others, some parents in this study preferred to hide their child's giftedness. Some other parents, tended to ceased communicating with other parents, friends, or family members. Parents indicated trying to make others understand that raising a gifted child was very challenging and stressful.

Some parents feel they are unable to talk freely about their gifted children to friends or family members because this group of people does not understand about rearing a gifted child (Delisle, 2001). One parent reported in the study **"If you talk, you are just talking but if I talk, is that bragging?"** The mother like other parents in this study felt her parenting was a lonely journey, that no one understands what it is like to parent a gifted child. The risk of being regarded as parents who brag or as pushy parents, made them hesitate to share their experience and thoughts about raising a gifted child to anybody who did not understand them emotionally.

The findings from this study are contextualised within the region of Hamilton and Auckland. It is important to note that two families in this

study live away from the city area and most likely the families may experience limited support because of the rural context. Other families are probably not taking full advantage of the existing support system in the area in which they live. These families do recognise the support system in their area, but owing to lack of time and misunderstandings with other parents of gifted children, they appear to move away from the existing support groups.

Eris, Seyfi and Hanoz's (2008) study reported that parents experienced pressure when other parents tested their children's level of giftedness and they felt uncomfortable with it. Similarly, in the interview with Edward, the father commented that "it is always a competition among all gifted families" (Transcript, 1/12). There is a growing body of research suggesting families of gifted children function best when parents engage with other parents of gifted children who have experienced what they have experienced in their parenting (Adler, 2006; Alsop, 1997; Moraswska & Sander, 2008:2009). However, it appears that meetings and sharing knowledge with other parents of gifted children seemed not to be functioning well for some parents in this study.

In this study, all the parents had two significant issues in common, that is the education system and social support network. Silverman (2002) argued that parents who try to advocate for their children in order to develop their children's abilities may find themselves in conflict with teachers, school, and the educational system whose agenda is for **all** children to fit in with the system. The issue occurred owing to lack of understanding about giftedness by the teacher and other school authorities. Thus, feelings of frustration existed among the parents of the gifted children. This eventually caused conflict between the teachers and parents.

Next, conflict arose when these parents felt others tended to have high expectations of a child labelled as gifted. Parents were also disturbed when their child misbehaved; others (e.g. family, other parents, or friends) would overreact and comment on their disciplining of their child. Any other child engaged in similar behaviour, might not attract such attention as parents of the particular child. Anticipating such reaction was bothersome to parents in this study, hence, parents appeared to move themselves away from those who failed to understand them and their children. Perhaps, owing to this

experience, parents have reported that their journey parenting a gifted child happened to be lonely.

7.3 Limitations and Recommendations

This thesis is based on a phenomenological study which relied on interviews exploring the perception and experience of raising a young intellectually gifted child by four families. The interviews were conducted over a period of two months in the regions of Auckland and Hamilton, New Zealand. Within the confines of its scope, this study offers contributions to parenting a gifted child, especially a young and intellectually gifted child. Beyond its scope, it is open to misinterpretation. Therefore, I wish to be clear about the parameters of this study.

This is a qualitative study which is focused on only four parents. It is impossible to generalize the conclusions to all parents of gifted children. However, the patterns and views shared by all the parents in this study suggest some directions that other parents of gifted children or the non-gifted, educators, and professionals in gifted education might consider taking the concerns and difficulties voiced by the

parents in this study. The theme presented in the study appeared to be similar for all the parents. All they wanted was to get an educational placement to cater for their child's needs and also emotional and social support within the community in which they lived.

The second limitation is related to the sample of parents of gifted children. This sample is not representative of all parents of gifted children. The sample of participants was quite homogenous, as the parents' ethnicity was mostly identified as 'whites'. Therefore, the findings of the study represent only this sample. A suggestion for future research would be to examine more diverse populations of parents of gifted children such as Asian parents, Pasifika, or Maori.

The third limitation is that the findings cannot be generalized because all the participants were members of an organization for parents of gifted children. There are unknown numbers of parents of gifted children who do not elect or have the option to join the group.

The fourth limitation is that teachers were not included in the study. If teachers had been included in the study and asked to talk about their

experiences in relation to teacher-parent partnerships, contrasting evidence may have pointed to additional matters pertaining to educational issues. Indeed, obtaining evidence about teachers' pedagogy and gifted programs from the educators and other school staff would enable deeper consideration of support services provided for gifted children and the family. Further research with parents of gifted children in other organizations is recommended to develop a more comprehensive understanding of parenting a gifted child and their needs across the country.

Challenges remain in researching parenting gifted children. This research included parents from only two geographic regions in one country. Future research should include parents from other regions of New Zealand, for example respondents from the South Island to determine if similar findings will emerge. Research also should attempt to collect data from other cultural groups residing in New Zealand such as those from China, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Arab countries and the Pacific. Additionally, research should be expanded to include children aged 10-18 to further investigate differences in

parenting young and secondary school aged gifted children which would increase the understanding of the challenges and stressors that may be different for parents of young gifted children and parents of secondary school aged children. Finally, parents from urban, suburban, and rural locations should be considered.

7.4 Implications of this research

The findings of this study have several implications with regard to the parenting of young gifted children. More specifically, they could help increase teachers', policy makers', and other parents' understanding and knowledge about the factors that contribute to challenging parenting especially of families with gifted children. These findings could also help teachers, and other parents understand the differences in parenting a gifted child compared a typical average child and also focus on all of the stresses that come with parenting gifted children. There is evidence that parents of gifted children have more concerns about their children's wellbeing (Adler, 2006; Davis, 2006; Moon, 2003). They spend more time advocating for their children's needs and often worry about them more than do parents of non-gifted children (Silverman & Golon, 2008). Additionally, the

intensity mentioned by all the parents in this study allows one to stop and think about all the stresses that the parents have experienced and also ways parents keep up with their gifted children's tantrums and emotional intensity. Despite those challenges, parents appear to keep their children comforted and challenged. Teachers need to understand that parenting gifted children is different from parenting non-gifted children. It would be important to work with these parents and examine their lives with their children. Many parents of gifted children are perceived as elitist, so it would be helpful to look at the parents' involvement in their children's lives rather perceiving them as pushy parents.

Parents could work with teachers to share their understanding of what it means to be gifted and if the child is gifted, parents can help teachers point out ways in which teachers can support their children. Likewise, teachers who have knowledge about giftedness and understand the characteristics of gifted children could work with parents. Some children also come from family backgrounds where giftedness was unknown. If teachers can be made to identify giftedness with some degree of certainty (Gross, 2004) and also

taught to design an appropriate and systematic plan to support gifted children, they will in all likelihood not necessarily need the support of school psychologists to help these children and their families.

This study does not specifically suggest successful teaching strategies for teachers. However, it highlights ways teachers can support gifted children and their families to meet their children's educational needs. Parents' views and perceptions in this study can be helpful to teachers for further consideration in supporting gifted children and their families.

7.4.1 Implications for a Malaysian Special Education Support Group

In my experience teaching at the primary and secondary levels in five different schools in Malaysia, I have never come across any programmes especially for gifted children or any intervention programmes for parents of gifted children. In fact, identification of gifted children in general education is virtually non-existent. There are a small number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) striving to fulfil the needs of gifted children and support their families.

Additionally, some private schools offer opportunities for children identified as gifted through in house assessment methods such as special classes for science and mathematics, providing hands-on projects and sports activities. The only programme that caters for the needs of Malaysian gifted children throughout the country is through the Permata Programme. The programme offers official gifted programs at elementary and secondary school levels admitting students based on a minimum IQ score of 130. In general, children at both elementary and secondary education levels need to sit for the online IQ test before they can be admitted to a gifted education programme.

Hence, this study supports the recommendations for the Ministry of Education to develop awareness of gifted education and foster a school-wide understanding of gifted and talented education in general schools. States and Districts administrators should provide professional development for teachers to up-skill their knowledge in gifted education. If teachers have positive attitudes towards gifted and talented children and are trained to be knowledgeable about the needs and support for gifted children, eventually they would be the

best practitioners, counsellors, and psychologists to help the families of gifted children. Teachers can educate parents about gifted education and the characteristics of gifted children. Teachers need to know that not only students need support; the parents also need it. Parents of gifted children require guidance on how to keep nurturing their gifted children and this can be accomplished if teachers have knowledge of gifted education and are aware of the issues in gifted families.

7.5 Conclusion

I understand that no definitive conclusion can be made from these findings, owing to the small size of the study and lack of data dissemination. Owing to the limited time available, I could only focus on four families in two regions in New Zealand. However, I do believe they are significant findings worthy of further research. This is new knowledge being generated from New Zealand data that is only minimally alluded to within the existing research. This finding is significant in that it is a variation from what is in the existing research, and therefore worthy of more investigation. The findings which came out of this research have validated my assumptions that families could

tell their stories in a sincere and truthful manner. It was important for researchers to capture and listen to their voices and feel their concerns. The scope of the method and the shape of the findings have produced convincing information in relation to parenting young gifted children. Parents' perceptions and their concern have provided insight into their day-to-day lived experience parenting a young intellectually gifted child and identified the factors which they believe contribute to challenging parenting and family stressors.

From this study or from any other studies on parenting gifted children, the issues on how we can support parents in their parenting are still a relevant issue. All the families interviewed in this study believed that parenting a gifted child is not an easy task and with regard to the Tall Poppy syndrome exists in New Zealand, parents have developed ways of managing or negating the effects of the Tall Poppy syndrome. However, there are more questions that require further research in order to advance our understanding of parenting gifted young gifted children.

As this study shows, the research attention directed to the parenting young gifted children phenomenon is limited. The discussion in this study around the possible implications for parenting young gifted children in New Zealand points to this being an important area to continue researching. The most pressing question is whether the focus on the limited support for gifted children and their family is in any way peculiar to New Zealand. Research involving cross country comparisons would help to address this question in future.

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Appendices



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2011/24/ERHEC

27 June 2011

Lakshmi Chellapan
School of Educational Studies & Human Development
College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Lakshmi

The College of Educational Research Human Ethics Committee is pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Perspectives and experiences of parents with young gifted and talent children in Aotearoa, New Zealand" has been granted ethical approval at their meeting on 22 June 2011.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change, you are required to reapply for ethical clearance/approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval please let me know.

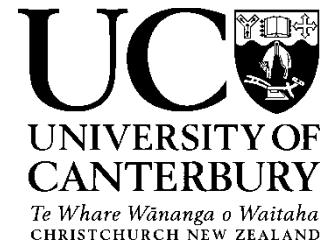
We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

pp 

Nicola Surtees
Chair
Educational Research HEC

Please note that Ethical Approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.



**An Investigation of perspectives and experiences of parents
with young intellectually gifted and talented children
in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Information Sheet for Parents of the young
intellectually gifted and talented children.

My name is Lakshmi Chellapan and I am a Masters' student at the University of Canterbury, College of Education, New Zealand. I am doing my thesis on gifted education and my focus is parenting of gifted and talented children. I will be working under the supervision of **Senior Lecturer Jenny Smith** and **Dr. Missy Morton**. The purpose of this research is to investigate the perspectives and experiences of parents with young gifted children specifically in New Zealand. For this research I am looking for children who have been identified as gifted and talented. Children can be aged from birth to 8 years of age. There will two methods of data collection used which are individual interviews and document analysis.

Purpose of this Research

The aims of this research are to determine:

1. What are parents' perceptions, understanding and experiences of having a young intellectually gifted and talented child?
2. How do the services and supports in the gifted and talented community have an effect on parents' perceptions, understanding and experience in parenting gifted and talented young children?

Individual Interviews

I would like to invite you to participate in two face to face individual interviews to discuss your perceptions, experiences, and understanding of parenting young gifted and talented children. Interviews will be conducted at a venue of your choice and will be approximately 45 minutes in duration. Suitable times for the interviews will be negotiated upon receipt of consent forms and are expected to occur in October 2011. The interviews will be audio taped and written notes will be taken by the researcher. Transcripts of the interviews will be sent out to participating parents for comments and/or corrections to assist in the accurate recording and interpretation of views.

Document Analysis

I would like to invite you to share with me relevant learning materials, learning stories, portfolios, assessment reports or any information related to assessment for the gifted. The purpose of this analysis is to add detail to the interview responses. All materials will be returned to you upon completion of my study.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, provided this is practically achievable. You will be guaranteed anonymity; real names and other identifying information will not be used. All records will remain confidential and access to data will be restricted to myself, my supervisors and the transcriber. Both records and data will be securely stored and retained for five years and then destroyed. Data will be used specifically for the purposes of this study and any related conference papers or journal articles that may follow. A summary of my findings will be available and a copy will be sent to you upon your request. This information is not being collected as a means of assessing or judging your parenting styles, methods or strategies but more towards the perspectives and experiences that are inclusive of parenting the young gifted and talented and their contribution in their children's lives.

Complaints Procedure

The University of Canterbury, College of Educational Research Human Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study. If you have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted please contact **Nicola Surtees**, details below.

Nicola Surtees

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury

Room: 223 Wheki, School of Maori, Social and Cultural
Studies in Education
Telephone: 44349 or +64 3 364 2987
nicola.surtees@canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any questions about involvement in this research you may contact myself on or lakshmi.chellapan@pg.canterbury.ac.nz. Alternatively you may wish to contact my supervisors jenny.smith@canterbury.ac.nz or missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz

If you are willing to participate, please complete the attached consent form and return to me in the envelope provided by 17th October 10, 2011.

I am looking forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your contributions.

Yours sincerely
Lakshmi Chellapan



**An Investigation of perspectives and experiences of
parents with young gifted and talent children in
Aotearoa New Zealand**

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I/We.....
have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained. Questions have been answered to my/our satisfaction, and I/we understand that I/we may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that by participating in this study, I agree to:

- Two individual interviews which will last approximately 45 minutes
- The interviews being audio-taped and transcribed
- The opportunity to read, comment and return the transcript of each interview

I understand that by being involved as a participant in this study:

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty and if I withdraw, my information will be removed.
- I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the Ministry of Education, Malaysia and will be destroyed after five years.
- My identity will be protected i.e., my name will not be published or attributed to any quote or comments used in publication. Only pseudonyms will be used where appropriate.
- All information will be stored securely and available only to the researcher, the transcriber and the supervisors.
- The names of individuals or organizations referred to in the interviews will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed or used in any published material.
- The findings of the study will be published in an MEd thesis and may be used in articles, conference presentations or reports.

➤ I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Lakshmi Chellapan. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (details below).

➤ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

1. Signature: Date
Full Name – printed
Email address:

2. Signature: Date
Full Name – printed
Email address:

Please return this completed consent form to [Lakshmi Chellapan] in the envelope provided by [17th October, 2011].

.....

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:
The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Sample Interview Questions for parents

Procedure:

- Orally administered parent interview
- To be conducted in the parents' home or other setting of their choice
- Introductory comments to be read before commencing
- Tone to be informal; if additional relevant discussions occur broader than the specific questions, these will be audio taped; e.g.- developmental history may be referred to or photos', records or work samples presented.
- Where records and work samples are presented, parental permission will be sought to photocopy data.
-

Parent Interview 1 Date: _____

Name of interviewee and relationship to the gifted and talented child:

1. _____

2. _____

First Interview questions

- a) What is it like parenting a young intellectually gifted child?
- b) What factors influence parenting a gifted child especially the young and intellectually gifted?
- c) Is parenting a young gifted child different from parenting any other child? If so, what is the difference and what remains the same?

- d) What kinds of support do the parents of gifted children need in relation to their parenting?

Second interview questions.

- a) When you first discovered that your son/daughter was gifted, what were your feelings and thoughts as parents? (eg. happy, worried, anxious, etc....)
- a. Prompt: Can you please explain further?
- b) As a parent, can you please tell me how you manage the characteristics of your child as a gifted. (e.g- his/her intensity, perfectionism, sensitivity, argumentativeness)
- a. Prompt: Can you please explain further?
- c) Some gifted parents are often labelled/called elitist or pushy parents. In your opinion, how do you regard yourself as parents of a gifted child?
- d) Having a gifted child, has your child had social and emotional adjustment difficulties with his/her peers, teachers or you as parents?
- a. Prompt: Can you please explain further?
- e) As parents of a gifted child, have you ever had the thought that your child's giftedness outdistances your knowledge of a specific field? (e.g. what were your feelings, how did you solve the situation....etc)
- a. Prompt: Can you please explain further?

Follow-up Questions

- a) How can parents do partnership better with teachers?
- b) Where would be appropriate and visible places for parents of gifted children to easily access information in Hamilton/Auckland?
- c) How often do you talk/meet parents with other gifted children?
- d) What are the most supportive and wonderful experiences you have had throughout your parenting journey?

Participants' Demographic Information

Dear Participants.

Can you please fill in the information below for my research purposes.

Thank you so much for your time and I really appreciate your contributions towards my study.

Name : Parent (Father)	
Parent (Mother)	
Age: Father	
Mother	
Occupation: Father	
Mother	
Education Background: Father	
Mother	
Your child's age:	
Your child's gender:	

With lots of appreciation and many thanks

Lakshmi Chellapan
Masters Student
University of Canterbury
Christchurch, New Zealand