Review of Gifted IQ: Early Developmental Aspects: The Fullerton Longitudinal Study

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At the 2006 Annual Meeting of the AERA in San Francisco, our SIG was allotted sufficient program slots to accept 34 of the 68 submissions we received. All sessions went well, and assistant program chair Cheryll Adams and I were quite pleased with the high quality of all of the presentations we were able to accept.

The SIG business meeting featured an invited presentation on effect sizes by noted authority Dr. Bruce Thompson, Distinguished Professor and Distinguished Research Fellow at Texas A&M University. Dr. Thompson’s engaging presentation was well received by a standing-room-only crowd. His talk was followed by a panel discussion addressing the status of effect size reporting in gifted education research. Although there clearly has been progress in this respect over the last ten years, this important information is not yet present in all of the studies where it should be included. We hope that the presentations in this session have raised researchers’ awareness of how and why effect size reporting is important.

Cheryll Adams is now our SIG Program Chair for the 2007 Annual Meeting in Chicago, and she is preparing a great program for next year’s annual meeting. I look forward to seeing you there!

Typically, research provides new information or a new perspective to a given paradigm. However, occasionally, a study flips that paradigm on its head. That is when you’ve found something special. One such study can be found in Gifted IQ: Early Developmental Aspects: The Fullerton Longitudinal Study (Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst, & Guerin, 1994). Whereas most research on gifted students occurs after children have been labeled and begun participating in special programs, The Fullerton Longitudinal Study (FLS) investigates the developmental course prior to gifted identification.

Using an array of developmental, cognitive, and behavioral measures administered at six-month and then annual intervals, the FLS began when participants were one-year-old infants. Parents were also asked to rate their children’s performance and abilities. At age 8, children were given the Wechsler Intelligence Scale-Revised and determined to be gifted or nongifted. The investigators then retrospectively compared group differences across the measures they had been collecting in real-time for the previous seven years. At no point of the data collection were participants notified by the researchers of the results of any measures or of gifted status. Thus, the FLS was an entirely pre-identification study and eliminated potential social and cognitive effects due to the label and participating in a program for the gifted.

Gottfried et al. found that cognitive performance differences appeared as early as 18 months. Gifted participants generally performed higher than did nongifted participants. Further, parents of gifted youth rated their child’s performance higher than did the parents of nongifted participants. Moreover, the authors found no differences in social life, and behavioral or emotional problems between the two groups, but gifted students tended to provide more solutions to hypothetical social dilemmas. Additionally, parents of gifted children provided more enriching and stimulating environments (e.g., more books in the home). However, as the authors noted, the parent-child relationship is bidirectional; youth help shape their environment by requesting and reacting to parent actions (e.g., requesting more books in the home).

The FLS continues today, now tracking participants into adolescence and focusing on motivation as well as parent-child relations. Longitudinal studies as comprehensive, well written, and organized as the FLS are few and far between, but appreciated all the more when they are found. Well worth the read (or reread), this marvelous book forms a solid foundation for understanding the developmental course of gifted children prior to identification.

References