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Exploring the perspectives of Asian American parents on their musically talented children in instrumental education

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study employed Gagné Integrative Model of Talent Development as a conceptual framework to explore the perspectives of nine Asian American parents on their musically talented children in Western classical music culture in the United States. Musically talented children, defined by [Gagné, François, and Gary E. McPherson. 2016, September. "Analyzing Musical Prodigiousness Using Gagné's Integrative Model of Talent Development." In *Oxford University Press eBooks*, 3–114. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199685851.003.0001>], as individuals who rank within the top 10% of their age peers. This distinction is made to differentiate talent from giftedness, which pertains to exceptional natural abilities or aptitudes. The analysis yielded five macro themes: (1) children's innate abilities and importance of hard work; (2) parental sacrifice and investment; (3) benefits and challenges; (4) influence from Asian culture; and (5) future expectations. This study offers deeper insights into the complex interplay between children's individual abilities and parental investment, which can be influenced by cultural identity and work ethics, especially in Asian American communities. The findings illuminate the intricate process of nurturing gifted and talented young children from a parental perspective and provide implications for how parents can support their children's talent development.

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Asian Americans; gifted education; musically talented; parental perception

Introduction

Early in the twentieth century, research into mental inheritance and subnormal children led to the emergence of studies on giftedness. Psychologist Lewis Terman, who created the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale in 1916, was among the first to introduce the concept of giftedness (Terman and Merrill 1960). Terman emphasised the significance of identifying academically talented students early in their education and providing them with specialised education to help them reach their full potential (National Association for Gifted Children n.d.). As a result, efforts to identify and support gifted students began to take shape in the United States. This led to the introduction of advanced courses, early entry into college, and integration of more advanced content into curricula across the nation (Rimm, Siegle, and Davis 2018).

In the United States of America, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988 defines talented and gifted students as those who exhibit high-performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields. Despite years

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of research on Gifted Education, ambiguity and inconsistency in the terms ‘gifted’, ‘talented’, and ‘giftedness’ persist, leading to confusion. Ziegler and Phillipson (2012) advocated for a systemic approach to understanding exceptionality that examines the interactions among its components. They suggested that a systemic gifted education that prioritises creating individualised opportunities, rather than selection and placement, can create an individually tailored learning environment. As the learning environment at home is considered crucial to child development, it is surprising that little research has been done on the families of gifted students (Renati, Bonfiglio, and Pfeiffer 2017). Subotnik and Jarvin (2005, *may*) believed that transforming from novice to expert level involves genetic and environmental components, which are modifiable and capable of being flexibly deployed. Researchers have stressed that exploring family well-being and parenting practices is critical, particularly in the field of gifted education (Morawska and Sanders 2009a 2009b; 2009c; Reichenberg and Landau 2009).

In music education, research has also shown that parental involvement in the learning process is strongly correlated with musical achievement (Denac 2008; Ho 2009). Findings have shown that many musically gifted children receive the highest levels of parental support (Dai and Schlader 2002; Evans, Bickel, and Pendarvis 2000; Ho 2009). In Evans, Bickel, and Pendarvis (2000)’s research, the authors noted that the parents attributed their children’s musical accomplishments to encouragement provided by the family members, rather than contributing the success to children’s innate ability. The result contradicted existing literature where musically gifted children usually demonstrate innate musical ability. To further address the current gaps in music education and gifted education, this study explored the lived experiences of 9 Asian American parents raising musically talented children, their perspectives on their own parental roles, and their expectations for their children. In this study, we refer to musically talented children from the perspectives of Western classical instrumental performance. As defined by Gagné and McPherson (2016), talented children are individuals who rank within the top 10% of their age peers. This distinction is crucial to differentiate talent from giftedness, which giftedness involves the use of untrained and exceptional natural abilities or aptitudes (2016, 5). These musically gifted children were identified both by their teachers and their parents.

Music and giftedness

Due to the lack of consistency in current theories of gifted education, this research utilises Gagné’s Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) as a framework. Developed by Gagné in 2015 originally, the IMTD integrates the Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) and the Developmental Model for Natural Abilities (DMNA) as a unified model. Initially, the DMGT was created to focus solely on behavioural variables, leading to the development of four subsequent theoretical advancements. These advancements include identifying key categories and levels for the biological foundations of the primary DMGT components, integrating these biological foundations within the pre-existing DMGT framework, determining the dynamic interplay between these foundations and other factors responsible for the development of natural abilities resulting in the DMNA, and lastly, creating the IMTD as a natural merger of the two existing models (Gagné and McPherson 2016, 12).

The one main component of Gagné’s Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) is the differentiation of giftedness and talent. Giftedness and Talent have been used interchangeably by researchers in many contexts, both describe outstanding abilities (Gagné and McPherson 2016, 4). According to Gagné and McPherson,

Giftedness designates the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed outstanding natural abilities or aptitudes (called gifts), in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers.

Talent designates the outstanding mastery of systematically developed competencies (knowledge and skills), in at least one field of human activity, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of 'learning peers' (those having accumulated a similar amount of learning time from either current or past training). (2016, 5)

Gagné and McPherson (2016) stated that the 'top 10%' is a 'generous choice for the initial threshold, counterbalanced by the recognition of degrees of giftedness or talent' (5). In addition, DMGT differentiates the concepts of giftedness, potential, aptitude, and natural abilities from those of talent, performance, achievement, systematically developed abilities, expertise, eminence, and prodigiousness (Gagné and McPherson 2016, 5). They also explored IMTD's application to musical prodigiousness by identifying behavioural variables related to environmental factors (E), intrapersonal factors (I), and developmental processes (D).

Due to the breadth of this framework, this study focused on investigating the factors asterisked in Figure 1 through interviews with parents. Therefore, the figure shown below is an adaption of Gagné's Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) (2016) for this study specifically.

Gagné (2016) proposes the core of the DMGT as the 'talent development trio' (18), which comprised of Natural Abilities (G), Developmental Process (D), and Talents (T).

- i *Natural Abilities (G): Intellectual (GI), Creative (GC), and Perceptual (GP).* Gagné (2016) posited that Natural Abilities (G) are not innate, but rather can be developed. However, he acknowledged that their development is influenced to some extent by an individual's genetic endowment (7). These subcomponents encompass Intellectual (GI), Creative (GC), and Perceptual (GP) abilities, including memory, listening skills, perfect pitch, and attention span. These abilities play pivotal roles in acquiring new competencies across various domains of human activity, including musical learning.

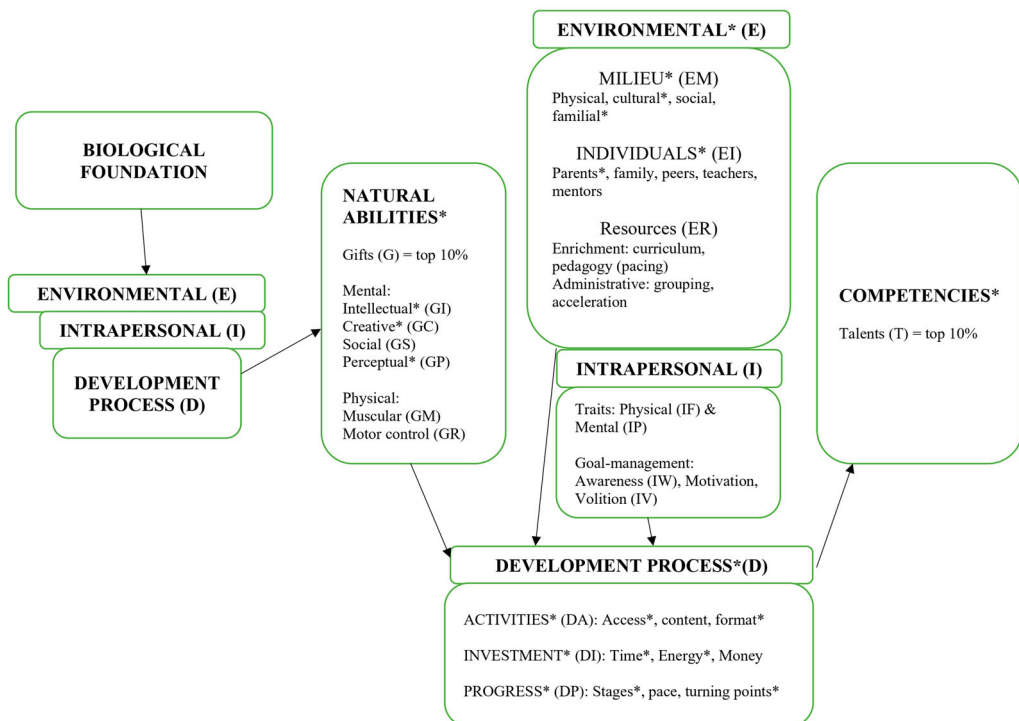


Figure 1. An adapted framework based on Gagné's Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) (2016).

- ii *Development Process (D): Activities (DA), Investment (DI), and Progress (DP)*. Integrating Natural Abilities (G) and Environmental (E) catalysts, the Development Process (D) involves a structured programme of activities (e.g. weekly lessons, recitals, competitions) with specific contents and formats. Ensuring access to these Activities (DA) allows individuals to develop in both unstructured and structured ways. Additionally, Investment (DI) in terms of time, energy, and financial resources (hours of practice, performance opportunities) is a crucial component of the development process that facilitates Progress (DP). This progress, from initial access to peak performance, can be delineated into stages such as novice, proficient, advanced, and expert levels in instrumental playing.
- iii *Competencies (T): Talent development*. Within Gagné's framework, talents gradually evolve through the refinement of exceptional natural abilities or innate gifts into well-honed and systematically developed competencies, particularly in the context of classical instrumental playing in this study. Given that we are currently investigating musically talented children, from the perspectives of parental perspectives, their achievements only reflect their success at this stage. We further interpret this aspect as parents' future expectations on their children.

Lastly, Environmental (E) factors serve as catalysts that significantly influence the development of human aptitudes, either fostering or hindering them. In our study, we emphasised two subcomponents: Milieu (EM) and Individuals (EI). Milieu (EM) refers to the social, cultural, or physical environment in which a person lives or operates. It encompasses the surroundings, conditions, and influences that shape an individual's experiences. Regarding Individuals (EI), our focus is on the parental influence in creating a specific family environment conducive to instrumental learning, which can impact the development of related natural abilities.

This paper focuses on researching the concept of giftedness using the Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD). While recognising the biological foundations of giftedness (DMNA), the main focus is on talent development from parental perspectives (DMGT). Hence, the term 'musically talented children' was carefully chosen to define the targeted group in this study. The study aimed to investigate how Asian American parents perceive their musically talented children, their parenting styles, cultural influences, benefits, challenges, and expectations. The research questions guiding the inquiry were:

- (1) What factors have contributed to the current success of these Asian American children with musical talent?
- (2) In what ways do Asian American parents perceive their parental roles and how do they intersect with their identity as Asian Americans?
- (3) How do Asian American parents perceive the value of music education and its potential impact on their children's future?

Methods

Participants and procedure

To recruit participants for this study, we searched for Asian American parents with musically talented children who met certain criteria. We reached out to music teachers online and through our own network. To be eligible for this study, Asian American parents had to have a child under the age of 18 who was musically talented. To identify 'musically talented' children, we used Gagné's Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) as a framework, which defines it as 'the outstanding mastery of systematically developed competencies to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of 'learning peers' (Gagné and McPherson 2016, 5). While it may be difficult to determine whether the children of the parent participants were in the top 10%, as there is no universal standardised music test, we believe that these children are

among the most promising music students in the field. According to Gagné and McPherson, ‘the competencies we are looking for should not be specific to prodigious talent development; they should account equally well for individual differences among less extreme levels of excellence, ideally covering the whole range of musical achievement’ (2016, 32). As a result, most of these children have performed solo at top-tier performance hall, won numerous state-wide and international music competitions, and some were enrolled in prestigious music pre-colleges. Although this is not an indicative factor, some of the children were also admitted or studied at the most competitive public high schools in the area, with an admission rate of less than 10%. We identified 9 Asian American parents to participate in this study through a combination of network and snowball sampling (see Table 1).

Prior to the interview, we obtained approval from our institutional ethics committee. A consent form with research background was sent to the participants, and a preliminary survey was also distributed to gather information about the participants and their children. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted to examine parents’ experiences with their musically talented children. Participants were given the choice to conduct the interviews in Mandarin, Cantonese, or English, whichever language they felt most comfortable with. As Cortazzi, Pilcher, and Jin (2011) noted, ‘This should allow participants to choose languages according to ease of expression or familiarity with the topic. To offer participants the choice may help establish rapport and trust, and move the locus of control towards the participant. It may be beneficial for the interviewer to use both languages when explaining a question’ (510). Most participants chose to conduct the interviews in their mother tongue. Unfortunately, the researchers were not able to offer interviews in Korean. Pseudonyms were used for both parents and children to ensure the confidentiality of this study.

Data analysis and coding

We used the Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) on musical prodigiousness (Gagné and McPherson 2016) as a framework for designing the preliminary survey, interview questions, and research questions to investigate the musical talent development of 9 Asian American children from the perspectives of their parents. All interviews were recorded, translated into English, proof-read, and analysed using framework analysis. We used both inductive and deductive approaches to derive themes and organise the structure of our framework (Spencer et al. 2014; Goldsmith 2021). We conducted cross-sectional analyses using data description and abstraction and linked the study data and framework components using a CAQDAS program. Additionally, we used charting to summarise the data based on components and subcomponents of the framework such as Natural Abilities (G), Environmental (E) and Development Process (D) (See Table 2).

To ensure the credibility of the data analysis, we separately conducted a second unit of analysis to analyse complex data and reconciled and cross-examined to eliminate inconsistencies. We also invited the participants to review their transcripts and results and provide comments in the process. 3 out of 9 participants provided minor edits while the rest were satisfied with the transcribed data and analysis. Finally, the main author independently audited the analysed data by examining each step of the data analysis process and its results.

Results

After analysing interviews with 9 parents, we initially identified around 10 different themes. After grouping and refining them, we ultimately identified 5 themes that address our research questions (See Table 2). Theme 1 centres on the factors that contribute to the child’s musical talent, including innate abilities and hard work. Theme 2 centres on the parents’ experiences, their sacrifices, and their investments. Theme 3 focuses on the benefits and challenges that parents face while raising a talented young musician. Theme 4 explores the influence of Asian culture on the parents’ perspectives. Lastly, theme 5 discusses the parents’ future expectations for their children.

Table 1. Information of the participants and their musically talented children.

Parent's Information				Children's Information				
Name*	Ethnicity	Generation	Musical Background	Name*	Age	Instrument	Years of Practice	Demonstrations of Musical Talent
Mary	Korean-American	Immigrated during in her mid-20s (1st generation)	None	Cecilia	12	piano	4.5 years	Winner of national music youth competition. Tested as the top 1% nationwide gifted test.
Elaine	Chinese-American (Hong Kong, China)	Immigrated around 11, 12 years old (1.5 generation)	Novice in piano playing	Carmen	12	Piano	6.5 years	Winner of multiple music competitions, performed twice at top-tier performance venue.
Sally	Chinese-American (Fujian, China)	Immigrated around her 20s (1st generation)	None	Dave & Eli	15 & 10	piano	10 years & 5 years	Winner of multiple music competitions, performed a few times at top-tier performance venue.
Amy	Chinese-American (Fujian, China)	Immigrated around her 30s (1st generation)	None	John	15	piano	9 years	Winner of multiple music competitions.
Maggie	Korean-American	Immigrated when she was 3 years old (1.5 generation)	Intermediate piano playing	Eunice	6.5	violin	3 years	2 times competition winner.
Katherine	Chinese-American (Hong Kong, China)	Immigrated in her 20s (1st generation)	None	Stephen	17	Piano; cello	13 years on piano; 3 years on cello	Winner of multiple music competitions, performed at top-tier performance venue and performed concerti with orchestra.
Morgan	Chinese-American (Hong Kong, China)	Immigrated for college (1st generation)	Novice in piano playing	Olivia & Julie	12 & 8	piano	7.5 years & 4.5 years	Winner of multiple music competitions, performed at top-tier performance venue. Olivia has performed concerti with orchestra.
Shirley	Chinese-American (Shenyang, China)	Immigrated in her 20s (1st generation)	Limited training on recorder	Ada	6	piano	2 years	Winner of music competitions, performed at top-tier performance venue twice, and performed concerti with orchestra.
Diana	Chinese-American (Wuhan, China)	Immigrated during college (1st generation)	Piano professor	Mark	15	piano	8 years (on and off)	Winner of national music youth competition and performed concerti with orchestras.

*All names are pseudonyms.

Theme 1: children's innate abilities and importance of hard work

We investigated whether the parents' experiences were in line with Gagné and McPherson's (2016) framework and discovered that only 3 out of 9 parents had identified any innate musical abilities in their children before commencing instrumental instruction. For instance, Maggie recalled that her daughter Eunice had attended 'mommy and me' music classes in her early childhood and exhibited superior singing skills compared to her peers. Mary, the mother of Cecilia, also noted that her daughter had a remarkable ability to sing and memorise lyrics from a young age. Diana attributed his son's musical talent to his passion for dancing, which possibly enhanced his rhythmic and bodily coordination. On the other hand, the remaining six parents reported they did not perceive any musical traits in their children when they were young. Elaine commented, 'Carmen had no musical traits whatsoever. She only achieved well because she was diligent'. Similarly, Sharon used the Chinese term 食苦 to characterise her daughter, which literally means 'Eat Bitter'. This term reflects a cultural belief that 「吃得苦中苦，方為人上人」, which can be translated as 'the more hardship you can endure, the more successful you will become', implying that pain leads to gain.

However, several parents, including Katherine, Amy, Sharon, and Morgan, did notice their children's musical talent after they started instrumental lessons. Katherine and Amy reported that their sons learned piano with exceptional speed, while Mary noted that Cecilia taught herself Chopin etudes after only two years of piano study. Despite struggles with reading music, Diana's son quickly picked up musical skills by ear. Parents also observed their children exhibiting remarkable stamina and focus beyond what was typical for children their age. For instance, Maggie described her daughter Eunice as having a 'strange ability to focus, practice, and attend to tasks for a child this young'. Additionally, eight out of nine parents reported that their children excelled academically, with some attending highly competitive schools or speaking multiple languages, such as Cecilia, who is fluent in Korean, Chinese, English, and Spanish.

Moreover, almost all parents emphasised the effort their children invested in learning their instruments, alongside their innate abilities. Mary, whose daughter tested in the top 1% of gifted children nationwide, noted, 'Giftedness is the first thing [that helps], after that, we need more resources so talent can be developed'. All the children (except for Diana's son, Mark), practiced their instruments for at least one hour daily, with some even dedicating four to six hours on certain days. Most children initially disliked practicing and often cried, particularly when first starting or receiving criticism from their parents. However, practice eventually became a responsibility and routine for the children. As they grew older, some children's aversion to practicing dissipated, and their practice time shortened due to heavier academic workloads or additional extracurricular activities.

Theme 2: parental sacrifice and investment

Parental sacrifice and investment are a prevalent factor in Gagné and McPherson's (2016) framework. With the exception of Diana, almost all of these parents, especially when the child was young, devoted a lot of time to sitting beside their children during their practice sessions. In Chinese, there is a term, 陪練, that was invoked by the parents several times. In the Western culture, this term is usually translated as 'sparring partner', someone who challenges you to improve your skills and performance at any given time, typically in the context of sports. This term 'sparring partner' (陪練) has gained popularity in recent years. In fact, as early as the late 1990s, articles were published in Chinese piano journals by Chinese piano scholars discussing how parents can effectively serve as 'sparring partners' for their children in piano training (邨惠丽 1997; 龚国宇 1999). To this day, the concept of a 'sparring partner' has evolved into a commercial opportunity for companies in China. Music schools now offer 'sparring partner' packages, where young music graduates or novice teachers sit alongside the children during practice sessions to provide guidance

Table 2. Examples of data analysis and coding using the selected components and subcomponents of Integrative Model of Talent Development (IMTD) on musical prodigiousness (Gagné and McPherson 2016).

Gagné's Proposed Domains for Talent Development	Sub-components	Examples of Qualitative Data	Initial Codes	Final Theme*		
Natural Abilities (G)	Intellectual (GI) <i>General intelligence, memory, verbal, procedural.</i>	'Olivia is a quick learner. She doesn't have to exert a lot of effort in learning piano.' – Morgan	Children's innate abilities	1		
		'My son is gifted, I believe ... He can memorize music very quickly.' – Diana	Children's innate abilities			
	Creative (GC) <i>Imagination, originality.</i>	'Cecilia knows how to speak 4 languages fluently.' – Mary	Children's innate abilities	4		
		'Cecilia is gifted not only in piano playing, but in drawing and singing as well.' – Mary	Children's innate abilities			
Perceptual (GP) <i>Vision, hearing, touch.</i>		'Julie is very musical.' – Morgan	Children's innate abilities			
		'Eunice has a great sense of hearing since she was young, she can sing very much in tune due to that.' – Maggie	Children's innate abilities			
Environmental (E)	Milieu (EM) <i>Physical, cultural, social, familial.</i>	'I wanted Stephen to start playing an instrument because all of my cousins know how to play piano.' – Katherine	Family influence	4		
		'Just like other Asians, they work hard, they are more aggressive in working hard.' – Mary	Importance of hard work/ Influence of Asian culture	1		
		'Prodigy does not exist. Success comes from hard work.' –Morgan	Importance of hard work	1		
		'I have to set up some rules; if not, they will only play video games every day. In my household, they can only play video games on the weekends.' – Elaine	Parental guidance/ Influence of Asian culture	4		
		'Give up is not a choice, never.' – Amy	Parental guidance/ Influence of Asian culture			
		'I see the value of tiger parenting, but I also worry about the long-term emotional trauma that will affect my daughter.' – Maggie	Parental guidance/ Influence of Asian culture			
		'畫棋書畫樣樣皆精 ('piano, chess, calligraphy, and painting; all skills have to be mastered.') is a part of our Chinese culture. That's why I want my child to learn an instrument and be good at it.' – Sally	Parental guidance/ Asian cultural influence			
		'My role is non-transferrable. It cannot be alternated between me and my husband because I need to be in the known [of her daughter's piano progress]. I believe one parent needs to sacrifice.' – Shirley	Parental investment	2		
		Individuals (EI) <i>Parents, family, peers, teachers, mentors.</i>		'Besides parents, I think having a great music teacher is as important for my child's music development.' – Shirley	Teacher influence (Other influence)	-
				'Julie doesn't like to take feedback, but she likes to follow her sister's path [on piano]. She wants to compete with her.' – Morgan	Sibling Influence (Other influence)	-
		'Now our life is surrounded by beautiful classical music. Life has been changed; I love classical music and learned a lot about the composers and history of classical music.' – Mary	Benefits	3		

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Gagné's Proposed Domains for Talent Development	Sub-components	Examples of Qualitative Data	Initial Codes	Final Theme*	
Development Process (D)	Activities (DA) <i>Access, content, format.</i>	'Carmen is only doing well because she is hardworking ... We practice at least 1-2 h every day.' – Elaine.	Format/Importance of hard work	1	
		'They [Dave and Eli] achieved their success through hard work.' – Sally	Format/Importance of hard work	1	
		'There are no traits of talent in Carmen ... She cannot read music initially. She would not be able to play like this without the training and switching to a new teacher.' – Elaine	Format/Importance of hard work	1	
		'I lost track of how many trophies Olivia got. Maybe 10 plus? And she performed with the Carnegie Hall 7 times total.' – Morgan	Access/Format	2	
		'We have two pianos at home so Olivia and Julie can practice at the same time. They do not have time to take turns to practice.' – Morgan	Access/Format	2	
		Investment (DI) <i>Time, energy, money.</i>	'When Stephen was young, I practiced with him 2- 3 h per day. We did not own a grand piano at home at that time. So we would take a 45-minute subway ride to a piano studio every day and stayed there for the entire afternoon to practice.' – Katherine	Format/Importance of hard work/ Access	2
	Format/Importance of hard work		Format/Challenges	3	
	'Learning instruments need a lot of time. Our schedule is very packed every day.' – Morgan				
	'I believe his piano skills and achievement will make his college application more appealing.' – Katherine		Benefits	3	
	'I actually do not see any benefits [for me] that John learns piano, especially when I needed to sacrifice my job when they were young.'		Parental sacrifice	2	
	Progress (DP) <i>Stages, pace, turning points.</i>		'Dave wanted to quit on piano. I let him choose and, in the end, he told me he wanted to keep learning piano.' – Sally	Challenges/Turning Points	3
			'John actually tried to quit twice. I told him he can quit on piano but he still cannot play video games with his spare time.. In the end, he told me he wanted to keep playing.' – Amy	Challenges/Turning Points	
		'Now John is older, he only practices around 30 minutes a day. It is up to him how much he would practice now ... He is too busy with his academic studies.' – Amy	Turning Points/ Challenges		
'There is argument during practice. And Ada got emotional sometimes. But I think it is normal for her age. I feel proud that we are improving together.' – Shirley		Challenges/Benefits			
Competencies	Talents (T) <i>Top 10%</i>	'As long as they [Julie and Olivia] are happy, they can do whatever they want ... Olivia shows a lot of interest in STEM currently, so honestly, I do	Future expectations	5	

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Gagné's Proposed Domains for Talent Development	Sub-components	Examples of Qualitative Data	Initial Codes	Final Theme*
		not think she will study music in the future.' – Morgan		
		'If she [Eunice] can go to music school like Juilliard, I would be very happy. But I don't know if she can get in.' – Maggie	Future expectations	
		'Mark wants to be a medical doctor. Although he is very good at piano, he was aware how difficult it is based on me, and my husband's lives.' – Diana	Career choice	
		'John did not want to play professionally because the lack of money in this career.' – Amy	Career choice	

*Number representing the 5 marco themes. Theme 1: Children's innate abilities and importance of hard work; Theme 2: Parental sacrifice and investment; Theme 3: Benefits and challenges; Theme 4: Influence from Asian culture; and Theme 5: Future expectations.

before their lessons with their teachers. Additionally, there are also developed mobile applications available for parents who may be too busy to arrange for a virtual 'sparring partner' for their children. Although most of the interviewed parents lack proficiency in playing the instrument, or only possess rudimentary knowledge, they believe that accompanying their children while practicing will enhance their outcomes and motivation. Shirley stated:

My role is non-transferrable. It cannot be alternated between me and my husband because I need to be in the known [of her daughter's piano progress]. I believe one parent needs to sacrifice.

Moreover, many of the parents (Shirley, Katherine, Amy, Stephanie, and Mary) indicated that they had to relinquish their careers to attend to their children. Most of them opted for part-time jobs, freelance work, or became full-time housewives. It appears that it was an implicit assumption that if they wanted to be vigilant to the child, including allocating the time to sit beside them during their practice, some of them had to forfeit their own career aspirations. Diana, who is a piano professor, was an exception. She reflected that she was always preoccupied with her career, teaching on the weekends and rehearsing for her own recital. She seldom had time to supervise Mark's practice and he would encounter difficulties in note reading. Mark abandoned piano after a while and only resumed it when he was 10. For a few children who are now teenagers, the parents said they are finally pursuing their own careers and have very little influence on how much their children practice. Furthermore, they also need to allocate financial resources to their musical training. Morgan mentioned that they had to buy two pianos for their home so that her two children could practice simultaneously, given their busy schedules. As many of the musically talented children have performed in prestigious concert halls, some even outside the United States, a significant amount of financial support is invested in their musical development.

Theme 3: benefits and challenges

Parents raising musically talented children experienced different levels of benefits and challenges. Morgan and Sharon could not think of any benefits of raising musically talented children directly related to themselves. However, other parents such as Maggie and Mary believed that their love for classical music grew since their children's instrumental training. Diana reflected that one big benefit for her was Mark could learn and memorise the repertoire quickly without spending much time practicing so he could play sports and focus on STEM. On the contrary, many parents found challenges in raising musically talented children. Some parents expressed that they found the process of

recalling the challenges emotionally challenging. Four parents explained there had been increased tensions between them and their children. For Maggie, she recalled being worried that Eunice would be emotionally scarred forever as she would sometimes say, ‘Mommy, why are you so mean to me?’ For Morgan, she expressed that music brought them closer sometimes but also hurt their relationship.

Elaine, Kimberly, Morgan, and Maggie concurred that time management poses a great challenge. Given the scarce amount of time available for the child each day, they struggle to strike a balance between instrumental practice and other aspects of life. For Elaine, this means sacrificing weekend family time for bonding. For Kimberly, when Stephen was young, she had to commute for 45 minutes every day to take her son to a piano studio where he would practice for 2 to 3 hours, since they could not practice in their apartment. For Maggie, this implies prioritising Eunice’s practice over her academic performance. Many of them also emphasised the significance of finding the right teacher who can inspire their children. Mary, who regarded her child, Cecilia, as a potential prodigy in piano, asserted that her biggest challenge was to find a teacher who understood gifted children and provided both guidance and freedom for the child to flourish. It had been a frustrating experience for both her and her daughter when their first teacher hindered their growth – Cecilia was only allowed to practice a few songs, had to keep a practice log of 45 min, and could not pursue her own goals or explore more repertoire.

Theme 4: influence from Asian culture

During the interviews, discussed whether Asian culture has influenced their parenting styles. More than half of the parents (Diana, Maggie, Elaine, Amy, and Morgan) resisted this idea. They believed their parenting and perceptions toward their children were unrelated to their cultural background. Maggie and Elaine also reflected that since they immigrated to the United States when they were very young, they did not believe their cultural roots had influenced them much; perhaps there was some peer influence.

However, Mary, Sally, Katherine, and Sharon all acknowledged that Asian culture has influenced them more or less in their parenting styles. Sally believed that learning an instrument well is part of Chinese virtue. In Chinese culture, there is an old saying of 琴棋書畫樣樣皆精 which translates as ‘piano, chess, calligraphy, and painting; all skills have to be mastered’. Many of them also mentioned that as first generations in the United States, they want their children to be successful no matter what they are doing. Mary reflected that ‘Just like other Asians, they work hard; they are more aggressive sometimes more than other ethnicities. [People from] Korea, China, Japan, and Hong Kong are similar ...’ Many Asian parents often cite the cultural value of hard work, which sets a high standard of expectations for their children.

When discussing the parents’ views on ‘tiger parenting’, many of them were not shy away and admitted they were one of them though they might not like the term. The term ‘tiger parenting’ was coined by Chua (2011) to describe the concept of an extremely demanding and authoritative parenting style, commonly observed in Asian or Asian American households. The concept of ‘tiger parenting’ has ignited a public debate regarding whether these parenting methods have a positive or negative influence on children’s development. Research studies have not yet furnished sufficient empirical evidence to definitively validate or refute these concerns. (Kim et al. 2013). While some of the interviewed parents think they were a mix between ‘tiger parents’ and ‘non-tiger parents’, many of them claimed that setting up rules and boundaries in the household is necessary. Elaine claimed,

I don’t think I am a tiger parent but I have to set up some rules; if not, they will only play video games every day. In my household, they can only play video games on the weekends.

On the contrary, Diana believed that tiger parenting was not applicable for some children and could cause trauma for them, expressed,

Do you want your children to be successful? I do too. However, it greatly depends on the child. Understanding your children well is crucial. If a child is naturally driven and possesses talents, I must honestly admit that not everyone has the same level of IQ. So, personally, if it were me and my child were slower, I wouldn't push too hard. I would encourage them to develop confidence in society and their abilities, but not necessarily to the extent of expecting them to reach a certain level or surpass others. Trying too hard in such cases could make the child's life miserable.

For Amy, she also has a daughter who has special needs. While John is exceptional in piano playing, her daughter had to quit piano due to her special needs. Amy mentioned in the interview, 'Whenever I see tiger parents, I run away from them. I do not like to compare my children to them. I know my children are different'.

Theme 5: future expectations

All the interviewed parents acknowledged the value of music education and were cognizant of its importance. In summary, parents believe that music can serve as a vehicle for their children to express themselves and develop a lifelong skill and hobby. Some believed that music is a form of self-cultivation, particularly in Chinese culture where it is deemed necessary to have one talent. Since all participating children are still under 18, it is challenging for us to predict their future paths. Therefore, we sought input from the parents regarding their expectations for the continued development of their children's musical talent, and whether they envision it as a path they would like to pursue in the long run. With regard to whether being a professional musician can be a future career, only one parent, Mary, was unequivocally supportive of her child becoming a concert pianist. Two other parents of younger children (6-year-olds), Maggie and Shirley, expressed that they would be pleased if their children could major in music in the future. The remaining parents predicted that their children are unlikely to major in music in college. Sally claimed that she knew her children were very good at piano but not at the level where they would be famous. Morgan and Diana emphasised that as long as their children could support themselves, they would support their decisions but their children were mostly interested in STEM. Diana, who is a piano professor herself, also recognised how challenging it is to pursue a career in music as she experienced it firsthand; she said her son also recognised it early on and did not want to be a full-time musician. Katherine, whose son is about to apply for college next year, was cautious about having her son major in music as she believed that men have a huge responsibility to be the breadwinner of the household. Although parents devoted significant time to their children's instrumental practice, many viewed it as a means of benefiting their children rather than as a means of pursuing a career. Amy, whose son is currently in high school, reflected on the challenges she personally faced in cultivating John's musical training. She acknowledges that, in some respects, it may seem like a bit of an investment with limited returns as is aware that John does not intend to pursue music as a career.

Discussion

In accordance with Gagné and McPherson's (2016) Framework, it was observed through the interviews that parents agreed on the importance of resources, investment, and opportunities in cultivating and developing talent (Dai and Schlader 2002; Denac 2008; Evans, Bickel, and Pendarvis 2000; Ho 2009). While parental involvement is crucial, the significance of hard work must not be overlooked (Gagné and McPherson 2016; Winner 2000). Interestingly, some parents believed their children to be gifted, while others did not recognise any particular gifts in their children. Despite this, it is noteworthy that some children who were not initially considered as gifted were able to reach the top 10% of the talent framework proposed by Gagné through their diligent efforts. Morgan, one of the interviewed parents, specifically voiced out she believed prodigies do not exist; it only comes from hard work through her own experience.

Among the interviewees, two children – Cecilia and Mark – stood out due to their exceptional piano playing skills. Interestingly, the amount of time they dedicated to practice daily differed greatly, with Cecilia averaging around four hours and Mark only averaging 30 min. Despite this difference, both children had won national music competitions, with Cecilia putting in tireless efforts to achieve her self-defined goals, while Mark balanced his musical talent with other pursuits such as sports and STEM activities. Although their parents acknowledged their exceptional giftedness, they did not exhibit the same level of intense involvement in their children's practice routines as some other interviewed parents did. Based on the parents' perspectives, it became evident that music giftedness is a combination of innate abilities and hard work (Winner and Martino 2000). In our interviews, STEM was brought up by several parents, even though the interview questions did not specifically address this topic. This suggests that, in addition to musical training, some of these parents are also prioritising the development of STEM skills for their children. While the level of giftedness varied among the children, it was evident that hard work was a critical factor in their success. Cecilia and Mark exemplified that hard work is not solely defined by the number of practice hours, but also by their clear goals and inner drive, as attested by their parents (Williamson and Valentine 2000; Williamson, Lehmann, and McClure 2003).

To enhance the understanding of the complex interplay between the model minority stereotype and Asian American musically gifted students, it is imperative for future studies to extend the scope of this research beyond the experiences of only 9 parents with predominantly pianist children. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of distinguishing between the terms 'gifted' and 'talented' within the domain of gifted and music education. The data provides initial information that parents of highly talented children who possess exceptional musical innate abilities, may not need to invest and sacrifice to the same extent as parents of other musically talented musicians. Further research could involve delving deeper into disparities in parental investment, teaching pedagogy, and personal motivation between children who are classified as gifted versus those identified as talented.

The results of this study, as illustrated in [Figure 1](#) (Gagné and McPherson 2016), indicate that natural abilities (G), environmental (E), and developmental process (D) factors are crucial in facilitating talent development. Parents highlighted the significance of developmental process (D) in ensuring their children's success, specifically by providing access (DA), time (DI), and energy (DI), as well as offering unwavering parental support (EI) within the environmental (E) context. It was apparent that certain inherent abilities and traits, like attention span, a passion for singing, listening skills, and memorisation skills, serve as early indicators of Natural Abilities (G). As two parents, Mary and Diana, heavily attributed their children's musical achievements to natural abilities, such as intellectual (GI) and biological foundations (e.g. keen musical senses and inner drive). However, it was also observed that children lacking these traits can develop them through environmental (E) factors, particularly family support, i.e. Milieu (EM) & Individuals (EI), as demonstrated in our study, underscoring the cultural influence and the belief in the importance of hard work as crucial factors. Additionally, this involves providing access to activities and resources (DA), such as private music lessons, practice equipment at home, and opportunities to perform and compete. Nevertheless, parental involvement and dedication proved significant. Not only did they invest time and financial resources, but they also assumed the role of a second teacher, acting as a 'sparring partner' when the children practiced at home.

In essence, all parents interviewed agreed that talent development was pivotal in unlocking their children's potential and transforming them from 'diamonds in the rough' into accomplished musicians. As Thomson (2006) attested, 'talent development requires systematic learning and practising, and the more intensive these activities are, the greater the demonstrated skills will be. In the DMGT, while one cannot be talented without first being gifted, it is possible for natural abilities not to be translated into talents ...' (4). Though many of the parents did not intend their children to be professional musicians, they are aware of the importance of music education. This study matters because it provides insights and evidence into how different factors, including natural abilities,

environmental support, and parental involvement, contribute to the musical development of a broader spectrum of students.

Overall, we hope that this study provides valuable insights into the complex nature of nurturing gifted and talented young children from a parental perspective, particularly in the Asian American communities. Furthermore, we aspire to provide insights for parents, music educators, and policy-makers to enhance music education's inclusivity and accessibility for all students, regardless of their initial abilities or backgrounds.

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