

They're not the same genetically — they don't behave the same — and they don't choose the same kinds of habitats.

Because the Mojave tortoise is listed as threatened, scientists have

studied it more intensely, at least until recently. Now Schwalbe and other investigators want to know such details as when and where the Sonoran tortoise lays eggs and how many — how the female guards her

eggs — and how to tell if populations are doing poorly or well.

Knowing more about the biology of the tortoise can help scientists protect and preserve this fascinating desert reptile. ♦

Raising a Teenager

Parents of brand new babies get a great deal of advice. But, when the "baby" becomes a teenager, the advice often turns into dire predictions of trouble ahead.

Parents worry about the best way to handle their maturing children. Susan Silverberg, assistant professor of family and consumer resources at the University of Arizona, is working on a long-term project to help determine what influences parenting techniques, and to find out what will help promote young teens' social, emotional, and academic development.

Through the Amphitheater School District in Tucson, Silverberg enlisted 94 mothers whose oldest child was in 8th grade. The group was evenly split between two-parent families and single parent families, and accurately represented the financial and racial make-up of families in the District.

Among preliminary findings, Silverberg believes it's important to note that in many ways, single mothers raised their children the same as married mothers. But, single mothers were more apt to allow depressed feelings to spill over into their confidence about their abilities as parents.

Single mothers must meet the demands of parenting and managing a household alone — without

the kind of support that many married mothers have.

Silverberg also explored how mothers affected the emotional and academic well-being of young teens. The youngsters talked about their dreams for the future, and what they really expected to achieve. She correlated these conversations with the mothers' parenting practices and found a strong relationship between parenting techniques and young teens' realistic expectation of their future. On the other hand, there was no real relationship between parenting practices and teenagers' dreams.

Silverberg wants to find the relationship between specific parenting practices and young teens whose expectations are much lower than their dreams. A specific example is a girl who wanted to be a doctor but expected to work at McDonald's.

"Our next step is to pinpoint the reasons behind this kind of thinking," she said.

Silverberg believes that many basic ingredients of effective parenting practices are similar for younger and older children.

"Give a child an appropriate amount of freedom in decision-making but still maintain behavioral control. Combine the controlled freedom with lots of warmth and affection. The combination

leads to positive development for young children and young adolescents."

A more concrete idea of what influences parenting, including personal characteristics of parents, sources of stress and support, and beliefs about children's development, can lead to educational programs on parenting will better serve the public. Silverberg said it's time for parenting education courses to go beyond teaching basic techniques and discuss what influences those techniques.

"With a better idea of the support needed to back up parenting skills, the transition into adolescence can be easier for everybody involved," Silverberg said. ♦



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