

Expanding the Conception of Giftedness To Include Co-Cognitive Traits and To Promote Social Capital

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*The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain
until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.*
Jane Addams

Changing the World...One Life at a Time

After repeatedly observing the little boy crying on the school bus, Melanie, a fifth grade student, took a seat next to him and struck up a conversation. "You don't understand," said Tony, a first grader whose face was practically hidden behind the thickest eyeglasses Melanie had ever seen. "You see these glasses? I'm partially sighted. The kids trip me and make fun of me; I have special books for my subjects, but there are no books in the library that I can read."

Later that day Melanie approached her enrichment teacher and asked if she could make Tony her "Type III" Project for the year. Over the next several days, Melanie and the enrichment teacher drew up a plan that began with some "friendly persuasion" for the boys that were harassing Tony. A few of the school's bigger, well-respected boys and girls escorted him from the school bus and sat with him in the lunchroom.

Melanie then asked Tony a series of questions from an instrument called the Interest-A-Lyzer to determine what some of his reading interests might be. She recruited a number of the school's best writers to work on large print "big books" that dealt with Tony's interests in sports and adventure stories. She also recruited the school's best artists to illustrate the books, and served as the editor and production manager for the series.

As the project progressed over the next several months, a remarkable change took place in Tony's attitude toward school. He became a local celebrity, and other students even signed out books from Tony's special section of the library. Melanie's creative idea and her task commitment resulted in the development of profound empathy and sensitivity to human concerns and the application of her talents to an unselfish cause. When questioned about her work, Melanie explained simply, "It didn't change the world, but it changed the world of one little boy."

Background

In the early 1970s I began work on a conception of giftedness that challenged the traditional view of this concept as mainly a function of high scores on intelligence tests. This work was greeted by a less than enthusiastic reception from the gifted establishment of the time including rejections of my writing by all the main journals in the field of gifted education. My convictions about a broadened view of human potential caused me to seek an audience elsewhere, and in 1978 the *Kappan* published my article entitled, *What Makes Giftedness: Reexamining a Definition* (Renzulli, 1978). In the ensuing years scholars, practitioners, and policy makers began to gain a more flexible attitude toward the meaning of this complex phenomenon called giftedness, and the 1978 *Kappan* article is now the most widely cited publication in the field. I mention this fortunate turn of events mainly to call attention to the always expectant hope that people can change their minds about a long cherished belief, and to acknowledge the courage of Robert Cole, the then *Kappan* editor, who was willing to take a

chance on what was at the time a decidedly unpopular point of view.

In what is now popularly known as the three-ring conception of giftedness (above average but not necessarily superior ability, creativity, and task commitment), I embedded the three rings in a hounds tooth background that represents the interactions between personality and environment (see Figure 1). These factors aid in the development of the three clusters of traits that represent gifted behaviors. What I recognized but did not emphasize at the time was that a scientific examination of a more focused set of background components is necessary in order for us to understand more fully the sources of gifted behaviors and more importantly, the ways in which people transform their gifted assets into constructive action [Note: I prefer to use the word, "gifted," as an adjective rather than a noun]. Why did Melanie devote her time and energy to a socially responsible project that would improve the life of one little boy? And can a better understanding of people who use their gifts in socially constructive ways help us create conditions that expand the number of people who contribute to the growth of social as well as economic capital? Can our education system produce future corporate leaders who are as sensitive to aesthetic and environmental concerns as they are to the corporate bottom line? Can we influence the ethics and morality of future industrial and political leaders so that they place gross national happiness on an equal or higher scale of values than gross national product? These are some of the questions we are attempting to address in an ongoing series of research studies that examine the relationship between co-cognitive personal characteristics and the role that these characteristics play in the development of social capital.

What Is Social Capital and Why Is It Important?

Financial and intellectual capital are the well-known forces that drive the economy and result in generating highly valued material assets, wealth production, and professional advancement -- all important goals in a capitalistic economic system. Social capital, on the other hand, is a set of intangible assets that address the collective needs and problems of other individuals and our communities at large. Although social capital cannot be defined as precisely as corporate earnings or gross domestic product, Labonte (1999) eloquently defines it as: "something going on 'out there' in people's day-to-day relationships that is an important determinant to the quality of their lives, if not society's healthy functioning. It is the 'gluey stuff' that binds individuals to groups, groups to organizations, citizens to societies" (p. 431). This kind of capital generally enhances community life and the network of obligations we have to one another. Investments in social capital benefit society as a whole because they help to create the values, norms, networks, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation geared toward the greater public good.

Striking evidence indicates a marked decline in American social capital over the latter half of the century just ending. National surveys show declines over the last few decades in voter turnout and political participation, membership in service clubs, church-related groups, parent-teacher associations, unions, and fraternal groups. For example, membership in the League of Women Voters has

decreased by 42 percent since 1969 and an even greater decrease (59 percent) has been recorded for the Federation of Women's Clubs. Similar reductions are found in volunteerism to organizations such as the Red Cross and Boy Scouts, and to service and fraternal groups such as the Jaycees, the Elks, the Lions, and the Masons (Putnam, 1995). These declines in civic and social participation have been paralleled by an increasing tendency for young people to focus on narrow professional success and individual economic gain.

What is perhaps most striking when examining the commentary of leading scholars about relationship between economic and social capital is that investments in *both* types of national assets can result in greater prosperity and improved physical and mental health as well as a society that honors freedom, happiness, justice, civic participation, and the dignity of a diverse population. Putnam (1993, 1995) pointed out that the aggregation of social capital has contributed to economic development. He found that widespread participation in group activities, social trust, and cooperation created conditions for both good government and prosperity. Putnam traced the roots of investments in social capital to medieval times and concluded that communities did not become civil because they were rich, but rather became rich because they were civil. "Researchers in such fields as education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and even health have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities" (Putnam, 1995, p. 66). Other researchers have concluded that social capital is simultaneously a cause and an effect leading to positive outcomes such as economic development, good government, reduced crime, greater participation in civic activities, and cooperation among diverse members of a community. (Portes, 1998).

Researchers who have studied social capital have examined it mainly in terms of its impact on communities at large, but they also point out that it is created largely by the actions of individuals. They also have reported that leadership is a necessary condition for the creation of social capital. Although numerous studies and a great deal of commentary about leadership have been discussed in the gifted education literature, no one has yet examined the relationship between the characteristics of gifted leaders and their motivation to use their gifts for the production of social capital.

Gifted Education and Social Capital

Research on the characteristics of gifted individuals has addressed the question: What causes some people to use their intellectual, motivational, and creative assets in ways that lead to outstanding manifestations of creative productivity, while others with similar or perhaps even more considerable assets fail to achieve high levels of accomplishment? Perhaps an even more important question so far as the production of social capital is concerned is: What causes some people to mobilize their interpersonal, political, ethical, and moral realms of being in such ways that they place human concerns and the common good above materialism, ego enhancement, and self-indulgence? How can we understand the science of human strengths that brings about the remarkable contributions of people like Nelson Mandela, Rachel Carson, Mother Theresa, and others who have focused their talents on bringing

about changes that are directed toward making the lives of all people better?

The folk wisdom, research literature, and biographical and anecdotal accounts about creativity and giftedness are nothing short of mind boggling; and yet, we are still unable to answer these fundamental questions about persons who have devoted their lives to improving the human condition. Several writers have speculated about the necessary ingredients for giftedness and creative productivity. These theories have called attention to important components and conditions for high level accomplishment, but they fail to explain how the confluence of desirable traits results in commitments for making the lives of all people more personally rewarding, environmentally safe, peaceful, and politically free. Concern for a psychology that focuses on these positive human concerns is especially important because it will help give direction to the educational and environmental experiences we might be able to provide for the potentially gifted and talented young people who will shape both the values and the actions of the new century.

That certain ingredients are necessary for creative productivity is not debatable; however, the specific traits, the extent to which they exist, and the ways they interact with one another will continue to be the basis for future theorizing, research, and controversy. We need to learn more about all aspects of trait theory, but I also believe that new research must begin to focus on that elusive “thing” that is left over after everything explainable has been explained. This “thing” is the true mystery of our common interest in human potential, but it also might hold the key to both explaining and nurturing that kind of genius that has been applied to the betterment of mankind.

Operation Houndstooth

One of the more fortunate new directions in the social sciences in recent years has been the development of the positive psychology movement. Championed by Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000), this movement focuses on enhancing what is good in life in addition to fixing what is maladaptive behavior. The goal of positive psychology is to create a science of human strengths that will help us to understand and learn how to foster socially constructive virtues in young people. Although all of society's institutions need to be involved in helping to shape positive values and virtues, schools play an especially important part today because of changes in family structures and because people of all ages now spend more than a fifth of their lives in some kind of schooling. In a research study dealing with developing excellence in young people, Larson (2000) found that average students report being bored about one-third of the time. He speculates that participation in civic and socially engaging activities might hold the key to overcoming some of the disengagement and disaffection that is rampant among American youth. Larson argues that components of positive development such as initiative, creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement can result from early and continuous opportunities to participate in experiences that promote characteristics associated with the production of social capital.

The positive psychology movement, coupled with my continuing fascination about the scientific

components that give rise to socially constructive giftedness, has resulted in an examination of personal attributes that form the framework of Operation Houndstooth. A comprehensive review of the literature and a series of Delphi technique classification studies led to the development of an organizational plan for studying the six components and thirteen subcomponents presented in Figure 2. These components are briefly defined as follows:

Optimism. Optimism includes cognitive, emotional, and motivational components and reflects the belief that the future holds good outcomes. Optimism may be thought of as the mood or attitude associated with an expectation about a future one regards as socially desirable, to his/her advantage or to the advantage of others.

Courage. Deriving from the Latin word for “heart,” courage is the ability to face difficulty or danger while overcoming physical, psychological, and/or moral fears. Integrity and strength of character are typical manifestations of courage, and they represent the most salient marks of creative persons.

Romance with a Topic/Discipline. When an individual is passionate about a topic or discipline a true romance, characterized by powerful emotions and desires, evolves. The passion or love characteristic of this romance often becomes an image for the future in young people and serves as a primary ingredient for eminence.

Sensitivity to Human Concerns. This trait is described as the abilities to comprehend another's affective world and to accurately and sensitively communicate understanding through action. Altruism and empathy, aspects of which are evident throughout human development, characterize sensitivity to human concerns.

Physical/Mental Energy. All people have this trait in varying degrees, but the amount of energy an individual is willing and able to invest toward the achievement of a goal is a crucial issue in high levels of accomplishment. In the case of eminent individuals, this energy investment level is a major contributor to task commitment. Charisma and curiosity are frequent correlates or manifestations of high physical and mental energy.

Vision/Sense of Destiny. Complex and difficult to define, vision or a sense of destiny may best be described by a variety of intercorrelated concepts such as internal locus of control, motivation, volition, and self-efficacy. When an individual has a vision or sense of destiny about future activity, events, and involvement, that image serves to stimulate planning and to direct behavior; the image becomes an incentive for present behavior.

The goals of Operation Houndstooth are twofold. First, we have examined the scientific research that has been conducted on the components described above. The two-directional arrows in Figure 2 are intended to point out the many interactions that take place between and among these six components. I will refer to these components as co-cognitive factors because they interact with and enhance the cognitive traits that we ordinarily associate with success in school and the overall development of human abilities. The literature reviews and empirical research that resulted in the identification of these components can be found by visiting our web site (www.gifted.uconn.edu/houndst.html). The first phase of our research includes clarifying definitions and identifying, adapting, and constructing assessment procedures that have extended our understanding of the components, especially in young people.

A major assumption underlying this project is that all of the components defined in our background research are subject to modification. Thus, the second phase consists of a series of experimental studies to determine how various school-related interventions can promote the types of behavior defined within the respective components. These interventions draw upon existing and newly developed techniques that can be used within various school and extracurricular contexts.

This article examines practical applications of our research by describing exemplars of the work of young people who have displayed these traits and the opportunities, resources, and encouragement that led to participation in experiences which promoted the kinds of positive human concerns that are the raw material of increased social capital. It is important to point out that we are in the early stages of trying to understand very complex concepts that contribute to the development of socially responsible behaviors. Definitive answers to questions about promoting larger amounts of social capital as a national goal may be years away, but it is my hope that this article will motivate other investigators to sense the importance of this challenge and pursue studies that will contribute to our understanding of this complex concept. It is also my hope that school personnel will begin to think about steps that they can take now to make changes in the ways we promote in young people some of the virtues discussed below. And earlier is better! Howard Gardner has commented on the importance of early experiences in acquiring enduring habits of mind: "Research shows that when children are young they develop what you might call intuitive theories. It's like powerful engravings on your brain. Teachers don't realize how powerful they are, but early theories don't disappear, they stay on the ground" (Gardner quoted in Kogan, 2000, p. 66). Wouldn't it be nice if we began engravings that will lead to societal improvements rather than the status, materialism, and self-indulgence that is so prevalent in the life styles of many of our young people?

How Can Schools Develop Houndstooth Components?

Although political controversy has frequently surrounded the role that schools should play in dealing with non-cognitive abilities, character development and the moral, ethical, and affective growth of young people have been a major concern of educators since ancient times. The Houndstooth components certainly have implications for these non-cognitive characteristics, however, the focus of this initiative, and the reason I refer to them as co-cognitive factors, is that they support the growth of cognitive attributes such as academic achievement, research skills, creativity, and problem solving skills. They also have important implications for the development of high levels of motivation, interpersonal skills, and organizational and management skills. Before discussing how to create learning environments that nurture Houndstooth characteristics, there are a few cautions we should acknowledge about things we know don't work when it comes to instilling in young people the kinds of co-cognitive traits we have focused on in our research. Direct teaching about these more complex capacities through prescriptive lessons simply doesn't work -- you can't teach or preach vision or sense of destiny. And although structured simulations of so-called "real life" experiences and group process

training activities may familiarize students with co-cognitive traits, these approaches have not been highly successful in internalizing complex beliefs, behaviors, and commitments to action-oriented involvement. Long histories of religious training and attempts over the centuries by governments to indoctrinate the young into one belief or another have generally yielded minimal results. A recent *Kappan* article (Glanzer, 2001) described communist moral education programs as "tragic failures," and warned American educators to be cautious about promoting lists of virtues, slogans, or aphorisms that serve political agendas. Just as attempts to legislate morality or to brainwash people in to believing or acting in certain ways have failed to produce lasting effects, so also will we fail if we attempt to "teach" optimism or to "teach" sensitivity to human concerns through direct instruction. We should also avoid *requiring* students to participate in programs and projects that someone thinks will promote the more complex characteristics and behaviors identified in Operation Houndstooth. Required community service or forcing uncommitted young people to participate in projects based on someone else's values or altruistic goals often results in minimal and sometimes even reluctant compliance with yet another prescribed activity.

How then can we go about promoting the capacities represented in this expanded conception of giftedness? The answer lies in providing young people with a systematic approach to: (1) examining their individual abilities, interests, and learning styles, (2) exploring areas of potential involvement based on existing or developing interests, (3) providing them with the opportunities, resources, and encouragement for first-hand investigative or creative experiences within their chosen areas of interest, and (4) becoming involved oneself so that students can see positive traits being modeled by adults. All learning and personal growth resulting from these experiences, both cognitive and co-cognitive, take place within the context of work that students carry out with the primary purpose of having an impact of one or more intended audiences.

Examining Abilities, Interests, and Learning Styles

The best examples of positive behaviors identified in the Houndstooth research have resulted from students who have a good picture of their strengths. Although academic strengths are usually obvious and well known by both students and teachers, information about interests, learning styles, thinking styles, and preferences for various modes of expression may require some guided exploration. Through a vehicle called The Total Talent Portfolio (TTP) (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998) we have helped students gain insights into both general and specific areas of interest, the types of learning environments and adult and/or peer interactions they prefer in various learning situations, and their preferred modes of thinking and expression. Students achieve autonomy and ownership of the TTP by assuming major responsibility for the selection of items to be included, maintaining and regularly updating the portfolio, and setting personal goals by making decisions about items in the portfolio upon which they might like to elaborate. Although teachers should serve as guides in the portfolio review process, the ultimate goal is to create autonomy in students by turning control for the management of the portfolio over to

them. The major purposes of the Total Talent Portfolio are:

1. To **collect** several different types of information that portrays a student's strength areas, and to regularly update this information.
2. To **classify** this information into the general categories of abilities, interests, learning styles, and related markers of successful learning such as organizational skills, content area preferences, personal and social skills, preferences for creative productivity, and commitments to beliefs, causes, and values.
3. To periodically **review and analyze** the information in order to make purposeful decisions about regular curricular enrichment opportunities and participation in special projects and extra-curricular activities.

The portfolio can also be used for communicating with parents and for assisting students in the exploration of electives, extra-curricular options, and career choices. The unique feature of the Total Talent Portfolio is its focus on strengths and "high-end learning" behaviors. A tradition exists in education that has caused us to use student records mainly for spotting deficiencies. Our adherence to the medical (i.e., diagnostic-prescriptive) model has almost always been pointed in a negative direction: "Find out what's wrong with them and fix them up!" Strength assessment emphasizes the most positive aspects of each student's learning behaviors. Documentation should be carried out by inserting in the portfolio any and all information that calls attention to strong interests, preferred styles of learning, and high levels of motivation, creativity and leadership as well as the academic strengths that can be used as stepping stones to more advanced learning experiences. The theme of the Total Talent Portfolio might best be summarized in the form of two questions: What are the very *best* things we know and can record about a student? What are the very best things we can *do* to capitalize on this information?

Exploring Areas of Potential Involvement

Houndstooth capacities develop when students become passionately involved in an area of personal choice. The best way to promote such involvement is to expose young people to dynamic experiences within their general area(s) of interest. Speakers who deliver powerful messages about important topics are one way of stimulating active involvement in a particular area. A key feature of presentations designed to promote student involvement is the passion and commitment of the speakers. Our experience has shown that the more dynamic the presentation, the greater was the likelihood of triggering follow-up action on the parts of one or more students.

A powerful presentation to middle school students by the young leader of Free the Children, an advocacy group that addresses child labor issues around the world, resulted in a multi-year commitment on the part of a student in Connecticut to work on this problem. She helped form several school chapters of the organization, raised money for the emancipation of children sold into servitude because of parental debt, and traveled to Pakistan to lobby officials about the use of child labor in the rug making industry.

A presentation by a local scientist about the hazardous effects of acid rain resulted in a yearlong collection and analysis of precipitation specimens by a group of elementary school students. Interviews with environmental department officials, examinations of reports by fish and wildlife agencies, and advanced training in chemical analysis procedures provided the background for a very professional final report that contributed data to a Northeast regional environmental impact study. The study eventually resulted in the enactment of regulations on power plant emissions.

Another way to stimulate intensive involvement is by visits to places where research or creative activity of a consequential nature is taking place. Once again, understanding students' interests and learning styles also helps to economize on resources that are used to stimulate interests and problem focusing activities. Thus, for example, a group of high school students who expressed a strong interest in athletics and recreation visited a newly constructed recreation center in their city. They were given opportunities to talk with their city's recreation director and to visit and photograph other recreation facilities. Under the guidance of a teacher who shared their interest, they also took field trips to neighboring communities, examined many books and articles about community recreation, and sent away for brochures and catalogues distributed by the manufacturers of recreation equipment. They compared differences between and among communities in their region, discussed various ways in which recreational facilities in their city could be improved, and subsequently developed a very sophisticated proposal for a citywide bicycle path system. After a great deal of advocacy through a public information campaign, an analysis of costs and potential benefits to their city, and political action directed toward the recreation department and city council, their proposal was approved and funds were allocated to build bicycle paths in high traffic sections of the city.

Participation in lively discussions about controversial issues, events, books, and media presentations is another way to stimulate intensive follow-up on the parts of individuals and small groups. A lively classroom discussion and debate about nuclear energy motivated a group of middle school students in Richland, Washington, a city that grew up around the development of the nuclear industry, to study the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the Soviet Union. After extensive background research, the students contacted a group of students in the Ukrainian city of Slavutych, which was created following the Chernobyl reactor meltdown. Using nearly daily e-mails and frequent videoconferences, the students explored common concerns, exchanged ideas for research projects and essay topics, traded photos, and conducted interviews about attitudes and influences of nuclear facilities in their respective cities. Research focused on environmental impact, employment and economic issues, and the deep and profound influences that living in nuclear communities have on the daily lives of young people and adults. After 18 months of intense involvement in this work, the students jointly published a hard cover book of their essays presented in both English and Ukrainian. The book, entitled *Nuclear Legacy: Students of Two Atomic Cities*, includes many color photographs plus historical photos of their respective cities.

Experiences that may trigger the types of student involvement described above can also take place outside of school, so it is important for students to know that the school, and especially any special programs or independent study options, are inviting places where they can "take" their interests to get the help they need. Orientation about opportunities for the types of involvement described above, a referral process that will connect students with teachers or community mentors who have interest and expertise in various areas of student curiosity or potential involvement, and guidelines for teachers and mentors are important considerations for producing the kinds of intense participation described above. Presentations of student work at assemblies and through newsletters and displays are good ways to awaken other students to the opportunities that they might like to pursue. Public relations information is also a good way to inform parents and the general public about high level student achievement that is different from the present day obsession with test scores.

The projects described above are profound illustrations of the behaviors we have been attempting to study and develop in Operation Houndstooth. Interviews with these students (as well as numerous others who engaged in similar endeavors) consistently showed remarkable degrees of optimism, a sense of power to change things, and a romance (sometimes bordering on passion) with the work they were doing. Students talked about their work with "stars in their eyes," frequently recounting clever and creative ways in which they overcame obstacles. Although they did not speak of themselves as being courageous, their actions in tackling difficult problems and the physical and mental energy they expended clearly attested to their willingness to challenge existing practices and to address issues that are above and beyond typical curricular topics. In all cases, an underlying theme was -- "we changed things... we made something happen." And it was not uncommon for students to report that their involvement in these types of projects influenced the things they wanted to study in college and pursue in their careers. This finding is consistent with biographical accounts of how the lives of persons committed to social action were frequently influenced by early experiences. Perhaps the most important outcome was the sheer enjoyment students experienced from this type of learning. Many pointed out the contrast between these ventures and the increasing pressure they are under to do well on objective tests. "Why can't all school be like this?" was a typical comment when asked to compare the regular school curriculum with their investigative or creative projects.

The work that these students did also illustrates a number of programmatic and pedagogical issues underlying the development of Houndstooth characteristics. First and foremost, the students attended schools that made some kind of special program provisions for advanced enrichment experiences. Independent studies, enrichment clusters, inquiry academies, and research seminars are a few examples of the organizational patterns that provided a "place" where work that is above and beyond the regular curriculum can be carried out. All students should have opportunities to participate in these experiences, but participation should be voluntary and it should also be based on interests and a high degree of commitment to work over long periods of time. Especially crucial is students'

willingness to work in unstructured learning situations.

The teacher's role is also crucial if we are to avoid "research papers" that are no more than journalistic reports! Because there are no "right" answers to the problems posed in this type of learning, teachers took on a very different role and relationship with students. They became the proverbial guide-on-the-side rather than the disseminator of information. They helped students find and focus research questions within their interest areas, develop plans of operation, identify and secure resources, learn the investigative skills necessary for data gathering, and develop procedures for identifying and approaching target audiences. In the group projects, teachers helped students appreciate divisions of labor and the importance of mutual cooperation and respect. One teacher commented "...this is what I always thought teaching was about;" and another teacher said that working with students in this type of situation was better "training" about how to be a good teacher than the hundreds of hours of in-service training through which he had sat.

The Role of Gifted and General Education In Leadership Training

The history and culture of mankind can be charted to a large extent by the creative contributions of the world's most gifted and talented men and women. Advocates for special services for the gifted regularly invoke the names of persons such as Thomas Edison, Marie Curie, Jonas Salk, Isadora Duncan, and Albert Einstein as a rationale for providing supplementary resources to improve the educational experience of potentially gifted young people. If we assume that it has, indeed, been these people who have created the science, culture, and wisdom of centuries past, then it is also safe to assume that persons who are the stewards and nurturers of today's potentially able young people can have a profound affect on shaping the values and directions toward which our society's future contributors of remarkable accomplishments devote their energies. Such stewardship is an awesome responsibility, and yet it has some intriguing overtones, because the names of persons who will be added to the lists of Edisons and Einsteins are in our homes and classrooms today. It is also important to point out that this stewardship does not rest solely with teachers who are directly responsible for gifted programs. Melanie did, in fact, do her work as part of a special program for the gifted, but many other instances of creative productivity and problem solving by young people are guided by teachers in general education programs. In spite of our best efforts to identify students for special programs, predicting who will be our most gifted contributors is still a very inexact science. What is even more significant, so far as our work on Operation Houndstooth is concerned, is that by expanding our conception of giftedness beyond traditional high scoring test-takers and good lesson-learners, we will find as rich a source of high potential young people in broad and diverse populations of non-selected students as we find in students traditionally selected for gifted programs. Houndstooth factors are independent of the traditional normal curve approach to identifying gifted potentials. Said another way, does anybody really care about the test scores or grade point average of people like Melanie, Mother Theresa, or Martin Luther King, Jr?

Are the Goals of Operation Houndstooth Realistic?

There have been times in the history of civilization when the *zeitgeist* has resulted in elevating a society's values toward concerns that emphasize the production of social capital. The focus on democracy in Ancient Greece, the ascendancy of the arts during the Renaissance, and the elevation of man as a logical and rational thinker during the Reformation are examples of times when entire cultures and societies brought new ways of thinking to bear on issues that enriched the lives of people. And even in our own country, there were times when our culture placed a higher value on a sense of community and the dedication of individual and group efforts toward improvement of the greater good. In 1830, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French philosopher and celebrated commentator on our emerging democracy, wrote about the need and desire for civil associations of all kinds on the parts of Americans who, he observed, worked together with their fellow citizens toward common goals. "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations ...," he noted. "Nothing in my opinion is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America" (de Tocqueville, 1945, p. 109). De Tocqueville went so far as to say that the key to making democracy work in America was the propensity of our ancestors to form all kinds of civic associations -- to view the building of community as important as personal success and prosperity. If, as studies have shown, self-interest has replaced some of the values that created a more socially conscious early America, and if the negative trends of young people's over indulgences and disassociations are growing, then we must ask if there is a role that schools can play in gently influencing future citizens and, especially future leaders, toward a value system that assumes greater responsibility for the production of social capital. Modern society is barraging our young people with messages that emphasize a fast-paced life, material gain, selfishness, and rampant consumerism.

Our fast paced world and scientific technology have created the mechanisms of production and consumerism that define the present American way of life, but they have also created a mind-set that sees the world as an endless resource for the consumption that has contributed to a rapidly growing world ecological crisis. Nowhere is this mind-set more evident than in the life styles of young people. And who can blame them when they are subjected to an educational system that focuses mostly on skills that will give them a competitive advantage in the marketplace and a commercial media establishment that barrages young people with constant messages about consumption and material gain?

Is it beyond our vision as educators to imagine a role for schools that can influence the future leaders of the new century in ways that would help them acquire values that produce social capital as well as material consumption and economic gain? Can a vision about the role of education include creating future political leaders who place fairness and kindness and social justice ahead of power, control, and pandering to special interest groups? And can we create the future CEOs of automobile and energy companies who are as committed to safety and emission control as they are to shareholder's profits, sexier cars, and the corporate bottom line? Could some of the endless pitches for commercial

products at least be interspersed with advocacy for more time with our children, a greater tolerance for diversity, and more concern for the rapid depletion of the Earth's resources? It is intriguing to think that the men and women who will decide the content of these messages are the boys and girls who are in our classrooms today.

It would be naïve to think that a redirection of educational goals can take place without a commitment at all levels to examine the purposes of education in a democracy. It is also naïve to think that experiences directed toward the production of social capital can, or are even intended to replace our present day focus on material productivity and intellectual capital. Rather, this work seeks to enhance the development of wisdom and a satisfying lifestyle that are paralleled by concerns for diversity, balance, harmony, and proportion in all of the choices and decisions that young people make in the process of growing up. What people think and decide to do drives some of society's best ideas and achievements. If we want leaders who will promote ideas and achievements that take into consideration the components we have identified in Operation Houndstooth, then giftedness in the new century will have to be redefined in ways that take these co-cognitive components into account. And the strategies that are used to develop giftedness in young people will need to give as much attention to the co-cognitive conditions of development as we currently give to cognitive development.

My colleagues and I are only in the early stages on this path toward once again attempting to expand the definition of giftedness. We believe that an expanded definition will not only help us understand the unique contributions of persons who have used their talents to make the world a better place, but it will also help us to extend supplementary opportunities and services to potentially able young people who have been overlooked because of the overemphasis of cognitive traits in the identification of giftedness. Each area of inquiry brings us closer to understanding the complexity of the concepts, identifying promising practices and assessment techniques that are being used in present and future scientific studies, and bringing this message forward to interested educators. While the whole notion of changing the big picture seems awesome and overwhelming, the words of Margaret Mead remind us that it can be done: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world...indeed, it is the only thing that ever does."*

Note to Interested Readers

Material about Operation Houndstooth is being shared through presentations and postings on our web site and we are developing an ongoing database that will make methods and materials for co-cognitive development available to educators and parents. There are many ways in which interested persons can become involved in our research and I invite these readers to visit the Operation Houndstooth section of our web site [www.gifted.uconn.edu] where they can share their experiences and communicate their interest in possible research and field test opportunities.

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