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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*

After repeatedly observing the little boy crying on the school bus, Melanie, a fifth-grader, 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 (Renzulli, 1976).[2] Over the next several days, Melanie and the enrichment teacher drew up a plan that began with some "friendly persuasion" for the boys who were harassing Tony. A few of the school's bigger, well-respected boys and girls escorted Tony 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 among a number of children and at the same time allowed her to apply 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."

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[2] Type III Enrichment is a self-selected individual or small-group investigation of a real problem.

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 education establishment of the time and included rejections of my writing by all the main journals in the field. So I sought an audience elsewhere, and in 1978 the *Kappan* published my article titled "What Makes Giftedness: Re-examining a Definition" (Renzulli, 1978). In the ensuing years, scholars, practitioners, and policy makers began to gain a more flexible attitude toward the meaning of the complex phenomenon called giftedness. That 1978 *Kappan* article is now the most widely cited publication in the field.

Using 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 houndstooth background that represents the interactions between personality and environment. These interactions aid in the development of the three defining traits of 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 to allow us to understand more fully the sources of gifted behaviors and, more important, the ways in which people transform their gifted assets into constructive action. For example, why did Melanie devote her time and energy to a socially responsible project that would improve the life of one little boy? 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 we influence the ethics and morality of future industrial and political leaders so that they value gross national happiness as highly as or more highly 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."

Financial and intellectual capital are the well-known forces that drive the economy and generate highly valued tangible assets. Social capital is a set of intangible assets that address the collective needs and problems of other individuals and of our communities at large. Although social capital cannot be defined as precisely as corporate earnings or gross domestic product, Ronald LaBonte 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" (LaBonte, 1999). 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 ended. National surveys show declines over the past few decades in voter turnout and political participation, membership in service clubs, church-related groups, parent/teacher associations, unions, and fraternal groups (Putnam, 1995). Such 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.

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 and that leadership is necessary for the generation of social capital. Although numerous studies and a great deal of commentary about leadership have appeared in the literature of gifted education, no one has 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 creative productivity, while others with similar assets fail to achieve high levels of accomplishment? Perhaps an even more important question, as far as the production of social capital is concerned, is: What causes some people to mobilize their interpersonal, political, ethical, and moral lives in such ways that they place human concerns and the common good above materialism, ego enhancement, and self-indulgence? What makes a Nelson Mandela, a Mother Theresa, a Rachel Carson?

The folk wisdom, research literature, and biographical and anecdotal accounts about creativity and giftedness are nothing short of mind-boggling. 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 have failed to explain how the confluence of desirable traits results in commitments to making the lives of all people more personally rewarding, environmentally safe, peaceful, and politically free. Understanding how these positive human attributes develop is especially important because it will help us direct the educational and environmental experiences we provide for the potentially gifted-and-talented young people who will shape both the values and the actions of this 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 these traits, 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 might also hold the key to both explaining and nurturing the kind of genius that has been used for the betterment of mankind.

Operation Houndstooth

One of the more fortunate directions in the social sciences in recent years has been the development of the positive psychology movement. Championed by Martin Seligman and

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, this movement focuses on enhancing what is good in life in addition to fixing what is maladaptive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). 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 one-fifth of their lives engaged in some kind of schooling. In a research study dealing with developing excellence in young people, Reed Larson 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 the disengagement and disaffection that are rampant among American young people. He argues that components of positive development—e.g., 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 (Larson, 2000).

The positive psychology movement, coupled with my continuing fascination with the scientific components that give rise to socially constructive giftedness, has led me to examine the personal attributes that form the framework of a project I have dubbed Operation Houndstooth—think of the interconnected "houndstooth" pattern that forms the background of the three-ring model of giftedness. 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 that make up this framework.

• *Optimism.* Optimism includes cognitive, emotional, and motivational components and reflects the belief that the future holds good outcomes. Optimism may be thought of as an attitude associated with expectations of a future that is socially desirable, to the individual's advantage, or to the advantage of others. It is characterized by a sense of hope and a willingness to accept hard work.

• *Courage.* Courage is the ability to face difficulty or danger while overcoming physical, psychological, or moral fears. Integrity and strength of character are typical manifestations of courage, and they represent the most salient marks of those creative people who actually increase social capital.

• *Romance with a topic or discipline.* When an individual is passionate about a topic or discipline, a true romance, characterized by powerful emotions and desires, evolves. The passion of this romance often becomes an image of the future in young people and provides the motivation for a long-term commitment to a course of action.

• *Sensitivity to human concerns.* This trait encompasses the abilities to comprehend another's affective world and to accurately and sensitively communicate such understanding through action. Altruism and empathy, aspects of which are evident throughout human development, characterize this trait.

• *Physical/mental energy.* All people have this trait in varying degrees, but the amount of energy an individual is willing and able to invest in the achievement of a goal is a crucial issue in

high levels of accomplishment. In the case of eminent individuals, this energy investment is a major contributor to task commitment. Charisma and curiosity are frequent correlates 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 interrelated concepts, such as internal locus of control, motivation, volition, and self-efficacy. When an individual has a vision or sense of destiny about future activities, events, and involvements, that vision serves to stimulate planning and to direct behavior; it 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 six components described briefly above. Of course, many interactions 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 with the overall development of human abilities. The literature reviews and empirical research that resulted in the identification of these components, along with a graphical representation of Operation Houndstooth, can be found by visiting our website (https://gifted.uconn.edu/operation_houndstooth/). The first phase of our research included clarifying definitions and identifying, adapting, and constructing assessment procedures that have extended our understanding of the components, especially as they are exhibited by young people.

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

Here I will examine practical applications of our research by describing exemplars of the work of young people who have displayed these traits. I will also discuss the opportunities, resources, and encouragement that led to their participation in experiences that promoted the positive human actions 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 factors that contribute to the development of socially responsible behaviors. Definitive answers to questions about promoting the development of larger amounts of social capital may be years away, but it is my hope that this article will motivate other investigators to sense the importance of this challenge and to pursue studies that will contribute to our understanding of this complex issue.

I also 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"

(p. 66, Kogan, 2000). Wouldn't it be nice if we sought to make those engravings ones that will lead to societal improvements rather than to status, materialism, and self-indulgence?

How Can Schools Develop Houndstooth Components?

Political controversy has frequently surrounded the role of schools in dealing with noncognitive abilities. But character development and the moral, ethical, and affective growth of young people have been major concerns of educators since ancient times. The Houndstooth components certainly have implications for these noncognitive characteristics. However, the focus of this initiative is the ways in which the components support the growth of such cognitive attributes as academic achievement, research skills, creativity, and problem-solving skills. (Recall that I have referred to the components as "co-cognitive factors.") They also have important implications for the development of high levels of motivation, interpersonal skills, and organizational and management skills.

Before I discuss ways to create learning environments that nurture Houndstooth characteristics, I should caution readers about a few 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 complex capacities through prescriptive lessons simply doesn't work: you can't "teach" vision or sense of destiny. 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 helping youths internalize 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 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 (Glanzer, 2001).

Just as attempts to legislate morality or to brainwash people into 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. Requiring community service or forcing uncommitted young people to participate in projects based on someone else's values or sense of altruism will lead to minimal—sometimes even reluctant—compliance.

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 and 2) exploring areas of potential involvement based on existing or developing interests. We can also give them opportunities, resources, and encouragement for first-hand investigative or creative experiences within their chosen areas of interest, and we can become involved ourselves so that students can see these 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 on one or more intended audiences.

Examining Abilities, Interests, and Learning Styles

The best examples of positive behaviors identified in the Houndstooth research are provided by students who have a good picture of their strengths. Although academic strengths are usually obvious and well known to 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), we have helped students gain insights into both general and specific areas of interest, the types of learning environments and adult and peer interactions they prefer in various learning situations, and their preferred modes of thinking and expression (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998). Students achieve ownership of the TTP by assuming major responsibility for the selection of items to be included, by maintaining and regularly updating their portfolios, and by setting personal goals as they decide about items in the portfolio on which they might like to elaborate. Although teachers should serve as guides in the process of portfolio review, the ultimate goal is to create autonomy in students by giving them total control over the portfolios. The major purposes of the TTP are:

- to collect and regularly update several different types of information that portray a student's areas of strength;
- 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; and
- to periodically review and analyze the information in order to make purposeful decisions about regular curricular enrichment opportunities and participation in special projects and extracurricular activities.

The portfolio can also be used for communicating with parents and for helping students explore electives, extracurricular options, and career choices. The unique feature of the TTP 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 model of diagnosis and prescription has almost always been pointed in a negative direction: find out what's wrong with them and fix them up. Assessing strengths 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. These can be used in conjunction with academic strengths as stepping stones to more advanced learning. The theme of the TTP 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 general areas of interest. Inviting speakers who deliver powerful messages about important topics is one way of stimulating students to become actively involved in a particular area. Key features of presentations designed to promote student involvement are the passion and commitment of the speakers. Our experience has shown that the more dynamic the presentation, the greater the likelihood of triggering follow-up action on the part of 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, inspired a Connecticut student to make a multi-year commitment 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 project in which a group of elementary school students collected and analyzed precipitation specimens. Interviews with environmental department officials, examinations of reports from 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 led to the enactment of regulations on power plant emissions.

Another way to stimulate intensive involvement is to arrange for students to visit places where research or creative activity of a consequential nature is taking place. Understanding students' interests and learning styles helps to economize on resources that are used to stimulate interests and support 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. The students compared differences between communities in their region, discussed various ways in which recreational facilities in their city could be improved, and developed a very sophisticated proposal for a citywide system of bicycle paths. 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, the students' proposal was approved and funds were allocated to build bicycle paths in high-traffic sections of the city.

Holding 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 Richland 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 toward and effects of nuclear facilities in their respective cities. The students' research focused on environmental impact, issues of employment and the economy, and the deep and profound effect on daily life that living in nuclear communities can have on young people and adults. After 18 months of intense involvement in this work, the students jointly published a hardcover book of their essays, presented in both English and Ukrainian. The book, *Nuclear Legacy: Students of Two Atomic Cities*, includes many color photographs as well as historical photos of the respective cities.[3]

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 will encourage them to pursue their own interests and will give them the help they need. Orientation about available opportunities, a referral process that will connect students with teachers or community mentors who have interest and expertise in the areas of student curiosity, and guidelines for teachers and mentors are important considerations for producing the kinds of intense participation we seek.[4] Presentations of student work at assemblies and through newsletters and displays are good ways to inform other students about opportunities that they might like to pursue. Public relations information is 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 the students who participated (as well as numerous others who have engaged in similar endeavors) have consistently shown 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 were above and beyond typical curricular topics. In all cases, an underlying theme was that "we changed things; we made something happen."

It was also 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

[3] Readers interested in obtaining information about this book should visit the bookstore at https://www.battelle.org or contact Battelle Press, 505 King Ave., Columbus, OH 43201-2693; ph. 800-201-2011.

[4] An article that includes guidelines for investigative and creative projects, titled "The Definition of High-End Learning," can be found at https://gifted.uconn.edu/schoolwide-enrichment-model/high-end_learning/

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 we heard when we asked students 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, 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 provide a “place” where work that is above and beyond the regular curriculum can be carried out. All students should have opportunities to participate in such experiences, but participation should be voluntary, and it should be based on interest and a high degree of commitment to work over long periods of time. Especially crucial is the willingness of students 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 must play a very different role and have different relationships with students. Teachers became the proverbial “guides on the side” rather than the disseminators of information. They helped students find and focus research questions in their interest areas, develop plans of operation, identify and secure resources, learn the investigative skills necessary to gather data, 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.” 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 inservice training that she had sat through.

Gifted and General Education in Leadership Training

The history and culture of humankind 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 such people as Thomas Edison, Marie Curie, Jonas Salk, Isadora Duncan, and Albert Einstein as justifications for providing supplementary resources to improve the educational experiences 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 those who are the stewards and nurturers of today’s potentially able young people can have a profound effect 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. Yet it has some intriguing overtones, because the people whose names 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 the most significant contributors to society is a very inexact science. What is even more significant, as far as our work on Operation Houndstooth is concerned, is that, by expanding our conception of giftedness beyond the traditional group, we will find as rich a source of high-potential young people in broad and diverse populations of students not usually selected for gifted programs as we typically find in populations of students traditionally chosen for such programs. Houndstooth factors are independent of the traditional, normal-curve approach to identifying potential giftedness. Put another way, Does anybody really care about the test scores or grade-point averages of people like Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Melanie?

Are the Goals of Operation Houndstooth Realistic?

There have been times in the history of civilization when the *zeitgeist* has helped to improve a society's efforts to 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 the view of humans as logical and rational thinkers 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.

Even in the U.S., there were times when the 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 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" (p. 109, de Tocqueville, 1945). 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 a goal that was 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 overindulgences and disassociations are growing, then we must ask whether there is a role for schools to play in gently influencing future citizens and future leaders toward a value system that places greater responsibility on the production of social capital.

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

Can educators imagine a role for schools that will influence the leaders of the new century in ways that will 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 interests? 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 shareholders' 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 such messages are the boys and girls who are in our classrooms today.

It would be naive 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 would also be naive to think that experiences directed toward the production of social capital can replace our current focus on material productivity and intellectual capital. Rather, work in developing social capital seeks to enhance the development of wisdom and a satisfying lifestyle that is paralleled by concerns for diversity, balance, harmony, and proportion in all the choices and decisions young people make.

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 of the journey toward once again expanding the definition of giftedness. We believe that such 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 extend supplementary opportunities and services to potentially able young people who have been overlooked because of the overemphasis on 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, 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."

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Note to Interested Readers

Material about Operation Houndstooth is being shared through presentations and postings on our website, and we are developing an on-going 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 readers to visit the Operation Houndstooth section of our website (https://gifted.uconn.edu), where they can share their experiences and communicate their interest in possible research and field-test opportunities.—JSR