

Expanding the Conception of Giftedness to Include Co-Cognitive Traits and to Promote Social Capital [Summary]

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The document titled "Expanding the Conception of Giftedness to Include Co-Cognitive Traits and to Promote Social Capital" by Joseph S. Renzulli discusses the importance of including co-cognitive traits and promoting social capital in the definition of giftedness. The author argues that traditional views of giftedness based solely on high scores on intelligence tests are limited and fail to capture the full range of abilities and characteristics that contribute to exceptional performance and contributions to society.

The document begins with a story about a fifth-grade student named Melanie who takes it upon herself to help a first-grade student named Tony who is being bullied and struggling with his schoolwork due to his partial sight. Melanie recruits other students to support Tony and creates large print books based on his interests. Tony's attitude towards school changes, he becomes popular. Through this project, Melanie demonstrates empathy, sensitivity to human concerns, and the application of her talents to help others. The author uses this story to illustrate the importance of co-cognitive traits and their role in promoting social capital.

The document then delves into the background of the author's work on expanding the conception of giftedness. In the 1970s, the author challenged the traditional view of giftedness as solely based on high intelligence test scores and proposes a three-ring conception of giftedness that includes above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment. The author emphasizes the importance of considering the interactions between personality and environment in the development of gifted behaviors. The author raises questions about using giftedness for socially constructive purposes and the role of education in developing social capital.

The concept of social capital is introduced as a set of intangible assets that address the collective needs and problems of individuals and communities. The author argues that social capital enhances community life and facilitates coordination and cooperation for the greater public good. The decline in social capital in American society is highlighted, with young people's decreasing participation in civic and social activities and their focus on individual economic gain. Both economic and social capital investments can lead to greater prosperity, improved health, and a society that values freedom, justice, and civic participation. Social capital is both a cause and an effect, contributing to positive outcomes such as economic development, good government, reduced crime, and cooperation in diverse communities.

The author explores the relationship between gifted education and social capital, emphasizing the need to understand the factors that lead some individuals to use their

talents for the betterment of society. Research has focused on the question of why some individuals with considerable intellectual and creative assets achieve high levels of accomplishment while others do not. The author discusses the importance of developing traits such as courage, a romance with a topic or discipline, sensitivity to human concerns, physical and mental energy, and a vision or sense of destiny. These co-cognitive traits are seen as essential for individuals to contribute to the growth of social capital. The question of what motivates individuals to prioritize human concerns and the common good over materialism and self-indulgence is raised. Various theories have been proposed to explain the necessary ingredients for giftedness and creative productivity, but they do not fully address the commitment to improving the human condition. The importance of understanding these traits and factors is emphasized to provide appropriate educational and environmental experiences for gifted and talented young people.

The positive psychology movement focuses on enhancing what is good in life and fostering socially constructive virtues in young people. Operation Houndstooth examines personal attributes that contribute to socially constructive giftedness. Schools play a crucial role in shaping positive values and virtues due to changes in family structures and increased time spent in schooling. Civic and socially engaging activities can help overcome disengagement and disaffection among American youth. Positive development, such as initiative, creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement, can result from early and continuous participation in experiences that promote social capital. Operation Houndstooth is a framework that examines personal attributes associated with socially constructive giftedness. The framework includes six components: optimism, courage, romance with a topic or discipline, sensitivity to human concerns, physical/mental energy, and vision/sense of destiny. These components interact with and enhance cognitive traits associated with human abilities. Early experiences are crucial in acquiring enduring habits of mind and promoting societal improvements.

The document discusses each co-cognitive trait in detail, providing examples and research findings. Optimism is described as a cognitive characteristic with emotional and motivational overtones, associated with an expectation of a socially desirable future. Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping individual differences in optimism. Optimism is a mood or attitude associated with a socially desirable future expectation. Optimism can be learned and modified through self-awareness and intervention strategies. Beliefs in powers outside the self, such as spirituality, can contribute to optimism. Courage is discussed in terms of facing physical danger, psychological fear, and maintaining moral integrity. Moral courage is correlated with empathy, altruism, and sensitivity to human concerns. Courage is a significant characteristic of a creative person, as it involves questioning accepted norms and standing against the group if necessary. Teachers play a role in modeling courage and fostering prosocial behaviors in children. Psychological courage is necessary for individuation, making good decisions, and developing healthy relationships. A romance with a topic or discipline is described as a passion and intense interest that fuels intrinsic motivation. Flow is a state of total absorption and self-actualization that occurs when one is engaged in a challenging and stimulating activity. The love of a topic often begins at an early age and

requires nurturing circumstances to flourish. Emphasizing the difficulty and pain of achievement, along with strategies to cope with negative emotions, is necessary for a true romance with a topic.

Sensitivity to human concerns encompasses empathy, altruism, and moral courage. The development of prosocial behavior in children and the measurement of empathy is explored. Research shows that children have a natural ability to feel empathy towards others from an early age. Intensive counseling interventions have been found to significantly increase affective sensitivity in individuals. There is a need to develop ways to increase empathic tendencies, especially in the current climate where knowledge and caring about social concerns among young people are decreasing. Physical and mental energy are seen as important for creative productivity and are related to traits such as charisma, curiosity, and vitality. Charisma is often associated with high levels of physical and mental energy. Curiosity is linked to intensity and energy, and it plays a role in creativity. Intensity is considered a universal aspect of creative thinking. Children may exhibit intense energy levels in different areas, which can be misinterpreted as hyperactivity. Curiosity fuels the desire for learning and can be related to intrinsic motivation and mental health. Non-punitive environments that encourage exploration and provide challenge and connectedness optimize the expression of physical and mental energy. Vision and a sense of destiny are described as integral to the development of high levels of performance and success. Characteristics of individuals with vision and destiny are apparent from early development. Quantifying and defining these characteristics is challenging but emerging from areas of psychology and education. Achievement motivation, competence motivation, locus of control, intrinsic motivation, self-determination theory, and self-regulation theory are potential components of vision and destiny. Gifted individuals exhibit a sense of purpose and task commitment, even in adverse circumstances. A sense of direction and the power to change things are subcomponents of vision and destiny. Optimal achievement motivation, as defined by expectancy, value, and affect, is related to talent development and the concept of flow.

The author acknowledges that infusing these co-cognitive traits into education and promoting the production of social capital is a complex and challenging task. However, the author argues that it is necessary to redefine giftedness and expand the focus of education to include these traits. The creative contributions of gifted individuals have shaped the history and culture of mankind. Special services for the gifted are advocated to improve the educational experience of potentially gifted young people. Stewardship and nurturing of gifted individuals by teachers and mentors play a crucial role in shaping their values and directions. The positive psychology movement and existing research provide a foundation for further exploration and development of strategies to nurture these traits in young people. Identifying gifted individuals is still an inexact science, and expanding the conception of giftedness beyond traditional paradigms can uncover a diverse population of potential contributors.

In conclusion, the importance of education in influencing future leaders and shaping their values towards the production of social capital is discussed. The negative trends of self-interest and disassociations among young people. The influence of a fast-paced,

materialistic society on young people. The need for schools to play a role in shaping future citizens towards valuing social capital. The impact of technology and media on values and lifestyles. The importance of infusing educational experiences related to social capital and wisdom. The document emphasizes the importance of including co-cognitive traits and promoting social capital in the definition of giftedness. The author argues that these traits are essential for individuals to make meaningful contributions to society and that education should focus on nurturing these traits alongside cognitive development.

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