

# **Operation Houndstooth: A Positive Perspective on Developing Social Intelligence**

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Operation Houndstooth is a positive psychology approach to developing social intelligence in young people. It focuses on promoting positive values, virtues, and behaviors that contribute to the growth of social capital. The goal is to create a science of human strengths that fosters socially constructive virtues in young people.

The Houndstooth Intervention Theory outlines six approaches to promoting positive growth in young people: the Rally-Round-the-Flag Approach, the Gold Star Approach, the Teaching-and-Preaching Approach, the Vicarious Experience Approach, Direct Involvement I, and Direct Involvement II. Each approach has varying levels of effectiveness in promoting internalization of co-cognitive attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.

The Rally-Round-the-Flag Approach involves visual displays, verbal slogans, and positive messages to promote desirable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The Gold Star Approach uses positive reinforcement through rewards and recognition for good behavior. The Teaching-and-Preaching Approach directly teaches values and ethics through discussions and debates. The Vicarious Experience Approach uses role-playing, dramatization, and simulations to provide students with firsthand experiences of desirable behaviors. Direct Involvement I involves community service, internships, and participation in events that promote positive social change. Direct Involvement II focuses on students taking an active leadership role in bringing about positive change in their communities.

Schools can develop Houndstooth components by first examining students' abilities, interests, and learning styles through tools like the Total Talent Portfolio. This helps students gain insights into their strengths and preferences. Then, schools can provide opportunities for students to explore areas of potential involvement through dynamic experiences, such as guest speakers, visits to relevant places, and discussions about controversial issues. Students can also be encouraged to take on direct involvement in community service, internships, and leadership roles to promote positive social change.

It is important to note that the internalization of co-cognitive attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors cannot be achieved through any one intervention alone. Schools should adopt multiple approaches to promote positive growth in young people. The progression through the levels of the Houndstooth Interventions mirrors the progression through

Kohlberg's stages of moral development, with each approach being more effective for students at different stages of moral reasoning.

In conclusion, Operation Houndstooth is a comprehensive approach to developing social intelligence in young people. By promoting positive values, virtues, and behaviors, schools can contribute to the growth of social capital and create a society that values the common good.

*Aubyn, an 11-year-old girl, founded Suitcases For Kids to provide suitcases for children in foster care. The project quickly gained momentum and spread to all 50 states, Canada, and even the Soviet Union. Aubyn's personal collection of suitcases reached nearly 17,000.*

## **Background**

The need to focus on social intelligence in education and the author's work on redefining giftedness is discussed.

- The author believes that social intelligence is just as important as cognitive development in education.
- The traditional view of giftedness based solely on intelligence test scores is challenged.
- The author's article on redefining giftedness was initially rejected but later became widely cited.
- The three-ring conception of giftedness includes above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment.
- The author emphasizes the importance of understanding the background components that contribute to gifted behaviors.
- The author raises questions about the role of education in developing socially responsible leaders and expanding social capital.

## **What Is Social Capital and Why Is It Important?**

The concept of social capital and its impact on economic development and community well-being is discussed.

- Social capital refers to intangible assets that address collective needs and problems in communities.
- Investments in social capital benefit society by creating values, norms, networks, and social trust.
- There has been a decline in American social capital, as seen in reduced civic and social participation.
- This decline is accompanied by a focus on individual economic gain and a lack of concern for others.
- The consequences of a lack of social capital include income inequality and financial instability.
- Investments in both economic and social capital can lead to greater prosperity and improved health.
- Social capital is both a cause and an effect, contributing to positive outcomes such as economic development and reduced crime.
- Leadership is a necessary condition for the creation of social capital.

## **Gifted Education and Social Capital**

The characteristics of gifted individuals and the factors that lead to outstanding creative productivity and a focus on the common good is explored.

- Research has examined why some individuals with intellectual, motivational, and creative assets achieve high levels of accomplishment while others do not.
- The question of what causes some people to prioritize human concerns and the common good over materialism and self-indulgence is also explored.
- Various theories have speculated on the necessary ingredients for giftedness and creative productivity.
- However, these theories fail to explain how these traits result in commitments to improving the lives of all people.
- The importance of understanding these positive human concerns to shape the education and experiences of potentially gifted young people is emphasized.

### **Operation Houndstooth**

The positive psychology movement focuses on enhancing strengths and fostering socially constructive virtues in young people.

- The positive psychology movement aims to create a science of human strengths.
- Schools play an important role in shaping positive values and virtues.
- Two-thirds of students report being bored in school every day.
- Civic and socially engaging activities can help overcome disengagement and disaffection among American youth.
- Service-learning classes are more interesting to students and motivate them to work harder.
- Positive development can result from early and continuous opportunities to participate in experiences that promote social capital.
- Operation Houndstooth is a research project that examines personal attributes associated with socially constructive giftedness.
- The project involves studying six components: optimism, courage, romance with a topic/discipline, sensitivity to human concerns, physical/mental energy, and vision/sense of destiny.

### **How Can Schools Develop Houndstooth Components?**

The concerns and cautions in promoting co-cognitive traits in young people is discussed.

- Direct teaching and structured simulations have not been successful in instilling complex beliefs and behaviors.
- Religious training and government indoctrination have yielded minimal results in moral development.
- Attempts to legislate morality or brainwash people into certain beliefs or actions have failed.
- Requiring students to participate in programs based on someone else's values often results in minimal compliance.
- Providing young people with a systematic approach to exploring their abilities and interests is key.
- Modeling positive traits by adults and involving students in impactful work are important for cognitive and co-cognitive growth.

## **Examining Abilities, Interests, and Learning Styles**

The Total Talent Portfolio empowers students by helping them identify and develop their strengths.

- The Total Talent Portfolio helps students gain insights into their strengths, interests, learning styles, and preferences.
- Students take ownership of the portfolio by selecting and updating items, setting personal goals, and making decisions about elaboration.
- The portfolio is used to classify and analyze information for curricular enrichment, special projects, and career exploration.
- It focuses on strengths and “high-end learning” behaviors, emphasizing positive aspects of each student’s learning behaviors.
- The Total Talent Portfolio is part of Renzulli Learning Systems, which assesses student strengths and provides personalized enrichment materials.

## **Exploring Areas of Potential Involvement**

The importance of exposing students to dynamic experiences and passionate speakers to promote their involvement in areas of interest is discussed. It also highlights the impact of visits to research or creative activity centers and participation in lively discussions.

- Exposing students to dynamic experiences and passionate speakers promotes their involvement in areas of interest.
- A powerful presentation by the leader of Free the Children resulted in a student’s multi-year commitment to address child labor issues.
- A presentation about acid rain led to a yearlong collection and analysis of precipitation specimens by elementary school students.
- Visits to research or creative activity centers can stimulate intensive involvement and problem focusing activities.
- A group of high school students interested in athletics and recreation developed a proposal for a citywide bicycle path system.
- Participation in lively discussions about controversial issues motivated middle school students to study the Chernobyl disaster.
- Students from different cities collaborated on research projects and published a book about the influences of nuclear facilities.
- The experiences described here resulted in remarkable degrees of optimism, a sense of power to change things, and a passion for the work.

## **The Role of Gifted and General Education in Leadership Training**

The significance of nurturing gifted individuals and the impact it can have on shaping society’s future contributors of remarkable accomplishments is discussed.

- Advocates for special services for the gifted often refer to renowned individuals like Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein as a rationale for providing supplementary resources to potentially gifted young people.
- The stewardship and guidance provided by teachers and educators play a crucial role in shaping the values and directions of future contributors.

- Identifying gifted individuals is still an inexact science, and expanding the conception of giftedness beyond traditional measures can uncover high potential in diverse populations.
- Test scores and grade point averages may not accurately reflect the potential and achievements of individuals like Aubyn, Mother Theresa, or Martin Luther King Jr.

### **Houndstooth Intervention Theory**

Non-cognitive approaches to positive development, focusing on abilities, creativity, and task commitment is explored.

- The development of abilities, creativity, and task commitment is influenced by co-cognitive factors.
- Non-cognitive concerns such as social and emotional development, self-concept, and character development also play a role.
- Various programmatic approaches, including therapies and educational interventions, have been studied to promote positive development.
- Operation Houndstooth focuses on constructive development of gifted behaviors rather than healing maladaptive conditions.
- Six areas of recommended practices for positive development are discussed, ranging from least powerful to most powerful approaches.

### **The Rally-Round-the-Flag Approach**

The Cheerleading Method, also known as the "Rally-Round-the-Flag" approach, involves using visual displays and verbal slogans to promote values and virtues in schools. Examples include posting behavioral expectations throughout the school and using character education kits with inspirational messages. This approach aims to instill desirable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in young people.

### **The Gold Star Approach**

The use of the Gold Star Approach in the Girl Scouts program and its effectiveness in promoting desirable behaviors and values in students is discussed.

- The Gold Star Approach in the Girl Scouts program utilizes techniques such as positive reinforcement and rewards to encourage desirable behaviors.
- Scouts are rewarded with pins, badges, patches, and awards for demonstrating these behaviors.
- The effectiveness of the Girl Scouts program in enabling moral development is varied, with some studies supporting its efficacy and others questioning it.
- In 2008, the Girl Scouts launched a new initiative called the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience, which aims to develop leaders who make a difference in the world.

## **The Teaching-and-Preaching Approach**

The use of direct teaching methods in character and value development programs is discussed.

- Direct teaching is the most commonly used method to promote character and value development.
- Programs like "Character Counts" and D.A.R.E. utilize the direct teaching approach.
- "Character Counts" focuses on six pillars of character and teaches about historical figures who exemplify them.
- Longitudinal studies have shown limitations in the outcomes of the Teaching and Preaching approach.

## **The Vicarious Experience Approach**

The Vicarious Experience Approach is a teaching method that aims to foster deep and enduring effects on attitudes, values, and character by placing students in situations where they experience a particular personal or emotional reaction. This approach utilizes role-playing, dramatization, and simulations to actively engage students in moral reasoning and reflection. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics offers a character education program that uses literature to teach and internalize values such as integrity, self-control, and respect.

### **Direct Involvement – I**

Service learning, which involves community service, internships, and participation in social or political events, is believed to be the best way to internalize non-cognitive characteristics in young people. According to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), 28% of teenagers participate in volunteer activities, with rates varying from state to state. While volunteering exposes students to new experiences, it may not be effective if it is a forced requirement. Maryland students are required to volunteer before completing high school, but adults in the age range of 19–24 are the least likely to volunteer, suggesting a need for sustainable interest and connections between youth and their communities.

### **Direct Involvement – II**

This type of direct involvement consists of situations in which young people take an *active leadership role* to bring about some kind of positive social, educational, environmental, or political change—especially change that promotes justice, peace, or more harmonious relations between individuals and groups. In most instances, the fact that a young person has made a personal commitment to pursue a change-oriented course of action means that certain positive attitudes or values are already present, but putting the values or character traits into action helps to solidify and deepen the commitment to particular beliefs. Stacy Hillman, a ten-year-old girl, took an active leadership role in raising money for bulletproof and stab proof vests for police dogs. She

approached the local police chief, placed collection bottles in vet's offices and pet stores, and is now the president of the charity "Pennies to Protect Police Dogs."

### **Adding it All Up**

Schools need to adopt multiple approaches to promote social engagement and internalization of co-cognitive factors in students.

- Schools should provide students with more opportunities for social engagement to promote action and social capital.
- Different interventions are effective for students at different stages of moral development, as outlined by Kohlberg.
- Only 20% of the adult population reaches the Postconventional stage of moral thinking.
- Progression through the stages of moral development requires continued exposure to advanced stages of reasoning.

### **Conclusion**

Operation Houndstooth aims to develop gifted students by instilling six co-cognitive factors, such as optimism and sensitivity to human concerns. By internalizing these traits, students like Stacy and Aubyn become creative producers, contributing to the improvement of life and resources on the planet.

### **Are the Goals of Operation Houndstooth Realistic?**

The role of schools in influencing future leaders to prioritize the production of social capital alongside material consumption and economic gain is discussed.

- Examples of times in history when societies focused on the production of social capital, such as Ancient Greece and the Renaissance.
- Alexis de Tocqueville's observation of Americans forming civil associations and the importance of community building.
- The fast-paced and consumption-driven nature of modern society, particularly among young people.
- The need for schools to play a role in shaping future citizens and leaders towards valuing social capital.
- The impact of technology and media on the mindset of young people and their educational experiences.
- The goal of infusing experiences related to social capital into the schooling process.
- The need to redefine giftedness to include co-cognitive components and give equal attention to cognitive and social development.
- Feasibility of infusing social capital components into the curriculum and the benefits of nurturing these traits.



*Summarized from:*

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