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## **Operation Houndstooth: A Positive Perspective on Developing Social Intelligence<sup>1</sup>**

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*Each time someone stands up for an ideal,  
or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes  
out against injustice, he or she sends  
forth a tiny ripple of hope.*

**Robert F. Kennedy**

*When 11-year-old Aubyn heard about how many children in foster care programs are forced to carry their belongings in garbage bags because they cannot afford suitcases, she was shocked and saddened. “I thought they must feel like garbage themselves,” she said. So, Aubyn founded Suitcases for Kids, dedicating herself to ensuring that every child in foster care would have a bag of his or her own.*

*She asked 4-H groups and Boy and Girl Scouts to help her as well as members of her own church. She published notices in several church bulletins, put up posters at libraries, grocery stores, and community buildings, and she spoke to numerous Sunday school classes. The project spread like wildfire and at the end of the second year, Suitcase For Kids was active in all 50 states and Canada and was being introduced into the Soviet Union. Aubyn remained chairperson, overseeing the nationwide coordination of collections by churches, schools, 4-H clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, department stores, airlines, YMCA’s and YMHA’s, Jaycees, and travel agents. Aubyn’s personal collection of suitcases tallied nearly 17,000.*

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*“I thought it was horrible that the children had nothing to carry their things in as they moved so many times. I wanted to make them feel special by giving them something of their own to keep. I tried to put myself in their place and think how I would feel,” said Aubyn.*

### **Background**

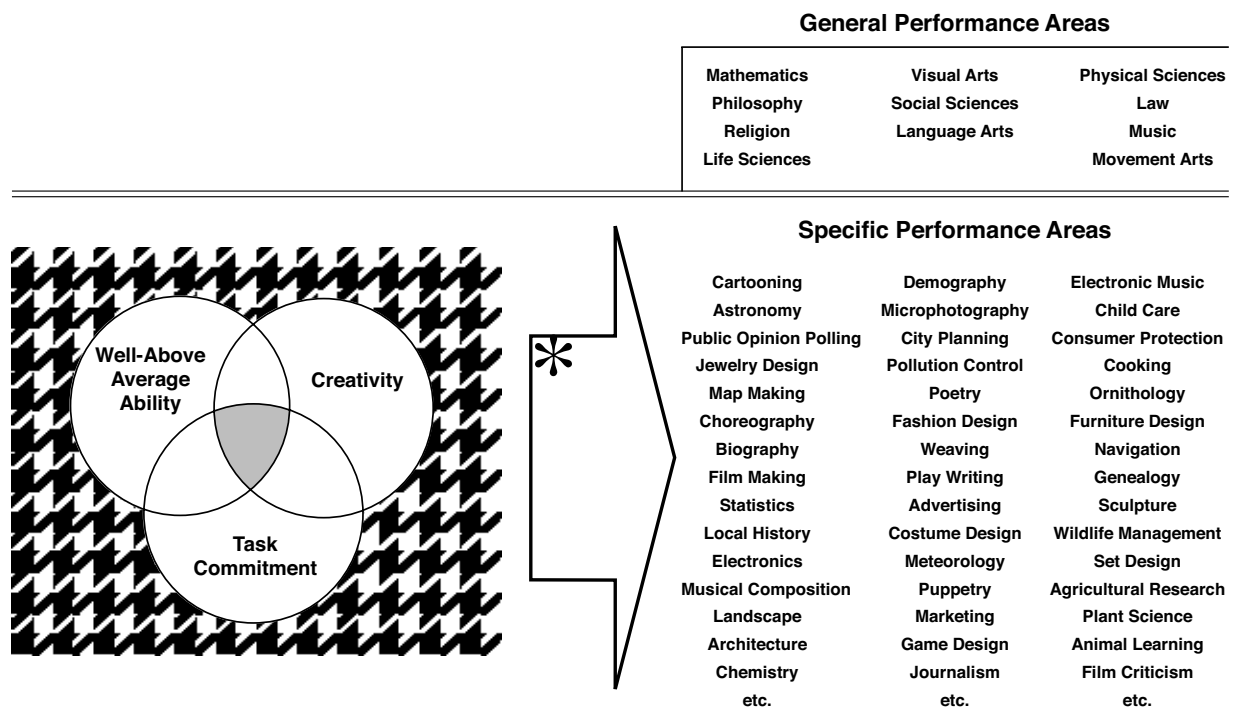
Examining social and emotional issues can take many forms ranging from dealing with maladaptive behaviors faced by gifted children to a “positive psychology” approach, which focuses on providing young people with the opportunities, resources, and encourage to support matters that touch their social consciousness. I believe that all people have a “social intelligence,” and I further believe that one of the challenges of our field is to devote resources to the development of this form of intelligence just as we have for so long focused on cognitive development.

The brief story of Aubyn is but one of numerous examples I have collected over the years to illustrate how a focus on student interests and the need to take positive action can help fulfill affective needs in young people who want to make positive differences in their community, and sometimes even in the world. Too much of our focus on education in general, and even if gifted programs, has been on cognitive development; and while I am not criticizing this focus, we clearly need to give some balance to what I sometimes call “intelligences outside the normal curve.”

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 Aubyn devote her time and energy to a socially responsible project that would improve the lives of children in foster care? 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 financial 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.



\* This arrow should read as "... brought to bear upon ..."

**Figure 1.** Graphic Representation of the Three-Ring Definition of Giftedness

### 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 (Coleman, 1988). Initially social capital referred to the benefits an individual or small group received as a result of relationships within family or institutions (Coleman, 1988). Recent research (Putnam, 2001; Portes, 1998, Portes & Mooney 2002) has extended the concept of social capital from benefits received by individuals to

communities as a whole. Consequently, a “core belief guiding current social capital research is that the ‘goodwill’ that others have toward us is a valuable resource” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 17).

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 peoples 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). Adler and Kwon (2002) note that this definition of social capital indicates that the goodwill that comes from social relationships can be used to initiate action that brings about mutual benefits for everyone. 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 (Coleman, 1988). 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% since 1969 and an even greater decrease (59%) 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. A recent study of college students found that they were more narcissistic and less empathetic than college students 30 years ago (Konrath, O’Brien, & Hsing, 2010).

The results of this decline of social capital are ultimately a lack of concern for fellow human beings and a winner-take-all approach felt throughout our economy. Indeed, we are already beginning to reap the fruits of this bitter harvest. For example, during the years 2002–2007, top executives’ salaries rose 78% and the pay for all other employees rose only 24% (Lazzaro, 2009). Despite this fact, large corporations are paying fewer taxes, which may bankrupt the Social Security system in time. And one has only to think about the recent collapse of world economies, led by eager Wall Street investors willing to look the other way as banks led over-mortgaged consumers to the brink of financial ruin, to realize the potentially shattering consequences of a lack of social capital, that most basic of human currency.

What is perhaps most striking when examining the commentary of leading scholars about the 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; Portes & Mooney, 2005). Although Portes and Mooney (2002) caution that there is limited empirical proof to support that “national participatory behavior” (p. 313) leads to improved prosperity and equality on a national scale, they suggest it is worthwhile to examine the impact of social capital on local communities.

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 (Tannenbaum, 1986; Mönks, 1991; Gardner, 1983; Sternberg & Davidson, 1986, 2005; Renzulli, 1978; Gagné, 1985; Feldhusen, 2005; Runco, 2005) 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 (2000), this movement focuses on enhancing what is good 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 the recent report *Charting the Path from Engagement to Achievement: A Report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement* (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010), two-thirds of students indicated that they are bored at least every day in school. Larson (2000) 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. A recent survey of high school students found that 75% of students believed that service-learning classes were more interesting than their other classes, and 77% of students stated that they were motivated to work harder when the service learning took place within their communities (Civic Enterprises, 2008). Larson (2000) 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:

**1. 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.

**2. 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.

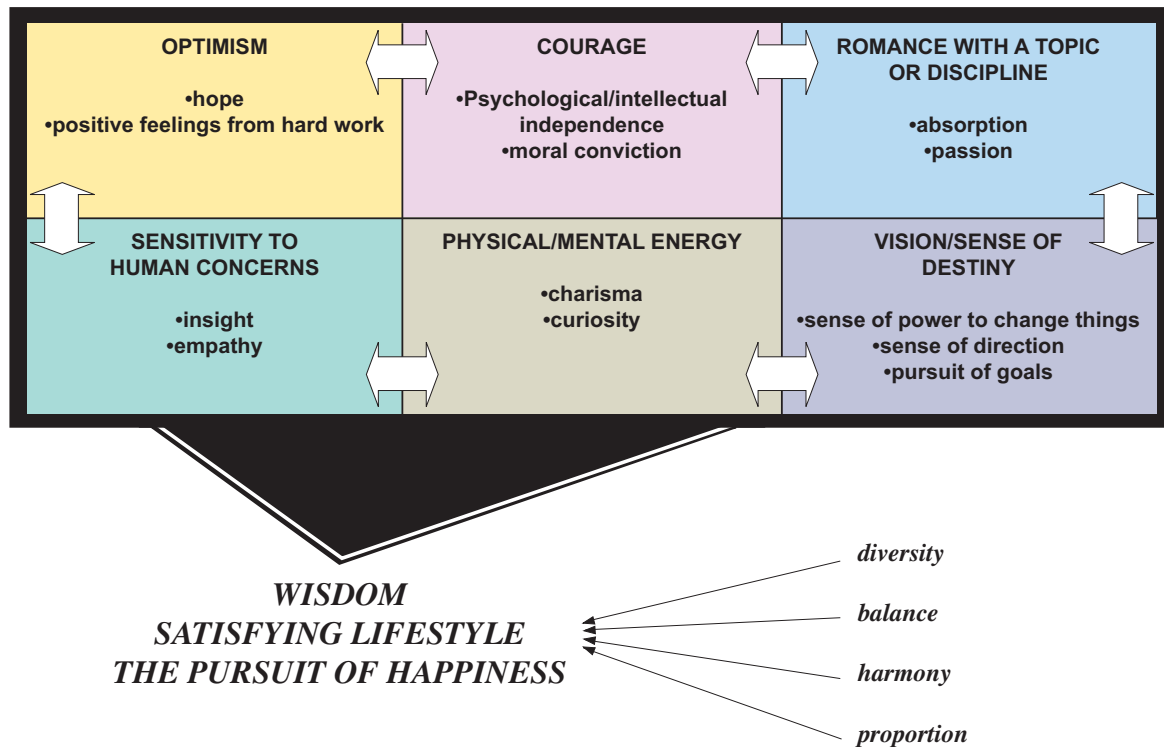
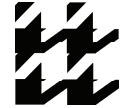
**3. Romance With a Topic/Discipline.** When an individual is passionate about a topic or discipline a true romance, characterized by powerful emotions and desires, evolves. The passion or love characteristic of this romance often becomes an image for the future in young people and serves as a primary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

**4. 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.

**5. 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.

**6. 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.

# OPERATION HOUNDSTOOTH



**Figure 2.** Graphic Representation of Operation Houndstooth Theory

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 ([https://gifted.uconn.edu/operation\\_houndstooth/](https://gifted.uconn.edu/operation_houndstooth/)). 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 promote 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). Recent research shows that active practice and reflection can promote the development of important elements of optimism such as gratitude. Gratitude in turn leads to an awareness of the interdependence of members of social communities and a need to reciprocate for acts of goodwill, the basis of social capital (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson 2001). 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 non-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. Damon (2010) warns against these “skin-deep efforts” (p. 39) that fail to engage students or nurture their moral development in a meaningful way. 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 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. In his research related to the role of purpose in youth development, Damon (2008) found that many young people consequently experience disengagement due to experiences which they feel are “thrust upon them by external forces” (p. 10). A recent study of 1,000 high school students who participated in service learning programs found significantly greater gains in civic engagement for students who chose their own projects (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). 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. The Total Talent Portfolio is also an integral part of Renzulli Learning Systems, a computer based resource that assesses student strengths and creates a personalized data base of enrichment materials reflecting a student's ability, interests, and learning styles. 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. Although all students might have benefited in varying degrees from the experiences made available to the groups and individuals described above, the high degree of follow-up and the commitment to work over long periods of time undoubtedly resulted from the fact that the supplementary

opportunities and resources were made available to group or individuals that expressed strong interests in particular topics. And 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 develop plans of operation, identify and secure resources, learn the investigative skills necessary for addressing their work, 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 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, 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. Aubyn 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 Aubyn, Mother Theresa, or Martin Luther King, Jr?

## **Houndstooth Intervention Theory**

Our examination of the co-cognitive factors that influence the development of abilities, creativity, and task commitment parallels a great deal of theory and research that has looked at other non-cognitive concerns such as social and emotional development, the development of self-concept and self-efficacy, character development, and the development of attitudes and values. Untold numbers of studies have examined the effects of various programmatic approaches that influence these types of development among persons who have experienced a range of adjustment problems and within the contexts of promoting positive, beneficial adjustment in healthy individuals and groups. Such approaches include a wide range of therapies, individual and group counseling techniques, social and psychological experimental treatments, and a broad array of educational interventions. Because the focus of Operation Houndstooth draws upon the theory and direction established in the emerging field of positive psychology, and because our own interest is the constructive development of gifted behaviors rather than healing maladaptive conditions, the research reviewed in this chapter generally focuses on school-related opportunities and alternatives for the development of positive changes in the generally healthy population of young people.

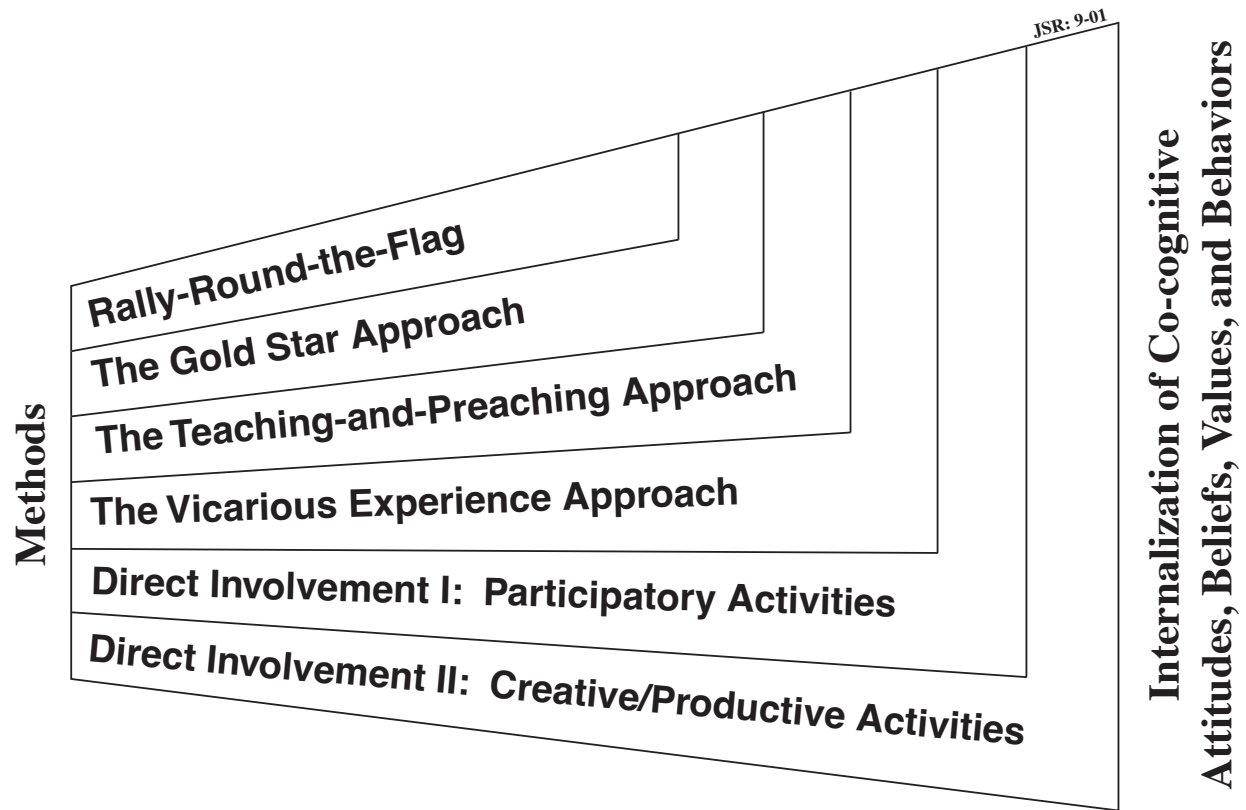
It is difficult to organize a categorical inventory of the large amount of information available on non-cognitive approaches to positive development because several recommended approaches range across what might form the parameters of discrete categories. We have, nevertheless, attempted to examine recommended practices and related research with an eye toward the most common characteristics of particular approaches. Based on literature reviews, we have divided these approaches into six areas, ranging from what research indicates are the least powerful to the most powerful approaches for making strong attitudinal and behavioral changes in students (Vess & Halbur, 2003). Since one of our major concerns is the *internalization* of behaviors that eventually leads to the development of both a value system and the capacity to act upon positive characteristics, we have tended to view each category with an eye toward awareness versus a more deeply ingrained manifestation of certain values and behaviors. A graphic representation of Houndstooth Intervention Theory is presented in Figure 3.

Before reviewing the six approaches included in Houndstooth Intervention Theory, it is important to point out that each approach may contribute in varying degrees to positive growth. Although the earlier interventions in Figure 3 have less power to promote internalization, they may have value as part of a chain of experiences that maximize the effect of each individual level of intervention.

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

This approach, sometimes referred to by others as “the cheerleading method,” involves visual displays (posters, banners, bulletin boards) featuring certain values, slogans, or examples of virtuous or desired behaviors. Also included are verbal slogans delivered over the schools’ public address system or presented orally in classrooms and at assemblies. The rationale for this approach to promoting values, virtues, morality, and character development is that a steady

regimen of affirmations and positive messages result in desirable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in young people.



**Figure 3.** Operation Houndstooth Intervention Theory

In Tarkington School in Wheeling, Illinois, lists of behavioral and academic expectations are posted throughout the school (Murphy, 1998). These moral codes are known to students as “Tarkington Tiger Traits” which exemplify desirable characteristics of citizenship. Another example is the Heartwood Institute, which provides schools with character education kits that focus on seven character traits: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love. The kits include flash cards called T.R.U.E. (Teaching Resources for Understanding Ethics) cards which contain inspirational messages, quotes, and proverbs related to the desirable character traits. At Markham Elementary School in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania the teachers pass the T.R.U.E. cards around during weekly class discussions of the seven character traits (Niederberger, 2011).

### **The Gold Star Approach**

This approach is not unlike the ways in which we traditionally have rewarded students for good academic work. The approach makes use of techniques such as providing positive reinforcement through merit badges, placement on “citizen-of-the-week” lists, extolling good



behavior at award assemblies or other events, and even having students earn points, gold stars, or other tokens that can be exchanged for prizes or privileges. Based on classic behaviorism, the rationale underlying this approach is that positive reinforcement for desirable behaviors will increase the frequency of these behaviors. Although providing positive feedback for desirable behaviors may produce greater awareness about the issues under consideration, and even more desired behaviors in situations in which rewards may be earned, the importance of students' actions so far as internal beliefs and values are concerned may be of secondary consequence when compared to the award or reward being offered for good behavior.

One prevalent program that utilizes the Gold Star Approach is the Girl Scouts of America. The four program goals of the Girl Scouts are to develop self-potential, to relate to others, to develop values, and to contribute to society. Scouts are rewarded with pins, badges, patches, and awards in return for demonstrating desirable behaviors. More information about the Girl Scouts of America can be obtained at, <https://www.girlscouts.org>. Research regarding the effectiveness of Girl Scouts is varied. Some studies claim that the program helps to enable moral development, while other studies question the efficacy of the program (Dubas & Snider, 1993; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003 Smalt, 1997). In 2008 Girl Scouts of America launched a new initiative called the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience. This curriculum has 15 outcomes divided into three categories: discovering yourself, connecting with others, and taking action to make the world a better place (Girl Scouts of USA, 2008). This new approach to leadership development recognizes the limitations of earning badges when the end goal is to create leaders who are “defined not by the qualities and skills one has, but also by how those qualities and skills are used to make a difference in the world” (Girl Scouts of the USA, 2008).

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

The direct teaching of non-cognitive material is probably the most frequently used method to promote attitudes and behaviors related to character and value development. This approach resembles the kinds of training commonly used over the centuries in religious instruction and in situations in which allegiance to particular ideologies is the goal of persons responsible for the curriculum. The direct teaching approach spans a broad range of techniques ranging from recitation and drills about desirable beliefs and behaviors that require students to repeat back slogans or answer in prescribed ways (“What is meant by honesty?”), to dialogue, discussions, and debate about character- or value-laden issues. The direct teaching approach might include discussions based on fiction, films and videos, or examinations of personal characteristics or decision points by noteworthy persons portrayed in biographies, autobiographies, or other non-fiction genres.

One example of a Teaching and Preaching program is “Character Counts”, which uses six pillars of character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. The program was developed by the Josephson Institute and more information can be found at their website address: <https://charactercounts.org>. Through lessons, students learn of historical figures who have exemplified each of these pillars of character. For example, when learning

about citizenship, they will study Dorothea Dix who pioneered better conditions for the mentally ill; and when learning about trustworthiness, they will study Pat Tillman, who sacrificed millions of dollars when he left the NFL to join the U.S. Army after the attacks on America in September of 2001<sup>2</sup>. Through learning about these heroes and heroines, (the program has an outline of 48 specific heroes and heroines) they will see examples of people who have embodied the six pillars of character. Ideally, the students will then want to emulate the behaviors of these people. Programs such as Character Counts are arguably the most common types of programs used in America today. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) found that a majority of research-based character education programs included the direct teaching of values and ethics. D.A.R.E. is one well-known program that utilizes this approach. D.A.R.E. strives to prevent drug and alcohol use by focusing on self-esteem, resistance to peer pressure, and problem solving skills (D.A.R.E., 2010). Unfortunately, several longitudinal studies (Clayton, Cattarello, & Johnstone, 1996; Dukes, Ullman, & Stein, 1996; West & O'Neal, 2004) found no significant differences in the outcomes for students who participated in D.A.R.E. and students who did not, suggesting limitations of the Teaching and Preaching approach.

### **The Vicarious Experience Approach**

This approach is often used as an extension of direct teaching; however, it uses techniques that place students in situations in which they are expected to experience a particular personal or emotional reaction to situations in which a specified non-cognitive goal is being pursued. Role-playing, dramatization, and simulations of significant or critical incidents are examples of the Vicarious Experience Approach. The rationale underlying this approach is that deep and enduring effects on attitudes, values, or character must be experienced at a more active and participatory level than merely learning about them through general awareness or direct teaching approaches. For example, Nucci states higher levels of moral reasoning can be fostered through the use of dilemma discussions in classrooms (1987). Berkowitz & Bier (2005) noted the effectiveness of Moral Dilemma Discussions (MDD) in the development of moral reasoning stating, “When students engage in facilitated peer discussions of moral dilemmas, they show accelerated development in moral reasoning capacities” (p. 11).

The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, an organization based at Santa Clara University in California, provides a character education program entitled “Character-Based Literacy.” In this program, students study plays, poems, and novels. These literary devices are used initially to teach reading and writing. Then students critically discuss the characters in the literature, often trying to place themselves in the situation or environment of the character in order to reflect on and internalize values such as integrity, self-control, and respect. Units include responsibility, self-direction, self-control, respect, integrity, moderation, and justice. This approach is very similar to its precursor, Teaching and Preaching, but it seeks to more highly internalize the values it teaches by asking students to take on the role of the character (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> Sadly, Pat Tillman was killed in action in Iraq.

## **Direct Involvement – I**

Many people believe that the best way to internalize non-cognitive characteristics is to provide young people with experiences in which they come into direct contact with situations and events where affective behaviors are taking place. Commonly referred to as “service learning,” it includes community service, internships that deal with provisions for helping others or remediating injurious events, and participation in events where social or political action is being formulated or taking place.

According to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), 28% of teenagers participate in some type of volunteer activity (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). However, rates vary from state to state: 17% (Mississippi) to 51% (Utah), which may be attributed to an increased emphasis on volunteerism in some states’ schools (Kirby, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Godsay, 2011). Many schools require their students to volunteer at local organizations and the state of Maryland mandates community service/service-learning as a graduation requirement (Kirby, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Godsay, 2011). Volunteering exposes students to situations and experiences that they may not have been exposed to previously and can raise their awareness about local, national, and global issues. While promoting this exposure moves students in a positive direction, it may not help them internalize the co-cognitive factors if it is a forced requirement rather than an involvement based on a personalized commitment on the parts of students. Interestingly, although Maryland students are required to volunteer before completing high school, they do not continue to do so, for adults in the age range of 19–24 are the least likely of all age groups to volunteer. This fact may suggest that “more needs to be done to develop sustainable interest and/or connections between the youth and the community they interact with during their mandatory service” (Kirby, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Godsay, 2011, p. 3).

## **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. The rationale for this type of involvement is that a deep internalization of positive attitudes and attendant behaviors has a more enduring influence on developing wisdom, a satisfying lifestyle, and a lifelong value system than quick-fix behavioral changes that may result from experiences that do not culminate in personally fulfilling activities based on action-oriented involvement.

In 2000, Stacy Hillman read in a magazine that police dogs were in need of bulletproof and stab proof vests (ICGate Inc., 2004). Stacy, then ten years old, decided that she could help by raising money. She began by approaching the local police chief to tell him her plan. She placed a

picture of her with a police dog on collection bottles and put them in vet's offices and pet stores to collect donations. Today, Stacy is the president of the charity "Pennies to Protect Police Dogs." Read more about Stacy at the Pennies to Protect Police Dogs website, <http://www.penniestoprotectpolicedogs.org>.

### **Adding it All Up**

The internalization of co-cognitive attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors cannot be achieved through any one of these interventions alone. Schools should adopt several approaches. If our goal is to move more students towards initiating action and promoting social capital, then our schools need to provide them with more opportunities to achieve higher levels of social engagement.

The progression of individuals through the levels of the Houndstooth Interventions mirrors the progression through Kohlberg's stages of moral development. At any stage, one can understand all stages up to their current level of involvement, but can only be influenced by their current stage of moral development. As a basis for moral development, rules are placed upon young people both in societies and schools, such as in Rally-Round-the-Flag, The Gold Star Approach, and The Teaching-and-Preaching Approach. These methods are effective for students in the Preconventional stage in Kohlberg's theory. The Vicarious Experience Approach as well as Direct Involvement I are more appropriate methods for use with students who have reached the Conventional level. It is during this stage that students gain an understanding of their place in society according to societal norms. Reaching the level of Postconventional thought allows students to examine societal rules in order to establish their own moral relativism. Prior to this stage, students are unable to take a critical view of ethical principles and simply accept the standards with which they are presented. The Direct Involvement II intervention is most effective for students at the Postconventional level because it enables them to evaluate and resolve societal deficits.

In his seminal research, Kohlberg reported that only 20% of the adult population will reach the Postconventional stage of thinking (1978). Progression through the stages is not guaranteed. Progression necessitates continued exposure to advanced stages of moral reasoning. Schools have the potential to promote internalization of the co-cognitive factors needed to progress toward Postconventional thought through a myriad of experiences at all levels of the Houndstooth Interventions. Social capital can only be enhanced by members of society who have achieved this level.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of Operation Houndstooth is to instill in students the six co-cognitive factors mentioned previously: optimism, courage, romance with a topic/discipline, sensitivity to human concerns, physical/mental energy, and vision/sense of destiny. These are traits that many gifted students already exhibit, and may adopt quickly. Each level of the Houndstooth Intervention Theory leads students closer and closer to the constructive development of gifted behaviors and

the internalization of the co-cognitive factors. Students like Stacy and Aubyn have become creative producers at the highest level of the Houndstooth Intervention Theory by internalizing a combination of the six co-cognitive traits. By employing this intervention, schools will encourage a new generation of students to use their gifts in socially constructive ways and seek ways to improve the lives of others rather than merely using their talents for economic gain, self-indulgence, and the exercise of power without a commitment to contribute to the improvement of life and resources on the planet.

### **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.

Look around; everything is going faster. The average sound bite by persons running for U. S. President is less than thirty seconds. We've traded in-depth stories in the *New York Times* and *Atlantic Magazine* for the six o'clock news and *USA Today*, and we've replaced reading a good biography with a quick trip through *People Magazine*. FedEx, cell phones, e-mail, round-the-clock stock trading, and drive through Egg McMuffins are the way many people run their lives. And we also have sped up other things that should be important reflections of the *quality* of life. Recent studies have shown that we spend less than 31 minutes a day caring for our children and seven minutes caring for our pets. Each day adult college graduates spend 16 minutes or less per day reading non-work related material, and young married couples spend an average of four minutes a day engaged in anything that in polite company we might call romantic encounters!

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 consumption. 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 result in the production of social capital as well as material consumption and economic gain? The general goal of this work is to infuse into the overall process of schooling experiences related to the Houndstooth components that will contribute to the development of wisdom and a satisfying lifestyle. 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 presently give to cognitive development.

Although there is no silver bullet or institutional fix for infusing these components into the curriculum or creating a greater awareness about the need to produce more social capital, there are things that lend feasibility to this endeavor. First, the entire positive psychology movement is growing in popularity and promises to enhance research endeavors of the type we are pursuing. Second, already completed research in psychology, sociology, and anthropology clearly indicate that these co-cognitive traits can be assessed (at varying levels of precision) and that the environment in general, and schooling in particular, can nurture and influence the components we have identified in Operation Houndstooth. Third, economists have pointed out the benefits of a reciprocal relationship between material and social capital, and many social, political, spiritual, and educational commentators have indicated that nurturing these traits must become an imperative.

We 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, 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.*”

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