

The Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Students

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A Question for the Group

Generally speaking, is it your opinion that gifted students are **MORE** or **LESS** socially and emotionally well-adjusted in comparison to their non-gifted peers?

- Let's chat, then
- Let's bust some myths!!

A Plan for Today

- Definitions
- Profiles of the Gifted and Talented
- Research on Social and Emotional Challenges of Some Gifted Students
- Directions for Developing the Social and Emotional Traits of Gifted Students
- Research on Overall Social and Emotional Strengths of Gifted Students
- Thoughts and Questions

Definitions

- Rena Subotnik, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, and Frank Worrell (2011) have defined giftedness based on a thorough examination of the relevant psychosocial research.
- Subotnik, R. F., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Worrell, F. C. (2011). Rethinking giftedness and gifted education: A proposed direction forward based on psychological science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12, 3-54. doi:1177/0016986212456079

Giftedness

- The manifestation of performance that is at the upper end of the distribution in a talent domain.
- Can be viewed as developmental in that in the beginning stages, potential is the key variable.
- In later stages, achievement is the measure of giftedness.
- Psychosocial variables play an essential role in the manifestation of giftedness at every developmental stage.
- Both cognitive and psychosocial variables are malleable and need to be deliberately cultivated.

Psychosocial Variables per Subotnik et al. (2011)

- Cognitive Variables
 - ability
 - achievement
- Non-cognitive Variables
 - perceptions and beliefs about self
 - motivation, task commitment
 - resilience
 - social supports

Non-cognitive Variables: Emotional Domain

- The emotional domain refers specifically to the internal, psychological health and affective features of a child as measured in terms of self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, resiliency, motivation, task commitment, self-regulation, etc.

Non-cognitive Variables: Social Domain

- The social domain refers specifically to interpersonal skills as seen in the ways in which gifted children interact with peers, parents, and teachers as measured in terms of relationships and broad social skills.

Profiles of the Gifted and Talented

- Type I - The Successful
- Type II - The Creative (Challenging)
- Type III - The Underground
- Type IV - The At-Risk
- Type V - The Twice-Exceptional
- Type VI - The Autonomous Learner

Type I THE SUCCESSFUL



- As many as 90% of the identified TAG students
- Discovers what "sells" at home & school
- Convergent thinker
- Learns & tests well
- Eager for approval
- Liked by peers
- Positive self-concept
- Unaware of deficiencies

Type II THE CHALLENGING



- Divergently gifted
- Often go unidentified
- Question authority
- Don't conform - haven't learned to use the system
- Receive little recognition for accomplishments
- Struggle with self-esteem
- At risk as eventual drop out

Type III THE UNDERGROUND

- Middle school females hiding giftedness
- High School boys dealing with athletic or social pressures
- Want to be included in non-gifted peer group
- May be radical transformation from earlier grades
- Their needs are often in conflict with expectations of teachers & parents



Type IV THE AT-RISK

- Angry with adults & with themselves;
Defensive
- System has not met needs for many years;
Burn-out or Spaced-out
- Depressed & withdrawn or acts out
- Interests are outside realm of regular school curriculum
- Poor self-concept



Type V THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL

- Physically or emotionally challenged
- Learning disabilities
- Limited English Proficiency
- Typically not identified gifted
- Programs don't integrate their varying needs
- Discouraged, frustrated, rejected, helpless, powerless or isolated
- School system tends to focus on the weaknesses



Type VI THE AUTONOMOUS LEARNER

- Few demonstrate this at an early age
- Work effectively in school system
- Use the system to create new opportunities
- Strong, positive self-concept
- Positive attention & support for accomplishments
- Respected by adults & peers
- Leadership roles
- Independent, self-directed



Negative Emotional and Social Outcomes

LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE RESEARCH

The "Gifted" Label

- Some gifted children harbor internal perceptions of being both different and exposed to peer rejection based on their gifted label, even if their own self-perception is to view their giftedness positively.
- Girls – attractiveness
- Boys – athleticism
- African Americans – “acting white”

Profoundly Gifted

At the highest ends of the IQ continuum

- Challenges in cultivating and developing social relationships
- Lack of same-aged peers with comparable intelligence or interests
- Lack of peers with whom the profoundly gifted child can relate

Perfectionism

The need to avoid making mistakes.

Many gifted students are perfectionists. But,

- Adaptive
 - Leads to high quality products and is positive
- Maladaptive
 - Fear that work will not be perfect creates anxiety, low self-esteem, procrastination

Factors that Promote Emotional and Social Health

LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE RESEARCH

Emotional Outcomes

- Louis Terman's *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925/1947)
- Longitudinal study of gifted individuals (IQ 140+)
- Cohort became more professionally accomplished adults than the general population.
- Cohort had more positive emotional outcomes over the course of their lives than comparable non-gifted individuals.

Challenging Academic Environment

- Acceleration
- International Baccalaureate Program
- Advanced Placement
- Ability and cluster grouping
- Scaffolding of skills development for ELL students

Integrate Affective Components

- Work in areas of student' s interests and strengths
- Students set and monitor goals
- Targeted interventions to promote resilience and self-perceptions development
- Discussion Groups
 - Led by trained educators or school psychologists and counselors
 - Provide a forum allowing gifted students to voice concerns and experiences in a non-judgmental context devoid of grades or performance measures

Operation Houndstooth

- Provides a framework for developing and supporting socially constructive attributes in young gifted children through participation in civically and socially engaging activities
- Addresses six components that relate to overall academic, social and emotional success including: optimism, courage, romance with a topic, sensitivity to human concerns, physical/mental energy, and vision or sense of destiny
- Total Talent Portfolio

Emotional Intelligence Framework

- Self-assessment (understand abilities in light of personalities and interests)
- Philosophy of life (defining beliefs and values)
- Bibliotherapy (continued use of literature and biography to help students understand themselves through characters and role models)
- Talent development plan (students to develop a personal talent plan and monitor personal growth)
- Each component is purposefully targeted through lessons designed to develop problem solving and to encourage written and oral communication about emotional issues.

Positive Emotional Outcomes

- Gifted students generally exhibit higher or comparable...
 - **Academic self-concept**
 - **Self-efficacy**
 - **Self-esteem**
 - **Self-regulation**
 - **Motivation**
 - **Task Commitment**
 - **Resilience**

Positive Social Outcomes

Families

- **Families**
- **Peer Relationships**
- **Teacher Relationship**
- **Big Fish Little Pond Effect**

QUESTIONS?

Comments?

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