Social-Emotional Development


Perceptions of self-esteem, locus of control, popularity, depression (or unhappiness), and discipline problems as indices of social and emotional adjustment were investigated in highly verbally or mathematically talented adolescents. Compared to a group of students who are much less gifted, the highly gifted students perceive themselves as less popular, but no differences were found in self-esteem, depression, or the incidence of discipline problems. The gifted students reported greater internal locus of control. Comparisons between the highly mathematically talented students and the highly verbally talented students suggested that the students in the latter group perceive themselves as less popular. Within both the gifted and comparison groups, there were also slight indications that higher verbal ability may be related to some social and emotional problems.


This study examined the social context in which crystallizing experiences (CEs), experiences which solidify the individual's awareness of some aspect of the self, occurred among 422 academically talented youth entering the sixth through tenth grades. Content and Chi square analyses indicate that most CEs occur in a public setting, are related to personal achievement, do not require conscious self-initiative, and usually involve significant interaction with another person. Furthermore, CEs that result in recognition and affirmation of ability at an early age may help to establish a positive academic self-concept and foster further development of self-identity.


The Brief Symptom Inventory was administered to 274 mathematically gifted secondary students identified by a national talent search and enrolled in a summer precalculus program. Results indicated that these students were significantly better adjusted than the adolescent normative group. Gender, age, achievement level, and verbal ability were unrelated to adjustment scores.

A possible explanatory framework of the coping and adaptation of 159 academically able 7th graders was tested by exploring their strengths and vulnerabilities in coping with their differences, their peer relationship styles (PRSs), and their patterns of achievement motivation (ACM). The range of responses included a bifurcated distribution pattern of strengths and vulnerabilities in values related to ACM and normal distribution patterns in coping with self and academic ability and PRS. Findings support the use of structured self-reports in obtaining participants’ perspectives on self-in-context and as a supplement in psychosocial assessment.