

New study reveals: Gifted children shape their personalities according to social stigma

March 3 2009

Gifted youths already know what they want to be when they grow up. They usually choose to study applied sciences, but when they are asked why they made their choices, they are not able to explain.

"Society identifies the gifted child with high intelligence and is often hasty to identify this intelligence with specific subjects, especially exact or prestigious sciences. The maturing children are quick to adopt this identity, renouncing the process of building self-identity," said Dr. Inbal Shani of the University of Haifa, who carried out this study under the supervision of Prof. Moshe Zeidner.

The study surveyed 800 gifted and non-gifted high-school students and examined the differences in self-concept and other psychological variables between the two groups. The study also observed the ways in which maturing gifted students form their identity. The results showed that while gifted youths have higher self-esteem in their educational achievements, they have lower self-esteem in social and physical aspects.

The researchers pointed out that as soon as students are defined as gifted, they are entered into special educational programs. This process causes them to feel that they excel in the academic field and therefore they strive to meet the expectations set for them in the programs built specially for them. This is particularly prominent in those classes that participate in intensive daily programs fostering gifted children.

"Maturing gifted students know from a very young age what their life's

course will be - usually in the applied sciences. Most of them demonstrate neither deliberation nor interest in other fields, and they speak of studying in academic or military-academic tracks . . . which is of much significance in the process of self-exploration," Dr. Shani noted.

She added that it is likely that applied science tracks are adjusted for the maturing gifted, and it could be that many of these youths would have chosen them regardless of the social labeling; but the problem is that they do primarily tend to choose their professional identity based on the social expectations. "It is a paradox: It is the gifted - who are often multi-talented - who tend to limit the realization of those very talents into specific fields. Instead of selecting from many options open to them, they limit themselves to applied or prestigious subjects," she said.

Dr. Shani added that gifted youths frequently report social difficulties and the feeling that other children keep distant from them because of the gifted label, and therefore it is important to enable them - in the process of forming an identity - to relate to emotional and social characteristics, such as motivation, self-concept, and external pressures, and not only to those characteristics related to cognitive aptitude.

Source: University of Haifa

Citation: New study reveals: Gifted children shape their personalities according to social stigma (2009, March 3) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-reveals-gifted-children-personalities-social.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--