RUNNING HEAD: HOWARD GARDNER’S ESSENCE IN CREATIVITY

Howard Gardner’s Essence in Creativity

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CRS 560, Fall 2009

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to outline the achievements of Howard Gardner in the field of creativity. Although Gardner continues to shape his theory of Multiple Intelligences, the focus and research gathered for this paper will be on the early works and stages of Gardner’s work and the Multiple Intelligences theory. Gardner’s books about creativity have helped make a clearer definition for what it means to be creative.

**Bibliography**

Howard Gardner was born into a Jewish, German, Immigrant family in 1943. As a child, Gardner was shielded by his parents from the effects of the Holocaust and the death of his older brother, caused by a tragic sledding accident. It was not until a later age in youth when Gardner himself did some research did he learn about the reasons why his family immigrated and his brother’s death. He attributes the pathway of his life to be majorly influenced by these two family tragedies as well as the environment of which his parents raised him. Gardner denoted himself as a gifted child and earned Eagle Scout recognition by the time of his bar mitzvah (www.HowardGardner.com). He studied social relations at Harvard because of his self-credited researcher and synthesizer characteristics. A few of his most notable books involving creativity are *Extraordinary Minds, Creating Minds, and Changing Minds.* Some awards Gardner has received include a MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1981, University of Louisville’s Grawemeyer Award in Education in 1990, a Fellowship from the John S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2000, and honorary degrees from twenty-two colleges and universities. Gardner is currently the Hobbs professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Definition of Creativity**

“Creativity [is] the impulse to break out of conventional ways of thinking and discover a new truth about the world” (www.HowardGardner.com). Gardner’s perceptions of creativity are similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s in that each believes in a person, domain, and field concept. (Davis, 1983). Csikszentmihalyi’s work is cited in many of Gardner’s works, especially the novels involving creativity. As a matter of fact, Gardner notes in his book *Extraordinary Minds*, “I have been most influenced by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s “system view” of extraordinariness” (Gardner, 1997). Gardner states that creativity is represented by the “individual (child or master), the work (relevant symbol systems in domain), and other persons (In childhood – family, peers; in mature years – rivals, judges, supporters in the field)” (1993a, pg. 9). The theory of multiple intelligences is evident in Gardner’s definition of creativity since he includes a domain specific component. Gardner (1993a) says, “I shall argue that creative breakthroughs in one realm cannot be collapsed uncritically with breakthroughs in other realms…a single variety of creativity is a myth” (pg. 7). People do not have to be creative in society’s realm of conventional means; one can be creative in something as unconventional as the kinesthetic movement of tying ones shoes.

The argument of how much creativity and intelligence are related seems to be an ongoing battle in the psychological world. Gardner (1993b) states his opinion of the creativity and intelligence relation debate by stating, “there is a tension between creativity and expertise: certainly one may be expert without being creative; and, possibly, some creativity can be manifest prior to a determination that someone has attained the level of a master” (pg. 52).

Gardner has contributed his definition to the field creativity through writing his books: *Creating Minds, Extraordinary Minds, Changing Minds, Intelligence Reframed,* and *Multiple Intelligences: Theory in Practice.*

**The Theory of Multiple Intelligences**

Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences is rooted in his work at group homes. Hamilton and Gardner (1995) noted that while working with disabled adults, he realized that every human has learning strengths regardless of what their IQ score reports. The purpose of the theory of Multiple Intelligences is to help learners discover their learning strengths (1995).

American society declares mathematical and linguistic strengths as the determinants of intelligence, and in turn power and success. This societal frame of mind allows for only the select few mathematical or linguistic people to succeed.

The original (which has been revised) theory of Multiple Intelligences outlines seven intelligences. The intelligences include: bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, mathematical-logical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and visual. The theory of multiple intelligences allows for people to think more creatively and open-minded about themselves and others.

***Creating Minds***

In Gardner’s book, *Creating Minds*, he fuses together his definition of creativity with his theory of Multiple Intelligences. The main focus of the book involves defining Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, T. S. Eliot, Martha Graham, and Mahatma Gandhi as seven of the most creative people from the (modern era) time period of 1885 to 1935. Gardner selected people from the same half-century so that he could compare their creative styles using the worldly events that they all experienced. Each historical figure he studied in this book represents one of his seven multiple intelligences. Gardner (1993a) noted,

I argue that the arts, crafts, scientific understandings, and intellectual syntheses that were regnant in the nineteenth century were no longer viewed as adequate; and that, in response to the perceived inadequacies, these seven creators forged a new agenda…the character of that reformulation entails, paradoxically, a return to the basic elements of each domain: the simplest forms, sounds, images, puzzles – a purification process that involves a strange yet productive amalgam of the most elemental impulses with the most sophisticated understandings (pg. 7).

Throughout the book Gardner highlights for the reader connections between this modern era of creativity to the seven individuals studied, to the domain of which they were involved; thus highlighting how these seven “creating minds” reflect Gardner’s creativity definition of the individual, domain, and others.

***Extraordinary Minds***

*Extraordinary Minds* informs readers about what life is like as an extraordinary individual. He states that persons, nonhuman physical objects, symbolic entities, and developmental processes are the building blocks to creating an extraordinary individual (Gardner, 1997). Gardner distinguishes the extraordinary from the ordinary by saying, “in every age a tiny percentage of individuals stand out by virtue of creative achievements. A few are distinguished because of the prodigiousness and quality of their output: although he died young, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart created dozens of masterpieces in virtually every existing musical genre” (Gardner, 1997).

An interesting aspect of this book draws attention to whether or not extraordinariness and high creative achievement is desirable. In order to become a famed creative individual, Gardner believes that,

One must have enormous dedication to one’s domain and one’s mission. At a minimum, it takes ten years of steady application to master a domain...the extraordinary individual is also perennially at risk for pain, rejection, and loneliness. Most innovators and most innovations are not well understood or appreciated at the time of their launching (Gardner, 1997).

**Applying the Intelligences in the Classroom**

In 1995, Steve Hamilton interviewed some teachers and students of the L. Fuller Elementary school in Gloucester, Massachusetts. L. Fuller Elementary is a school that operates with the Multiple Intelligences as a primary focus of the creation of their curriculum. Throughout the interview, students and teachers commented on activities that involved the multiple intelligences. Interviewees talked about the value of multiple intelligences in finding their creative strengths. One young boy exclaimed, “Multiple Intelligences help find what we’re good at” (Hamilton & Gardner, 1995). Gardner states that involving the intelligences in the classroom not only helps students find their strengths, but they also can learn about all of the other learning styles. By learning more about other student’s learning styles, children strengthen their empathy for others.

**Project Zero**

The project zero website states that, “Project Zero’s mission is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines, at the individual and institutional levels” (pz.harvard.edu/history). Gardner was a director for Harvard’s Project Zero from 1972 to 2000, although he continues to research for the good of student assessment. Project Zero started out as a study of the individual and their performance in the Arts and creativity, but has expanded to studies involving other subjects, looking at groups of students, and classroom growth. In an interview with Ron Brandt (1988), when asked why we should assess student achievement in the arts, Gardner replied,

We want to know whether individuals involved in the arts are getting something out of their experiences, and whether those results can be documented…the abilities involved in dealing with the visual arts – with sculpture or painting, with dance, mime, use of the body, and so on – all represent separate sets of cognitive skills. If we omit those areas from the curriculum, we are in effect shortchanging the mind (pg. 30).

Creativity is well embedded in Project Zero since the student creativity level used within making the arts project is what is really being assessed.

**Conclusion**

Howard Gardner has done some extraordinary research and projects for the field of creativity. Since Gardner is still actively working in the fields of creativity and social psychology, one can assume that the theory of Multiple Intelligences will continue to grow and expand.

Gardner’s Works

Books

Responsibility at Work

Five Minds for the Future

Howard Gardner Under Fire

MI – New Horizons

Development and Education of the Mind

Creating Minds

Making Good

The Disciplined Mind

Intelligence Reframed

Extraordinary Minds

Leading Minds

MI – Theory in Practice

The Unschooled Mind

Art Education and Human Development

To Open Minds

The Minds New Science

Frames of Mind

Art, Mind, and Brain

Artful Scribbles

Developmental Psychology

The Shattered Mind

The Arts and Human Development

The Quest for Mind

Co-Authored Books

Good Work

Practical Intelligence for School

Intelligence: Multiple Perspectives

Man and Men: Social Psychology as a social science

Journal Articles

The 25th anniversary of the publication of Howard Gardner’s Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Five Minds for the Future

Multiple Lenses of the Mind

How MI Theory Fits into Traditional and Modern China (by Dr. Jie-qi Chen)

Transmission and Reception of MI Theory in China (by Dr. Zhilong Shen)

M.I. After 20 Years

Ethical Responsibility of Scientists

Three Meanings of Intelligence

A Multiplicity of Intelligences

Interview with Steen Napper Larsen

Multimedia and Multiple Intelligences

Technology and Multiple Intelligences

Response to EdNext Critique of MI Theory (Written by Mindy Kornhaber)

Note: Book and Journal listing was retrieved from www.HowardGardner.com

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Hamilton, S. & Gardner, H. (1995). *How are kids smart?: multiple intelligences in the classroom: teachers version.* [VHS]. Available from the Butler Library at Buffalo State College.