Chapter 1

TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY QUESTIONS ABOUT MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

When we first read Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) in 1983, we were profoundly impressed by the challenge he issued to traditional psychology, particularly psychometrics. We believed that Gardner stood with us in our efforts to develop psychological and educational approaches that facilitated the inclusion of students from marginalized groups whose talents and capabilities had been mismeasured by traditional psychological instruments. Gardner's theory appeared to assume a wider spectrum of human abilities that were, for some reason or another, excluded from the domain of educational psychology and the definition of intelligence. We taught multiple intelligences theory to our students in hopes of exposing and overcoming some of the ways particular students were hurt by these exclusionary disciplinary practices. As Gardner has continued to develop his theory over the last twenty years, those of us associated with this book grew increasingly uncomfortable with many of his assertions and many of the dimensions he excluded from his work. A few years ago we decided it was time to undertake a comprehensive questioning of the theory and Gardner's work surrounding it. *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered* is the result of that project.

Our point here is not to issue some reductionistic validation or repudiation of Gardner's work. We are more interested in raising questions about the nature of mind, self-production, intelligence, justice, power, teaching, and learning arising from a careful confrontation with his scholarship. At times our questions may be harsh and our conclusions biting. We do not mean for such unsparing criticism to be taken as a personal attack. We respect Gardner, the work he has produced, and
in the process producing a trivialized, touchy-feely mode of education. In *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered*, we provide a progressive critique, maintaining that despite all its democratic promise Gardner’s theory has not met the expectations of its devotees. The reasons for this failure are multidimensional and complex, as the authors of this volume carefully delineate. One aspect of the failure, we will argue, comes from Gardner’s inability to grasp the social, cultural, and political forces that helped shape the initial reception of MI. Even when he has addressed what he describes as a “dis-ease” in American society, Gardner (1999a) fails to historicize the concept in a way that provides him a larger perspective on the fascinating relationship between American sociocultural, political, and epistemological dynamics of the last two decades and MI theory.

Gardner is entangled in this sociocultural, political, and epistemological web whether he wants to be or not. Not so, he maintains, contending that his is a psychological and pedagogical position—not a social, cultural, political, or epistemological one. In a naïve decontextualized and psychologized *modus operandi* he asserts that the psychological and pedagogical domains are separate from all these other denominators. This is a profound analytical error on Gardner’s part. The epistemology (ways of knowing) traditionally employed by Gardner’s psychometric predecessors and contemporaries is the epistemology of MI. As Richard Cary (1999) puts it in his chapter on visual-spatial intelligence: “Although MI theory is more appealing and democratic at first glance, it remains a stepchild of positivism’s exclusively quantitative methodologies and of grand narrative psychology.” Indeed, there is less difference between Gardner and the psychological establishment than we first believed. As in so many similar domains, Gardner has been unwilling to criticize the power wielders, the gatekeepers of the psychological castle.

In her chapter in this volume Kathy Berry (1999) extends this point:

[Gardner’s] works, as scholarly and beguilingly penned as they are, have seduced the field of education into yet another Western logo-centric, psychological categorization. Under the guise of educational/school reform, his theory of MI has spawned a host of other supportive theories, practices, discourses, and critique. . . . Once labeled, however, whether in the singular or the plural, intelligence acts as an economic, social, political, and cultural passport for some and for others, a cage . . . .

The authors in this volume are especially concerned with the democratic and justice-related dimensions portrayed in Gardner’s early articulation of MI. Taking our cue from the concerns of many people of color, the poor, colonized individuals, and proponents of feminist theory, we raise questions about the tacit assumptions of MI and its implications for both education and the social domain. Informing in part by Kincheloe & Steinberg’s (1993) notion of presocialization, we raise questions about knowledge production and power in the psychological domain in general and MI in particular (Weil 1998; Berry 1999; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Hinchey 1999; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Villaverde 1999; Cannella 1997
and 1999; Horn 1999 and 2000; Steinberg 2001; Malewski 2001; Pushkin 2001). Postformalism is especially interested in modes of cognition that recognize the complicity of various academic discourses, psychology in particular, in the justification and maintenance of an inequitable status quo and an ecological and cosmological alienation from the planet and universe in which we reside (see Marla Morris’s chapter here). As Morris puts it:

If we are to talk about a naturalistic intelligence, we need to understand that intelligence does not mean anything goes, just because a scientist works with or in nature. I argue that an ecological sensibility springs from a sensitive, ethical, and holistic understanding of the complexities of human situatedness in the ecosystem.

Gardner seems either unable or unwilling to trace the relationship of MI to these issues (Johnson 1999; Weil 1998 and 2001). Danny Weil’s chapter in this volume carefully delineates the social alienation, the absence of situatedness that Gardner so summarily dismisses from his work.

Thus, as postformalists we deploy our power literacy to reveal MI’s ideological inscriptions. In this context we examine the multiple and complex ways power operates to shape psychological descriptions of human abilities and behaviors. For example, what is labeled intelligence can never be separated from what dominant power groups designate it to be. Thus, what Gardner attributes solely to the authority of a Cartesian science always reveals the fingerprints of power. What psychologists such as Gardner designate as intelligence and aptitude always holds political and moral significance. Kathleen Nolan illustrates this ideological dynamic clearly in her chapter on linguistic intelligence. While Gardner’s notion of linguistic intelligence at first glance appears to value a more equitable classroom, it tacitly privileges the language of the dominant culture as superior and the language of marginalized groups as inferior. As Nolan puts it:

While Gardner does acknowledge different socially constructed discourses, his assimilationist goals and his emphasis on the cognitive process of language development lead to the evaluation of subordinated discourses within the context of the dominant ideology.

Indeed, what postformalists and any other cognitive theorists designate as intelligence and aptitude produces specific consequences. The important difference between postformalism and Gardner’s psychology involves postformalists’ admission of such ramifications and their subsequent efforts to shape them as democratically, inclusively, and self-consciously as possible. Gardner, concurrently, dismisses the existence of such political and moral consequences and clings to the claim of scientific neutrality.

The editor and authors of Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered take seriously these political and moral consequences of both Gardner’s work and the knowledge produced by his psychological tradition. Indeed—surprising as it may be to some of his devotees—there are aspects of Gardner’s MI theory that are:

- antithetical;
- supportive of an abstract individualism;
- epistemologically naïve;
- subversive of community;
- insensitive to race and socioeconomic class issues;
- patriarchal;
- Western colonialist;
- Eurocentric.

Despite all of these concerns the editor and authors of this book still believe there is value in Gardner’s work. In many of the chapters authors seek the kinetic potential of Gardner’s ideas in the sociopsychological and educational domain. In this context we seek to retain the original democratic optimism of Gardner’s theories, confront him and his many sympathizers with powerful paradigmatic insights refined over the past twenty years, and move the conversation about MI forward with a vision of a complex, rigorous, and transformative pedagogy.

Coming to Terms with Power

In a nation where information produced for schools and media-constructed knowledge for public consumption are misleading, ideologically refracted, edited for right-wing political effect, and often outright lies, the notion of learning to become a scholar takes on profound political meanings—whether we like it or not. Do we merely “adjust” students to the misrepresentations of dominant power or do we help them develop a “power literacy” that moves them to become courageous democratic citizens? In the post-9/11 era, Lynn Cheney’s American Council of Trustees and Alumni report, “Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done about It,” symbolizes our power-knowledge concerns. This so-called Cheney Report lists several examples of unpatriotic actions from higher education.

Educators calling for historical study of what led up to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are labeled anti-American agents. It is apparent from the Cheney Report and many other sources that numerous political leaders in the United States view the notions of rigorous analysis and democratic pedagogy advocated in this book as unsavory activities (see Kincheloe 2003). While the stakes were already high, dominant power wielders have upped the ideological ante in the twenty-first century. In raising these concerns we are not arguing that Gardner has supported this type of ideological management. We are contending that Gardner has fallen prey to false dichotomies in his work, separating the political from the psychological and educational. Indeed, he has been unwilling to address the relationships connecting dominant power, psychological theory, and teaching and learning. In this era of American democracy such political decontextualization can be dangerous. This fragmentation has exerted a profound influence
on the character and value of Gardner’s work. These dynamics are addressed throughout Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered.

The power concerns developed here played little role in Gardner’s educational experiences in developmental psychology and neuropsychology at Harvard:

I was born in Scranton, PA in 1943, the son of refugees from Nazi Germany. I was a studious child who gained much pleasure from playing the piano: music has remained very important throughout my life. All of my post-secondary education has been at Harvard University. I was trained as a developmental psychologist and later as a neuropsychologist. For many years, I conducted two streams of research on cognitive and symbol-using capacities—one with normal and gifted children, the second with adults who suffered a form of brain damage. (Gardner 1999c)

Such an educational and research background protected Gardner from emerging concerns with the relationship between psychological knowledge production and power. In writing about motivation and learning in Frames of Mind, for example, he addresses the development of a general, universal theory of motivation. Such theorizing takes place outside the consideration of motivation’s contextual, cultural, and power-related specificity (Gardner 1983, 286). A student, for example, from a poor home in the southern Appalachian mountains whose parents and extended family possess little formal education will be situated very differently in relation to educational motivation than an upper-middle-class child of parents with advanced degrees. The poor child will find it harder to discern the relationship between educational effort expended and concrete rewards attained than will the upper-middle-class child. Such perceptions will lead to different levels of performance shaped by relationships to dominant power in its everyday, lived-world manifestations. Such motivational and performance levels have little to do with innate intelligence, whether of a linguistic, visual-spatial, or mathematical variety. Gardner has not made these types of discernments in his MI theorizing.

Thus, power theory (see Fiske 1993; Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997) has eluded Gardner. Sociopolitical reflection is not an activity commonly found in the history of developmental psychology and neuropsychology. Indeed, such concerns have been consistently excluded as part of a larger positivistic discomfort with the ethical and ideological. Such political dynamics reveal themselves in Intelligence Reformed, as Gardner (1999b, 218) writes of Western civilization as a story of progress toward both democracy and respect for the individual. Democracy has been achieved in the United States and the civilized West, Gardner assumes, as he cautiously avoids confronting democratic failures in these domains outside the tragedy of the Third Reich. He explores business involvement with education in The Disciplined Mind but expresses little concern with corporate power’s capacity to shape the ideological purposes of schools (Gardner 1999a, 237). And, as Kathy Berry writes in her chapter in this volume, he never considers the effects of these political forces on the very definitions of intelligence employed by psychologists and his own MI theory.

Danny Weil in his chapter confronts Gardner on these absences, marveling at Gardner’s embrace of issues of social justice and democratic citizenship. Though Gardner labels himself an educational progressive, Weil astutely continues, he ignores the powerful dictum of John Dewey—the father of Progressive Education—that such a pedagogy refuses to make schooling a vehicle of conformity and control. In light of Weil’s concerns and the historical democratic pronouncements of the Progressive tradition, Gardner’s description of MI-produced “masters of change” appears thin and impotent. Such an individual “acquires new information, solves problems, forms ‘weak ties’ with mobile and highly dispersed people, and adjusts easily to changing circumstances” (1999b, 2).

Gardner’s masters of change are mere technicians to be fed into the new corporate order of the globalized economy. They are not empowered scholars who understand the larger historical and social forces shaping the macro-structures that interact with the complexities of the quest for democracy and the production of self. There is no mention here, for example, of

- the impact of 500 years of European colonialism;
- the continuing anticolonial movements of the post-1945 world; and
- Western neoliberal/neocorporate efforts to “reclaim” cultural, political, and intellectual supremacy over the past twenty-five years (Gresson 1995 and 2004; Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodríguez & Chennault 1998; Rodríguez & Villaverde 2000)

Such macro-forces exert profound influences on how we view the roles of Western psychology and education or where we stand or are placed in relation to them. MI and its masters of change stand outside history. They are passive observers of the great issues of our time.

Studying Gardner’s work, we perceive no indication that he has ever imagined a critique of his work in light of the issues of power. In Frames of Mind he asserted that he could envisage two types of modifications of MI: he could be convinced to drop one or two of the intelligences, or he could be persuaded to add some new ones (1983, 396). In this power vacuum Gardner is not unlike many other upper-middle-class Americans in that he cannot imagine how dominant-power—inscribed psychologies and educational practices can harm individuals—especially those marginalized in some way by the dynamics of, say, race, class, or gender. As I have spoken about or written elsewhere, growing up in the rural Appalachian mountains of Tennessee, teaching on Native American reservations, and studying schooling in various poor inner-city schools, I am painfully aware of how these practices hurt particular individuals in specific ways. Gardner’s naïve acceptance of the benefits of school for all came across clearly in Frames of Mind:

[T]he overall impact of a schooled society (as against one without formal education) is rarely a matter of dispute. It seems evident to nearly all observers that attendance at school for more than a few years produces an individual—and, eventually a collectivity—who differs in important (if not always easy to articulate) ways from members of a society that lacks formal schooling. (1983, 336)
Gardner would be well served to familiarize himself with literature that documents the way school often serves to convince many individuals from marginalized backgrounds that they are unintelligent and incompetent. The most important curricular lessons many of these students learn is that they are not “academic material.” The individuals we are talking about here are young people who may be profoundly talented but, because of their relationship to the values and symbol systems of schooling, are evaluated as incapable of dealing with the higher cognitive processes of academia. Wasn’t it some of these individuals that MI theory was supposed to help? Weren’t we supposed to see valuable talents in individuals who were overlooked by a monolithic mode of defining intelligence?

**Writing Defensively**

Though he never anticipated the power-related critique of his work, Gardner knew that something about MI was out of sync with many progressive intellectual impulses of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. On one level Gardner recognizes the cultural blinders he wears and is quick to let readers know that he knows. Yet he never addresses the effects of such blinders and their implicit power dynamics in this psychological theorizing. For example, Gardner in *The Disciplined Mind* lays out a universal curriculum—though he equivocates with the ambiguous caveat that such a course of study is “not privileged”—based on the true, the beautiful, and the good. To illustrate “the true” he proposes the curriculum include a study of Darwin’s theory of evolution. For “beauty” he selects Mozart. And for “the good” he chooses the study of the Holocaust. Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong with these choices of topics.

I would hope most students in Western societies knew something about them—especially the horrors and the sociohistorical context of the Holocaust as well as the debate about the lessons learned from the nightmare. But Gardner knows their selection represents a larger tendency throughout his work to ignore, time and again, the study of groups possessing the least status and the most negative dominant cultural representations of their intellectual ability. Outside of an abbreviated reference to African drumming, African Americans and Africans in general and Latinos living in the United States and Latin American peoples in general, are absent in Gardner’s work. In his examples of genius he stays quite close to those who test highly on IQ tests. We find this fidelity to dominant and unrepentant modes of psychometrics disturbing.

Indeed, the disturbance is magnified by Gardner’s awareness of what he is doing. After delineating his curriculum in *The Disciplined Mind*, he writes:

> It is not difficult to anticipate a response to this trio of topics: How can one call this an education for all human beings? It is time-bound (the modern era); it is place-bound (Western Europe and places influenced by it); and it is even linked to the author’s personal concerns. (1999a, 18)

He answers his own question in the next few lines.

Within the West, there are numerous other scientific theories of importance (Newtonian mechanics and plate tectonics, to name just two examples); other singular artistic achievements (the works of Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Shakespeare or George Eliot); other morally tinged historical events (the French and Soviet revolutions; the American struggle over slavery). And within other cultural traditions, there are abundant examples of the true (these would include folk theories about healing or traditional Chinese medicine); the beautiful (Japanese ink and brush painting; African drum music); and good and evil (the precepts of Jainism, the stories of Pol Pot and Mao’s Cultural Revolution; the generosity of the bodhisattvas). (1999a, 19)

A quick examination of this response is in order. In this quotation and throughout Gardner’s work there is no questioning of the supremacy of Western scientific thinking and therefore:

- no need to historically contextualize it;
- no reason to seek the ways it reflects the cultural blinders of the place and time of its development;
- no motive to scrutinize its moral and ethical insensitivity;
- no concern with exploring what many have pointed out as its inherent logical flaws—its “rational irrationality”;
- no justification for studying its linguistic construction;
- no cause to explore the ways it tends to uphold the status quo and the interests of the powerful; and
- no need to analyze its tendency to pathologize the different and the marginalized.

As far as artistic achievements are concerned, aren’t all of the musical forms that are labeled American, such as blues, jazz, gospel, country, rock, pop, and rap (see Yusef Komunyakaa’s chapter for an expansion of these musical concepts), either African American creations or appropriations/direct derivations of African American music, etc. As far as “morally tinged historical events” are concerned, aren’t all historical events inseparable from moral context? For those who would ask if the reference to the “American struggle over slavery” covers the issue of including African Americans in Gardner’s curriculum, many mainstream historical chronicles of this theme omit African American voices. It is often portrayed as a debate among white people about the country’s “race problem.” Toni Morrison writes of this absence of blackness in American writing. Her words resonate in relation to Gardner’s progressive and liberal scholarship:

One likely reason for the paucity of critical material on [blackness in America] is that, in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse. Evasion has fostered another, substitute language in which the issues are encoded, foreclosing open debate. The situation is aggravated by the tremor that breaks into discourse on race. It is further complicated by the fact that the habit of ignoring race is
understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture. To notice is to recognize an already discredited difference. . . . (Morrison 1993, 9-10)

Gardner’s silence and defensiveness about these concerns are well displayed by his dismissal of the benefits of the postmodern paradigm shift in the sciences. Painting with a broad brush, Gardner labels that which passes for postmodernism as relativistic. As Gaile Cannella deftly explores in her chapter in this volume, Gardner confuses postmodernism’s questioning of psychology as final truth with a threatening form of nihilism. Writing defensively, Gardner asserts that “I do not believe in singular or incontrovertible truth, beauty, or morality . . .” (1999a, 23). But throughout his work he undermines such a claim by tacitly assuming that there are “proper” ways of producing truth (the scientific method of Descartes, Newton, and Bacon) and that some cultures have higher claim to truth, beauty, and morality than others (white Europe vis-a-vis Africa and African America). Indeed, where is the role of cultural critique or power analysis in his MI curriculum? We would like to see once the inclusion of a debate within or between particular fields of study.

Gardner teases us with the possibility that critique and “disagreement across cultures and subcultures” might be important (1999a, 35). But he retreats with the conclusion that inculcating the best knowledge of the Western academic disciplines is the correct way to educate our world. Our point here is not to allege that Gardner has no business making judgments about the best ways to produce knowledge or build a curriculum. We all make these assessments—indeed, we need to openly discuss and debate how to make them. Instead, our purpose is to point out that in the name of inclusivity and progressive psychology and education Gardner’s MI theory exhibits disturbing patterns of exclusion that are consistent with more regressive and ethnocentric versions of Western scientific work. We are assessing Gardner by the criteria of the traditions with which he overtly identifies and the groups to which he has appealed.

Between the Rock and the Hard Place

Gardner’s work rests in an awkward locale between paradigms, between an objectivist positivism and an antipositivist understanding of the role of subjectivity in all knowledge production. He consistently promotes the idea that his multiple intelligences are value-free, objective constructs of science but preaches a pedagogy that eschews positivistic demands of a standardized curriculum assessed by the administration of standardized tests. Empirical psychologists, Richard Cary asserts in his chapter, view Gardner’s work as soft science devoid of rigorous quantitative data, while, concurrently, proponents of more modern pedagogies see him too often in collusion with his positivistic colleagues in psychology. From this counter-Cartesian perspective Gardner does not move the study of cognition to an unprecedented domain. He covertly inscribes old ways of knowing with a new veneer of excitement.

MI is a child of a Cartesian psychology that fails to recognize its own genealogy. Gardner uses the intelligences to pass along the proven verities, the perennial truths of Western music, art, history, literature, language, math, and science. The notion of constructing a meta-analysis of the ways cultural familiarity occludes our ability to see the plethora of assumptions driving work in these domains does not trouble Gardner’s psychic equilibrium. If Gardner were interested in performing a cultural meta-analysis of his theories, he would begin to see them as technologies of power that reproduce Western and typically male ways of making meaning. Gardner seems oblivious to the epistemological, cultural, and political coordinates of his work. As Kathy Berry argues in her chapter, he doesn’t sense that the classification systems and cognitive frameworks of MI routinely exclude “the knowledge and values of women, non-white races, non-Christians, and local and premodern ways of knowing.”

In the descriptions of what counts as intelligence and curricular knowledge in Gardner’s eight domains resides a battle over cultural politics. Whose science, literature, music, history, art, etc., gains the imprimatur of the labels classical and canonical? When patterns of racial, cultural, gender, and class exclusion consistently reveal themselves in Gardner’s work, why would nonwhite and non-European individuals and groups not be suspicious of it? Again, Gardner’s reading of expressions of such concerns is naive. In Intelligence Reframed, for example, he states that MI has been disparaged “as racist and elite . . . because it uses the word intelligence and because I, as its original proponent, happen to be affiliated with Harvard University . . .” (1999b, 140). We can assure Gardner that if he were a professor at some small college who developed the “paradigm of multiple talents” and had exerted comparable levels of influence on the fields of psychology and education, we would still criticize his exclusionary scholarship. Gardner the progressive is trapped on a terrain littered with cultural, political and epistemological land mines.

In his contradictory paradigmatic position Gardner operates to normalize/universalize European cultural expressions. Excluded from his intelligences are the practices that most inhabitants of the earth view as wise, insightful, and intelligent. When compared with some of the alienating and environmentally destructive practices produced by the Western sciences, many of these practices should not be dismissed so cavalierly. Gardner might consider these modes of alienation and destruction when arguing for K-12 curricular fidelity to the disciplines and what is excluded by his definitions of the various intelligences. Much work is required by Gardner to acquaint himself with the contradictions that result from this paradigmatic schizophrenia. A rigorous understanding of these issues could lead to a much more coherent, inclusive, and intellectually challenging version of the eight domains.

From our subjective perspective Gardner would be well served by contextualizing, analyzing, and understanding the ways of thinking, knowing, and seeing that produced the disciplines and methods of knowledge production in which he is embedded. Such activities are not the remote, esoteric domains of ivory-tower philosophers. Many individuals in Western societies and around the world have
come to recognize that these understandings affect academic institutions and everyday life, the complex mundane world where people are empowered or beaten down by ways of seeing that are tacitly inscribed by these paradigmatic dynamics. When psychologists and educators don't rigorously understand such processes, they participate in the sorting functions of testing and schooling that too often privilege the privileged and oppress the poor and the "culturally different." Writing about Gardner's cosmos of intelligences in his chapter here, Danny Weil puts it succinctly: "Formal educational psychological theories serve as gatekeepers for the dominant social and economic order and the power relations inherent in it." Peter Appelbaum makes a similar point in his critique of logical-mathematical intelligence, arguing that Gardner's view of mathematics excludes everything but the most Western logic-based dimensions of the discipline. Ways of seeing math and logic that fall outside this narrow conception of logic do not exist in Gardner's mathematics.

The Critical Complex Challenge to Gardner's Psychological Modernism

The critical complex, counter-Cartesian perspective we bring to this analysis of Gardner's MI posits that valuable sociopolitical and pedagogical outcomes can be derived from understanding:

- the etymology of knowledge production;
- the development of a power literacy with its insight into the relation between power and knowledge;
- the social production of self;
- the historical context of the disciplinary processes of psychology;
- cosmological meaning-making;
- ecological sensitivity;
- the value of multiple cultural perspectives, especially the insights derived from cultures traditionally marginalized;
- the effects of European colonialism and the knowledges produced in anticolonial movements; and
- premodern knowledges and values that have been rejected by Western modernism.

Gardner rejects the importance of these understandings. The purpose of elementary and secondary education, he maintains, involves mastering and "appropriately" joining particular disciplines (Gardner 1999a, 219). The adverb appropriately here signifies an absence of critique or analysis of the critical complex points listed above. What is the value of a MI-based education if it doesn't prepare democratic citizens in an era of disinformation to challenge untested assumptions within academic and media-generated knowledges? What does it provide if it doesn't encourage students and teachers to think about the genesis of their belief structures and attitudes toward self, others, and the world? In Gardner's psychological paradigm, such critical educational orientations are unacceptable. Since democracy is already established and power complicity in the production of knowledge is irrelevant in Gardner's cosmos, these modes of thinking are "inappropriate."

Gardner accepts the interpretative strategies of psychological science although, as Richard Cary observes in his chapter here, Gardner avoids strict modes of controlled observation. He can't seem to admit that he is involved in an interpretive theory-making activity rather than empirical research. In this same context Marla Morris asserts in her chapter that, epistemologically speaking, Gardner's MI is a realist theory which claims it is providing an accurate description of correspondence between the intelligences and their theoretical description. A realist correspondence theory that is scientifically produced denies that it is inscribed by the researcher's own sociopolitical location in the web of reality. In Gardner's conception the eight intelligences are universal (the same qualities are possessed by individuals from all over the world) and objective (no values are involved in generating them). Gardner's intelligences are consistent, intractable entities that have always existed, exist now, and will always exist in their present form.

Thus, in a bizarre way, Gardner in the name of innovation and reform reinforces mainsteam rationalities and Eurocentric ways of thinking. From our critical complex orientation we want to push the boundaries of Cartesian rationality, to discover and create new ways of making meaning, new modes of intelligence that can help change ourselves and the world in a just, egalitarian, and smart manner. While by no means advocating the abandonment of rationality—that would be silly—we are calling for a reassessment of what has passed as reason in traditional Western scientific and psychological scholarship. We are not satisfied that this is the ultimate expression of human genius. We believe there is an irrationality, a madness, operating in particular dimensions of mainstream psychology's view of intelligence and reason. Indeed, a key feature of producing reason and intelligence involves excluding those others who are "unreasonable" and "unintelligent." As we have examined these individuals throughout the history of psychology, they consistently seem to be those people who, in terms of culture, race, sexual orientation, gender, or economic status, are different from the psychologists creating the classification system. Gardner has yet to deal with these concerns.

Popularity and Inadequacy

It is not unusual to hear Gardner referred to as an academic superstar and a genius while seeing MI theory labeled as a rallying cry for school reform and a concept so popular that it is now a cultural commonplace, "Howard is the guru and Frames of Mind is the bible" (Traub 1998), a critic of progressive education recently proclaimed. MI pulls everything together in education, educators often exclaim. Educational leaders are often heard to say that MI democratically cultivates diverse human gifts. We cannot help but find it fascinating that in light of such adoration,
Gardner has rarely had to justify his views of mind and society, the nature of the individual, and the process of identity formation. A broader theoretical view would seem to be demanded from such an important intellectual figure. As I explore in my chapter on personal intelligence, Gardner’s notion of the self in this context is underanalyzed and problematic.

Outside of addressing the psychometric monolithic definition of intelligence, Gardner is reluctant to ask questions about the basic assumptions of the Cartesian-Newtonian scientific tradition and its use within the psychological and educational sciences. The critique of Gardner’s work in MI provides a classic case study involving the use of social theory and the paradigmatic consciousness developed over the past few decades to expose where more traditional modes of knowledge production are lacking in the psychological, social, and educational sciences. In our critical complex analytical context we understand that Gardner’s, our own, and all intellectual work is embedded in and inseparable from larger webs of meaning. Particular cultural, linguistic, and ideological conventions shape the way we tell our stories, in this case, about intelligence (Gergen 1997; Kincheloe & Weil 2001). We can be more aware or less aware of these important dimensions that shape our view of the world and our action within it. Gardner chooses to be less aware.

At one point Gardner admits that the Cartesian view of mind is rationalistic and conceived outside of historical context. His strategy, however, is not to examine the process of knowledge production used in psychology but to retreat to a facile Darwinian position, arguing that mind and intelligence have “evolved” and must be understood in the context of their evolution. Thus, the question of the historical social construction of both the concept of intelligence and the emergence of psychology is avoided (Gardner 1983; Traub 1998). On numerous occasions Gardner moves into a conceptual zone where the questions we raise here about knowledge production in psychology haunt those who enter. But Gardner eludes the inquiring specters, focusing his attention on whether or not the mind is a single coherent domain (Sempey 1993). Such an issue exists in a cosmos separate from concerns with the intricacies of social construction and the assumptions of Eurocentric psychology.

Culture, Values, and Subjectivity: Gardner’s “Neutral” Scholarship

Gardner never gets to the formulation of the relationship between mind and culture, with all of the complex interactions of power, values, moral issues, emotions, and social structures involved. He never addresses his attention to the ways culture facilitates or subverts the power of mind to realize its potential. He makes references to the social placement of mind and self but doesn’t possess the historical or philosophical background to imagine what such a process might involve (Gardner 1999b, 158). For example, when discussing innovative methods of evaluating intelligence in Intelligence Reformed, Gardner asks:

Why settle for an IQ test or an SAT, on which the items are at best remote “proxies” for the ability to design experiments, write essays, critique musical performances, or resolve a dispute? Why not instead ask people to do the things—either in person or on-line? As long as we do not open the Pandora’s box of values and subjectivity, we can continue to use established insights and technologies judiciously. (1999b, 209)

Of course, it is these values and subjectivities that rest at the very heart of the relationship between mind and culture. Such pronouncements indicate that Gardner does not exactly know what we are referencing when we raise issues of the social construction of cultural context in which definitions of mind and intelligence are formulated.

Obviously, we profoundly differ with Gardner around the perception of the meaning of the relationship between mind and culture. Though we all claim the label “progressive,” we differ on questions regarding the purpose of our psychological/educational scholarship, the values we embrace in the process, and our political relationship with dominant power. As we observe the implementation of educational policies that are based on a grotesquely simplistic definition of “good scholarship” (the top-down–standards movement shaping American education in the first decade of the twenty-first century, for example) and a disregard of the well-being of numerous marginalized students, we are distressed. Indeed, in this context we are taken aback by Gardner’s avoidance of the Pandora’s box of values and subjectivity. Gardner’s refusal to connect his work on MI to the political and educational attack on the victims of poverty and racial/ethnic prejudice manifests a specific value position. He cannot claim neutrality in this cultural context.

As we read Gardner’s repeated references to this type of value neutrality, we marvel at the value assumptions he makes throughout his work. His assumption that American democracy is a completed project, chugging along successfully in the twenty-first century is a profoundly value-laden ideological statement issued from a position of privilege. In the same vein his equation of multiculturalism and multicultural curricula with low standards and scholarly inaccuracy is semiotically disturbing and racially problematic:

I call for educators “to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.” I also want students to have information that is as accurate as possible. So long as these two criteria are met, I believe that multicultural curricula and approaches are beneficent. When, however, multiculturalists abandon high standards in their selection of work, or favor inferior work just because of its appealing provenance, I part company with them. (1994, p.58)

Why would Gardner want to raise issues of accuracy and standards in the context of multiculturalism? Like a lawyer who brings up inadmissible evidence in a parenthetical comment to the jury, Gardner plants the implication that multiculturalism is characterized by nonwhite advocates possessing low cognitive abilities and a disregard for curricular accuracy.

Gardner continues:
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By the same token, I have no sympathy for those who choose to rewrite history, so that credit for discoveries is given, without convincing evidence, to individuals or groups that happen to have a certain accent, cultural background, or political attitude. (1999a, p.38)

The coding here is clearly racial, particularly African American, as Gardner makes oblique reference to the dominant culture's hysteria concerning black historical scholarship attempting to correct centuries of Eurocentric research placing Africans and African Americans in an inferior position as mysterious inhabitants of the "dark continent.”

Again, Gardner inscribes his “value neutrality” in relation to the multiculturalists, never contextualizing the historical distortion that motivates their corrective actions:

Let me phrase my point positively. I want all students to develop a sense of high standards; I want all students to strive for accuracy and to use evidence properly; I want all students to respect a range of groups and cultures, but not to do so uncritically.

It is possible to have a precollegiate education that is multicultural and that meets these criteria, though that is not a necessary outcome of multicultural education. It is not possible to have a postmodern curriculum that meets these criteria—indeed, the criteria have no legitimacy in the eyes of postmodernists. (1999a, 38)

Historical distortion and low scholarly standards are the province of the multiculturalists—not the generations of Europeans who erased nonwhite peoples from the story of humanity. Bad scholarship and historical distortion can be found in all ideological schools of thought. In light of the revelations in 2002 about the poor scholarship and plagiarism of mainstream celebrity-historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Stephen Ambrose, this point is made even clearer. And, in addition, to claim that postmodern scholars do not strive for high scholarly standards, accuracy, and proper use of evidence is a biased and narrow charge. Just because such scholars have raised questions about the complexity of tacit value inscriptions and neutrality claims of various definitions of standards, accuracy, and proper use of evidence does not mean that such scholarship should be summarily labeled poor.

We argue that scholarship that raises such questions and adeptly answers them with carefully compiled evidence is a prime manifestation of good scholarship with profound social value. Indeed, the analysis we are engaged in here could be labeled a form of postmodern expose. Everyone involved in this book strives to be accurate, maintain high scholarly standards, and use evidence in a fair manner. Our claim is that such pursuits may not be as transparent as scholars such as Gardner might assert. For example, is one conducting high-quality and accurate scholarship and making proper use of evidence when one has already judged and excluded the accomplishments of individuals from particular racial and cultural traditions? The editor and authors of this volume assert that the answer to this question is no. Claims of value neutrality are dangerous and frequently come back to bite the claimant.

Gardner and the Problem of Cultural and Socioeconomic Class Specificity

Gardner’s work is beset by the same flaw that undermines so many other psychologists operating within the parameters of the modernist, Eurocentric, socioeconomic class-inscribed paradigm: the failure to recognize that what is represented as universal features of mind is shaped by cultural and class factors. Thus, a degree of complexity is added to the study of mind that Gardner ostensibly recognizes but fails to act upon in his delineation of the eight intelligences. Jay Lemke in his chapter expands this concept:

I do doubt that we can endlessly reduce the domains of intelligent human behavior to a small number, and I mainly fear that every attempt to do so that claims the universal validity of objective science may in time become part of political projects to unjustly advance the values and interests of some social and cultural groups in the world at the expense of others.

Donald Blumenthal-Jones in his chapter on bodily-kinesthetic intelligence extends Lemke’s point as he discusses the possible inclusion of the intelligence of car mechanics. Given the socioeconomic position of car mechanics vis-à-vis dancers, actors, and athletes, Blumenthal-Jones questions why their intelligence is not addressed by Gardner:

We must seriously examine Gardner’s selection of “geniuses” and note that he has privileged certain kinds of physical behavior and ignored others. Highly skilled car mechanics do not make the list of special-abilities people. Why is this? It is not disingenuous to note that Gardner’s list of intelligences and his lists of exemplars within intelligences are replete with high-cultural icons. This makes the genius criteria automatically suspect since he does not create these lists from a broad spectrum of cultural possibilities but, rather, echoes the prejudices of the culture.

Lemke is right on target in his assertion about the use of such scientific universalizations, and Blumenthal-Jones is insightful with his example of the inseparability of Gardner’s universal intelligence with cultural status. We maintain that Gardner’s implicit privileging of dominant European over African frames of mind and high-socioeconomic-status over low-socioeconomic-status occupations are prime examples of this value-laden, pseudo-objective, elitist dynamic at work. Such cultural and class insensitivity places Gardner’s theorizing on the same paradigmatic plane with the decontextualized psychometric g-theory he ostensibly wants to subvert.

Cultural and socioeconomic class contexts and the complications of human consciousness are abandoned in this mode of positivist scientific scholarship. The psyche is studied in the same manner as physical reality—of course, the complexity of the psyche’s cultural/class embeddedness and the consequences of consciousness as the human capacity for self-direction are dismissed. Humans cannot be
reduced to the ontological status of igneous rocks or sulfuric acid. Another angle on this process that demands understanding in psychological scholarship involves the tendency of modernist Eurocentric epistemology to exclude the culturally constructed mind's role in shaping what psychologists observe the mind to be. Such procedures have allowed scientists of all stripes to assume that their mental pictures of the world were accurate, objective reflections of reality. In the case of his view of the mind, Gardner travels this epistemological path, maintaining throughout his journey that his picture of the mind with its eight intelligences is an accurate, objective, culturally and socioeconomically neutral reflection of psychic reality.

Here Gardner falls into the epistemological trap of the Cartesian notion of the abstract individual—"abstracted" from the cultural/class context that helped produce him or her. Intelligences are contained within this abstract individual's head—not a product of larger cultural and social processes on any level. Taking our cue from the enactivist cognitive science of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana—the Santiago School—we maintain that cognition and learning cannot be appreciated outside of the context of coemergence. Coemergence involves the idea that individual intelligence and collective intelligence arise together, one being impossible without the other. Enactivists are dedicated to the analysis of context and the numerous, interrelated, and complex ways individuals are produced while at the same time they produce their sociocultural and historical surroundings (Maturana & Varela 1987; Sunara & Davis 1997; Fenwick 2000). Indeed, individuals do not spontaneously spring into being, as in the old theory of spontaneous generation with its maggots automatically emerging from rotten meat. Cultural context and the social interactions taking place within it produce individuals in a manner that transcends the governance of any one person.

Thus, the specificity of culture and socioeconomic class shapes the biological structures of individual minds. This dynamic exerts not only a dramatic influence on the attempt to make universal generalizations about the mind but also on how we see the world in general and the mind in particular. Seeing himself as an autonomous individual, Gardner claims that he has eliminated his own cultural and historical subjectivity from his theory of MI. Thus, what he purports to present is a transcultural, transhistorical view devoid of the biases of his time or place. In a world that is changing dramatically, there are ever-increasing global challenges to European Cartesianism and its epistemological colonialism and socioeconomic disparity. Because of the consciousness these challenges construct, we believe that Gardner's social and cultural blinders will become increasingly apparent to observers. Such awareness will cause his work to be viewed more and more as a form of Eurocentric elitist psychological parochialism in the years to come. The weight of global history is working against MI theory.

**The Vision Quest: Cosmological and Epistemological Alienation**

Gardner's decontextualization of his psychological theory is so profound that it undermines a vision of human possibility. In this context, Gardner's theory is cosmologically, epistemologically, and ontologically alienated, producing cognitive and educational constructs that offer little hope for those interested in producing a better future for human beings. In his cosmological alienation, Gardner provides—despite his naturalistic intelligence—little insight into ways of addressing the ecological transformation of the earth with its destruction of life systems and its challenge to the continuation of human existence. In the same alienated mode, Gardner's work is punctuated by an epistemological lack of consciousness that consistently moves him to substitute claims of scientific evidence for what in actuality is logical reasoning. Gardner's assumptions about MI are not tested empirically against fact; paradigmatic consensus shapes what will be viewed as evidence and what will be dismissed. Thus, manifestations of intelligence recognized by Eurocentric psychology count; those not recognized do not. Biological context is taken into consideration; social, cultural, political, and economic contexts are not. These hidden forces working to shape MI theory must be exposed.

Richard Cary is especially helpful in our understanding of this epistemological alienation. Analyzing Gardner's use of biological evidence to "prove" the validity of visual-spatial intelligence, Cary questions what such data have to do with supporting Gardner's "vision" of such intelligence:

Gardner reviews scientific research that has established the location of visual-spatial intelligence and that it operates as a biological process. So what? This information contributes little to our understanding of how a visual-spatial intelligence operates in the culture and why we should value it in our daily experience.

Thus, in the name of proving to the guardians of the discipline of psychology his fidelity to data produced via positivist epistemology, Gardner references information that has little to do with his purpose: delineating the nature and use of the multiple intelligences. As Cary concludes, he hides the hermeneutic nature of the epistemology he employs. In this context we return to Gardner's epistemology of naïve realism, deployed in this case to hide his actual epistemological approach. In a further attempt to conceal his epistemological alienation, Gardner uses postmodernism as a straw man. Distorting the position, Gardner piously argues that despite the postmodern insistence that there are no standards for producing or judging knowledge, there must be standards for scientific work. In this context Gardner fails to understand that the epistemological fragmentation of the traditional psychological paradigm undermines the quest for a deeper understanding of the complexity of interrelatedness. Such an understanding would profoundly contribute to Gardner's appreciation of the multiple forces that are operating to construct society's—and thus his—own views of intelligence. In this context he would be far better equipped to provide a socially helpful and much richer description of intelligence as a multidimensional concept. This is the nature of scholarly standards and the quality of knowledge production could be profoundly improved. Indeed, this is the case.
them. These individuals stand alone as things-in-themselves abstracted from their multiple relationships with the structural forces of the lived world. Gardner fails to confront and grapple with the complexity of these all-important relationships. Indeed, these social, cultural, philosophical, ideological, economic, linguistic, and historical relationships shape minds, their abilities, the recognition and validation of their abilities, and research on their abilities. Stated bluntly, the exclusion of these dynamics is a manifestation of epistemological reductionism, of low standards of psychological scholarship. As a manifestation of epistemological alienation, an entire range of concepts, knowledge traditions, and lexicons is removed from Gardner’s scholarship. Especially in light of his claim that postmodernism has “no standards,” we are not impressed with Gardner’s version of rigorous scholarship.

Ontological Alienation: “Don’t Need Nothin’ from Nobody”

One aspect of our excitement about MI in 1983 involved our belief that it could help provide cognitive insight into what human beings could become. In our social imagination we could transcend the Enlightenment category of abstract individualism and move toward a more textured concept of the relational individual. While abstract individualism, a self-sufficient ontology, seems almost natural in the Western modernist world, such is not the case in many non-Western cultures and has not been the case even in Western societies in previous historical eras. In ancient Greece, for example, it is hard to find language that identified “the self” or “I”—such descriptions were not commonly used because the individual was viewed as a part of a collective who could not function independently of the larger social group (Allen 2000). In the “common sense” of contemporary Western society and the unexamined ontological assumptions of Gardner’s psychology, this way of seeing self is hard to fathom.

Enlightenment ontology sees the natural state of the individual as solitary. The social order in this modernist Eurocentric context is grounded on a set of contractual transactions between isolated individual atoms. In other works I have referred to Clint Eastwood’s “man with no name” cinematic character who didn’t need “nothin’ from nobody” as the ideal Western male way of being—the ontological norm (Kincheloe 1993). Operating in this context, Gardner’s intelligences reflect cognitive psychology’s tradition of focusing on the autonomous development of the individual monad. In our critical complex ontology, a human being simply can’t exist outside the insulation of community with its processes of relationship, differentiation, interaction, and subjectivity. Indeed, in this critical complex ontology the relational embeddedness of self is so context dependent that psychologists can never isolate a finalized completed “true self.” Since the self is always in context and in process, no final delineation of ability can be determined—whether it is IQ or assessment of MI.

One can quickly discern the political consequences of such an Enlightenment, Cartesian ontology. Human beings in Western liberal political thought become abstract bearers of particular civic rights. If individuals are relational, context-embedded beings, however, these abstract rights may be of little consequence. A critical complex ontology insists that individuals live in specific places with particular types of relationships. They operate or are placed in the web of reality at various points of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, geography, and other continuums. Where individuals find themselves in this complex web holds dramatic power consequences. Their location shapes their relationship to dominant culture and the cognitive psychology that accompanies it. In other words the intelligence—whether described as “g”—musical, bodily-kinesthetic, or linguistic—psychology deems them to possess profoundly depends on this contextual, power-inscribed placement. A prime manifestation of Gardner’s ontological alienation involves his lack of recognition of the dramatic effect of these dynamics on the very topics he has written about over the previous two decades.

Gardner’s stable, autonomous self that either has or does not have particular forms of intelligence is becoming a psychological anachronism. While in no way dismissing the power of human beings to affect their own destinies, to possess human agency, or to change social conditions, we argue that one’s ontological condition must be re-examined in light of the sociological, cultural-studies, cultural-psychological, and critical-analytical work of the past few decades. Much of what Gardner and his fellow psychologists consider to be free will and expressions of innate intelligence are manifestations of the effects of particular social, cultural, political, linguistic, ideological, and economic forces. While we can make decisions on how we operate as human beings, we are never completely independent of these structuring forces, whether we are Howard Gardner or Michel Foucault. It is important to note here that Gardner claims that his development of MI took place outside of these dynamics. He claims that his work avoids cultural values and morally inscribed issues, and because of such diligence, he has presented us with the truth. We believe that in this ontological context, Gardner must take a closer look at who he is and the structuring forces that have shaped his view of the world, the mind, and the self.

Gardner, MI, and the Purposes of Education

In an article in Phi Delta Kappan in the mid-1990s, Gardner wrote about his dedication to one of our most important concerns—stimulating a conversation about the purposes of education and schooling. In this piece he emphasized the importance of this consideration in his work with MI and of his belief that MI has stimulated these types of inquiries. Such focus on the purpose of education, he contended, will move schools to teach for understanding rather than the rote mastery of test-based isolated data—a concern we share with Gardner. Intoxicated with the popularity of MI among so many educators, Gardner boasted that MI concerns with understanding, educational purpose, and pedagogical personalization were creating a revolution in schooling around the world (Gardner 1995;
Barr & Tagg 1993; Cantu 1999). Answering a right-wing critic of The Disciplined Mind, Gardner reiterated his commitment to the analysis of educational purpose, writing that insufficient conversation about American education “has focused on why we should educate students at all” (Gardner 1999c). What is difficult for us to understand is that after all this expression of concern, Gardner studiously avoids any discussion of the social, cultural, political, ideological, and economic purposes of schooling in a democratic society.

This issue is profoundly important in understanding what is missing in Gardner’s psychoeducational analysis. When examining his construction of the purpose of schooling, the abstract individual again rears her socially decontextualized head. The purpose of education he offers involves individuals achieving their potentials. While readers may find something wrong with this particular goal, it is what Gardner omits in this discussion that is so troubling. When we understand the self as contextually embedded and relational, we begin to discern the multitude of forces that impede particular individuals from attaining their potential—whatever exactly this means. A student’s socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic background must be addressed even to reach the starting line of this process. If it is not, then she cannot be blamed for not having the mental ability—the potential—to learn what is taught.

Just as important, our emphasis on educational purpose, while certainly concerned with individual development and the contextual factors shaping that process, also addresses larger civic, democratic, ecological, justice-related, and power-based issues. Gardner fails to question the ways schools are used to “regulate” students for the political needs of business and government. From the school crusades of the mid-nineteenth century to the present, power wielders have attempted to use schools to domesticate students in order to perpetuate the status quo. Such social regulation is a central feature of the twenty-first-century—standards movement that Gardner so vehemently opposes—but for reasons other than this political one. As Danny Well argues in his chapter, Gardner simply ignores the existence of racism, class bias, sexism, and homophobia, and their relationship to both individual achievement in school and the social purposes of American education in general. Gardner seems unconcerned with the ways these forces shape the field of psychology or the ways they structure what goes on in classrooms across the country.

In relation to this question of educational purpose Gardner seems callous to the construction of the curriculum and its discursive, ideological, and disciplinary dimensions. The concept of problematizing what we learn, asking where it comes from, why we learn A but not B, is irrelevant in Gardner’s world. He displays disconcerting confidence in what has been established as the true, the beautiful, and the good in dominant Western culture, operating as if the concepts have not been saturated by the power relations of ethnocentric, patriarchal, and class-élitist ways of seeing. Does he not understand that the anger various groups around the world and within this society direct at high-status educators of his stripe emerges precisely from these types of assumptions and exclusions? After carefully studying his pronouncements on the purpose of MI-grounded schooling, we conclude that Gardner wants to educate obedient subjects for the American global empire.

In this context Gardner couches his speculations on educational purposes within his fidelity to the traditional academic disciplines. In his response to Mary Eberstade’s conservative critique of The Disciplined Mind, Gardner writes: “Formal schooling has several purposes; of course, but I believe its most fundamental purpose should be the inculcation of the major ways of thinking that have been crystallized in the disciplines” (1999c).

Gardner makes this disciplinary argument in an era when the sanctity of disciplinarity has been successfully called into question. In my recent work on bricolage (Kinchloe 2001b), I have referred to the ruins of disciplinarity and the need to move to a more rigorous and challenging form of scholarship. Once the understanding of the limits of “objective science” and its “universal knowledge” escaped from the genie’s bottle, there was no return to the confines of modernist scholarship. Gardner is part of a larger attempt of many politicos and scholars to recover what they perceived to “be lost” in the imposition of the disciplines, namely:

- the value-laden products that operate under the flag of objectivity;
- the avoidance of contextual specificities that subvert the stability of its structures; and
- the fragmenting impulse that moves the disciplines to fold their methodologies and the knowledge they produce neatly into disciplinary drawers.

My argument here is that progressive scholars must operate in the ruins of the disciplinary temple, in post-apocalyptic social, cultural, psychological, and educational sciences in which certainty and stability have departed for parts unknown.

Gardner accepts the way complex knowledges are compartmentalized in the traditional disciplines, creating in the process a sense that truth exists in disciplinary canons. This subdivision fragments important topics, such as intelligence, rendering it the exclusive domain of psychology—not sociology, cultural studies, history, linguistics, literary studies, philosophy, anthropology, education, and psychoanalysis, to name a few disciplines. Indeed, Gardner’s acceptance of disciplinary ways of thinking, researching, and validating knowledge is unshakable. He unequivocally accepts school curricula teaching such knowledge and standardized tests measuring how well students have memorized it. In Intelligence Reframed Gardner reports research results illustrating standardized test score improvement in MI schools. Such educational improvement, Gardner argues, is beyond dispute because it is “based on empirical data, which an impartial party cannot dismiss” (1999b, 13). Gardner simply cannot imagine critique by observers who question the value of schools teaching the unassailable empirical truths of disciplines to uncritical, passive students.
Conclusion: A Debate Outside of History

Too often, Gardner's discussion of educational purpose degenerates into a discussion of what methods we should employ and what knowledge we should transmit. Even when he asks the question "what should be taught and why?", his answers are weak and socially, historically, and linguistically decontextualized:

It is helpful to lay one's curricular cards on the table. Here are my cards. Education in our time should provide the basis for enhanced understanding of our several worlds— the physical world, the biological world, the world of human beings, the world of human artifacts, and the world of self. (1995b, 156)

Gardner operates as if he never registered for an introductory course in the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education. Historically, how have schools been used? Do schools exist to reproduce or challenge a society? What philosophical assumptions are operating in the development of particular curricular and instructional practices? Should schools teach traditional European values or expose students to a range of cultural values from around the planet? What is the relationship between schools and the economic structures of the society? In what ways are schools implicated in political struggles? Is education in a democratic society different from education in a totalitarian society? Is social regulation a proper role of democratic schooling? None of these are questions that Gardner asks.

By not asking these questions, by not exploring the ways power shapes educational purpose and the knowledges validated by dominant culture, Gardner omits a huge piece of the psychocultural puzzle. Without this piece, students are left vulnerable to the sociopolitical and cultural forces that produce disinformation in the contemporary informational landscape. In this ideological vacuum Americans in general are undermined in the effort to situate themselves in various sociopolitical, cultural, philosophical, and economic domains. In many cultures education has focused its purpose on the effort to establish oneself in the world (O'Sullivan, 1999). This is certainly not the intent of Gardner's education or a factor in shaping MI theory. Gardner's vision is truncated; his sense of the sociohistorical is naïve. Without substantial rethinking and reconstitution, MI theory and the schooling it informs have reached a conceptual dead end.

References

PART II
THE EIGHT INTELLIGENCES

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