

LIS 523 User Education  
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## Reflection paper: Multiple intelligences

Before I read the required encyclopedia materials for this week I had no prior knowledge of the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. I was aware, however of the Stanford-Binet intelligence scale (and tests). I find this fact very peculiar, considering that the Stanford-Binet test was created in 1916 (The Binet-Simon original test was created earlier in 1905) and Gardner's theory was published in 1983, the second one being much closer to my time.

The more I read about the Multiple Intelligences theory (MI), the more I was fascinated with it. I began researching the theory, finding readings on my own and while I was doing that I stumbled upon a chat session with Gardner on the subject of MI. I don't remember in my studies ever reading a theory, where also a chat session with the author discussing that theory was available. That was extremely valuable to me because it provided the personal, conversational reflections of the professor on the theory expressed in real time. Usually all the information available on a given theory is the scholarly information (books, articles, literature reviews etc.) on the subject. It was a very refreshing experience.

After reviewing all of the readings that were available to me, I feel confident discussing the MI theory and I believe that before I make a parallel with my personal experience, as well as Char Booth's textbook ("Reflective teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Educators") I have to explain the MI theory the way I understand it.

In short, the MI theory suggests that all humans possess eight intelligences (in contradiction to the traditional theory, where it is accepted that there is only one intelligence). These eight intelligences exist as a unique combination in each and every one of us, something I would like to call an intelligence "mindprint". Gardner regards these intelligences not as skills, but as "biological potentials which are realized to a greater or lesser extent depending upon opportunities and motivation". (Gardner, chat session, 2004)

Even more fascinating is the fact that the development of this theory is not complete, as Gardner himself confides. It is a theory based on research, analysis, revision and consideration of ever changing circumstances. Gardner even proposes the fact that there might be more than eight intelligences, an issue addressed in all these encyclopedia readings; however, he did not officially include more than eight intelligences in his official theory (this question has been explored by other scientists).

The intelligences Gardner identifies are Logical-Mathematical, Spatial, Linguistic, Bodily – Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalistic.

Why do I find Gardner's theory so fascinating?  
When I was ten years old a friend of mine and I volunteered to be "guinea pigs", allowing the school psychologist to test our intelligence with all testing tools available at her disposal. I believe she was doing research on intelligence, and although I do not recall what tests exactly I participated in, I remember there were a lot of them. I spent hours with the school psychologist

and I fondly remember the conversations we had discussing the results when I finished each test. If I remember correctly the whole testing process was spread in one semester and I was excused of gym classes for this purpose (I have to admit I did not mind at all at the time).

I decided to participate in this “experiment” because I was mesmerized by the fact that intelligence can be measured. I was often thinking about this later in life, how that experience affected me, if it helped me or if it impeded me in any way. Now, reading about Gardner’s theory all of these questions came back to me. To me personally, each person possessing different intelligent “mindprint” makes much more sense than “one size fits all” intelligence. I think MI much more accurately measures a person’s intellectual potential, than the traditional intelligence theory. I especially appreciate the fact that Gardner suggests that intelligences can be improved throughout human life (something the traditional theory frowns upon). Of course it will be a choice on expanding knowledge in areas (intelligences) where the person has a natural potential or improving on ones that the same person is experiencing deficiency in.

That got me thinking, what is the goal of instruction then- to build upon strengths or weaknesses? It is quite simple- we do not have to make that choice at all. Booth has the answer in his Instructional Design chapter, and especially the part on ADDIE design cycle. We are all different, we all have a different intelligence “mindprint”; therefore, in order for an instructor to be successful, he/she has to create instructional design based upon ADDIE:

*Analyze-* Understanding the core needs and **characteristic of the product’s users;**

*Design-* Create a strategy that addresses **the needs and characteristics of these users;**

*Develop-* Construct and **revise the product;**

*Implement-* Deliver the product to its **intended audience;**

*Evaluate-* **Assess** the impact and effectiveness of the product.” (Booth, 2011, p. 85)

I think Instructional Design (ID) and MI walk hand in hand. An instructor cannot, in my opinion, understand and address his audience’s needs unless he/she realizes that each and every person in that audience possesses a different intelligence “mindprint”. Therefore it is the instructor’s job to make sure all intelligences are equally addressed in the instruction that will make the instructional design beneficial for the audience regardless their intelligence “mindprint”.

I have to admit though that initially I was a little put off by Gardner’s statements that he is not particularly fond of instruction in specialized schools ( like art schools, music schools etc.). As being the “product” of one such school (art high school, for a period of time) I felt a little disappointed by his remarks. However, after reading more on the subject and relating to my personal experiences, I think I understand his position and here is why.

I believe that such a school would choose building upon strengths, not upon weaknesses; therefore it is understandable that it will have its own consequences. I these consequences in people that I know, who graduated from the art high school that I attended (I had to relocate; therefore I did not finish my education in that institution). Although these people’s strongest intelligences are obviously levels upon what they could have been had they not attended that school, their weaknesses unfortunately show even more. For an extremely gifted person

attending such a school would be an enormous jumpstart and I actually have seen this happen. However, to the rest of the people it could be a huge disadvantage.

Some of the people I know who graduated from art high school discovered they are actually not that attracted to the professions available to them after graduation( different reasons, lost interest, skills and abilities limitations etc.). However, it was too late to change their mind. The curriculum they used was highly focused on the intelligences connected to art and the transition to something else later in life put these people behind their peers that attended a traditional school. So, yes, I understand Gardner's position and I can even make a parallel with my own family.

I asked my family to take the assessment test (I did it myself as well) and I compared the results afterwards. First and foremost, I was blown away how accurate the descriptions of the different people in my family were. It was invaluable to compare between myself, my husband and my son (my daughter is too young for the results to be accurate) and understand why we have such different styles of learning for example. My husband has a highly analytical thinking and mathematical approach to solving problems and his top intelligence is Logic/Math Intelligence. We all participate in some type of martial arts, but my son is the only person in our family that excels at it, so it was no surprise that his top intelligence is Bodily-Kinesthetic. I am the only person from the whole family that had a perfect 5 score in any intelligence, as my top intelligence was Spatial, followed closely by Social Intelligence with 4.57 and Musical Intelligence with 4.43. Reading the description the intelligences that I received top scores in, I think they could not have described me better. The visual thinking, the drawing, creativeness, the ideas and learning from people, all of it is completely true regarding my abilities. In other words I agree with Gardner and developing all intelligences at the same time, because I personally have seen the difference between focusing on a single intelligence and the benefit of focusing on all of them at the same time. Would I have developed my spatial intelligence if I had continued in the art school with its highly spatial oriented curriculum- most likely, but would that have been in my benefit? I sincerely believe that it would not have been and I can prove it.

When I was younger due to relocating I have changed 7 different schools before graduating from high school. I had to take tests, prove myself, establish in a new and (most often) unfriendly environment, excel in my learning, and succeed in improving my abilities. That made me highly flexible, adaptable, creative, fast-thinking, strong, facing challenges face on. These abilities served me immensely throughout my life. I am great at establishing myself in a new environment, very effective working under stress and very persistent in my endeavors. Tests? Job interviews? Bring them on! In comparison, a friend of mine was in the same school for the first 12 years of her education ( in Bulgaria there are schools that begin in K and continue until 12 grade in High school, it is a personal choice to attend such a school), graduated with 4.0 GPA, failed miserably her college admission exams for the next 5 years after graduation ( eventually she got accepted). Why? She was a very intelligent person; however, her inexperience in any other educational environment became a crutch. That particular school's curriculum was entirely focused on Math/Logic intelligence and Linguistic intelligence and that was, and still is a major problem for the adaptability of the students graduating from it.

In conclusion, Multiple Intelligences is a fascinating theory that I truly believe in, have seen the benefits of, and I am planning to continue using (I have used it without realizing before)

to help my own children grow and live up to their full potential. I appreciate Gardner's theory for one more reason as well- I wholeheartedly believe that people can improve on their intelligence(s), something that is rejected as idea by the traditional intelligence theory.

### **Resources:**

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