This Week’s Citation Classic


This book succeeded in finding creativity tests which were strongly correlated with one another and virtually uncorrelated with standard measures of intelligence. These results gave empirical support to the belief that creativity is a human characteristic quite different from intelligence. The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index™ (SSCI™) indicate that this book has been cited over 345 times since 1965.

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"The limitations of conventional intelligence tests have long been suspected, but attempts to demonstrate those limitations empirically have not been easy to come by. The major appeal of this book has been that it succeeded in such an attempt. It argued that previous work had failed to provide convincing evidence because too wide a range of different functions had been included under 'creativity,' at least some of which overlap with intelligence. Also, the purported measures of creativity had been administered under test-like conditions, whereas exercise of creativity calls for more relaxed, game-like circumstances. The book showed: (1) Tasks could be defined which, on their face, looked relevant to creativity—tasks concerning the readiness of a person's flow of ideas and the uniqueness of the ideas produced. (2) These tasks could be administered under relaxed, game-like conditions. The book showed that, contrary to what we first thought, ideational fluency tests may do a little better than intelligence tests at such predictions, but, in fact, do not predict well enough to serve as useful proxies for the real-world achievements themselves. Tests of ideational fluency are subject to many sources of variance besides what they may have in common with the display of real-life creativity, for example, a tendency to please a test administrator by trying harder to come up with more ideas. What best predicts creative achievements in the world is earlier achievements of similar kinds. Intelligence tests do have striking limitations, therefore, but to find out more about creativity we seem best advised to study real-life accomplishments themselves and the conditions that bring them about."


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