

individual to be considered unqualifiedly smart or dumb, so, too, the search for “generally creative” individuals and the devising of tests that allegedly tap “creativity” seemed to me to be forlorn pursuits. If intelligence is pluralistic, so, *a fortiori*, is creativity.

The second triggering event was my membership in an “invisible college” of individuals of about my age, trained in developmental, social, and educational psychology, who discovered common interests and found opportunities to pursue them together. We were linked by our general sympathy with Piaget’s approach to cognitive development, but also by our conclusion that some of Piaget’s claims could not be sustained; an interest in the nature and operation of human symbol-using capacities; a concern with the different routes of development that can be discerned in diverse cultures; and curiosity about the relations among such human virtues as intelligence, creativity, expertise, giftedness, competence, and prodigiousness. In this endeavor my closest colleagues have been Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and David Feldman; but other fellow-travelers include Michael Cole, William Damon, Vera John-Steiner, David Olson, David Perkins, and Gavriel Salomon, as well as many members of Harvard’s Project Zero.

Inspired particularly by Csikszentmihalyi’s formulation, I developed a new approach to the conceptualization of creative phenomena. As I explain in the introductory chapters, this approach begins with the individual but then focuses both on the particular *domain*, or symbol system, in which an individual works and on the group of knowledgeable individuals, or members of the *field*, who judge the quality of new work in the domain. Having hammered out this conceptualization in abstract terms, I decided to apply it to an indisputable exemplar of creativity in our times—Sigmund Freud. My case study of Freud engendered interest, and I soon coupled this with a comparative study of Pablo Picasso, another person of redoubtable achievement.

In comparing Picasso with Freud, I was deliberately contrasting people who exemplify different intelligences: linguistic and logical in Freud’s case, spatial and bodily in Picasso’s. Both men also drew on their personal intelligences in most distinctive ways. I wondered how creativity played out in the different intelligences, and from this puzzlement arose the idea of a comparative study of a small number of individuals, each exemplifying a different human intelligence. At first I thought of choosing from all of human history the exemplars that I found most intriguing (for example, Mozart, Augustine, Confucius); but I soon decided it would be more prudent, in terms of methodology and the limits of my own expertise, to select seven individuals from the same era. Thence came the cast of seven characters who exemplify creativity in this book.