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Creativity under the glass ceiling: a study using a contextual theory of creativity as a framework

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CREATIVITY UNDER THE GLASS CEILING: A STUDY USING A CONTEXTUAL
THEORY OF CREATIVITY AS A FRAMEWORK

Margaret Botticchio

Dip Ed. (Art), M. Ed.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Education

in the Faculty of Education in the University of Wollongong

February 2006

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret R. Botticchio, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Education, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

M.R. Botticchio
28 February, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	1
CERTIFICATION	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF FIGURES	6
ABSTRACT	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction to a study of creativity under the glass ceiling	10
A personal context for this study of creativity	11
Rationale	12
What is creativity?	12
Is it intelligence or is it creativity?	13
Why are some domains valued more than others?	15
Why so many men and so few women?	15
What is the meaning of “successful creative achievement”	16
Pilot study one	17
Pilot study two	17
The research question	18
Organisation of this thesis	18
CHAPTER TWO	
Background to a contextual theory of creativity	20
Underpinnings of creativity theory	20
Can creativity be measured?	21

Can creativity be improved?	23
Is creativity rare or common?	24
What is creativity?	25
An important conceptual advance	26
Where is creativity?	30
Creative persons within a system: a site for the individual	31
The cultural context of discovery: at the domain site	36
The social context of justification: at the field site	41
 CHAPTER THREE	
Achievement under the glass ceiling	48
A question of women and a woman question	48
What is the woman question a question of?	52
Great men versus “Remarkable Women”: different standards of excellence	54
The heart of the matter	58
Halfhearted answers to a woman question	61
Women’s autobiography	69
A woman’s story	77
 CHAPTER FOUR	
Process for a transit of Venus across the glass ceiling	78
Case study design	78
The process directed by many questions	80
Introducing six creative women	82
Participant selection	87
A unique interview situation	88
The interview protocol	90
Two interviews: a reflective process	91
Analysis: taking a narrative turn	92
Multiple case analyses: a synthesis both wider and penetrating	96
Analysis: issues of validity and reliability	98
 CHAPTER FIVE Karla’s Story	 100

CHAPTER SIX Wanda's Story	131
CHAPTER SEVEN Willa's Story	159
CHAPTER EIGHT Anna's Story	188
CHAPTER NINE Connie's Story	217
CHAPTER TEN Delice's Story	247
CHAPTER ELEVEN	
Conclusions and recommendations	271
Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling: at the domain site	273
In between disciplines: a conscious duality of purpose	274
Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling: at the field site	280
A regard for relationship: at variance from the field dynamic	281
Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling: at the site of the individual person	289
Creative woman: a small c construction of creativity	289
Recommendations: a contribution to creativity theory	293
In summary	293
Recommendations for changes to the visual representation of creativity theory	295
Recommendations for further research	295
LIST OF REFERENCES	299
APPENDICES	
Appendix A Interview protocol used in a study of creativity under the glass ceiling	310
Appendix B Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling	319

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 11.1 Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling relevant to the domain site	273
TABLE 11.2 Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling relevant to the field site	280
TABLE 11.3 Dimensions of creativity under the glass ceiling relevant to the site of the individual person	289

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1 The creativity triangle	28
FIGURE 2.2 The creativity spiral	29
FIGURE 11.1 Alterations to the creativity dynamic presented graphically	295

ABSTRACT

The purpose of a study of creativity under the glass ceiling was to make a contribution to a viable theory of creativity. Six case studies were constructed in which each of six women talked about an individual experience of creative work in a distinct domain. These data were not fully included in the early development of a contextual theory of creativity.

The initial proposal of a contextual theory of creativity was developed by asking questions of visibly creative people. Because women were not found in sufficient numbers at the top of many domains or professions, these important questions were not asked of them. When women's data appeared in the research they were not valued. In this way contextual theory failed to show a complete understanding of creativity phenomena and was not tested on diverse populations.

The six stories came from interviews with women who demonstrated a serious commitment to their work in different domains. The interviews and the analysis were structured on the contextual framework developed by Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner. The cases challenged the contextual view of creativity by using the contextual framework with women and by trying to determine whether the contextual theory could accommodate these and other different experiences of creativity. Analysis of the case studies showed that the women's experience of creativity was captured and explained by the contextual framework. The new dimensions of creativity discovered by this research extend the theory, enabling greater flexibility in further testing on other populations and situations. This study of creativity under the glass ceiling offers support for a social theory of creativity that is inclusive of varied experiences of creative enterprise. The theory, made inclusive by this process, provides a more comprehensive understanding of creative phenomena.

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