CONCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS AND CREATIVITY FROM AFRICA: THE SHONA CULTURE’S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Whereas conceptions of giftedness, assessment tools, and models espoused in contemporary psychology are all grounded in the West, there are different ways to look at giftedness. This study investigated Shona culture of Zimbabwe’s conceptions of giftedness with a view to generate theoretical ideas that inform gifted programming from an African cultural perspective.

The study was conducted at two levels using different research designs: a) a cultural level seeking to highlight Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness and b) an individual level seeking to understand Shona artists’ talent attributions. At the first level, Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness were explored by a questionnaire completed by 16 Zimbabwean academics of Shona cultural background. Data were analyzed in thematic frames, using frequency tables to gauge a consensus of responses among the respondents. The second study adopted a grounded theory study approach to generate a mid-range theory of Shona stone sculptors’ talent attributions focusing on how they propel a field of art. Participants in the study were 20 top talented Shona stone sculptors (icons of creative works in Zimbabwe).

The Shona model of giftedness that emerged is spiritual, participatory and community focused. The grounded theory generated in the study suggested a dynamic interactive process model (DIPM) which explains how artists’ talent attributions help to propel a field of art. The DIPM posits that creativity emerges from dynamic and interactive processes activated or reactivated (by some trigger stimulus) in interactions evoking one’s unique experiences, cultural consciousness and domain specific consciousness and realized through practice and experience. In the DIPM model, creative vision and inspiration in art evolve from the interplay of six major factors which are not necessarily discrete: a) inherent/inborn potential, b) cultural consciousness,
c) individual’s unique experiences, d) activation/reactivation stimulus, e) domain specific consciousness, and f) practice and experience. The DIPM model is based on beliefs systems as the magic carpets by which the artists ascend into the unknown to unleash their creativity. The study suggests that belief systems could become an interesting focus for future studies to understand creativity. The study makes a case for diversity sensitivity in gifted programming.
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my family; Gertrude (my wife), my children; Vimbiso, Shongeso and Tapiwa and my late parents, November and Anatolia, my source of inspiration.
CO-AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The initial study, Chapter Two of the thesis, ‘Shona culture of Zimbabwe’s Views of Giftedness’ (Ngara & Porath, 2004) was co-authored by this researcher and his Supervisor. Collaboration in the study was as follows: This researcher identified the problem, designed the research and conducted it under his Supervisor (Professor Porath). This researcher collected data, did the analysis and write up of the study while his supervisor assisted him through constructive criticism and preparation of the manuscript for publication. In this collaboration, this researcher had sufficient leeway for taking initiative in the project with inspiration from his Supervisor’s expert leadership.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Prologue

However defined, creativity has amazed and intrigued people for centuries. Creativity draws us closer to the truth by replacing old truths with new knowledge (Shavinina & Ferrari, 2004). This researcher was particularly intrigued and indeed amused by one Daniel Chingoma, a school dropout from Zimbabwe whose creative feats saw him flying his self-made Chopper helicopter (“Fly Zimbabwe!” which reportedly did not use conventional fuel) and landed safely in Harare the capital city of Zimbabwe only to be arrested for violating Zimbabwe’s airspace flying rights. Chingoma has become a household name in Zimbabwe for his ingenuity and creative innovation which includes his locally famous water pump-Taisek (We were just having fun) (Kanhema, 2004). The Taisek water pump is simple, affordable and suited for providing clean water to rural communities. Chingoma employs graduate engineers in his workshop. This researcher is equally intrigued and fascinated by Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe’s fabulous art. Having been intrigued and equally amazed by the ingenuity of the Chingomas and fascinating art of Shona stone sculptors, creativity has become the major focus in this dissertation research.

Stone sculpturing is not formally taught in Zimbabwean schools and artists struggle with simple tools against a background of little training and lack of sponsorship (Economist, 1993). Despite these odds, creative sculptors of Zimbabwe have elevated Shona stone sculpture into an amazing and envied world art that now dons the major art galleries of the world. It is indeed intriguing how individuals (who are mostly school drop outs) operating with simple tools against
a background of little formal training and limited sponsorship turn out to be the icons of creative works in Zimbabwe! Whether creativity is a form of giftedness or part of giftedness, it however remains unclear as to how Shona stone sculptors (herein called icons of creative works in Zimbabwe) themselves perceive and interpret their talent attributions by which they propel a field of art.

**Overview**

This research investigates African views of giftedness and creativity focusing on views of giftedness implicit in Shona culture and talent attributions articulated by its icons of creative works (i.e., Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe) in their social context. This investigation was conducted at two levels: a) a cultural level focusing on the existence and nature of Shona culture’s views of giftedness as the basis for understanding Shona artists’ constructions of reality in their social context and b) the individual artists’ level seeking to highlight their talent attributions or constructions of reality within their social context. The two levels of investigation were synthesized to establish theoretical ideas that inform gifted programming for talent development from Shona culture’s perspective.

**Background to the Study**

The discourse on gifted programming is a contested area in special education. Much as we are intrigued by amazing talents of gifted individuals in society, how to program for the development of students’ giftedness and talents in schools is the challenge that pervades our practice. The whole idea of programming for gifted learners is based on assumptions that we can define and identify gifted and talented students and provide them with appropriate services. However, despite our third millennium advances in educational research technology and know-how, gifted programming remains an arena of much debate, controversy, contradictions and disagreements bordering on how we conceptualize giftedness. Much of the debate and
controversy originate from the applications of standardized intelligence tests in gifted programming. Notably, the IQ paradigm has sparked criticism as theoretically inadequate and inappropriate for defining giftedness and selecting students into special programming (Ford, 1996; Gardner, 1983, 1993; Gibson & Vialle, 2007; Gould, 1995; Kwiatkowski & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg, 1985, 1988). When applied in diverse cultural settings, conventional assessment tools and models (based on the IQ paradigm), fail to identify diverse students’ talents.

Though existence of giftedness is acknowledged across race, culture, gender, ethnicity and creed (Cathcart, 1994; Kokot, 1992; Ngara & Porath, 2007; Niwa, 2005; Romero, 1994), gifted students of diverse cultures - notably, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans (Ford, 2005; Ford & Grantham, 2003) - are often underrepresented in Anglo-Western special programming. Meanwhile, Coopersmith (2001) acknowledges ‘alarming under representation’ of First Nations students of Canada in gifted programs in British Columbia. Similarly, Aboriginal students in Australia (Forbes-Harper, 1996; Gibson & Vialle, 2007) and Maori students in New Zealand (Moltzen, 1999) face similar problems of under-representation in gifted programming. The application of standardized IQ tests ignores the role of culture in intelligence and giftedness and therefore causes a yawning gap between theory and practice in gifted programming (Ford, 1996). Though the weaknesses of IQ testing are recognized, its attraction as a neat and standardized tool remains tempting in the field.

The Zimbabwean cultural context focused on in this study is no different from the cultural contexts of those diverse groups underrepresented in Anglo-Western gifted programming. In this context of the IQ hegemony in gifted programming, how do we understand and encourage giftedness and creativity in diverse cultural contexts? How do we understand and encourage the development of those amazing talents of Shona stone sculptors (herein called the
icons of creative works in Zimbabwe) without insights into their constructions of reality in their sociocultural context? By ‘icons of creative works’ the researcher refers to those individuals who by virtue of their distinguished creative art are highly esteemed in the Zimbabwean society.

The creativity of stone sculptors of Zimbabwe warrants research attention. Shona stone sculptors have transformed the original Shona spiritual sculpture into an envied world class art and one of Africa’s best known art genres (Lanom, 2003). Consistent with Sternberg’s (1999, 2003) Propulsion Theory of creativity, the capacity to transform a field is a significant contribution in creativity. The Propulsion Theory of creativity clarifies the contexts in which an act may be judged as creative and how creativity moves on (or propels) a field. In its basic premise, the Propulsion Theory proposes eight different ways in which creativity qualitatively and quantitatively propels a field from its humble expression in replication (i.e. of accepting the status quo) to reinitiation (propelling a field to a different and yet unreached starting point) and integration (attempting to integrate two formerly diverse ways of thinking). The envisioned eight ways are classified into three major categories namely: a) types that accept current paradigms (in which replication falls in at the base where contribution does not move the field), b) types that reject current paradigms (as in reinitiation whereby propulsion redirects a field to a new starting point, and c) types that merge current paradigms (as in integration whereby two different ways of thinking are combined into one unified system). As Shona artists have transformed the field of stone sculpturing from its original spiritual representation to a new art genre (Lannom, 2003), their field propulsion can be categorized into the middle group of “types that reject current paradigms.” High level creativity, or “big C” creativity (Simonton 1984), is a conveyor belt of human progress and advancement in time. With reference to the controversies of the IQ paradigm, such gifted individuals as Shona artists (excelling in experiential type of
giftedness, Sternberg, 1988) who advance society in time, are usually left out in Anglo-Western gifted programming. Hence, their talents would not be discovered and developed through special gifted programming. According to Kwiatkowski and Sternberg (2004), the IQ paradigm is ironic as it makes no match between identified gifted students and the programming model. Programming provided is not designed for IQ identified skills. Consequently, identified students do not benefit from the program while those students who might benefit from the program are usually left out. Hence, the application of IQ assessment in gifted programming is hegemonic.

The definition of giftedness (which is the current central focus of much debate and controversy in gifted programming) has been attempted by different scholars. Of note is Renzulli’s (1978) three ring conception of giftedness which suggested that giftedness is the interaction of three aspects: a) above average ability, b) creativity, and c) task commitment (motivation). A gifted individual is one who demonstrates above average ability in those three aspects in his/her life endeavors. Recently, the Columbus Group (as cited in Morelock, 1992) suggested that giftedness should be defined as “asynchronous development.” Asynchronous means that the gifted child’s cognitive development far outmatches the child’s physical and emotional development. However, “asynchronous development” is only one of the possible indicators of presence of a certain type of giftedness but not its real essence. In cognizance of what seems to be the central feature across existing definitions of giftedness, giftedness is understood in this study as demonstrated and/or potential to demonstrate exceptionally high abilities with some consistency usually manifested during childhood in one or more domains of human endeavor.

Jordan and Porath (2006) draw our attention to the confusion over the relationship between the two terms “giftedness” and “creativity.” Sometimes the two terms are used
interchangeably while creativity is considered as part of the criteria used for identifying gifted students. This study defines creativity as a human capacity and/or dynamic process involving imaginative thinking, visualization and inspirational power resulting in the production of something novel (tangible or intangible) in any domain. As evident in both Renzulli’s (1978) three ring definition of giftedness and Sternberg’s (1985, 1988) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, creativity and giftedness are part and parcel of the same reality but not one and the same thing. In Renzulli’s definition, creativity is a component or part of giftedness but in the Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, creativity is both part of the dynamics of giftedness as well as a product of intelligence or form of giftedness. The Triarchic Theory of Intelligence posits that creativity is a product of intelligence resulting from the interaction of: a) analytical b) synthetic, and c) practical abilities. Analytic ability involves convergent and critical thinking in analyzing and judging ideas, situations and possible solutions. Individuals excelling in analytic abilities have componential giftedness which is identified by IQ tests and are usually selected into gifted programming. Synthetic ability involves divergent thinking (generation of new and interesting ideas) and have capacity for novelty. Individuals excelling in synthetic ability have experiential giftedness but they are not usually selected into gifted programming. Practical ability involves translating abstractions and theories into practical situations. Individuals who excel in practical ability are contextually gifted. These include the street smart who are not usually identified for gifted programming.

In this contested discourse, Feldhusen (as cited in Sethna, 2004) suggests that the term talent be adopted instead of giftedness arguing, “The notion of giftedness is false, demotivating and socially undesirable” (p.109). In other words, Feldhusen believes the term ‘giftedness’ is deterministic and limiting. In this study, talent is understood as a skill for exceptional
performance (in a domain) that is believed to originate from innate or inborn factors and is realized through training and experience. The two terms are often used together. Meanwhile, the distinction between ‘giftedness’ and ‘talent’ has thankfully been clarified by Gagné’s (2004) Differential Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT). According to Gagné’s model, talent results from the transformation of natural outstanding ability whereby giftedness is the potential for talent development.

Despite all attempts to establish a consensus in defining giftedness, we have to accept the reality of its cultural situatedness (Kokot, 1992; Vygotsky, 1930/1967). Creativity does not emerge in a cultural vacuum. As defined by Gutierrez (1973), culture constitutes a way fully characteristic of organizing life, of thinking and conceiving the underlying postulates of the principal human institutions, of relating to and interacting with other intelligent human beings. It influences our way of experimenting with the universe, providing a combination of intermediate patterns which channel our feelings and thoughts, making us react in a particular way, different from those who have been submerged in different patterns. (p.17)

As suggested in this definition, culture means much more than just a people’s customs. It encompasses a people’s world views and how they perceive and construct reality from their experiences in their environments. From Marxian-Vygotskyian cultural mediation theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and in concurrence with Gutierrez’s definition, creativity cannot be understood outside its cultural situatedness. Against this background, this study sought to understand conceptions of giftedness from an African cultural perspective (focusing on Shona culture).
Statement of the Problem

There are different ways to look at giftedness and talent. Conceptions of giftedness and tools and models employed in contemporary psychology to select students into gifted programming are all grounded in the West. The area of gifted programming is under researched and not well understood from an African perspective. Though giftedness is acknowledged across cultures and societies, we do not know much about the views of giftedness espoused in Shona culture, if any. While Zimbabwe’s icons of creative works have transformed Shona traditional sculpture into a reputable art envied in the world art, we do not know how they conceptualize the development of their creative vision and inspiration and how their conceptualization enhances field propulsion in art.

Objectives of the Study

The desire to encourage student creativity is among the major goals of gifted programming. However, this goal remains elusive without sufficient and relevant research insight into both the emergence and development of giftedness and creativity in their social context. Sociocultural conceptions of giftedness have potential to inform gifted pedagogy (Phillipson, 2007). In cognizance of the fact, this study was designed to investigate African views of giftedness, focusing on Shona culture’s perspective. The study’s major focus was to establish talent attributions of Shona artists. However, talent attributions buried in Shona artists’ psyches might not be understood outside the context of their situatedness in Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness. Talent attributions are causal explanations given by people about the origins and development of their exceptional abilities. Sternberg (1988) defined implicit theories as those that reside in individuals’ minds; they are the basis of their decisions in their environment. This research was designed to investigate the problem at two levels: a) a cultural
level, seeking to explore and bring to light Shona culture’s views of giftedness and b) an individual level, seeking to understand Shona artists’ talent attributions. The latter study sought to establish Shona artists’ own talent attributions with a view to propose a mid-range theory that informs gifted education from an African perspective. The ultimate objective of the entire study was to establish a more complete picture of African views of giftedness and creativity from a Shona culture’s perspective as informed by both Shona culture’s implicit views of giftedness and by its talented members’ (Shona stone sculptors) reality constructions.

**Significance of the Study**

As existing tools for assessing students into gifted programming seem unable to uncover diverse students’ talents, the need to explore alternative views to complement our understanding of giftedness cannot be ignored. The African’s spiritualist world views differ from the Western paradigm (Ngara, 2007; Zindi, Peresuh & Mpofu, 1998). As such, a wholesale embracement of Western psychological constructs at the expense of other models (in non-Western educational settings) might be tantamount to collaborating in one’s intellectual domination and cultural marginalization (Wright, 2006). While the need for alternative theories and models that inform gifted programming from a cultural perspective is recognized, research that can inform us on conceptions of giftedness from an African perspective is very scarce. We lack insight into African constructions of giftedness and creativity. In accordance with Taylor and Kokot’s (2000) thinking, each society ought first to understand its own definitions of giftedness before trying to integrate other cultures’ conceptions in its gifted programming. Taylor and Kokot’s views are very informative to this study’s goal of searching for alternative conceptions that inform gifted education from a cultural perspective. As most African countries (with the exception of South Africa) are not yet offering formal special programming for gifted students (Williams &
Mitchell, 1989), this study’s findings might provide the Zimbabwean education system a good foundation for commencing such programs. Zimbabwe still relies on Western theories and models in special education but, as argued in Khaleeфа’s (1999) meta-analysis of Arab research, the “practice of importing methods of studying creativity, intelligence and giftedness without rigorous adaptation is handicapping” (p.25). For this researcher it is important to understand indigenous conceptions of giftedness and creativity for their potential to inform psychology from a cultural perspective. Though different approaches in research have been tried to understand the development of creative productivity, no particular studies were available to shed light on Shona stone sculptors’ talent attributions in their domain. Considering the distribution of Shona stone sculptures at major art galleries of the world and attention by art critics, it would be a great omission in research to ignore such icons of creative works’ constructions of reality. That is the gap in research that this study sought to address in search of theoretical ideas that inform gifted education from an African cultural perspective.

In the absence of documented research studies that inform gifted education from a Sub-Saharan African cultural perspective, we do not have insight into the indigenous psychological processes of creativity. The Sub-Saharan Africa region therefore lacks culturally sensitive theories and models that inform gifted programming from an African sociocultural perspective. Mpofu, Myambo, Mogaji, Mashego and Khaleeфа’s (2006) exploratory survey on conceptions of creativity across Africa was a laudable effort in putting African creativity into research focus. However, considering the vastness of Africa’s landmass and the different cultural regions sampled by Mpofu et al., much more research from different perspectives is required to investigate phenomena in depth in each respective cultural region before any substantive, explicit and culturally sensitive theories can be proposed from an African perspective. This is the
contribution for which this study was designed. In addition, the field of gifted programming still remains with many unanswered questions. Why do only a certain few individuals in more or less the same sociocultural environment demonstrate great creative achievement? As noted by Goldsmith (2000), most prodigies of great promise in childhood fizzled into lack of prominence in adulthood. The challenging question for the pedagogy of giftedness is: How can we inspire creative productivity among students through gifted education? School teachers are supposed to be at the forefront of nurturing students’ giftedness and talents in schools (Ngara, 2002) but do they sufficiently understand giftedness to program for all students’ talent development? Ngara’s study showed that teachers narrowly perceived giftedness as all about excelling in school examinations. Hence, teacher identification could not be relied on in gifted programming. This underscores the need for this research which seeks to expand our understanding of giftedness from an indigenous cultural perspective.

It remains intriguing to this researcher how individuals (Shona artists) with limited formal training in art, operating with simple tools against a background of lack of sponsorship (Economist, 2003), turn out to be the icons of creative works in Zimbabwe! These issues that intrigue us about giftedness and creativity call for alternative research perspectives to broaden our understanding of high abilities. As argued by Polanyi (1962), artists are experts in their field who have tacit knowledge (i.e., knowledge gained through both informal experience and limited formal training). Shona sculptors are conscious creators who construct meanings about reality in their environment. They have useful insights from personal experiences which can be mined in a study as this one which seeks to understand the development of creative productivity with a view to inform gifted programming. Amabile’s (2001) interviews with John Irving, an icon of creative writing, confirmed that creators have credible insights which can inform us about the
development of their talents. As a complex and subjective phenomenon, creativity needs to be understood from individuals’ constructions of shared meanings in their environment (Ugur, 2004). From a social constructivist epistemological view, knowledge is constructed from meaning-making activities of individuals (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, tapping and highlighting Shona artists’ constructions of reality pertaining to creativity in their domain could help in our efforts to develop eco-culturally relevant theories that inform gifted programming from an indigenous cultural perspective. Accomplished adult artists were chosen to inform this study; they are models from whom we can learn theoretical ideas about talent development and how to inspire students’ creative productivity in schools.

**Literature Review**

**Overview**

As constructs of giftedness and talent are culturally situated, Shona artists’ constructions of reality need to be understood within the broad context of Shona culture’s indigenous notions of giftedness. This review explores relevant theoretical frameworks that guided this study in its quest to establish Shona culture’s views of giftedness and understand Shona artists’ talent attributions within their cultural context.

**Conceptions of Creativity**

While some researchers view the construct of creativity as a dynamic and complex phenomenon involving intricate processes (e.g., Gruber & Wallace, 2001; Wallace & Gruber, 1989), other researchers’ definitions of creativity appear to be based on assumptions that we can harmonize the varying levels of creativity, freeze it into a single, static and measurable entity we can describe. Another dimension to the definition issue arises from our realization that creativity cannot be understood outside its cultural context (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004; Vygotsky,
1930/1967). Hence, like giftedness, there is no unanimity in definitions of creativity (e.g., Shi, 2004; Zimmerman, 2005). Feldman and Goldsmith (1986) acknowledge that we do not know how individuals come up with “original” and “important new works” and “how a new idea is fashioned” or “how a domain is transformed” (p. 230).

Despite debates about the definition, Misra, Srivasta and Misra (2006) assert that creativity is basically understood as “contributing something original or novel and useful to the domains of objects and ideas” (p.421). In this connection, Lubart (1999) and Mannarelli (2002) noted that the Western view of creativity focuses on ability to produce novel and appropriate work as the hallmark of creativity. “Appropriate” means creativity must satisfy a social need. In this context, Akarakiri (1998) argues that Africa’s technological and economic development challenges could be surmounted through producing creative and competitive new products. Hence, creativity implies vast potential and possibilities for realizing humankind’s dreams of development. As Dalal (2001) stated, “We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence” (p.337). If creativity can solve problems, change people’s standards of life, or change a particular domain, then it has an impact. Therefore, “impact” of a product is a key hallmark of creativity (Ugur, 2004). “Creative” refers to the extent a product (an act, object or idea) differs from what exists and has functional value (Runco, 2004; Sternberg & Lubert, 1996). In this connection, Sternberg’s (1999, 2003) Propulsion Theory of creativity (discussed in the background to the study) conceptualizes creativity in terms of moving a field forward through its different types.

While research on conceptions of creativity from an African indigenous perspective is scarce (Mpofu et al., 2006), a reflection on the Indian view of creativity is pertinent and
informative in this study. India espouses similar collectivist values as Sub-Saharan Africa. As informed by Misra et al. (2006), “The Eastern view of creativity emphasizes self-fulfillment or self-realization and the development of creative purpose” (p. 428). Unlike the West’s emphasis on products, the East views creativity as a state of fulfillment or the expression of one’s inner essence. The East’s view of creativity is evolutionary while the West’s view is revolutionary. In the Eastern view, creativity involves self-transformation and discovery of the inner self. As theorized by Sri Aurobindo (as cited in Dalal, 2001), there is a hierarchy of levels of evolutionary consciousness where life is the first; the mind is second and the greater release is spiritual and supramental. It is the realm of spiritual and supramental that we endeavor to understand to advance creativity. From an Indian perspective, creative talent (kārayitrī pratibhā) “is one’s ability to put or represent one’s felt experiences in words or other devices of communication” (Misra et al., 2006, p.431). Those endowed with the ability to create have sensibilities, experiences, feelings and suffering of others as one’s own. Pratibhā is considered innate - a predisposition. Indian society attributes creativity to spirit or divinity. Hence, creative people remain anonymous. Inspiration for creativity is the quest to understand the relationship between one’s inner world and outer existence. According to Sharma (1996), creation could be understood as an individual’s self-extension. As elaborated by Madera (1976):

The creative artist is one who contacts the psychic reality within the depths of himself, strive(s) to make it manifest, to become one with it, integrating it through differentiation.

In the very real sense, the artist is enjoined to recreate, or reactivate, what is already latent in his unconsciousness. (p.135)

Though these views were articulated by the proponent from an Indian (or Eastern) perspective, the same views may also be common to other societies. After all, human societies have a lot in
common. In Indian society’s view, creativity is not only rooted in the environment but it is continuous with it and seeks relationship.

The Indian view of creativity is very informative for understanding human creativity/invention at a philosophical level. However, the view does not directly inform us on how to identify creative potential in students so that we can nurture it through appropriate programming. As defined by Lumsden (1999), creativity is “that tantalizing constellation of personality and intellectual traits shown by people who, when given a measure of free reign, spend significant amounts of time engaged in the creative process” (p.153). This definition is very informative about personality variables, intellectual traits and conditions and process issues relevant to creativity. Meanwhile, for Eysenck (1993) and other personality psychologists, creativity is not so much an ability variable but a personality trait. In another approach to definition, Shi and Xu (as cited in Shi, 2004) defined creativity as “a function of one’s intelligence, personality, tasks, factors from social environment and the time one engages in a creative activity” (p.176). As concluded by Csikszentmihalyi (1999), debate over traits of creative people may go on but the cultural aspect of public recognition is the ultimate judge of creativity.

Defining creativity is indeed as complex as it is controversial. However, this brief review identified the following consistently occurring key terms across definitions considered: “originality,” “important new works,” “new idea/” “new possibilities,” “appropriate,” “social impact,” “production” and “uniqueness.” These key terms have informed this study’s operational definition of creativity cited earlier in the thesis.

Inspiration and vision. Closely related to culture are the two concepts, “inspiration and “vision,” which are considered in this study to be central to our understanding of the creative
process. As confirmed by Piirto (2005), all creators talk of inspiration, a kind of strong driving force that impels them to create. Some creators claim inspiration from dreams or substance and others from visitation by supernatural forces (De Angelis, 2003). For example, Octavio (as cited in Piirto, p.10) wrote the poem “Sun Stone” as if it were dictated from somewhere, referring to his inspiration as “the current” (commonly known to Western creators as “the Muse”).

Inspiration encompasses all the following: a temporary state and/or condition of feeling elevated energy and enthusiasm (or excitement) about something or experiencing heightened stimulation to a point of activity, powerful motivational energy and drive for performing an act, sudden creative idea or act and a source of influence (as in Divine guidance). As asserted by Thrash and Elliot (2003, p. 873), inspiration is a general construct implying three aspects: evocation, motivation and transcendence. a) It is evoked by some trigger stimulus (and not initiated); b) the inspired is moved by truth, ingenuity, goodness, beauty or superiority of the trigger object; and c) the moved is motivated to transmit, actualize or emulate those transcendent qualities. This study defined inspiration as a state or condition of heightened stimulation, strong interest and drive or motivational power that impels certain individuals to engage in action designed to accomplish a goal.

Closely related to inspiration is vision of the artist. Mumford, Strange, Scott and Gaddis (2005) defined “vision” in terms of future specification of an idealized end state for the group or organization. In this study, vision refers to imaginative ideas, insight and mental images of something perceived by an individual prior to its existence. Vision encompasses imaginative ideas, dreams and fantasy involved in visualization of something in the mind prior to its actualization into substantive reality.

In Southern Africa where Shona stone sculpture culture originated, Gaobepe’s (2003)
interviews with Selaelo Maredi, a South African icon of creative music, suggested that he derived inspiration from the stringent work ethic inculcated in his childhood. It appears that certain types of inspiration (e.g. dreams) may be universal save for their interpretation while others types of inspiration may be cultural. It is, however, not known to what factors Shona artists attribute the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain.

**Cultural Context of Creativity**

Creative expression is a product of society but its relationship with culture is rather complex (Ludwig, 1992). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) define talent as a relationship between culturally defined opportunities for development of personal skills, opportunity and capacity to act. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson therefore dismiss the naturalistic view and advance environmental attributional assumptions of creativity. Similarly, Jeltova and Grigorenko (2005) advise researchers to examine the interaction between culture and giftedness from a Vygotskyian perspective. From a Marxian-Vygotskyian perspective, the “development of giftedness both shapes and is shaped by culture” (Jeltova & Grigorenko, p.178). The Marxian-Vygotskyian perspective proposes that there is a dialectical relationship between culture and human abilities. As asserted by Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory of interdependent processes of mediation and internalization, culture mediates all human abilities. Vygotsky believed that creativity is not an innate quality possessed by only a few people; it exists in all humans (Smolucha, 1992). Vygotsky saw the growth of creativity in individuals as primarily a culmination of creative imagination resulting from the variety of a person’s accumulated knowledge and life experiences. Creativity is developmental and peaks in adulthood (Vygotsky, 1930/1967). This raises the prospect that growth in creativity could be enhanced through
educational training based on the principal of enriching individuals’ sociocultural environmental experiences.

Social abilities cannot exist outside the collective consciousness of culture as they must first exist within the social environment before being transformed and internalized into individual psyches and competences (Vygotsky, 1930/1967). As corroborated in Simonton’s (1984) historiometric studies, the social-historical environment sets the stage for talented individuals to express their creativity. In view of increasing recognition of the social cultural situatedness of human abilities, psychological constructs need to be understood in their cultural context (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004). Hence, this study was designed to investigate Shona culture’s views of giftedness as the basis for understanding Shona artists’ talent attributions and how those talent attributions contribute to field propulsion in art

*Context of Creativity in Shona Stone Sculpture*

Shona is a historical culture and language of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a former British colony with a colonial legacy spanning 90 years from 1890 to 1980. Geographically, Zimbabwe lies landlocked between several southern Africa states: South Africa in the South, Botswana and Namibia in the West, Zambia in the North, and Mozambique in the East. The true origin of the name “Shona” is not clearly established in history (Mpofu, Ngara & Gudyanga, 2007). However, Shona is the conventional name for the culture and language of 80% of Zimbabwe’s population of 12 million people [the remaining 20% are Ndebele (15%) and White, Asians and others (5%)] (Ngara & Porath, 2007). While modern Shona language is mostly spoken in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, Shona language has historical roots in several languages in Central and Southern African States (Campbell, 1969; Carter, 1962; Hombert, 1999; Kolbe, 1971). The Shona family of languages is characterized by common vocabulary, proverbs, beliefs and customs to some
extent. This region (commonly known as Bantu Africa) is historically a former vast empire of Munhumutapa, Mwenemutapa or Mutapa (a Shona ruler) whose capital was in Zimbabwe (now Great Zimbabwe ruins) (Beach, 1982; Chigwedere, 1980; Mudenge, 1988). Considering the historical and cultural factors that bind together the vast land mass of Sub-Saharan Africa, it makes sense to study Shona constructions of giftedness and talent as the findings would be applicable to the region more broadly.

Zimbabwe lies in the Sub-Saharan Africa zone where published research on creativity is still scarce (Mpofu et al., 2006). Mpofu et al. noted that constructions of creativity in Africa emerge from multilayered contexts of fusion of Western and indigenous cultures whereby Sub-Saharan African communities are in transition from traditional to modern belief systems and practices. In their pioneering study on creativity, Mpofu et al. surveyed conceptions of creativity across major cultural groups in Africa. They sampled 211 citizens from all walks of life across Africa. After content and thematic analysis of questionnaire and group language data, they showed that creative expression encompasses a wide range of forms from replication, integration, and adaptation to innovation, consistent with Sternberg’s (2003) Propulsion Theory of creativity. Contrary to Western individualist theorization, Mpofu et al. found the African view of creativity to be collectivist rather than individualist. In African communities, creativity is collectively owned by the entire community and does not belong to a single individual. Hence, patent and copyright rules for creativity do not apply in the African indigenous cultural context.

As noted Mpofu et al. (2006), creativity research in Africa tends to be more anthropologically based than psychological. Their research group blamed uncritical reliance on Western conceptions and measures of psychological constructs for hampering the process of indigenizing the psychology of creativity in Africa. Consequently, there is no known theory of
creativity from the region. Although Mpofu et al. claimed that they could not find any single word in African languages that is a direct translation of creativity; there is a widely known term referring to creativity among Bantu people, u-umb-i (creativity, Shona n. cl.14). The term is derived from the verb root ku-umb-a (to create) and is acknowledged in Swahili as ukumba, and in Zulu and Ndebele as ukumba. Though Mpofu et al.’s landmark survey of views of creativity across Africa is quite informative, there is need to carry out more investigations in Africa focused on specific cultural groups to develop theories that inform gifted programming on creativity. In this connection, the equivalent Bantu term for creativity ukumba/uumbi can be useful in proposing culturally sensitive theories of creativity from an African perspective.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was informed by the social cognitive perspective, its sister theory, the attributional perspective, and a social constructivist theoretical stance. These perspectives were found to be a good fit in informing a cultural perspective on giftedness and creativity because they all support the view that human abilities are shaped in (or by) social contexts. Hence, they all acknowledge the critical role of culture in the development of giftedness and creativity.

**Social cognitive perspective.** The social cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986) and its sister theory, the attributional theory of creativity advanced by Kelley (1967, 1973), both shed light on understanding talent attributions. The social cognitive perspective posits that social contextual and personal factors interact reciprocally to determine achievement motivation. From the social cognitive perspective, general motivation and the specific motive to achieve something are both cognitive processes mediated by self-reflection and self-direction (Bandura, 1986). In other words, the social cognitive perspective puts emphasis on environmental influences on human motivation rather than regard motivation as a trait whereby the self plays a passive role.
(Dai, Moon & Feldhusen, 1998). Self-perceptions and self-beliefs are influenced by both exogenous and endogenous factors which, once formed, tend to have an enduring effect on individuals (Schunk, 1991). Self-beliefs have an enduring effect on personal achievements of individuals. As creativity emerges in a social environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), self-perceptions and self-beliefs of Shona sculptors could be understood from a social cognitive perspective. From this perspective, Shona artists are consciously or unconsciously influenced by cultural signals within their social environment. They are aware of their esteemed positions in society and they can reflect on their own history, experiences and perceptions to shed light on the development of their creative talents.

**The attributional perspective.** Attributions are beliefs individuals have about why they think and behave as they do. Attributional theory was first proposed by Heider (1958) and later advanced by Kelley (1967), Weiner and others (e.g. Jones & Nesbit, 1972; Weiner, 1974, 1986) for different applications. As proposed by Kelley’s (1967, 1973) covariance theory of creativity, individuals attribute their abilities to internal (dispositional or inborn) and external (situational) causes in the nature-nurture argument depending on the level of the individuals’ originality. Kelley (1967) postulated that the locus and stability of attributions is determined by three informational variables: a) consensus (i.e., the extent to which the individual’s target behavior is shared by others), b) consistency (i.e., the frequency of occurrence of the target behavior in the past), and c) distinctiveness (i.e., the degree to which the target stimulus differs from other stimuli). Lower values of consensus and higher distinctiveness evoke more internal attributions; higher values of consensus and lower distinctiveness attract more external (situational) attributions. If an individual’s level of originality (or creativity) is high and only reached by a few individuals (meaning there is low consensus value), dispositional attributions of creativity
are articulated, but if originality is low (meaning there is high consensus value, more people meet the level), situational attributions are articulated. The higher the level of originality and the lower the consensus level, the more likely creativity is attributed to internal (dispositional) factors. As argued by Kasof (1995), the chief spokesman for the attributional perspective, creators and researchers of creativity alike unduly attribute creativity to dispositional talents more than to situational causes because situational causes are less attractive. According to Kasof, dispositional attributions are self-serving and biased illusions which creators find more appealing than valid situational causes. There is, however, no empirical evidence to support Kasof’s claims.

What Kelley (1967) postulated in the covariance theory of creativity is of interest to this research. However, the attributional perspective suggested by Kelley’s (1967, 1973) covariance theory of creativity might not operate in similar ways in a different cultural context of Africa (among the Shona people) unless supported through empirical research. Certainly, the African spiritualist world views differ from the Western paradigm, hence the need in this study to understand Shona artists’ talent attributions from an indigenous cultural perspective.

**Social constructivism.** Constructivism describes “the belief that knowledge is made up largely of social interpretations rather than awareness of external reality” (Stake, 1995, p.99). The basic premise of the constructivist view is that knowledge is constructed and there is no objective reality which must be discovered. According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), constructivism “adopts relativist ontology, a transactional epistemology, a hermeneutic and dialectical methodology” (p.125). As an epistemology, constructivism regards truths or reality as relative and knowledge and understandings as socially constructed (collectively) in interaction processes. Knowledge is constructed from meaning making activities of individuals (Crotty,
1998). From the constructivist perspective, realities of creators (Shona sculptors in this study) from which they derive their insights and vision are socially constructed in their social and physical environments. It is the objective of this study to investigate the meanings which Shona sculptors attach to the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain.

The three paradigms (i.e. social cognitivist, attributional and social constructivist perspectives) discussed above informed both the formulation of the study’s research questions and its execution (in the two studies: See Chapters two and three) in a number of ways (based on their agreed upon premise that human abilities emerge or are constructed in social contexts). The social cognitivist premise stressing environmental factors on development of human motivation and achievement (Bandura, 1986) inspired this researcher to channel research effort towards exploring social contextual factors perceived by Shona artists in their talent attributions. This means that the artists’ inspiration and vision could be explained by social environmental factors, hence the researcher’s perceived need to initially explore Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness (in the first study) as the basis for understanding individual artists’ talent attributions in their social context. Consistent with a Vygotskyian-Marxian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), the social cognitive perspective informed this researcher that individual Shona artists’ psyches are consciously or unconsciously influenced by cultural signals in their social environment. From this viewpoint, creativity is conceptualized as a product of the interaction of social contextual and personal factors. This guided the research (See second study) in formulating research questions and focusing interview questions on understanding Shona artists’ self-perceptions and self-beliefs to establish how they conceptualized their talent development. From a social constructivist perspective, Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness and Shona artists’ talent
attributions are all socially constructed realities that are better understood in their contexts. The premise that reality is socially constructed helped to focus the research on exploring Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness as the psycho-social basis for understanding individual (Shona) artists’ reality constructions in their domain. Accordingly, this necessitated the use of interviews as social cognitive processes for constructing shared meanings between the researcher and participants. Equally, the attributional perspective informed this study’s quest to understand Shona artists’ meaning making processes in their social environments as their talent attributions. To this end, the three paradigms complemented each other in informing both the conceptualization and execution of research in both studies (See chapter two and chapter three).

**Studies from an Attributional Perspective**

Bloom’s (1982) three year landmark study on determinants of talent development sheds light on talent attributions of great achievers. Bloom sampled eminent persons who attained world class status in their fields before the age of 35 years: Olympic swimmers, pianists and research mathematicians. Retrospective interviews with these extremely talented individuals and their parents, teachers and coaches were used to establish evidence of characteristics in their early years. Bloom concluded that the initial beliefs in talent supported by parental and teacher push, and individual effort, set the momentum for the process of development of talent into high achievement. However, the processes involved in creative achievement though not Bloom’s direct focus, might or might not operate as Bloom implied.

While beliefs about a child’s perceived specialness by parents appeared in Bloom’s study as talent makers, Feldman and Goldsmith (1986) argue that the development of creative talent also involves chance factors of being the right person in the right place and at the right time. It appears that the processes of creativity may not be as neat as supposed in Bloom’s study of
eminent persons’ talent attributions. However, what Bloom’s study established regarding how beliefs in a child’s specialness make talent is not unsubstantiated. The significance of specific beliefs in the creative process was confirmed in Shavinina’s (2004) model of extracognitive abilities of Nobel laureates. According to Runco (2004), ‘extracognitive’ refers to “everything not strictly cognitive” (p.18). Extracognitive phenomena are those aspects that go beyond cognition and metacognition for which an individual does not have much direct control. As elaborated by Shavinina and Seeratan (2004), extracognitive phenomena encompass four interrelated and yet different components: a) specific intellectual feelings (e.g., feelings of direction, harmony, beauty and style), b) specific intellectual beliefs (e.g. beliefs in elevated standards of performance), c) specific preferences and intellectual values (e.g. choice of field), and d) intuitive processes. Shavinina’s (2004) research on biographical and autobiographical reports of Nobel laureates suggests that beliefs determined their self-confidence and were part of the mechanism shaping the standards of their achievements. If beliefs are involved in reality shaping or creative processes, then Shona artists’ talent attributions in their domain cannot be ignored in our quest to understand and enhance student creativity in gifted programming.

In a different study, Silvia and Phillips (2004) investigated influences of self-evaluation on creativity. Silvia and Phillips used two experiments to test whether self-evaluation effects on creativity are moderated by expectations of success and improvement. Experiment One showed that when self-awareness was high, subjects who believed they could improve scored high on creativity while subjects who felt they could not improve showed reduced creativity. Experiment Two conceptually replicated Experiment One through different self-awareness manipulations with a different sample. Both experiments confirmed that self-evaluation affects creativity in one way or the other. Self-improvement beliefs moderate self-evaluation effects on creativity. Self-
evaluation may facilitate creativity in other circumstances such as influencing people’s standards in judging their work. Silvia and Phillips thus concluded that motivated self-serving illusions and self-regulation are all part of the underlying dynamics affecting creativity. Therefore, their study suggested that the creators’ internal attributions (i.e., beliefs in inborn basis of one’s talent) so much criticized by Kasof (1995) as biased self-illusions, are in fact part of the psychological dynamics of creativity. The construct of creativity is perhaps more complex than envisaged because it involves extracognitive phenomena of giftedness that may not operate in neat and easily discernible patterns, hence this study’s need to extend the existing approaches for studying creativity to sociocultural perspectives of talent attributions from an indigenous African perspective.

In another highly informative study, Reed (2005) investigated creative artists’ self-perceptions of creativity over time. Reed interviewed 21 mature and creative artists (with an age range of 53 to 75 years). In addition, their early and later works were judged by a panel of experts to assess whether their creativity had increased or declined with age. Data were analyzed through grounded theory study techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and graphic representations of individuals’ creativity over time were compared. Contrary to previous findings in quantitative research, Reed’s research established that creativity actually peaked over time. Participants attributed this growth pattern to their accumulated experience. Contrary to Kasof’s (1995) dismissal of creators’ attributions as self-serving and biased illusions, Reed’s informants articulated both dispositional and situational factors as responsible for development of their creativity in art.

Mannarelli (2002) investigated attributions of talent among musicians. A creative individual was defined as one who produces new, unusual, and uniquely original ideas.
Mannarelli tested the hypothesis that creative individuals were more likely than uncreative persons to attribute success to internal factors and failures to external causes through archival data and interviews with 76 most popular musicians. Vetting for inclusion into the study was based on the stringent criteria of being a solo artist/or front person of a band and having released at least four full-length major label albums between 1970 and 1995. Data analysis involved rating musicians by experts and coding of interviews. The study’s results acknowledged illusory cognitive biases as having a positive influence on creativity. Mannarelli’s results reflected that illusory cognitive biases enhanced creativity. Though no similar attributional studies could be found from an African perspective, Mannarelli’s study and other studies cited above gave impetus to this study to investigate the development of Shona artists’ talents from an attributional perspective. Whether creativity is dispositional, situational or both needed investigation focusing on Shona artists’ talent attributions. Though very informative, studies thus reviewed might not apply to different ways in which indigenous artists construct reality. The question of how Shona artists of Zimbabwe attribute the origins and development of their talents remains unanswered. Similarly, there is no available equivalent study in the literature which can shed light on Shona culture’s conceptions of giftedness. Hence, this study proposed to investigate African conceptions of giftedness focusing on Shona culture’s perspective.

**Research Questions**

a) How is giftedness viewed from an African perspective espoused in Shona culture?

b) How do the Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain? Alternatively asked: To what factors do Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe attribute the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain?
These questions are addressed in this thesis as follows: Question a) was addressed by the thesis’ exploratory study reported in Chapter 2 while Question b) was addressed in the thesis research’s main study reported in Chapter 3.

**Definition of Terms**

This section defines specific cultural terms that are used in this study.

*Shona stone sculpture*: An art genre that originated from Shona folklore and beliefs in which artists combine artistic creativity with artisan craftsmanship using the stone media.

*Shona stone sculptors*: Artists for whom Shona is their first language and culture.

**Summary**

This study was designed to investigate African conceptions of giftedness and creativity focusing on Shona culture’s perspective. The study was conducted at two levels, a) to explore and establish the existence and nature of Shona culture’s views of giftedness, and b) to investigate and highlight Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe’s talent attributions in their domain. As revealed in this chapter, there is no unanimity on the definitions of giftedness and creativity. The two constructs are part and parcel of the same reality and they need to be understood in their cultural context. There is justification to search for alternative theories and models that inform gifted programming from an indigenous cultural perspective. Shona culture’s views of giftedness need to be investigated for their potential to inform theory development from an African perspective. Though empirical evidence is inconsistent on whether creators’ talent attributions are biased and self-serving illusions, this study finds the attributional approach meaningful to understand creativity. Literature thus reviewed established no direct equivalent studies that investigated Shona culture’s views of giftedness or Shona artists’ talent attributions. The next two chapters are articles on studies that investigated phenomena in this thesis. The
studies have been published and/or submitted for publication, respectively. Chapter 2 explored Shona culture’s views of giftedness while Chapter 3 investigated Shona stone sculptors’ conceptualization of the development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain. Chapter 4 combines the two studies’ findings in the conclusion of the thesis. Both studies were approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board [See Appendices A (1) and A (2)].
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CHAPTER II

1Shona Culture of Zimbabwe’s Views of Giftedness

Introduction

Despite consensus that giftedness manifests in all racial and cultural groups (e.g. Florey & Tafoya, 1988; Kokot, 1992; Stone, 2003), its definition and tools for identifying gifted children have of late aroused more debate and controversy than consensus, let alone unanimity. The central issue has been and still is defining the relationship between giftedness and intelligence. As observed by Baldwin (2004), positions held in the twentieth century varied, but shifting from the IQ paradigm of viewing intelligence to defining giftedness more broadly has been quite difficult. In this scenario, some researchers subscribed to “great divide” theories as gospel truth (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999). As noted by Ford and Grantham (2003), Gould (1981) demonstrated how racial sentiments led to “conscious fraud …dishonest and prejudiced research methods, deliberate miscalculations, convenient omission, and data misinterpretation… in studying intelligence” (p. 86).

Poortinga and Van de Vijver (2004) noted that “great divide” theories seek to split the world by categories like race to explain differences in cognitive functioning. A case in point is Le’vy-Bruhl’s (1926) infamous proposition that non-Western thought processes were pre-logical cognition based on collective representations of shared mystical and religious beliefs. However, Poortinga and Van Vijver noted that such theories were not based on empirical evidence but were derived from mere assumptions. Unfortunately such assumptions have done more harm than good in the education of

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gifted culturally diverse students. According to Ford and Grantham (2003), those assumptions are responsible for reinforcing theories of deficit thinking and negative stereotypes about diverse cultural and racial groups’ intelligence. Discrimination and segregation of language minority students in tracking programs can be blamed squarely on deficit thinking.

The Need for a Paradigm Shift

The under-representation of language minority students in predominantly European-American gifted education programs has brought to question the validity of the traditionally acclaimed standardized psychometric tools of measuring intelligence and giftedness. Limitations of IQ tests in measuring potential beyond the traditional schoolhouse giftedness domain are now more apparent than ever in the light of the increasing dominance of the ‘Theory of Multiple Intelligences’ (Gardner,1983, 1993) and recognition of cultural influences on intelligence (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Vygotsky,1978). Similarly, Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) notions of the bell curve are criticised for not understanding eco-cultural influences on a child’s mental growth (Baldwin, 2004). Most nations today are culturally diverse, including Zimbabwe, the focus of this study. Therefore the search for consensus in defining the construct of giftedness cannot ignore cultural views of giftedness held by each respective cultural group.

The Debates on Definition of Giftedness and Identification of Gifted Students

As noted by Gardner (1993), IQ definitions of giftedness originated from the pioneering work of early psychologists of intelligence like Spearman and Terman who conceived of intelligence as a general factor (‘g’) for conceptualization, abstract reasoning, and problem-solving. They theorised that intelligence could be quantified. This put IQ on the map in measuring intelligence and elevated it to a position of dominance in defining giftedness. But
Gould (1995), in *The mismeasure of man*, amply demonstrated the limitations of IQ. Gardner (1993) concurred that standardized tests have been abused, with little theoretical advance. Gardner scoffs at claims like “Culture Free Test” as unfounded. IQ tests are heavily biased in favour of White Anglo-American middle-class students in North America. Consequently diverse minority students, notably African-American, Native-American, and Mexican-American, have a slim chance of being selected into North America’s gifted and talented education programs (Mitchell, 1984; Romero, 1994). Similarly, students from Aboriginal populations in Australia (Forbes-Harper, 1996) and the Maori population in New Zealand (Moltzen, 1999) also face problems of under representation in gifted education programs. While culturally diverse students are under represented in gifted programs, Cathcart (1994) maintains, “Similar numbers of exceptionally able children are found in all races and cultural groups” (p.184). It is therefore clear that the problem is essentially how we define and measure giftedness in students.

On the Sub-Saharan African scene, studies by Kathuria and Serpell (1999) carried out among Zambian children using ‘Panga Muntu’ (design a person), a local standardized test, showed that reliably measured intelligences among African children were not related to school success. Studies by Sternberg et al. (2001) on practical intelligence among the Luo children of Kenya revealed a reliability scale of .60 but results failed to correlate with academic intelligence as measured by Raven’s Progressive Matrices. Similarly, Grigorenko et al. (2001) established that what was considered intelligent among the Luo adults of Kenya did not correlate with teachers’ perceptions of intelligence. Meanwhile, in the same sub-region, Ngara’s (2002) study found teacher’s perceptions of giftedness among primary school children to be academically based. There must be some kind of potential which is not realized and developed in school yet is useful and acknowledged in communities. School definitions of giftedness and intelligence are
therefore limited in scope from the point of view of indigenous perceptions of human potential. One cannot agree with Mpofu (1994) more on the need for indigenizing the psychology of human intelligence with reference to the training of teachers in the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

In the Zimbabwean context, previous studies (e.g., Mpofu, 1994; Mpofu & Watkins, 1994) established no racial bias of results on imported ability tests when Zimbabwean Black and White students in urban areas were compared. But when applied to rural students, the scales showed a bias in favour of urban students. Compared to students in North America and the United Kingdom, Mpofu observed that, generally, Zimbabwean students performed slightly below. While issues of language command also come in, Mpofu concluded that Western developed mental ability scales might have limited applicability in Zimbabwe. At present the use of foreign intelligence test scales has been suspended in Zimbabwe. Since students’ intelligence is difficult to measure or, when reliably measured, seems to be unrelated to activities of schooling, it therefore follows that any potential outside the traditional scholastic domain is not recognized and developed in school.

Despite inconsistency and lack of consensus on the definition of giftedness and tools for identifying gifted students, Ford and Grantham (2003) noted that most definitions of giftedness and intelligence are still IQ based and test driven, purporting that a gifted person has an IQ of 130 or higher. Even those schools that boast of using multiple criteria still base 50% of the total scores on IQ tests in making placement decisions. Hence, Ford and Grantham scoff at a matrix of criteria as “pseudoscientific, a smokescreen” (p.220). Even within the same racial group, Renzulli (1978), proponent of the Triad Model definition of giftedness (i.e., above average intelligence, creativity, and task commitment) argued that most creative persons come below the 95th percentile in IQ. Therefore they are not likely to be selected into gifted education programs.
Cohen (1988) noted that the IQ test basically negates cultural and linguistic differences of gifted minority students. In the Zimbabwean context under study, African students, though in the majority, face two competing cultures (indigenous African and Anglo-Western values) while the language of instruction (English) is a second language. Zimbabwean students are as much victims of attempts to transport Western psychological notions of intelligence and technologies and attempting to apply them without considering their eco-cultural validation as are minority cultures elsewhere (Mpofu, 2004). Teacher training in Zimbabwe still relies on Western psychological conceptions of human intelligence. While tests play an important role in education and are linked to job success and promotion, an alternative point of view suggests that it is the society which ascribes so much importance to tests (Sternberg, 2004). Whatever value tests have, Rowe (as cited in Richardson, 2003) warns against “using tests in the same way a drunk might use a lamp post: more for support than for illumination” (p.7).

Debate on giftedness and methods of identifying gifted students would be incomplete without mentioning key players like teachers. As noted by Ngara (2002), the teacher is a crucial factor not only in the process of identifying gifted students but s/he also “….decides what curriculum to implement, how to implement it and how to shape and assess students’ total development” (p.215). However, Ford and Grantham (2003) noted that teachers who are not trained in multicultural education tend to have negative stereotypes of culturally diverse students’ academic competence. They argue that deficit thinking attitudes render teacher referral an effective gatekeeper for preventing true identification and development of gifted language minority students’ potential.
Selection into gifted education programs by IQ mainly focuses on the linguistic and logical-mathematical domains (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Therefore, many students with high potential outside these domains are not recognized. Gardner’s (1983, 1993) Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides scope for expanding our definition of giftedness and the criteria for selecting students into special programming in a major paradigm shift. Gardner discounted the notion of a single unified intelligence and proposed relatively distinct modes of intelligence. Initially Gardner identified seven distinct forms of intelligence (i.e., linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinaesthetic, spatial, and musical). Recently Gardner (1999a) proposed an eighth intelligence—‘naturalistic’ (i.e., the ability to discern patterns in nature). Gardner also speculated on the possibilities of the existence of two other forms of human intelligence, namely ‘spiritual intelligence’ and ‘existential intelligence’. Chapman (1998-2004), however, boldly insists on the existence of the ninth intelligence—‘existential intelligence’—which transcends the existential realm to include ‘spiritual’ or ‘metaphysical intelligence’ encompassing psychic powers.

In his theory, Gardner (1983, 1993) defined intelligence as “ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings” (p.x) - a definition silent on the origins of intelligence but acknowledging the relevance of its cultural context. From the Theory of Multiple Intelligence’s point of view, we can understand how giftedness can manifest in one or more domains of intelligence in an individual and among individuals. Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence is widely supported elsewhere (e.g., Feldhusen, Wood & Dai, 1997). Feldhusen et al.’s study, in particular, revealed ten areas of talent in which students reported their strengths. Hence, they argue that by focusing on narrow domains such as linguistic
and cognitive domains, a diversity of potential talents in students is probably going to waste.

Another useful theory which can shed light on the mystery of under recognition of culturally diverse talents is Sternberg’s (1985, 1988) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence. The Triarchic Theory of Intelligence comprises three sub-theories relating how intelligence reveals itself (i.e., componentially, experientially, and contextually). Componential intelligence specifies mental functions relating to analytical and abstract reasoning as reflected in IQ scores. Such individuals are likely to be selected into special programs for gifted students. Experiential intelligence relates capacity for novelty and creativity. Such individuals, though they excel in creativity, would not normally be considered as terribly smart. Finally, contextual intelligence specifies the capacity for readily adapting to the environment. This category includes practical intelligence and the ‘street smart’ but they are not usually selected into gifted programs. One can see how some gifted students from diverse cultures may be gifted in the context of intelligences in their culture, like the Chewa children of Northern Zambia and Luo children of Kenya, while this does not translate into scholastic competence (Sternberg et al., 2001).

**Context of Shona Culture’s Views of Giftedness**

Shona culture has historical roots in Zimbabwe. Although Shona language and culture are shared with Mozambique, this study’s focus was on the Shona culture of Zimbabwe’s views of giftedness. Geographically, Zimbabwe is landlocked between five other Southern African states - Zambia in the North, Mozambique in the East, South Africa in the South, and Botswana and Namibia in the West. Zimbabwe is a former British colony with a colonial legacy spanning ninety years from 1890 to 1980. Zimbabwe is culturally diverse with a population of 12 million people in the following proportions: 95% Blacks and 5% Whites, Asians and others. Shona is the language and culture of 80% of the population while 15% are from the Ndebele language and
cultural group. Shona is one of Zimbabwe’s three official languages, together with English and Ndebele. Zimbabwe’s language policy requires students to acquire proficient literacy in two languages (i.e., English and one indigenous language, either Shona or Ndebele depending on their regions). English is the main language of instruction from about grade 4 to university. Shona is a common term for six major dialects with a common/standard orthography, namely Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Kore Kore, Budya and Ndau. Kalanga, though basically a Shona dialect (Karanga) with marginal linguistic influences of Ndebele language, is merely left out of the Shona Syllabus on a historical technicality.

Compared to its neighbours, Zimbabwe is relatively industrialised with agriculture as the mainstay of the economy, supported by manufacturing, mining, tourism and the informal business sector. While the market economy is fast developing, many rural people are still subsistence farmers. About 80% of Zimbabwe’s population lives in rural areas while only 20% are urban dwellers. Most Shona urbanites have strong rural roots. Therefore, Shona people have two homes. By Shona cultural definitions, your relative’s home is also your home where you can visit or stay. As reported by Mpofu (2004), with the early literacy drive of the early 1980s, “The average Zimbabwean is Black, young, literate, and of rural background” (p.366). Two competing systems of causation are affecting Zimbabwean people’s lives - indigenous cultural values and Anglophone-Western values, which, as observed by Mpofu, are both ‘maligned and envied’ by Zimbabweans (p.365).

Previous Studies on Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa

No studies were found in the literature to illuminate Shona culture’s views of giftedness. However, several studies (e.g., Irvine, 1970, 1988; Mpofu & Nyanungo, 1998; Mpofu, 2004) are

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2 As of 2004 publication, there were no available studies in the literature to shed light on Shona culture’s conceptions of giftedness.
important in understanding the progress and effort directed towards finding eco-culturally relevant theories of intelligence for the sub-region. As reported by Mpofu, Irvine’s (1970, 1988) analysis of Shona proverbs indicated that Shona intellect was characterized by dispositional intelligence (*ungwaru*), instrumental knowledge, social intelligence (*uchenjeri*) and higher-order trait dispositions. Shona dispositional intelligence reflected logical reasoning, foresight, and being rational, sceptical, vigilant, alert and cautious. Mpofu’s (2002) studies, carried out among 49 Zimbabwean college students of Shona cultural background, established that “Zimbabwean college students consider intelligence to be multilayered” (p.6). Shona students considered intelligence to be expressed in five main areas - interpersonal relations; planning, decision making and problem-solving; resource management and utilization; education and culture; and work and productivity. Interpersonal behaviour was highly rated, followed by being educated and knowledgeable about local culture and success in the management of resources. As noted by Sternberg (1999), being successful, or practically intelligent, is cherished in communities.

In a pilot survey carried out among 49 Zimbabwean undergraduate college students of Shona cultural background from various professional backgrounds, Mpofu (2004) established a multilayered view of intelligence, that is, traditional indigenous and modern. The indigenous view of intelligence is ‘expertise in interpersonal relationships’ in contrast to the modern view of ‘cognitive or academic success’. ‘Interpersonal expertise’ is recognized as social giftedness, defined by Porath (2000) as “the unusual ability to make inferences about other people’s thoughts, emotions, intentions, and points of view, evidenced in nurturance of and empathic responses to others” (p. 197).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, studies by Wober (as cited in Mpofu) and White (as cited in Mpofu) on the Baganda of Uganda and Sternberg et al. (2001) on the Chewa of Northern Zambia
and Luo of Kenya also confirm the ‘socially spirited view of intelligence’ reflected by the Zimbabweans as ‘interpersonal expertise’. The indigenous view that emphasises social, practical, or functional ability is also confirmed in Shona and Ndebele proverbs (Mpofu). Zimbabwean students and the Shona and Ndebele proverbs studied by Mpofu (2004) are indeed valid sources for investigating indigenous conceptions of intelligence but the picture would be incomplete without viewing the construct of giftedness through the folktale window of culture. As observed by Finnegan (1976), human roles and attributes are dramatised and satirised in folktales. This study goes beyond proverbs and perceptions of intelligence to include folktales in probing Shona cultural perceptions of giftedness.

Research on indigenous views of intelligence is incomplete without implicit theories of giftedness based on indigenous views in the sub-region. While the relationship between giftedness and intelligence is still not clearly defined, Dabrowski’s theory (Piechowski, 2002) proposes that it is the intensity of overexcitabilities that marks the difference between the two. Dabrowski identified five overexcitabilities or modes of experiencing - psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imagination and emotional. Dabrowski believed that giftedness involves talents in specific abilities and intelligences plus five components of psychic life (overexcitabilities). Overexcitabilities are the ‘heart and fire’ of giftedness and ‘they ring loud and clear’ in gifted children. Therefore, this study goes beyond intelligence to delve into the realm of intensity of overexcitabilities to reflect Shona culture’s views of giftedness.

**Culture and Giftedness**

Giftedness does not emerge in a cultural vacuum. Culture is a significant variable in understanding giftedness in its entirety. As defined by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986), giftedness is a social construct resulting from social expectations and individual abilities.
Commenting on the role of culture, Feldman (1986) concurs with Stone (2003) in the observation that certain forms of giftedness appear to be universal while others depend on the nature of culture. According to Stone, “At a particular time and place, pursuing a specific field may be rewarded, ignored or punished” (p.13). The importance of culture in understanding intelligence was highlighted by Kroeber’s (as cited in Friedman & Rogers, 1998) reactions to the dangerous notions of racial supremacy that encouraged Nazi ideology based on Galton’s eugenics. The importance of culture in defining giftedness is best represented by Isaac Newton (as cited in Friedman & Rogers) when he observed, “If I have seen further than other men, it is on standing on shoulders of giants.” This means that any seemingly original idea or invention by an individual is first implied within his/her culture by previous creators. According to Simonton (1984) the social-historical environment provides possibilities which talented individuals recognize to express their creativity. From a Marxist-Vygotskyian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), culture mediates intelligence. No individual abilities can exist outside collective consciousness. Social abilities first exist in the collective environment before they can be transformed and internalised into an individual’s psyche. Therefore culture is very important to the study of both giftedness and intelligence. Culture encompasses a totality of a people’s way of life, their unique practices, beliefs, attitudes, communication styles, customs, rituals, and values representing their worldview.

This research is an exploratory study of Shona culture of Zimbabwe’s views of giftedness. People’s conceptions of intelligence are the basis for proposing implicit theories of intelligence in their communities (Sternberg, 1985). People make judgments and decisions in their environment based on their conceptions of intelligence. This study is part of the effort to search for eco-culturally valid definitions of giftedness and intelligence in light of the problems
noted on the transportability of Western psychological notions of intelligence and technologies into non-Western societies. The study is also intended to arouse interest towards developing giftedness in students, our special human resource, particularly in Zimbabwe which at present offers no formal special programming for gifted students (Williams & Mitchell, 1989). As argued by Feldman (1986), certain prodigies will only surface when culture is ready to recognize and nurture excellence in the particular domain. It is further hoped that the more we understand giftedness in its cultural diversity, the more we will be sensitive to the plight of gifted diverse students in mainstream Western-oriented gifted education programs.

**Method**

A questionnaire that included open-ended questions (see Appendix B) was sent by e-mail to 20 randomly selected members of the Zimbabwean academic fraternity with a strong Shona cultural background and lecturing experience in Social Sciences, Shona language, and Cultural Studies. While Shona elders are supposed to be the ideal informants as custodians and experts of Shona cultural knowledge and wisdom, Shona academics were chosen to inform this study because they had experiences of both worlds (i.e., Shona ethos and Western experience) which influence the modern Zimbabwean. By right of age, some of the informants to this study were not only learned academics but were also elders in their own right who could speak to educational context.

Sixteen completed questionnaires were received (80%) from eight male and eight female participants. Previous studies by Irvine (1972) and Mpofu (1994) found Shona students to be reliable reporters of their communities. This is assumed to be even truer for academics of Shona cultural background that are familiar with research ethics and in this study were required to report on non personal/non threatening issues. Participants responded to 12 open-ended questions based on selected themes derived from conventional psychology and Shona oral literature and
folklore to reflect Shona views of giftedness. Questions were tactically arranged with subtle repetitions to check the consistency of responses and gauge a consensus without irritating the respondents.

Thematic Analysis

Data were analyzed in thematic frames and represented in frequency tables to gauge consensus of responses among the respondents. Frequencies of identified descriptors of each theme did not necessarily tally with the number of respondents as frequencies were used to confirm existence of a theme in the culture based on the consensus of responses among the informants. Data analysis included analyzing related folktale themes and extracting supporting thematic frames from the stories suggested by the informants.

Shona definition of giftedness. Q1 sought information on Shona definitions of giftedness. The attributes of giftedness articulated in Shona culture (Q2) also shed light on the Shona definition of giftedness while Q1 elicited information on a direct definition.

Characteristics/attributes of giftedness. What characteristics or attributes of giftedness are acknowledged in Shona culture? Reference to characteristics of giftedness viewed through the folktale window of culture (Q3) was a probing technique to elicit more data and also to validate attributes identified in Q2. Reference to attributes of giftedness epitomised in Shona folktale heroes is equivalent to Mpofu’s (2004) inquiry on students’ ideal intelligent person. Reference to folktales was also necessary to ensure that the study only collected authentic Shona cultural views given that participants could be influenced by the two systems of causation in operation in Zimbabwe (i.e., African indigenous cultural knowledge and Anglo-Western knowledge). Finnegan (1976) and Fortune (1980) confirm that the folktale plays an important Selection into gifted education programs by IQ mainly focuses on the linguistic and complement
data reflecting Shona culture’s views of giftedness.

*Whether giftedness is valued in Shona culture/value system.* This question (Q5) required participants to provide evidence if they believed that giftedness is valued in Shona society. Data were also sought on the gender aspect (i.e., Q6 regarding the recognition of female giftedness in Shona culture). Reference to eminent persons acknowledged as gifted in Shona culture (Q9) sheds light on some of the valued domains of giftedness.

*Beliefs about the origins of giftedness or talents.* Q7 on attributions of giftedness sought to expose beliefs about origins and ownership of giftedness in Shona culture as understood by the informants.

*Commonly acknowledged domains or forms of giftedness.* Questions elicited information on commonly acknowledged domains of giftedness in Shona culture. Q2 on attributes of giftedness and Q3 on giftedness attributes dramatised in folktales were designed to reflect domain-specific giftedness acknowledged in Shona culture. Eminent persons (Q9) could be living, historical or legendary but what counts most is what they are famous for.

*Provision for collecting any other relevant data.* The technique for collecting any other relevant data in the questionnaire allowed the gurus and experts of Shona culture flexibility to cover any information potentially overlooked by the researchers. This technique is equivalent to interview probing in the absence of real interviews.

*Insights for recommendations.* The questionnaire was designed to provide data that would be useful in making educational recommendations. Response narratives were sorted and analyzed by themes in frequency tables indicating the number of times an aspect was identified. Frequencies do not necessarily tally with the number of participants consulted per question as questions were combined into themes. The results of this study were confirmed by two
prominent Zimbabwean professors of social sciences in both content and use of Shona terminology.

Results

Table 2.1 shows key terms for the Shona cultural definition of giftedness. The Shona language equivalent term for giftedness is ‘chipo’ (which literally means something special that is given selectively). Other key terms of the Shona definition of giftedness are: ‘ability or aptitude for performing a task’, ‘inborn’, ‘outstanding’, ‘unusual’, and ‘special’, ‘involves expertise/excellence’ and ‘reflected in skilled tasks’. The terms were identified in more or less the same frequencies. Put together, key terms define giftedness/chipo as “an unusual and prized human attribute believed to be both inherited and spiritually blessed which manifests in extraordinary abilities and expertise in valued and challenging activities of society.” This definition suggests that giftedness is confirmed when demonstrated through success in some endeavour. The identified examples of giftedness which confirm the aspect of skill challenge include chiremba (healer), umhizha (skilled craftsmanship), mhare (strategist) and hombarume (talented hunter). The role of nyamukuta (midwife) needed special knowledge and expertise to deal with complications of pregnancy and baby delivery. The element of success is quite evident in the definition as a hallmark of giftedness or talent.

Table 2.2 shows nine attributes of giftedness, listed in order of frequency of identification. Nearly all of the attributes cited are consistent with achieving success as a mark of giftedness and are also consistent with the identified Shona definition in Table 2.1. Being successful in life endeavors, or using practical intelligence (Sternberg, 1999), was consistently identified in Mpofu’s (2002, 2004) studies as a mark of intelligence acknowledged by Shona students. The attributes reflected in Table 2.2 cover the cognitive, linguistic, kinaesthetic,
affective and psychomotor domains and the aspects of Renzulli’s (1978) three ring definition of giftedness. Craft literacy (*umhizha*) refers to creative imagination crystallized to solve problems, for example, making a hunting trap (*dhibhura*). Craft literacy is the individual’s capacity to figure out solutions to the problem in his/her head.

The characteristics in Table 2.2 are dramatised in the imaginative world of the Shona folktale. Succeeding where others fail is typified in the folktale where the humble and introverted little Tortoise opened the community well to the water table during a drought when all other animals had failed and given up. It is also the humble and despised little Tortoise who arrests Hare, the impossible trickster, and brings him to justice for messing up their well, which he had refused to dig in cooperation with other animals. Ability to solve problems is typified through the successes of Tortoise to reach the water table, whilst in most folktales Hare succeeds in his usual role as policeman of the forest and guardian of rights or protector of the weak through extraordinary wits. Hare’s role portrays a view that smartness matters more than size or physical strength. On challenging tasks, it is the despised, humble and introverted Chinapapezi (one pitted with measles) who won the best bride and equally despised and introverted Tortoise who saved the forest people during a drought. Learning fast is typified in the folktale when Hare briefly borrows Baboon’s mbira musical instrument which he masters fast and outplays Baboon in a contest to resolve the ownership quarrel. In the same folktale identified, Hare is promoted to position of official mbira entertainer of the forest, overthrowing Baboon who lacked talent. Both folktales connote a similar Biblical Parable of Talents message that you can lose your talent if you don’t develop it. Prodigious development is demonstrated in Karikoga Gumiremiseve (“one who, alone, achieved great things with only a bow and ten arrows”) (Chakaipa, 1957), an old world folktale based novel and Mbimbindoga (one who trusts in himself) folktale. Both
characters mature early and demonstrate competence and knowledge far beyond their age. They both survive death through self-reliance, vision, courage and quickness of wit. Both characters have apt names coined to connote self-reliance as part of their fate and a manifestation of giftedness.

The folktale, as a product of creative imagination (Vygotsky, 2004), employs talking animals to dramatise, uncensored, an imaginary society of justice, equality and respect. The story teller suggests that the problems of society are solved by none other than gifted persons.

As indicated in Table 2.3, giftedness is highly valued in Shona society. Hence, the existence of the following special titles of honour identified by the subjects:

- *mazvikokota* (expert)
- *mhizha* (expert craftman)
- *mhare* (champion, strategist)
- *godobore* (expert healer, diviner)
- *hurudza* (successful farmer)
- *hombarume* (successful hunter)

Such titles were conferred on individuals at special ceremonies of honour celebrated with beer and a beast slaughtered to encourage the spirits believed to enhance the individual’s special powers (*ushavi*). Logical talk (wit) is valued by Shona people who customarily dismiss unceremoniously anyone who utters nonsense or daydreams during a court session. Such persons are relegated to skinning and roasting a goat while real thinkers get on with deliberations. Gifted people were recognized for solving problems in society as demonstrated in *ngano* (folktales). The gifted storyteller was acknowledged by being visited by more youths who brought firewood to show their appreciation. However, misunderstood giftedness or deviancy was punished and suppressed as suggested by the fate of Mbimbindoga whose extraordinarily advanced maturity and talents were classified as bad omens (*mashura*) and had to be eliminated. His giftedness was something a preliterate and superstitious society was not prepared for, but
they failed to eliminate him because he was too smart to fall into their traps. He later assumed a chieftainship somewhere. His survival and ultimate achievement confirms the view that superior intelligence cannot be forever suppressed.

Table 2.3 shows that the participants were unanimous that giftedness is collectively owned in Shona culture. The Shona say, “Your gift is given to you for us” (*Chipo chako chipo chedu*). Hence Shona culture acknowledges no patent and copyright rules on creativity. At the same time gifts are said to be owned by the Great Spirit (God). With regard to the modern school curriculum, participants felt that there was not much recognition for Shona forms of giftedness in the school curriculum. It was suggested that most gifted persons relied on individual efforts as the school curriculum emphasised academic competence. For example, Shona sculpturing, which is not taught formally in Zimbabwe, has become world renowned modern art, and well-known traditional musicians like Thomas Mapfumo (honoured with a Master of Music degree by University of Zimbabwe and Doctorate of Music degree by Ohio State University) did not make it through the school system.

As shown in Table 2.4, giftedness is believed to be spiritually blessed in individuals through their ancestors. In Shona beliefs God is the Supreme Spirit who blesses you through your ancestors. Gifts or talents are only entrusted in an individual for the society. Boasting is discouraged and it is believed that the spirits will curse you and withdraw the gift from you. Being humble and introverted is associated with great achievement as epitomised in the folktales, for example, in the despised and introverted Chinamapezi who won the best bride and equally in humble and quiet Tortoise’s great achievements in the forest. This is why when Hare, normally the paragon of forest smartness, brags about his smart tricks and continues to humiliate big animals and abuse the community well, the storyteller neutralizes him with an arrest by Tortoise.
Nobody is above the law, thus confirming the Shona proverb *Chikuriri chine chimwe* (Every conqueror has his/her own conqueror- No one is invincible). While valued talents are inspired by benevolent spirits, deviant talents are believed to be inspired by malevolent spirits. Beliefs about deviant giftedness were cited seven times with examples of witchcraft and stealing, talents believed to be inspired by evil spirits (*mashave akaipa*). *Chikapa*, a love making technique believed to heighten sexual orgasm between both partners (male and female) was acknowledged four times as one form of female giftedness.

Domains identified in Table 2.5, though not exhaustive, show the diversity of gifts and talents acknowledged in Shona culture including spiritual, lovemaking and deviant forms like stealing and witchcraft. The diversity of talent domains is supported elsewhere in research (e.g., Feldhusen et al., 1997; Gardner, 1993, 1999a, b; Romero, 1994). The arts domain is the most acknowledged with music topping the list followed by craftsmanship, especially sculpturing, then the affective-humanist domain, including healing and counselling, spiritual and leadership talents. Spiritual gifts are quite evident in this study. Among the subjects identified as spiritually gifted are a Shona historical prophet passionately respected as *Sekuru* (Grandfather) Chaminuka who foretold in amazing accuracy great events like tribal wars, change of rainfall patterns in the now Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe, the coming of White colonialism and new world order thereafter. Chaminuka was also a magician. Participants also identified as gifted a spiritual revolutionary war leader of MaShona Resistance to colonialism (*Chimurenga* War, 1896) now passionately called *Mbuya* (Grandmother) Nehanda. Mbuya Nehanda is now declared a national heroine of Zimbabwe. The case for recognizing spiritual intelligence is still debatable but Chapman (1998-2004) feels ready and bold enough to declare ‘spiritual intelligence’ the ninth intelligence and take the honours if Gardner himself does not do so.
Summary and Discussion

Shona culture of Zimbabwe defines giftedness (chipo) as a unique and prized human attribute which is both inherited and spiritually blessed and demonstrated in extraordinary abilities and expertise across a variety of domains of valued human activities. Good gifts are brought by good spirits while deviant gifts are inspired by evil spirits. The arts (especially music and sculpture), affective-humanistic, linguistic-cognitive, spiritual and leadership domains are the most acknowledged domains of giftedness in Shona society. Linguistic gifts are associated with dispositional intelligence (uchenjeri) in the cognitive domain (Irvine, 1970, 1988). Though giftedness is recognized and valued in both males and females in their gendered roles, fewer examples of talented females were identified. This situation raises questions. Why were only a few talented females identified in a culture that recognizes and values giftedness across gender? How does the shortfall of gifted women come about? An interview research would have allowed for probing the respondents to understand why fewer talented females than males were identified in the study.

As a spiritual blessing, giftedness is believed to be given for the common good like solving the problems of society. Individuals are recognized and praised for their talents but they are not allowed to boast about their abilities. It seems that humble and introverted persons are perceived as great achievers who can persevere even when the going gets tough as typified in Tortoise and Chinamapezi folktales. These views are not necessarily reflective of the modern Shona citizen of Zimbabwe who, as observed by Mpofu (2002, 2004), is affected by two systems of causation (i.e., indigenous Shona values and Anglo-Western values). However, since the average Zimbabwean is rural and the researched views are part and parcel of Shona people’s cultural identity, we believe these views entail important implicit theories for studying giftedness.
in Zimbabwe. The researched views are significant in the search for eco-culturally relevant theories that can inform gifted education from an African perspective.

Comparison with Other Views of Giftedness

As observed by Romero (1994), the Keresan Pueblo Indian Americans have a global view of giftedness, regarding it a “global human quality encompassed by all individuals” (p. 4). Their perception is centered on the ‘inner desire to want to contribute to the well-being of Pueblo life.’ Harmony and relationships are emphasized goals in Pueblo life and existence. The Keresan Pueblo have no direct term for giftedness in their vocabulary but they have an inclusive view intertwined with their values reflecting their concept of an ideal citizen. In their view, reports Romero, “A gifted person is one who exemplifies native culture and values through his/her convictions and behaviour” (p.6). The ideal gifted person should possess traits/attributes in four domains - humanistic-affective, special linguistic abilities, ingenuity-cultural knowledge, and creativity associated with special psycho-motor abilities. For the Keresan Pueblo culture, comparing persons through parameters of intelligence and giftedness is a totally alien and foreign Anglo-Western concept. The Maori of New Zealand have a similar holistic view of giftedness which encompasses interpersonal relationships and aspects of spirituality. Maori values, which are integrated with their religion, stress caring and serving others “manaakitanga” (Hyde, 2001).

Based on comparative elements outlined by Romero (1994, p.11), there are both similarities and differences between the Keresan Pueblo, the Maori, and Shona culture of Zimbabwe’s views of giftedness. Some similarities are evident in terms of inclusiveness of views and values such as cooperation, interrelationships and community focus of giftedness which differ from an “exclusive” concept of giftedness, and individual-focused, distinctive and pro-
competition Western values. Western views of giftedness exclude values of community focus and togetherness and highlight differences or distinctions in individuals’ abilities. Shona culture shares similarities with the Maori on the aspect of spiritualism. In Shona culture, giftedness is considered a spiritual blessing. Hence, some Shona sculptors operate on spiritual themes based on their cultural beliefs. Others articulate their creative vision as talking with stones to release their spirits, thereby manifesting thematic and creative artifacts. As confirmed by Bourdillon (1987), intelligence in Shona society is understood in the context of centrality of humanness, spiritualism and kinship of value systems.

However, Shona culture has specific terms for giftedness (chipo/ushavi), for example, Ane shave rechikoro (S/he is highly academically talented). Shona culture also recognizes distinctions between those who are truly gifted and those who are not. Both competition and cooperation are valued and harmony in society is maintained through checks and balances based on the skills of the very gifted people (with reference to folktale plots). Culturally, it is believed that everyone is born gifted, therefore no one should boast or be selfish in the ways they use their abilities. This is why the humble, quiet, and despised persons turn out to be the heroes in the end, for the Shona say, Hapana anomhanya achisiya mumwe. Weshure achave wemberi kwazvo (Nobody can progress ahead of others. Even the most backward individual shall be far ahead). While boastfulness is not allowed, special and enviable titles of honour are conferred to highly talented persons in recognition for excellence (e.g. mazvikokota (expert), mhare (fighter, strategist).

While Shona culture shares similar values of promoting community harmony with both the Keresan Pueblo and Maori cultures, it also reflects a similar fundamental view of giftedness as espoused in Western psychology if we put aside issues of values masking our perceptions. The
attributes of giftedness identified in Table 2.2, although not exhaustive, and the diversity of
talent domains confirmed in this study, basically agree with contemporary views of giftedness in
psychology. We note that studies of views of giftedness of the Keresan Pueblo and the Maori
mostly concentrated on value systems relating to giftedness, but in essence giftedness manifests
in all racial and cultural groups in similar ways. The real difference with Western views is in the
cultural values including the spiritual element enshrined in some cultures like the Shona and
Maori views of giftedness.

As observed by Richardson (2003), other nations (e.g., Japan and the Scandinavian
countries) which do not differentiate education programs by parameters of giftedness, indeed
recognize the existence of giftedness but they emphasise effort. They share a similar motto, “As
far as inborn ability goes, I can’t say it isn’t there, but I say it doesn’t matter. If you persevere
you will have a good outcome.”

As observed in this study, Shona views of giftedness do not militate against academic
progress or development in any other field of endeavour. The same cultural definition of
giftedness can be applied with a few modifications to the new domains. If a child is able to
demonstrate academic success ahead of others, by Shona definitions s/he is gifted. What may
differ is how individuals conceptualize the development of their talents and how this may affect
their motivation to achieve. This is what needs to be investigated. There is a need to include the
diversity of talent domains as recognized in Shona culture in the school curriculum. Those gifted
persons acknowledged in Shona culture (i.e., living heroes) have largely relied on their own
resources and effort to develop their abilities. The schools should harmonize the two systems of
causation and come up with one broad definition which is culturally responsive and relevant to
the needs of functioning in the modern cash economy.
Conclusion

Perceptions of giftedness are often masked in a culture’s values, needs and goals (Romero, 1994). This study has established that Shona culture’s basic views of giftedness do not differ fundamentally from contemporary views in psychology (if value elements are held constant). Demonstrated success, expertise/excellence, ability to solve problems and interpersonal relationships are the hallmarks of Shona culture’s views of giftedness. These results are consistent with findings in previous studies on intelligence (e.g., Mpofu, 2002, 2004). Shona culture attributes giftedness to heredity (ancestry) with hints of spiritual elements. It seems giftedness is basically a natural trait whose manifestation is masked in culture. Giftedness is realised, nurtured, moderated, defined, and manifested within a culture. The value systems of a culture selectively develop human potential in a domain in ways compatible with its worldview. This seems to explain why some cultures recognize intelligence and giftedness in domains not acknowledged by other cultures.

The existence of deviant talents in Shona culture is quite intriguing in this study. What this implies is that giftedness is based on a culture’s value system. Though Shona culture suppresses the development of deviant talents, it recognizes their existence and origins in its implicit theories of giftedness. This should stretch our conceptions of giftedness to emphasize its cultural situatedness. Meanwhile, there is debate on whether creativity should be judged by its “appropriateness” or “value to society” (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Lubart, 1999; Mannarelli, 2002; Smith, 2005). In this debate, Smith challenges the inclusion of “value to society,” preferring to judge creativity on the basis of production of something novel while Csikszentmihalyi (1999) argues that society is the ultimate judge of creativity.

The need to expand the definition of giftedness beyond the IQ paradigm makes sense not
just to accommodate culturally diverse students underrepresented in Anglo-American gifted education programs, but also as the way forward to optimally develop human potential by recognizing its cultural situatedness. What may appear to be naïve beliefs of some native cultures are in fact signals of possible existence of phenomena in implicit theories warranting formal research (Sternberg, 1985).

**Future Research**

While the study explored Shona culture’s indigenous views of giftedness in Zimbabwe, it was also constrained by distant communication methods in selecting participants. Owing to the small sample size employed in this study (as an exploratory study of Shona culture’s views of giftedness), the study’s results have limited generalizability. Despite this limitation, the insights gained have implications for the field of gifted education from an indigenous cultural perspective. However, there is a need to carry out further, broad based similar studies to confirm these findings with Zimbabwe’s wider community (especially among the Shona elders with no academic background who are assumed to be the guardians of Shona ethos and wisdom - *ndongamabwerume, vanamazvikokota*). A similar study is also needed (with the same questionnaire) to sample data from the Ndebele society of Zimbabwe since both Shona and Ndebele cultures share elements informing the Zimbabwean school curriculum.

Major research is underway to establish talent attributions by which Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe propel a field of art. Mpofu (2004) identified two causation systems in Zimbabwe (indigenous and Anglo-Western values). This study has highlighted conceptions of giftedness from a Shona indigenous cultural perspective. We however do not know how the third millennium Shona stone sculptors (icons of creative works in Zimbabwe) perceive and interpret the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration. This requires investigation.
Table 2.1: Identified Shona Definition of Giftedness Key Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) <em>Chipo</em> (something special given selectively)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) ability or aptitude for performing some task</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) inborn / present from birth</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) outstanding, unusual, rare, special</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) involves expertise, excellence</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) reflected in skilled tasks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Attributes/Characteristics of Giftedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) succeeding where most people fail/ excellence (<em>unyanzvi</em>)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) ability to outwit others, smart talk (<em>uchenjeri</em>)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) craft literacy (<em>umhizha</em>)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) awesome expertise, (<em>umazvikokota /umhare</em>)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) motivation/ energy (<em>shunguviro/havi</em>)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) humility /introversion (<em>kuzvidukupisa</em>)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) ability to learn fast/develop fast</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) visionary, insightful/expert (<em>godobore</em>)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) perseverance (<em>kushingirira</em>)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.3: Shona Values and Giftedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Giftedness is traditionally valued</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Female giftedness is traditionally valued</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Giftedness is collectively owned</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Humility rather than boasting is allowed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Deviance is suppressed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Recognition in the school curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Beliefs in Shona Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) inborn/inherited attribute (<em>zvedzinza</em>)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) supernatural/blessing from spirits</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) collectively owned by society (no copyright rules)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) deviance enhanced by spirits (<em>shave re-</em> )</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) lovemaking talent in women (<em>chikapa</em>)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.5: Gifted Persons by Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talent</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Gifted Person</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Arts-Musical (Traditional beat)</td>
<td>(Mbira player, singer &amp; dancer)</td>
<td>Thomas Mapfumo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Vocalist, composer)</td>
<td>Stella Chiweshe</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Revolutionary mbira player)</td>
<td>Oliver Mtukudzi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mbira musician)</td>
<td>Master Chiweshe</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mbira musician)</td>
<td>Ephet Mujuru*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Musician, composer)</td>
<td>Chiwoniso Maraire</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Musician, composer)</td>
<td>Big Tembo*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Craftwork Stone Sculpture</td>
<td>Domnic Benhura</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nicholas Mukomberanwa</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pottery/Basketry</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Affective/Humanist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jairos Jiri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Linguistics-Writer /Storyteller</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Mungoshi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sekuru Chaminuka*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>F/M</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mbuya Nehanda*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsudo (folktale)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Lovemaking art /chikapa</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Deviance-stealing shave rokuba</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.5: Gifted Persons by Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Either male or female</td>
<td>*Deceased persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender neutral</td>
<td>-- Gender neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No name given</td>
<td>--- No name given</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M/F: Either male or female
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Sternberg, R.J., Nokes, K., Geissler, P.W., Prince, R., Okatcha, F., Bundy, D.A., &


CHAPTER III

³Attributions of Creative Vision and Inspiration of Shona Stone Sculptors of Zimbabwe

Introduction

At the very mention of the word ‘creativity’, our minds jump to works of geniuses, yet creativity is normal for all human functioning at both the individual and societal levels. Creativity is central to human adaptation and survival (Ugur, 2004). As noted by Vygotsky (2004), human culture, both tangible and intangible, has been and continues to be shaped in creative processes by millions of mostly unknown and hence unacknowledged persons. However, ordinary creativity does not appear to arouse much attention in research. Considered at its higher level, (the big ‘C’ [Simonton, 1984]), creativity is a conveyer belt of human progress and advancement. It advances society in arts, science and technology (Sternberg, 1999). As proposed by Sternberg’s (2003) Propulsion Theory, creative expression encompasses a variety of behaviors constituting forms of creativity. Propulsion theory’s basic premise is that people express creativity in a range of different types from the humblest form of accepting the status quo (as in replication) to radically transforming a field to unprecedented levels in a historical period (as in reinitiation). Though defining creativity remains problematic in psychological research, when one’s contribution humbles previously respected positions in a field, creativity is never doubted. Consistent with Sternberg’s Propulsion Theory of Creativity, creative artists of Zimbabwe have transformed the original Shona stone sculpture into one of Africa’s best known art genres. Hence, the purpose of this study was to understand Shona artists’ constructions of meanings of the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain.

³ A version of this chapter has been submitted for publication. Ngara, C. (Under review). Attributions of Creative Vision and Inspiration of Shona Stone Sculptors of Zimbabwe.
Conceptions of Creativity

Researchers have increasingly come to accept that creativity is both dynamic and complex involving intricate processes (e.g., Wallace & Gruber, 1989). Creativity also is a cultural construct (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, creativity is neither inborn nor inherited. It originates from culturally defined opportunities for the development of personal skills, opportunity, and capacity to act. In this context, many writers concur that there is no unanimity on any one particular definition of creativity (e.g., Shi, 2004; Zimmerman, 2005). Similarly, Feldman and Goldsmith (1986) assert that we neither know how individuals come up with “original” and “important new works” nor “how a new idea is fashioned” and “how a domain is transformed” (p. 230). Previously, Guilford (1967) proposed that creative thinking encompasses variables such as divergence, originality, fluency, flexibility and elaboration. Torrance (1988), who took Guilford’s work further, suggested that creativity is cognitive and can therefore be assessed through tests. Although the Torrance tests of creativity are used in some quarters to assess creative potential in students, pen and paper definitions are theoretically limited to describe such complex phenomenon (Urban, 1990).

As asserted by Misra, Srivasta and Misra (2006), the central core for defining creativity is “contributing something original or novel and useful to the domains of objects and ideas” (p. 421). Similarly, Lubart (1999) and Mannarelli (2002) asserted that in the Western view, creativity is essentially the ability to produce novel and appropriate work. “Appropriate” means creativity must satisfy a social need. In this context, Akarakiri (1998) proposed that Africa’s economic and technological development challenges could be surmounted through the production of creative and competitive new products. Creativity implies limitless potential and
possibilities for realizing humankind’s dreams of development. As elaborated by Dalal (2001), “We are not only what we know of ourselves but immensely more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence” (p.337). If creativity can solve our third millennium challenges, including the HIV and AIDS menace, it has social impact. Therefore, among other things, “impact” of a novel product in society is a key hallmark in defining creativity (Ugur, 2004). “Creative” refers to the extent a product (an act, object or idea) differs from what already exists and has functional value (Runco, 2004; Sternberg & Lubert, 1996).

Research on conceptions of creativity from an African perspective is very scarce (Mpofu, Myambo, Mogaji, Mashego & Khaleefa, 2006). However, views from Indian research are very informative as India espouses similar communalist values as Africa. As informed by Misra et al. (2006), “The Eastern view of creativity emphasizes self-fulfillment or self-realization and the development of creative purpose” (p. 428). Contrary to the West’s emphasis on products, the East views creativity as a state of fulfillment or the expression of one’s inner essence emphasizing self-transformation and discovery of the inner self. Inspiration for creativity is viewed as the quest to understand the relationship between one’s inner world and the outer existence. Misra et al. (2006) defined creative talent (kārayitrī pratibhā) as “one’s ability to put or represent one’s felt experiences in words or other devices of communication” (p.431). Stone sculpture is a cultural form of communication. Talent (pratibhā) is considered an innate predisposition viewing creativity as spiritual (attributed to divinity). Creativity is therefore understood as an individual’s self-extension (Sharma, 1996). It is not only rooted in the environment but it is continuous with it and seeks relationship (Bhargava & Chakrabharty, 1996).
As perceived by Bhargava and Chakrabharty,

there is a relationship between creativity and beauty in all fields of human endeavor including science. When man creates, he is essentially generating beauty. His success depends on the extent to which what he has created is analogous to what is found in Nature and is in consonance with certain natural laws. Consequently, in man’s eternal search for beauty he is also sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously seeking similes with nature. (pp.67-68)

In other contributions to the definition issue, creativity is “that tantalizing constellation of personality and intellectual traits showed by people who, when given a measure of free reign, spend significant amounts of time engaged in the creative process” (Lumsden, 1999, p.153). For personality psychologists (e.g. Eysenck, 1993), creativity is not so much an ability variable but a personality trait. While personality traits may be involved in creativity, the creative process also involves dynamic and intricate processes. According to Runco (2004), creativity is ‘extracognitive’ meaning it “involves everything not strictly cognitive” (p.18). As elaborated by Shavinina and Seeratan (2004), ‘extracognitive’ phenomena encompass four interrelated and yet different components: a) specific intellectual feelings (e.g., feelings of direction, harmony, beauty and style), b) specific intellectual beliefs (e.g., beliefs in elevated standards of performance), c) specific preferences and intellectual values (e.g., choice of field), and d) intuitive processes. In yet another approach to definition, Shi and Xu (cited in Shi, 2004) suggest that creativity is “a function of one’s intelligence, personality, tasks, factors from social environment and the time one engages in a creative activity” (p.176). As concluded by Csikszentmihalyi (1999), debate over traits of creative people may go on but the cultural aspect of public recognition is the ultimate judge of creativity. Smith (2005), however, challenged
inclusion of the aspect “value to society” as the basis for judging creativity arguing that “reality” produced should be the central issue. Mumford (2003) also emphasized “productivity” as the key hallmark for judging creativity.

Defining creativity is indeed complex and controversial. However, this brief review identified the following consistently occurring terms: “originality,” “important new works,” “new idea,” “new possibilities,” “appropriate,” “social impact,” “production” and “uniqueness”. These key terms have informed the formulation of this study’s operational definition - *Creativity is a human capacity and/or process involving imaginative thinking, visualization and inspirational power resulting in the production of something novel (tangible or intangible) with social impact in any domain.*

**Context of the Study**

As “creativity” is still a grey area of research in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mpofu et al., 2006), the region lacks culturally sensitive theories and models that inform policy and practice on inspiring the quest for creative productivity amongst youths. Previous studies on indigenous views of giftedness from Zimbabwe revealed that giftedness has a spiritual foundation in African society (Mpofu, Ngara & Gudyanga, 2007; Ngara, 2006; Ngara & Porath, 2004, 2005). The same studies identified stone sculptors as gifted persons according to Shona and Ndebele cultures of Zimbabwe’s standards. While debate rages on as to whether creativity is dispositional (i.e., inborn ability or talent) or attributable to situational (environmental) factors (e.g. Barab & Plucker, 2002; Kasof, 1995; Irvine, 1989), it is not clear how Shona stone sculptors (herein called icons of creative works) conceptualize the origins and development of creative vision and inspiration in their domain. By “icons of creative works,” I mean those individuals who, by virtue of their distinguished creative productions, are held in high esteem in the Zimbabwean
society. In the Zimbabwean cultural context, icons of creative works may use different ways of knowing from those espoused in Western psychology (Ngara, 2007). Hence, Shona stone sculptors’ constructions of creative vision and inspiration cannot be ignored in our quest to propose culturally sensitive theories for encouraging creative productivity among youth in Zimbabwe. This study, therefore, was designed to investigate and bring to light Shona artists’ conceptualization of the development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain with a view to generate a mid-range theory that informs policy and practice in gifted education from an African perspective (espoused in Shona culture).

**Inspiration and vision.** As envisioned in this inquiry, “inspiration” and “vision” are central concepts in seeking to understand the development of creative talents. As confirmed by Piirto (2005), all creators talk of some form of inspiration and how they experience vision in their domains. According to Thrash and Elliot (2003), “inspiration” is a general construct with wide meanings. In the context of creativity, inspiration encompasses all the following: a temporary state and/or condition of feeling elevated energy and enthusiasm (or excitement) about something, experiencing heightened stimulation to a point of activity, powerful motivational energy and drive for performing an act, sudden creative idea or act and a source of influence (e.g. Divine guidance). Inspiration is understood in this study as a state or condition of heightened stimulation, strong interest and drive, or motivational power that impels certain individuals to engage in action designed to accomplish an objective. Mumford, Strange, Scott and Gaddis (2005) define vision in terms of a future image specifying an ideal end state for an organization or a group. In this study, creative vision encompasses imaginative ideas, insight, mental images, fantasy or visualization of something in the mind prior to its actualization into substantive reality. In light of this understanding of inspiration and vision, this study sought to investigate
the question: How do Shona sculptors of Zimbabwe conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain? Put another way: To what factors do Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe attribute the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain?

*The cultural context of stone sculpture of Zimbabwe*

Zimbabwe derives its name from the historical stone ruins dotted throughout the country and elsewhere in neighboring countries (*Dzimbabwe* means houses of stones) (Chigwedere, 1998; Mudenge, 1988). The largest stone ruins in the region (Great Zimbabwe ruins) are found in the modern day state of Zimbabwe and have been declared a national monument and world heritage site. That Zimbabwe ruins, constructed without mortar between 1100 to 1600 AD remain erect to this day attests to the Shona people’s historical legacy of stone sculpturing and architecture (Ndoro, 2005). The Zimbabwe Bird (now the country’s national emblem) is one of the earliest known forms of Shona stone sculpture relics. The earliest stone sculptures were not art for art’s sake but were a form of cultural expression symbolizing totems of the Mutapas (or Shona rulers) (Mhonda, 2004). Stone sculpturing has become a widely known indigenous art genre of Zimbabwe, originating from Shona cultural traditions and folklore (McEwen, 1966, 1991). According to Kotokwa (as cited in Kotokwa & Winter-Irving, 2004), stone sculpture of Zimbabwe “is considered some of the most respected sculpture in the world today, the most spiritually profound and culturally relevant” (p.2).

*Theoretical Framework*

As the study sought to generate a mid-range theory of Shona stone sculptors’ constructions of meanings of the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration, the study adopted a grounded theory study approach informed by a social constructivist
Constructivism. Constructivism is “the belief that knowledge is made up largely of social interpretations rather than awareness of external reality” (Stake, 1995, p. 99). The basic premise of the constructivist view is that knowledge is constructed and there is no objective reality that must be discovered. As a mode of inquiry, constructivism regards truth or reality as relative and knowledge and understanding as socially constructed (collectively) in interaction processes. “All meaningful reality is socially constructed…the basic generation of meaning is always social, for the meanings with which we are endowed arise in and out of interactive human community” (Crotty, 1998, p. 55). From a social constructivist perspective, realities of creators, from which they derive their vision and inspiration, are constructed in their social and physical environments.

In accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985), grounded theory in this study was based on the following constructivist assumptions: a) Reality is constructed; b) There are multiple realities; c) Shona artists are conscious individuals actively making meanings of their experienced realities, and d) Realities are mutually shared by both participants and the researcher.

Methodology

Much as the phenomenon of creativity is complex, understanding Shona artists’ constructions of creative vision and inspiration is equally complex and defies simplistic approaches. The complex, dynamic, and multifaceted nature of the construct of creativity requires a holistic and in-depth inquiry (Gruber & Wallace, 2001). A grounded theory study has both scope and potential to investigate the phenomenon of creativity because of its emphasis on theoretical emergence, context and social construction of realities (Locke, 2001). This section discusses the grounded theory study approach and how it was applied to generate theoretical ideas based on Shona stone sculptors’ constructions of meanings from their subjective
experiences, unique insights, and reflections on the development of their talents in their domain.

**Grounded theory.** A grounded theory study is “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24). Theory is empirically derived from data; it is “grounded” and not imposed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory has its theoretical underpinnings in the symbolic interactionism of Mead (1934), later elaborated by Blumer (1969). Symbolic interactionism proposes that individual and shared constructions can be investigated through interactions between the inquirer and informants; hence, the suitability of interview inquiry in this grounded theory study. Grounded theory study techniques were adopted in this study to investigate the question: How do Shona stone sculptors conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain? In accordance with Creswell (1998), grounded theory study techniques were found appropriate for this question which sought process-related phenomena of creativity. Researcher positioning in the study lay in post modernism, consistent with Charmaz’s (2000) constructivist approach to grounded theory. The researcher adopted a non-judgmental stance as a co-constructor of the participants’ perspectives of how they conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain.

Consistent with Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) grounded theory study tradition, the study commenced without hypotheses. Further, the researcher was also mindful to shelve any assumptions in order to conduct the study free from any preconceived ideas other than the study’s epistemological assumptions.

Though the grounded theory study approach was appropriate for this study; it is not without criticisms and limitations. According to Hammersley (1989), some of the concepts of the
grounded theory approach are a bit vague. Glaser and Strauss (1967) themselves are not very clear on the nature of grounded theory for they regard categories (or theoretical concepts) and their properties as “theory.” Besides, not all phenomena fit well with this kind of analysis. In addition, Bulmer (1979) doubts the practicality of Glaser and Strauss’ *tabula rasa* view of inquiry until theoretical categories have emerged. The researcher concurred with Bulmer that shelving assumptions was difficult during the study considering the relationship between data and conceptualization of the study.

Grounded theory appears to have different versions, some of which are attributed to differences between Glaser and Strauss (1967). The Glaserian position (which is more phenomenological) allows emergence of theory (respecting discovery in whatever form it takes) while Strauss and Corbin (1990) lean towards hermeneutics (applying a pre-existing interpretative framework). This researcher found Strauss and Corbin’s approach to grounded theory more flexible and consistent with this study’s social constructivist theoretical stance. Hence, this study’s goal was to generate (rather than discover) theoretical ideas that inform gifted education from an African perspective of Shona culture. In spite of its criticisms and limitations, the grounded theory study tradition offered this study definite procedures, guiding structure, and direction for deriving meaningful expectations at each stage of the inquiry process.

**Participants.** In accordance with grounded theory tradition (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), sampling was deliberately purposeful, targeting a homogenous group that could elucidate data for generating theoretical ideas. Participants in the study were 20 (14 males and six females) consenting acclaimed adult stone sculptors of Zimbabwe with a Shona cultural background (*Shona stone sculptors*). Participation in the study was highly selective based on three stringent criteria: a) having achieved national and/or international recognition in creative art, b) having
won at least one local or international prize of recognition in creative art, and c) having a Shona cultural background. While true icons are rare to find, the chosen sample size of 20 fell within the range recommended by McLeod (2001) for a grounded theory study. A grounded theory study approach does not so much depend on sample size but on the number of interviews that bring the analysis to the point of ‘saturation’ (i.e., the point at which no further analysis of data brings new insights to the emerging theory in the study) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Participants included a cross-section of artists from: a) first generation artists (among them living legends of modern stone sculpture of Zimbabwe), b) second generation artists (who learned from the first generation sculptors), and c) third generation artists (mostly children of first generation artists and other young and up coming artists). Among the third generation artists were a few highly educated participants who were also qualified professionals in other fields including two foreign-trained commercial pilots, an automotive engineer, three holders of business diplomas, and two graduate teachers. Only five participants in the study (including one foreign trained graduate) had had some form of formal training in art.

As per the grounded theory study tradition of Glaser and Strauss (1967), recruitment into the study was not done all at once but it was an on going process. Initial recruitment into the study was done through liaison with art galleries in and outside Zimbabwe and the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NAC) who assisted this researcher to identify the most highly talented Shona artists. Recruitment was initiated by a preliminary contact letter [See Appendix D (1)] that was handed to the artists through the assistance of their association with National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe (NAGZ) and Dominic Benhura Art Studio. Nominations, rating and short listing of prospective participants in the study were done in consultation with NAC, the Curator of NAGZ, Chinhoyi University of Technology (C.U.T.) Art
Department, and independent art galleries (such as Tengenenge, Chapungu, Matombo and Dominic Benhura Art Studio in Zimbabwe). The short listed artists were then helped to understand the terms of engagement as described in the informed consent form to ensure their free and voluntary consent [See Appendix D (2)]. Save for two, all the artists interviewed had exhibited sculptures at international art exhibitions. Accordingly, the researcher was confident that this study was informed by true icons of creative works in Zimbabwe.

**Procedure.** Data were collected through interviews conducted by the researcher at the participants’ workshops. All interviews were recorded on a digital voice-recorder and complemented by brief pencil notes by this researcher noting nonverbal communication. Each interview was transcribed verbatim using a transcription code informed by Jefferson’s (1985) transcription key symbols (See Appendix C). After ensuring their informed consent and establishing working rapport during preliminary visits [See Appendices D (1) and D (2)], participants were interviewed individually at times convenient to them. Data collection involved ongoing zigzag procedures of interviewing, transcribing, coding and re-interviewing participants to follow up issues, comparing and testing emerging theoretical categories and confirming findings with them in the process of generating theoretical ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participants identified as key informants were interviewed several times while others were interviewed much less, as dictated by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involved selecting cases on the basis of their capacity to elucidate the emerging theory or test it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In accordance with Ellis and Berger (2001), initial interviews explored the artists’ attributions of vision and inspiration with key informants through in-depth, open-ended and flexible inquiry guided by a set of eight pre-planned key questions. During the exploratory phase, in the quest to answer the grounded theory question (How do the Shona artists conceptualize the
origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain?), the researcher asked key questions such as: How did it all begin in your life for you to become such a great artist? What inspired you to join stone sculpturing art? Where do you think your creative talent originates from? When in your life did you first become aware of your special interest and ability in stone sculpture? (See Appendix E).

As per grounded theory study tradition (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), only the initial (exploratory) interviews were planned. The interviewing approach was non-judgmental regarding each informant as a unique individual capable of actively constructing and deriving shared meanings and perspectives. Subsequent interviews were conducted more flexibly, following up issues of emerging themes and theory categories.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection and transcription (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A step-by-step analysis procedure was followed to generate categories, patterns and themes which were later refined and interrelated to generate higher-order categories (major themes) and dimensions of theoretical ideas. Analysis commenced with initial open coding done simultaneously with memo writing and proceeded to higher level (axial) coding. Codes were written against supporting texts in accordance with Turner’s (1981) coding approach (See Appendix F).

Data analysis was based on constant comparison (i.e., comparing emerging ideas from participants, asking questions about emerging relationships or testing emerging hypotheses). Memo-writing ultimately led to formulations of theoretical ideas on Shona stone sculptors’ constructions of creative vision and inspiration. Concept categories were linked to subcategories at a dimensional level to put phenomena in the context of their causal relations and conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis process was terminated when new data could no longer
bring any further insights to the theoretical concepts thus generated in the study at the point of “saturation.”

**The worth of grounded theory.** Credibility of grounded theory was judged by its own rigors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which include collecting data multiple times from the same and different informants, consulting colleagues during and after analysis (See Appendix G), and applying member checks (Guba, 1981). During fieldwork, participants were offered opportunities to check reliability of transcriptions (in term of accuracy of recording and transcribing). Triangulation involved multiple and continuous collections of data from participants to generate theory, checking and crosschecking with them for their agreement during the data collection and analysis processes. Areas of queries were re-examined, explained and the final results were approved by participants drawn from the first, second and third generation Shona sculptors who informed the study. Finally, the major theoretical concepts of the grounded theory that were generated in the study were assessed for conceptual consistency with what is known in existing theories and research.

**Results**

The findings are presented in inductively derived major theoretical concepts/categories. The major themes or theoretical concepts highlighted here constitute Shona artists’ constructions of how they conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration in their domain.

**Inherent/internal factors.** Participants believed that their talents were inherent (inborn). They suggested that inherent factors spur on individuals to profit from exposure and practice experience that lead to creative vision and expertise. As articulated by a participant,

Talent is inborn; otherwise those who don’t have it give up so easily before they realize anything. They throw in the towel when going gets tough but those born artists soldier on
and live in hope. I’ve seen many youngsters come here very keen and eager to try their luck but many of them soon left unceremoniously.

While the participants recognized experience as necessary in talent development (as discussed later), they however asserted that experience, though necessary, is not a sufficient condition for talent development.

But those without the gift will still fail to create anything special even with 100 years of experience.... So, experience only helps talent to come out to its full extent or whatever. Those without gifts will become copyright experts with experience, so they remain craftsmen and never become true artists.

Internal factors (capacity or potential, personality factors such as motivation, confidence and perseverance) make the difference between talented artists and chancers just trying their luck.

From what the participants believed, talent has a biological basis.

There are certain factors that should be inherent in the person to become inspired and eventually create something. Even if you expose the person to the field, if s/he doesn’t have the interest, it won’t work…. What it actually means is that an individual has to have a cerebral underpinning for excellence....

While for some participants inherent factors implied something mystical about human potential, the sentiments expressed above clearly attributed creativity to both biological and personality factors.

*Activation and catalysis.* Activation results from a “stimulating exposure” to the domain. It is upon one’s exposure to a stimulating art environment (including its trends) that one realizes one’s passion and vision in the domain; hence one becomes motivated to join the field. As articulated and corroborated elsewhere by participants, inspiration and vision in stone sculpturing originate from being stimulated, intrigued or fascinated by one’s exposure’ to the art domain.

No matter how talented one is, one has to start from somewhere…. It’s not possible to create ideas from nowhere…. It’s not possible to create ideas from nowhere…because you have to see something first to be aroused by it. It’s like music when you hear it, that’s when you come to know that you have your own way of doing it. One needs a platform.
Platform here implies the knowledge base as the springboard for leaping into the depth of creative potential. Consistent with Langer (2005), familiarity increases liking which, in turn, is likely to evoke “mindful” engagement that produces creativity. Langer defines mindfulness as “the process of noticing new things” (p.16). As acknowledged by the participants, imaginative fantasies, perceptions and insights of creative vision are sparked by observing others’ fascinating creative works.

I felt excited…forgot myself and got carried away by my wild fantasies…. I was imagining myself as also capable of doing similar things. I just couldn’t stop thinking and imagining things I could make…. I felt a strong desire to try what those wonderful artists were doing…it’s like my whole self and my thinking were now dominated by imaginations of this art…. I began to have some kind of visions of stone sculptures. Even some ordinary things that I see in life somehow became metaphors of stone sculpturing.

This account reveals that inspiration entails intense arousal, vision, imagination and fantasizing with a compelling urge for action. In effect, a stimulating exposure evokes self-conviction that one can also do similar, if not better, things and fuels one’s passion in joining the field. The stimulus that evokes inspiration is the trigger (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). In this study, the trigger was either role model(s) or artworks (objects) perceived as valuable, enticing and intriguing. Insights thus gained from exposure to a stimulating environment (of accomplished artists and/or their artworks) may trigger a novice’s inspiration and passion, leading to creative vision and expertise in the field. Participants revealed that exposure had the magic of activating an individual’s latent talent if associated with a significant model.

My gift emerged through my marriage to my late husband…. one of the earliest top brass first generation sculptors of Zimbabwe…. I found him doing this work and I admired it…. It was difficult for a woman to venture into sculpturing…my husband did not want me to become a stone sculptor…. So, I’d venture into it clandestinely…I knew that he was not born talented and I believed that I could also do it

Here we see a female participant whose marriage to a talented artist provided her both the exposure and stimulation to realise her artistic talents against odds. Though the culture to which
she belonged frustrated her tacit skills and knowledge of art through its sanctioned male
dominance and gender-defined roles, such was the strength of her inspiration and passion in
stone sculpturing art that she would not allow odds and adversity to stand in the way of her talent
ambition. Her inspiration and passion saw her venture into a profession that was hitherto
perceived as masculine and this eventually cost her her marriage.

Similarly, another participant confirmed how inspiration was evoked by familiarity with
the domain and social proximity with the model.

That’s where my aunt’s son….was sculpting with other artists…. Those are the ones who
helped me to learn how to…. actually I started by helping them by polishing their works, that’s’ how I gained the experience of sculpting skills. I was just fascinated when I saw
these guys working with stone and I just fell in love with the stone. I just tried it and
stopped drinking beer and playing football which was so loved by other youngsters of my age.

Social proximity refers to closeness of social ties with the model, usually through
kinship, marriage or friendship group association (Ndoro, 2004). In effect, inspiration is
triggered by an individual’s ‘consciousness’ or being ‘mindful’ of qualities of goodness, beauty
and aesthetics associated with the art and the model (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). It emerged that, for
some participants, stimulating exposure/opportunity (the catalyst that activated their talent
consciousness) occurred by ‘chance and luck.’

Although talent is inherent, one also needs a platform to start from. Sometimes chance
and luck help you to activate what is inherent in you…. I was lucky to have come across
those guys who were doing just what I loved to do in my life. That helped me immensely
in the development of my talent you know.

Corroborating the role chance and luck play in creativity, Feldman and Goldsmith (1986)
asserted that it is a matter of “being the right person at the right place at the right time” (p.181).
Similarly, Simonton (2004) asserts that creativity appears to be stochastic; that is, creativity is to
some extent determined by chance factors, hence it may not be predictable. Similarly, Irvine
(1998) argued that the sudden blossoming of sculpturing talent among young Zimbabweans is attributable to availability of sculpturing opportunities such as offered by Tom Blomefield, a White farmer and owner of Tengenenge Art village in the Guruve District of Zimbabwe. Though only a few of the participants interviewed had made it through Tengenenge Art Centre, participants nonetheless acknowledged that the availability of sculpting media (stones) and sculpturing opportunity (including exposure) offered at Tengenenge Farm had helped individuals to discover their creative talents.

Even if your family is not of artists, by going to a training centre like Tengenenge, you may still discover your talent. There are some young generation guys who are born talented but whose families are not artists. However, when they get to Tengenenge Art Center, they discover their expertise and establish themselves.

**Domain specific consciousness (mindfulness):** As suggested by the interviews, creative vision comes through conscious intent to master and transcend prevailing artistic expressions. The process commences with appreciating others’ artistic expressions and techniques and being inspired to shift from one’s individual and usually static paradigm to try and transcend the domain’s collective vision.

If you want to be creative, you do not need to keep things to yourself because you will find out at the end of the day that you have done nothing special. You need to see what others have done and improve on your own pieces.... Yet when I tried to put into stone those visions and fantasies that boiled in my head as I observed expert artists, I got disappointed that I couldn’t produce....

Collective vision is inspired by observing other experts in the field, within and beyond one’s cultural boundaries. From what the above participant is saying, one needs to also see other artists’ fascinating styles as this inspires one to come up with something from one’s own ideas. This is similar to what another artist said earlier on: “It is like music, when you hear it that is when you know you have your own way of doing it.” This does not mean that one will see others and copy them. As observed earlier, passion and creative fantasies are evoked by
exposure to attractive models identified with exciting art productions.

I threw away my first pieces after I had gone to the city of Harare and saw that other sculptors were producing more creative and fascinating art than mine. They were already mixing various media - wood, stone and metal…. I told myself that I should carve something really imaginative and unique but despite changing my production style, no gallery accepted my works.

Informants thus acknowledged creativity by innovation involving a conscious struggle to master and transcend a collective vision of top performers. Innovation may be defined simply as the process of transforming existing reality (Mpofu et al., 2006).

**Cultural consciousness.** The interviews revealed that artists derived inspiration from cultural beliefs and value systems. Their mental frames of reference through which they think, imagine, dream, fantasize, and create are constructed from their cultural experiences.

In Shona culture, a woman does several things for the upkeep of the family and my art captures all that…culture influences my work. My ideas come simply from cultural themes that make strong impressions on my mind…. I also create from my cultural beliefs and values. I grew up in Shona culture and I think and create in that culture.

In this excerpt we see how this woman is a creation of culture and that she represents that culture through the sculpture she produces. Her art captures her gender role as embedded in her culture. In other words, her cultural consciousness is part and parcel of both her inspiration and creative vision. As part of artists’ cultural consciousness, beliefs and value systems, whether Christian or indigenous, were linked by participants to the development of their creative vision and passion in stone sculpturing. Some artists perceived and interpreted the development of their inspiration and vision spiritually.

It’s a purpose in life to give a meaning or to touch other people’s hearts to know their Creator who is the Most High. I feel like my name *Chenjerai* (Shona- translated as ‘Take heed’) obliges me to make other people aware of what the Creator Himself is telling us…. I feel that art is the only way to pass messages across because at times the Most High intercedes where words have no meaning to really say things.

While the Christian artist as captured above perceived inspiration and vision as acknowledging
divine message through form, the tradition-oriented artist perceived creative ideas through cultural symbolism, dream visions and reincarnation beliefs.

We say ‘spirit in the stone’ because we believe that these stones have some spirits in them. It is a Shona cultural belief that our spirits come back in different ways. We as sculptors believe that our spirits may reside in these stones. We get these stones from mountains and some of these mountains are sacred.

The artists’ constructions of creative vision and inspiration reflected a consciousness of their Shona cultural beliefs and value systems. Though individuals subscribed to different belief systems, they however ended up with similar results in terms of producing creative art. Participants were unanimous that talents were inborn, as espoused in Shona culture. Some of them cited early events in their childhood suggestive of art precocity while others alluded to prodigious achievement as evidence of possible existence of enduring giftedness.

My early primary school level art success gave me a big push. I won many provincial art and craft competitions at a tender age even in advanced categories. I was rated one of the best young artists in Manicaland Province ….. I was ever scooping up some envied prizes even beyond my age. Many school heads used to visit my school….in Nyanga to witness my highly publicized art expressions.

In this connection, one participant, an orphan who hailed from a humble family background, related how he commenced stone sculpturing at a tender age and sold his first sculpture piece at the age of twelve. Achieving success against odds and adversity is a Shona cultural hallmark of giftedness (Ngara & Porath, 2004). Participants acknowledged the cultural notion that “everyone has his/her own gift although it might be as yet unknown…..” Consciousness of cultural beliefs about innate talents constitutes a self-fulfilling prophecy that may affect creativity.

There was a time when I overheard my late father…whispering to his assistants, “I think my little daughter…. is going to be a great woman artist.” Though I did not immediately believe him, somehow this later worked like magic in turning my life into stone sculpturing…. Although I qualified as a graduate teacher of business accounts, I’ve since given up my teaching career to become a fulltime female sculptor breaking barriers in this male dominated field.
In this excerpt we see a young woman who from a very early age was imprisoned by her culture despite her father’s realization of her talent potential at a very tender age. She gives testimony of her disbelief of her father’s predictive assessment. Her cultural imprisonment seems to emanate from her consciousness of her culturally assigned gender roles. In defiance of her father’s judgment she became a full-time graduate teacher while infrequently venturing into stone sculpturing. This infrequent venturing could be considered an attempt to break a cultural barrier, the overcoming of which she attributes to the magic emancipation into the world of stone sculpturing art.

As revealed in the interviews, participants operated with strong beliefs about the emergence of their vision and inspiration. Consistent with this observation, Povey (1991) could not help being fascinated by a Shona artist “explaining his work by reporting its antecedents, its relationship to the entire cosmos of folk consciousness and the heritage that in some dimension can turn dream visions into images” (p. 21). Cultural consciousness evokes both inspiration and vision while enhancing passion and confidence in attaining expertise.

In some families, sculpturing has become a tradition whereby exposure is readily available to children at tender age. Participants from families of acclaimed artists saw their inspiration as following the footsteps to wisdom.

Having been born to a world famous sculptor that my dad is, I felt I should follow the footsteps to wisdom and join him to try and further what he had already done…. I started playing with my father’s tools as toys since I was five years old. I grew up in an environment for art…I was exposed to it. Though professionally I did something else, I developed a strong passion for art over the years… eventually after running around and doing this and that, I finally came back to it as I realized that sculpting is my call.

Consistent with this observation, Mhonda (2004) argues that Shona kinship’s apprenticeship-style education given by a master artist to a young unemployed relative tended to reinforce indigenous beliefs of nhaka youmhizha hwedzinza (family inherited talent). “Stone sculpturing
was exclusively a courtly profession - sacred, closed and limited to a few courtly shrines. Only certain lineages …” (Mhonda, p.41). In this context children from families of famous artists may be inspired into stone sculpturing art by family legacy.

Our father did not like directly encourage or pressurize us to join his art. To the contrary, he actually insisted that we should acquire a good education and take up professional training. Yet, because we admired his works from our early childhood, it’s not surprising that our passion in stone sculpturing art has ultimately dominated our other career alternatives and training.

The children of famous artists were among the few highly educated artists interviewed who were also qualified in various professions (among them two commercial pilots, two accountants, an auto-engineer, two graduate teachers and a graduate artist). Such was the strength of their inspiration through family legacy that many of them eventually left their original professions to join their families’ profession, codenamed *Made in stone*. *Made in stone* means that Shona artists associate the development of their talents, achievements, fame and pride with stone craft.

*Cultural consciousness* is articulated elsewhere by Shona artists as the foundation of their inspiration and creative vision in their domain. Shona artists acknowledged part of their inspiration as *following footsteps to wisdom* or being influenced by family and cultural legacy. In the Zimbabwean cultural context, the saying *following footsteps to wisdom* applies to all artists in general including those born outside sculpturing families because the country has established a stone sculpturing legacy. This consciousness is acknowledged below.

Because the first generation, the second, and now the followers in the third generation…. We are all following the leading guides of those that came before us. In fact there is nothing we can do that shall surpass those who started…. it’s a chain of tradition that has been passed down.

Similarly, Kotokwa and Winter-Irving (2004) observed that stones have historically been a source of artistic inspiration in Zimbabwe from San stone painting through the Zimbabwe ruins
architecture to modern stone sculpture. Hence, some of the early sculptors felt that stones contained spirits.

I’m also inspired by the ancient rock paintings of San (earliest known inhabitants of Zimbabwe). I saw that those people left their own history. This inspired me to do something in order to leave our own history taking after their example of rock paintings.

**Practice and Experience:** Although participants believed that their talents were innate, they also believed that expertise developed through conscious intent - hard work and practice. In the process of acquiring experience, participants acknowledged going through trial and error-learning, practice, feedback, self-criticism and criticism from others, and even experiencing some discouragement at some point. But they ultimately achieved success (not necessarily pecuniary), realizing their dreams, becoming confident, and expressing opinions and personal philosophical ideas.

I made that sculpture and took it to Chapungu Art Gallery, well it was not well received, people ridiculed it…. “Well the fingers were not even, it was this, that or the other,” and I was heart broken. I couldn’t stand how everybody would say whatever they wanted. I thought… the salesmen and other artists were so blind. So, I took it away but I thought it was a star piece when I made it.

As pointed out earlier, stone sculpturing involves two major skills, namely artistic creativity and craftsmanship. Individuals’ creative fantasies and imagination might boil upon being inspired but frustration soon ensues when reality dawns to them at concretizing their ideas into form through stone if they had not mastered craftsmanship skills.

Yet, when I tried to put those visions and fantasies into stone, I was disappointed that I couldn’t produce most of those wild ideas that boiled in my head as I observed expert sculptors at their work. However, the participants’ life stories corroborated that their creative expertise developed with experience.

But then, with time, patience, determination, practice and experience, I developed that idea. I made it whole and complete. I made it acceptable, I refined it. Everyone would look at it and just admired and praised it. So, experience does lend itself well when one is
trying to develop themselves. This corroborates Tusa’s (2004) findings that creativity results from experience won the hard way. Tusa concluded that being creative in art is “painful, an urgent necessity, a driven work” (p.10). Experience opens up one to possibilities for the next work as solutions to unresolved ideas are discovered in the process. In this process, only very few artists may move from idea to implementation.

A person might be born with potential for creativity but maybe without practicing and gaining insights and expertise, that potential might not be realized…. I wouldn’t say experience brings creativity as such but it is that need in you, that desire in you to break away from the standard practice and break new ground to chart a new course that sets you apart and sort of lands you somewhere.

How perseverance is linked to creative vision is confirmed in Raina, Srivasta and Misra’s (2001) analysis of durability and longevity of creative enterprises of playwrights, novelists and poets in India whose autobiographies reflected that they tried different things and had taken many years to compose their works. Similarly, Wallace and Gruber (1989) confirmed that Dorothy Richardson struggled to invent her Stream of Consciousness (a literary style that attempts to take story writing closer to reality). Hence, Wallace and Gruber concur that insight comes in prolonged and intricate processes.

*Unique experiences.* According to the interviews, artists were also inspired to join stone sculpturing by their own unique experiences. Most of the participants hailed from humble to ordinary backgrounds including poverty and orphanhood. Some grew up under very difficult conditions that compelled them to drop out of school early in life. Those who were orphans learned to do certain adult tasks at a tender age, and they called themselves survivors who made it through a stringent work ethic, self-discipline, courage and determination. Of those unique experiences were intriguing stories of female participants who derived inspiration from their
reactions to negative experiences of their cultural gender role scripts. One woman in particular related how she derived inspiration from courage and determination acquired during her tough childhood experiences of herding cattle with boys during a time when leopards, hyenas, jackals, crocodiles and snakes were roaming around. She related how she learned self-reliance competing with boys in many tasks, becoming friends with baboons which occasionally warned her through their ways about the presence of a dangerous snake or animal. Later, as a married woman in her adult life, she derived inspiration from her humiliation by her late husband, a true legend of Shona stone sculpture.

What really motivated me to take up sculpturing was that each time my husband went to sell his sculptures he did not come back home until he was broke.... I knew that my husband had not been born already talented…. You know, talents develop through trial learning, experimenting and learning from experience through determination and real hard work. I strongly felt that I could also do it…. You see, in my life I used to be despised as a woman…. and this gave me strong desire and passion to succeed in things I do and prove otherwise.

Here we see a woman challenging a cultural imposition by dismissing the cultural myth of inborn talent of her husband and the suitability of the male trait in stone sculpturing craft. Her clandestine engagement in the art asserted her capabilities. She saw herself also fitting the label Made in stone which is traditionally considered to be a special male preserve. Her close social proximity to an accomplished legendary artist (through marriage) and opportunity to observe him working on stone sculptures stimulated her own inherent talent, which mirrored that of her husband, thereby fueling her quest for self-actualization.

*Creative expression.* Participants perceived their creative processes metaphorically as *talking with stones (to release their spirits).* Participants used different modes or strategies in their creative processes. In the spirituality mode, they tended to revere or reify stones. Depending on the artist’s beliefs, some believed stones were reincarnated habitats of ancestral spirits while
other artists just respected stones for their aesthetic qualities and potential value. Spiritual reverence, or respecting the stone, reduces the probability of breaking the stone, thereby enhancing successful craftsmanship. *Talking with the stone* describes the artists’ imaginative mode of looking at the stone, scrutinizing its features and negotiating possibilities of what to carve considering its shape or nature.

You look at the stone and you can have a silent conversation where you look at the shape of the stone and say, hey this looks like…. Then, you scrutinize the stone further and you see it doesn’t look anything like…. is a human being hidden in there. In this communication, it’s not really talking to a stone like you had lost your head but the stone talks to me by its presentation.

As artists are unique individuals, it is not surprising that the metaphor *talking with stones* probably has different meanings to different artists. However, the end result is the same in terms of producing creative art. As part of dialoguing with the stone, other artists perceived their creative vision as unwrapping a parcel hidden in stone or peeling a banana.

You look at the stone and say, “Wow, that’s a magnificent shape! What is in that shape?” So it’s a mixture. Visions come to you occasionally through dreams and then the shape of the stone and also the surroundings, I mean the world around me, our culture and so on.

Interviews also revealed that artists constructed new ideas from reflecting on their past experiences, recycling one’s past experiences and evaluating them. It also emerged in the interview process that new ideas come in different ways including dreams, fantasizing and even in unexplained ways.

Sometimes your mind may flash back to those things you learned from culture and you may come up with a hunting theme. Other people may ask, “Why hunting?” At times you may not be able to explain convincingly the whys of some of your creations because you were reflecting and listening to your past speaking to you in the present and feeding your imagination on ideas to put into stone.
Discussion

The results of the grounded theory study analysis revealed that Shona artists conceptualized the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration as an interplay of six major theoretical concepts which explain creativity: *inherent/internal factors, activation stimulus, cultural consciousness, unique experiences, practice and experience,* and *domain-specific consciousness.*

*Inherent/internal factors.* Consistent with Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness, Shona artists believed that their creative talents are inherent/inborn. As evident in the analysis process, belief systems including cultural beliefs that one is born gifted constitute part of the inspirational process in stone sculpturing art through a cultural consciousness. The Shona view of spiritual foundations of giftedness is also corroborated in the Indian view. In the Indian view, talent (*pratibhā*) is considered to be an innate predisposition (Misra et al., 2006). Consistent with Shona culture’s views, the Indian view regards creativity as spiritual (attributing it to divinity).

*Activation and Catalysis.* In agreement with Shona artists’ beliefs of possessing inherent/latent (inborn) talent, the grounded theory study process revealed that stimulating exposure to a field of art activates or reactivates one’s internal/inherent/latent potential, thereby evoking one’s inspiration and creative vision. As revealed in the study, stimulating exposure is conditionally more effective through social proximity with attractive models. Culturally, exposure was previously limited to close kinsmen reinforcing beliefs of family inherited talent (Mhonda, 2004), but recently it has been extended not only through family but also through marriage, friendship association and training at art colleges. Some aspiring individuals also discover their talent by chance. Currently, female artists are still very few as they have to struggle against culturally defined gender roles to make it in the art field. Though female artists
become inspired by stimulating exposure just like their male counterparts, making it in a male dominated field demands immense resilience to withstand the odds and adversities of a patriarchal society that defines roles by gender. Hence, Shona women’s inspiration turned out to be more of a reaction or a protracted struggle to break cultural barriers to their self-actualization.

Consistent with Shona artists’ views of inherent/inborn talent that emerges with activation, Maduro (1976) defined a creative artist (from an Indian perspective) as:

One who contacts the psychic reality within the depths of himself…strive(s) to make it manifest, to become one with it, integrating it through differentiation. In the very real sense, the artist is enjoined to recreate, or reactivate, what is already latent in his unconsciousness. (p.135)

Although for Shona artists, “what is already latent” (or inherent) appears to be limited to beliefs of innate (inborn) talent, there is, however, agreement with Maduro on the aspect of “reactivating” one’s creative processes to conscious functioning. Shona artists suggest that no one can create anything that is not based on something one has learned or seen. One needs knowledge of crafting skills and field trends. This makes stimulating exposure a springboard for leaping into the depths of one’s creative potential. One Shona artist in particular summed it all so beautifully in a few words. It is like music, when you hear it, that is when you know you have your own way of doing it. It however emerged that stimulating exposure, though necessary, is not a sufficient condition for creativity where talent is lacking. Though many were exposed, only a few realized their talents. For many were called but a few were chosen.

*Practice and experience.* Despite their claims of possessing innate talent based on Shona culture’s implicit theories, Shona artists revealed that creative vision does not come automatically in stone sculpturing art. It requires involvement, practice, patience and experience. This is where the test of character strength, determination and motivation failed many. The artists however linked giving up to lack of inherent (innate) potential for talent. Artists revealed that
they worked long hours and endured a period of discouragement in their growth in creativity but with courage and determination, they eventually made it. As this researcher witnessed, stone sculpturing is more than just a crafting skill. In this vein, practice and experience, although necessary, are also insufficient conditions for creativity.

*Cultural consciousness.* Culturally, everyone is believed to be gifted from birth. Shona artists’ self-awareness and the influence of Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness constituted part of their inspiration and creative vision in stone sculpturing art. Cultural consciousness in this study included beliefs of family inherited talent, influence of family and cultural legacy (also known as following footsteps to wisdom) and value systems including culturally defined gender roles. Although the culture to which one belongs determines the degree to which one’s inherent talent can be experienced and realized, gender defines how individuals experience vision and inspiration through a cultural consciousness. As revealed in the analysis process, women derived inspiration in unexpected ways which boil down to a reaction against culturally imposed restrictions of gender roles. Despite the obstacles imposed by gender role expectations affecting women artists, we see as part of their inspiration a desire for freedom and self-expression. Ironically, in the earlier study (Ngara & Porath, 2004), the Shona perspective of giftedness that emerged suggests that “overcoming odds and adversities” is a hallmark of giftedness. At the same time, gender expectations in Shona culture place obstacles that inhibit women from exploiting their talent potential in fields traditionally considered to be a preserve of males. On one hand, it is probable that these women had resilience to overcome culturally imposed gender role barriers to realize their talents in stone sculpturing while on the other hand, some of the women may have been inspired by their determination to break gender role barriers to self-expression. This study revealed unexpected, intriguing and not so apparent ways in which
cultural consciousness inspires women’s creative vision and passion in stone sculpturing art.

Unique experiences. It emerged that inspiration of artists is partly influenced by their unique life experiences and circumstances including gender roles. In this study unique experiences are either a test of character or they reinforce traits of, self-reliance, perseverance, determination and hard work in individuals. As this researcher witnessed, stone sculpturing is quite challenging. Without a strong character one easily gives up. Hence, Irvine (1998) observed many unfinished half-carved boulders that were abandoned by many who had came to try their luck at Tengenenge Farm. In female artists we see that yearning for freedom desired by all artists being translated against odds and adversity to prove a point or to dispel established myths about woman’s capabilities.

Domain-specific consciousness. By virtue of one’s involvement in stimulating exposure, practice and experience in a domain, one develops a state of domain-specific consciousness which may lead to creative expression. In this state, one becomes mindfully engaged, fully alert and conscious of a domain’s trends. This is the state of experiencing vision. Shona artists perceive their creative vision in metaphors, dreams and symbolism. In the interviews some artists viewed carving a sculpture as unwrapping a parcel concealed in stone or peeling a banana. This is the stage at which artists experience internal dialoguing with stones {talking with stones to release its spirit} in the quest to figure out what to carve and how to carve in the stones.

The Dynamic Interactive Process Model (DIPM). As revealed in the results section, the major theoretical concepts discussed above are supported in the literature. Mhonda’s (2004) claim that “cultural consciousness of imagery is the basis of creativity through its quasi-religious emotion expressing Shona beliefs and mythology through solid imagery” (p.41.), though speculative, is not unsubstantiated. However, as revealed in this study, Mhonda’s hypothesis of
cultural consciousness is only part of the interactive dynamics producing creativity. In accordance with Langer (2005), cultural consciousness may be understood as being mindful of cultural beliefs and value systems. In this connection, belief systems, whether based on subjective or illogical factors, are part of the dynamics of inspiration, passion and creative expression in stone sculpturing art. That belief systems are linked to inspiration was confirmed in Perry’s (2005) observation, “I found that writers operate with a variety of belief systems” (p.34).

As established in this study, creative expression in art results from dynamic and interactive process involving six major factors: inherent/internal attributes, activation stimulus, individual’s unique experiences, cultural consciousness, practice and experience and domain-specific consciousness. These theoretical concepts espouse a dynamic and interactive process model that is based on cultural consciousness and belief systems as the foundation of Shona artists’ inspiration and creative vision in their domain. Figure 3.1 presents the dynamic and interactive process model of creativity (DIPM) that emerged in this study. The phenomenon of creativity is indeed a dynamic complex (Wallace & Gruber, 1989). The DIPM is a dynamic interplay of Shona artists’ talent attributions reflected in a process model. Figure 3.2 shows a cross-section of the DIPM model that emerged from the grounded theory study process. In Figure 3.2 the model’s arrows merely serve to represent its dynamic processes (through interactions among the elements) but nowhere is it suggested that interactions among elements is limited by directionality suggested by the arrows. Interactions are not limited to adjacent elements. However, it was beyond this study’s scope to suggest the order in which elements interact and how they interact in the model (whether directly or by transitivity). As proposed here, the DIPM model is not an attempt to simplify creativity. Rather the model should be viewed as a simplified version of a complex phenomenon established by the study. The model is
based on the artists’ belief systems as the *magic carpets* by which the artists ascend into the unknown to express their creativity. In this model, creative expression is realised through imaginations, fantasies, dreams, visions, reflections, metaphors, imagery and personal philosophies and other systems used by different artists.

*Figure 3.1:* A dynamic and interactive process model of creativity: Shona Stone Sculptors’ Constructions of the Origins and Development of Creative Vision and Inspiration
**Conclusions and Implications for Education**

This study investigated Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe’s constructions of creative vision and inspiration in their domain. The study established a dynamic and interactive processes model based on belief systems (DIPM). According to the DIPM model, the capacity to be creative is inherent in the individual requiring activation (or reactivation) to evoke one’s unique experiences, cultural consciousness and domain specific consciousness in interactive processes leading to creative expression with practice and experience. In this model, the identified dimensions are wired by belief systems. Hence, this study suggests that belief systems are *magic carpets* by which creators ascend into the unknown to unleash their creativity. Contrary to Kasof’s (1995) criticisms of creators’ talent attributions as self-serving and biased illusions, this study concurs with Mannarelli’s (2002) and Silvia and Phillips’ (2004) findings that illusory cognitive biases, motivated self-serving illusions, and self-regulation all constitute the underlying
From a social cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986), self-reflections and self-beliefs as reflected in Shona artists’ constructions of creative vision and inspiration are all cognitive processes mediated by self-direction. The social cognitive perspective puts emphasis on environmental influences to explain the basis of human achievement motivation (Dai, Moon & Feldhusen, 1998). Self-perceptions and self-beliefs are influenced by both exogenous and endogenous factors; once formed, they tend to have an enduring effect on individuals (Schunk, 1991). From a social constructivist perspective, belief systems are socially constructed. If beliefs are both cognitively and socially constructed, then we have some basis for influencing them to enhance passion for creativity among students. However, this is not as simple as it sounds because of the complexity of dynamic, intricate and interactive processes involved in creativity (Gruber & Wallace, 2001). Creativity appears to be stochastic (Simonton, 2004). The combination of chance and luck factors believed to produce creative genius is not so predictable. In addition, beliefs, preferences, intuitions, and feelings that produce creativity constitute extracognitive phenomena which we may not directly influence (Runco, 2004). Schools therefore need to engender more enduring student beliefs about existence of their talent potential. As informed by Shona culture, every child is born with talent potential which is sometimes forfeited by laziness and other vices. This view can be followed up or strengthened with Bandura’s (1986) social learning’s theory’s strategies for developing self-esteem and self-efficacy relating to creative achievements.

Consistent with this study’s findings, Schaefer-Simmern, Shaefer-Simmern, Abrahamson and Fein’s (2003) Theory of Visual Conceiving acknowledged existence of universal inherent capacity for artistic consciousness. The Theory of Visual Conceiving postulates that humans
transform environmental perceptions into gestalt formations expressed in various artistic forms. Therefore, students have a right to be exposed to a stimulating environment of creative art (catalysis) capable of reactivating their inherent capacity to create. Accordingly, the principle of social proximity may be considered to identify effective models capable of sparking students’ creative consciousness across domains. However, social proximity need not be limited to kinship ties as practiced in Shona traditional society.

Creativity has a social context (Csíkszentmihalyi, 1999). Although Zilberg (1996) criticized Shona artists’ metaphor of creativity - *talking with stones to release their spirits* as “unrealistic mystification of creativity” (p. 191), these are in fact part of indigenous cultural constructions of reality pertaining to creativity. As established in previous studies on indigenous views of giftedness and African ways of knowing (Mpofu et al., 2007; Ngara, 2006, 2007, Ngara & Porath, 2004, 2005), giftedness has spiritual foundations. These metaphors reflect an indigenous African paradigm of spirituality-centered wisdom for expressing extracognitive phenomena responsible for producing creativity. From Shona culture’s point of view (Ngara & Porath, 2004, 2005), talent is *shavi* (spirit for-) characterized by immensity and intensity of motivation, passion and energy of the individual. In concurrence with Sri Aurobindo’s thesis (as cited in Misra et al., 2006) from an Indian perspective, humans have “a hierarchy of levels of evolutionary consciousness where life is the first; the mind is second and the greater release is spiritual and supramental” (p. 338). It is the realm of “spiritual” and “supramental” that we endeavor to understand to advance human creativity. Consistent with observations from Amabile’s (2001) interviews with John Irving and Tusa’s (2004) interviews with accomplished artists, this study also confirmed that creative individuals have incredible insights that can significantly inform us about the development of their talents.
**Recommendations for Further Study**

Though these results are consistent with existing research, replication studies are required (with different artists from different cultures and domains) for wider application of the findings. Though previous studies have linked self-illusions with the dynamics involved in creativity, direct studies shedding light on belief systems and creativity are scarce. Self-illusions encompass subjective and unproven beliefs that either originate with individuals or are espoused in cultures as the basis of individuals’ exceptional abilities. Further studies should investigate the hypothesis that belief systems are *magic carpets of creativity* in the quest to enhance great creative achievements among students.
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Chapter 4

Conclusion

Overview

This study investigated African views of giftedness from Shona culture’s perspective with a view to generate theoretical ideas that inform gifted programming from an African perspective. The first chapter discussed the research problem in its cultural context. The research was conducted at two levels: a) a cultural level seeking to highlight Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness as a basis for understanding Shona artists’ talent attributions in their cultural context and b) an individual level seeking to understand Shona artists’ constructions of reality pertaining to their creative talents. The results of the studies reported in Chapters 2 and 3 are synthesized and discussed in this conclusion. The conclusion comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the study and evaluates the study’s findings in relation to current knowledge in gifted programming. In addition, the conclusion proposes new ideas derived from this research experience. Finally, the study’s overall significance to gifted programming is evaluated and directions for future research proposed.

Research Questions

To investigate Shona culture’s views of giftedness and propose theoretical ideas that inform gifted programming from an African perspective, the study sought answers to the following questions:

a) How is giftedness viewed from an African perspective espoused in Shona culture?

b) How do the Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe conceptualize the origins and development of their creative vision and inspiration? Alternatively asked: To what factors do Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe attribute the origins and development of their
creative vision and inspiration in their domain?

Study Approaches.

To address the above questions, the study employed two research designs at different levels of the study. At the first level, the study explored Shona culture’s implicit views of giftedness by a questionnaire completed by 16 Zimbabwean academics of Shona cultural background. Data were analyzed in thematic frames, using frequency tables to gauge a consensus of responses among the respondents. At the second level of the study, a grounded theory approach was adopted to generate a mid-range theory on how Shona stone sculptors of Zimbabwe’s conceptualize their talent attributions by which they experience creative vision and inspiration that propel the field of art. Data were collected and analyzed simultaneously in continuous and zigzag procedures and processes between the researcher and the participants in generating theoretical ideas. Participants were 20 top Shona stone sculptors (icons of creative works in Zimbabwe).

The Findings of the Study

Shona Culture’s Views of Giftedness

The study confirmed existence of giftedness in Shona culture. To a large extent, Shona artists’ talent attributions were found to be consistent with Shona culture’s implicit views of giftedness. The findings of the study are summarized in major themes that emerged.

Spiritual Foundations of Giftedness

As established in the exploration of Shona views of giftedness (Ngara & Porath, 2004) and corroborated by Mpofu, Ngara & Gudzanya (2007), giftedness has spiritual foundations in Shona culture. Shona language’s equivalent term for giftedness *chipo* ‘something valuable given selectively’ [by God or the Spirit] (Chimhundu, 2001; Ngara & Porath, 2004, p.198) confirms
the spiritual foundations of giftedness. Ngara’s (2006) linguistic analysis of the Shona term *chi-/p-/o* (giftedness) revealed that it is derived from a common Bantu (pronounced as *vantu* with soft /v/) verb root /-p-/ . This confirms a similar spiritualist understanding of giftedness among the Bantu people (e.g., *isi-p-iwo/isi-p-ho* [Zulu-Ndebele: South Africa-Zimbabwe], *ki-p-awa* [Swahili: Congo, Kenya, Tanzania], *m-p-ho* [Sotho-Lesotho], *uku-p-elwa* [Bemba: Zambia]).

*Chipo* is believed to be inborn (or present at birth) and is given to individuals as blessing through ancestry (emphasizing the biological basis of giftedness and talent). The Shona equivalent term for talent *ushavi/shavi* literally means “having a spirit for,” expresses the intensity of motivational energy and awesome capabilities, skills and/or expertise of the talented individual.

It emerged in the study that Shona implicit theories attribute exceptional abilities to two factors: a) either benevolent spirits which bring good gifts mediating between the individual and God through one’s lineage, or b) malevolent spirits which inspire deviant talents such as theft and witchcraft considered to be deviant in society. Giftedness is believed to be given to all at birth but lost to some. It is withdrawn from some individuals because of vices that anger the spirits, including God-the Greatest Spirit (e.g., disrespect, selfishness, laziness and wickedness).

Shona artists were identified as gifted people in Shona society. On their part, the Shona artists acknowledged *cultural consciousness* as an integral part of the psychological dynamics of their creative vision and inspiration. Cultural consciousness encompasses beliefs about *nhaka youmhizha hwedzinza* (family inherited talents, Mhonda, 2004), gender role scripts and the notion that everyone is born gifted. Consistent with Shona cultural thinking, Shona artists subscribe to cultural beliefs that they have *inherent/internal/inborn* giftedness and this contributes to their inspiration in stone sculpturing art. The belief that everyone (including the down trodden) can be gifted is reinforced in Shona folktales through exceptional talents of the
least esteemed individuals, “underdogs of society”. This shows how achieving success against odds and adversity is a key hallmark of giftedness as acknowledged by both the Shona and the Maori of New Zealand (Ngara, 2006; Ngara & Porath, 2004; Niwa, 2005). Consistent with this view, the icons of creative works in Zimbabwe who informed the second level of this study and the top artists interviewed by Tusa (2004) were individuals who rose to eminence from humble backgrounds.

**Definition of Giftedness**

As established in the study (consistent with spiritual foundations of giftedness), Shona culture views giftedness as “an unusual and prized human attribute believed to be both inherited and spiritually blessed which manifests in extraordinary abilities and expertise in valued and challenging activities of society” (Ngara & Porath, 2004, p.198). Shona artists were identified as some of the few individuals believed to be gifted; they demonstrate the “capacity to do what most other people cannot do,” or “achieve success against odds and adversity.” The Shona criteria of rare, unusual, exceptional, and deviating from what is considered normal (average standard) or capacity to do what most other people cannot do, corroborate views in contemporary psychology that only a few individuals are “truly gifted” in a population. However, estimates of giftedness in the population are arbitrary [e.g., Gagné’s (2004) top 10% threshold of giftedness estimation (e.g., Baer & Kaufman, 2004; Feldhusen, 2004; Porath, 2004)]. Consistent with the Shona understanding of giftedness across domains, Lumadi’s (as cited in Taylor & Kokot, 2000) preliminary study of giftedness among the Vhenda speakers (a Bantu group in both South Africa and Zimbabwe) established that they viewed giftedness as encompassing exceptionality in creative arts (e.g., woodcarving, stone carving and embroidery), performance arts (such as music, dance and drama), leadership, sports and
academic (school achievement).

**Hallmarks of Giftedness.**

As revealed in the first study, gifted individuals are usually identified by the following major traits:

- a) outwitting/smart talk, insightful/visionary
- b) rapid learning/precocity/prodigy
- c) awesome energy/spirit for-, motivation
- d) introversion/humility
- e) succeeding against odds and adversity
- f) rarity/uniqueness/outstanding
- g) awesome expertise
- h) introversion/humility
- i) perseverance
- j) craft literacy/creativity
- k) consistency

The more one demonstrates these characteristics, the more convincing one’s giftedness is.

Although every child is believed to be gifted in Shona culture, only when these traits are demonstrated with some degree of consistency does one merit the status of giftedness.

“Consistency” of traits that are associated with giftedness is usually observed from childhood. Consistency in demonstrating traits associated with giftedness alludes to aptitude or existence of potential in agreement with Gagné’s (2004) DMGT model. The above attributes are similar to Renzulli’s (1978, 1986) three ring conception of giftedness: a) above average abilities [ability to learn fast, early competence, outstanding, outwit, smart talk and insightful/visionary], b) task commitment [intensity of energy/spirit for-, motivation, perseverance] and c) creativity [craft literacy/creativity]. “Achieving success against odds and adversity” is the equivalent of the notion of resilience associated with giftedness in some students (Bland, Sowa & Callahan, 1994). Resilience refers to ability to overcome negative effects of psychological risk factors as if one has some kind of protective mechanism. Based on the above, Shona culture’s views of giftedness share some common aspects with views of giftedness espoused in contemporary psychology.
Who is Gifted?

While holding the belief that everyone is inherently gifted, Shona culture recognizes that not everyone will realize their giftedness because of certain human vices which include laziness, selfishness, cruelty and wickedness. As revealed in Shona culture’s implicit theory, giftedness is more likely to emerge in the low socioeconomic class. As epitomized in folktale heroes and confirmed by this researcher among the Shona icons of creative works who informed this study, exceptional abilities are demonstrated by simple individuals of humble backgrounds (the least esteemed or the underdogs of society, Fortune, 1980) confirming success against odds and adversity as the key hallmark of giftedness. As interpreted by Mpofu, Ngara and Gudyanga (2007), the Shona believe in the view that “poverty is the mother of invention and being poor trains a person in qualities of exceptionality such as resilience and perseverance” (p.245). Zimbabwean teachers sampled in Ngara’s (2002) study also suggested that giftedness was more prevalent among students from humble home backgrounds than those from higher classes. Despite the fact that Shona culture attributes giftedness to family lineage, it also considers giftedness as a blessing from the spirits which they can give and take back. It seems the spirits favor the down trodden to protect them from dehumanization by the rich and powerful through encouraging them to develop their potential.

Participatory Giftedness.

This study established that giftedness emerges in participating in and contributing to one’s community welfare and survival in corroboration with Mpofu et al.’s (2007) views. It is in tackling community challenges that those with giftedness emerge as heroes as portrayed in folktales. Folktales are authentic windows for understanding a culture’s ideals for acting wisely
(Finnegan, 1976). As satirized in the *Mbira* fairy tale (Ngara & Porath, 2004), Baboon lost both his *mbira* musical instrument and his job of forest entertainer to Hare confirming the notion that talent is given and lost. Hare outclassed Baboon in the *mbira* ownership contest through intense motivation, fast learning, experimenting and hard work (constant practice and rehearsing) resulting in the invention of novel rhythms which won the day. The Shona fairy tale epitomizes giftedness in Hare attributing his talents to *internal/or inborn factors*, personal effort (*perseverance*) and supportive environment (e.g. availability of *mbira*, adjudicators/judges, opportunity to play and reinforcements).

**Community Focus.**

Contrary to Western theorization of individualized views of giftedness, Shona culture espouses community-focused views of giftedness consistent with its collectivist values. Gifts and talents are believed to be given to individuals for the good of the community. Although exceptional gifts and talents are acknowledged, the talented honored with envied titles, gifts are said to be collectively owned by the community. “Hence, Shona culture acknowledges no patent and copyright rules for creativity” (Ngara & Porath, 2004, p.200). Much to the dismay of Western business traders in stone sculpture, certain art production styles invented by renowned artists have been reproduced en masse (or merely modified) in Zimbabwe by copy artists who flood the market with what is known as “airport art.” Although culturally, copying is no crime, pressure is mounting both locally and internationally for the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe to enforce the state’s modern laws on protection of intellectual property. National law exists regarding patents and copyrights but moving from a communal conception of giftedness to a concept affected by copyright laws has culturally lagged especially among the artists themselves.
Attributions of Creative Vision and Inspiration

The study investigated Shona artists’ talent attributions in the context in which they cause field propulsion (Sternberg, 2003), focusing on how the artists develop creative vision and inspiration in their domain. As revealed in the grounded theory study, creative vision and inspiration emerge from the interplay of six major factors which are not necessarily discrete: a) inherent/inborn potential, b) cultural consciousness, c) individual’s unique experiences, d) activation and catalysis, e) domain specific consciousness, and f) practice and experience. The grounded theory in the study suggested that creative vision and inspiration emerge from dynamic and interactive processes. This view suggests that creativity is inherent/inborn potential (in the talented individual). Consistent with previous studies’ findings (e.g., Gruber & Wallace, 2001; Wallace & Gruber, 1989) that creativity evolves in dynamic and intricate processes, this study established that creativity emerged from dynamic and interactive processes activated or reactivated (by some trigger stimulus) in interactions evoking one’s unique experiences, cultural consciousness and domain specific consciousness and realized through practice and experience. It emerged in the study that Shona artists’ talent attributions or constructions of reality operate on belief systems and personal convictions. Hence, belief systems were viewed in this study as the magic carpets by which the artists climb into the unknown to unleash their creativity (Ngara, under review).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research

Strengths

The research strategy of investigating African views of giftedness from a Shona culture’s perspective at two levels: a) a cultural level illuminating Shona culture’s implicit theory of giftedness and b) an individual level seeking to understand Shona artists’ talent attributions was
very insightful both during the study and in synthesizing the study’s findings. From a Marxian-Vygotskyian perspective (Vygotsky, 1930/1967) and as confirmed in this study, Shona artists’ talent attributions were found to be consistent with Shona culture’s collective consciousness (or Shona culture’s implicit theory of giftedness). Shona artists’ attributions of creative vision and inspiration result from cultural consciousness in dynamic interactions with other factors.

Though an insider perspective might potentially be limiting to research through a tendency to want to jump to conclusions or assuming that one has understood the participant’s perspective, being a native speaker of Bantu language(s) familiar with Shona idioms was an asset as Shona artists tend to communicate figuratively in metaphors, imagery and symbolism. From his insider perspective, the researcher effectively utilized such cultural communication strategies as folktales to understand Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness in Zimbabwe’s context of cultural fusion with the West. Orature is a powerful tool for understanding cultural thinking in a culture without a long history of written literature.

The study was informed by credible informants who were specialists in their fields: (a) Zimbabwean academics of Shona cultural background, and b) Zimbabwean icons of creative works. Their cooperation and willingness to share their valuable time to inform the study humbled this researcher: Finally, judging by the support for the study’s findings in the literature on the psychology of creativity, it can be concluded that the chosen designs and research procedures were appropriate for investigating phenomena in a cultural context

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was constrained by a few factors which might affect the outcome in some ways. These were limited research resources - financial, time and manpower. Field research was done abroad in Zimbabwe at a time when the country was experiencing political and economic
problems including fuel shortages. Owing to limited resources, the exploratory study was done through a questionnaire with Zimbabwean academics. Under ideal circumstances, academic informants do not adequately replace face-to-face interviews with Shona elders, the true guardians of cultural wisdom. Notwithstanding the desirability of tapping rich cultural data from Shona elders as the custodians of Shona ethos and wisdom, Western influence has been in Zimbabwe for a little over a hundred years. Hence, present generations including the elders who are believed to be the guardians of cultural wisdom have to some extent been influenced by Western culture (through the processes of acculturation and enculturation). However, as some of the sampled academic informants to the exploratory study on Shona culture’s views of giftedness (including the two prominent professors who confirmed the study’s results) were also highly informed Shona elders in right, it is highly unlikely that sampling academic informants compromised the results. If anything, academic informants who could speak to educational context using their experiences of both worlds enriched the study.

The grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in this study relied on introspective interviews with Shona artists evoking reflections of their lives back in time. Shona artists’ introspections were invoked to shed light on their talent attributions and how they help to propel the field. Self-report about one’s past events has its limitations (Shavinina, 2004). From a social constructivist perspective, constructions of reality are relative (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Individuals’ interpretations and evaluations of events are often colored by how they perceive things, their motives and interests, idiosyncrasies and other issues including accuracy of their memories of events. Reflecting on events when one has already established a high status “often relies on vague memories of one’s thinking processes which may have likely been weakened or altered over time…” (Shavinina, pp. 244-245). Acknowledging the problems of
reliability in how individuals appraise their past events in retrospect, Einstein (1949) commented,

The exposition of that which is worthy of communication does nonetheless not come easy; today’s person of 67 is by no means the same as was the one of 50, of 30, or of 20. Every reminiscence is colored by today’s being what it is, and therefore by a deceptive point of view…. (p.47)

Not only are interpretations of events affected by growth and change but there is a difference between “experience lived” and “experience reported” (Holton, 1973). In retrospective reporting, the individual tends to see systematic uniformity in development yet actual experience might not be systematic in some situations (Einstein, 1949). However, the confounding effects of retrospective reporting might be mitigated in a grounded theory study through the approach’s internal rigors including triangulation, collecting data from multiple sources, asking several questions, member checks and continuous checking and rechecking of information in generating theoretical ideas. In addition, tapping recollections and self-reflections of creators is viewed by scholars in the field of creativity as a valid and effective inquiry approach (John-Steiner, 1985).

**Evaluation of the Findings**

**Meta-Theoretical Perspective**

Consistent with Mpofu et al.’s (2007) approach, Ziegler and Heller’s (2000) meta-theoretical model of giftedness was applied to evaluate the Shona view of giftedness in this study and proved it to be a theory in its own right. Ziegler and Heller proposed four critical criteria (or postulates) for evaluating theories of giftedness as: a) temporary precedence, b) fulfillment of the inus condition, c) giftedness as a personal construct, and d) theoretical significance.

The temporary precedence condition stipulates that giftedness be first identified before
achievement of eminence (AE) to make sure that there is a clear relationship between the gift and achievement. As informed by Shona culture’s view, giftedness is presumed to be present in every individual (as given) from birth unless proven otherwise. Consistent with the Shona view, the Shona artists who informed this study subscribed to the belief that their talents were *inherent/inborn* (Ngara & Porath, 2004). As such, AE (e.g., becoming an icon of creative works) only serves to confirm what is believed. In that score, the Shona view of giftedness confirms the temporary precedence condition.

The fulfillment of the inus condition describes the necessary but not sufficient condition for AE. In the Shona view, being endowed with potential/gifts at birth is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee achievement of eminence. In the Shona idiom, Baboon was given *mbira* (musical instrument) but that did not turn him into a musician. Though individuals may be assumed gifted if born in a lineage of gifted individuals, if they do not work hard and persevere by participating in the community and solving its problems, no expertise or status of giftedness is acquired. Shona artists interviewed in this study acknowledged making it through practice experience, perseverance and hard work. Hence, the Shona view also fulfills Ziegler and Heller’s (2000) inus condition.

The third postulate of giftedness that gifts are personal constructs means giftedness is a personal (psychological process) rather than environmental variable. The Shona view recognizes gifts and talents as psychological constructs involving exceptional abilities (i.e. deviating from average standards); capacity to talk sense, early maturity, capacity do what others cannot do, motivation/energy (having a spirit for-) and perseverance. These are among the personality traits which Shona culture associated with gifted individuals. The Shona view therefore satisfies Ziegler and Heller’s (2000) third postulate of a personal construct.
The fourth postulate, theoretical significance, requires that there be an explainable relationship between variables that predict probable eminence. In the Shona view, the antecedents for gifted participation are: possessing the inherent/inborn capacity (or the spiritual endowment), motivation/task commitment (or having a spirit for doing something), demonstrating exceptional ability, and perseverance. These traits acknowledged in Shona culture are consistent with traits for achieving eminence as identified by Cox (1926):

Youths who achieve eminence are characterized not only by high intellectual traits but also by the greatest degree of persistence of motives and great strength or force of character …. The superior youths …pursued high ideas, developed significant interests … (p.50).

Though the essential traits for achieving eminence in the Shona view are corroborated by Cox, the extent to which they predict AE is not known. As such, some of the variables in the Shona view are not easy to measure in order to determine their capacity to predict AE. The Shona view is only an implicit theory. Further research is therefore required to propose a substantive and explicit theory of creativity.

**Evaluation of Current Knowledge and Proposal of New Ideas**

Current knowledge lacks culturally sensitive theories that inform gifted programming from an indigenous cultural perspective. Present models for defining giftedness and tools for identifying students into gifted programming are based on the IQ paradigm which precludes diverse students’ participation in Anglo-Western programming. Equally, the IQ paradigm is criticized as theoretically inadequate and limited in defining giftedness and identifying students’ diverse talents including creative productivity (Renzulli, 1984). There is no match between IQ identified students and programming (Kwiatkowski & Sternberg, 2004). In this irony, the
identified students do not benefit from programming while students who might benefit from programming are left out. Though each society ought first to understand its own definitions of giftedness before trying to integrate other cultures’ conceptions (Taylor & Kokot, 2000), special education in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa still relies on Western theories and models in contemporary psychology. In the absence of sufficient research that inform policy and practice in Africa, present contradictions in psychological constructs of differing world views cannot be helped. Therefore, the quest to establish alternative conceptions that broaden our view of giftedness cannot be overemphasized. In this context, this study was conducted to propose theoretical ideas that inform gifted programming from an African perspective espoused in Shona culture.

As established in this study, the artists’ constructions of reality pertaining to the origins and development of their creative talents are consistent with psychological dynamics of Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness.

a) As much as Shona sculpture has transformed into a new art genre that speaks to a modern audience even beyond Africa’s borders, Shona artists’ talent attributions through which they propel a field of art have equally changed to include new attributions unarticulated in the Shona culture while maintaining a cultural consciousness. Such attributions of talent development as impact of one’s unique (life) experiences, activation and catalysis and domain specific consciousness are unacknowledged in the Shona view of giftedness.

b) The Shona model of giftedness that emerged in this study is spiritual, participatory and community focused. ‘Spiritual’ is paradigmatic expressing the biological basis of giftedness through causation; that is giftedness is believed to be given by God and mediated by one’s ancestry (Ngara & Porath, 2007). “Spirituality” also seems to express the notion of
‘extracognitive’ phenomena in high ability (Runco, 2004; Shavinina & Seeratan; 2004).

c) The study corroborates Silvia and Phillips’ (2004) observation that motivated self-serving illusions, and self-regulation are all part of the underlying dynamics affecting creativity. Contrary to Kasof’s (1995) dismissal of creators’ talent attributions as biased illusions, this study established that Shona artists’ talent attributions of vision and inspiration could not be dismissed as biased illusions. Talent attributions are the very constructions or psychological dynamics (magic carpets) by which artists experience vision and inspiration that propel the field of art.

d) The grounded theory that emerged in this study proposes that creative potential is inherent/inborn in the talented individual. Creativity emerges from dynamic and interactive processes when activated or reactivated (by some trigger/stimulus) in dynamic interactions evoking one’s unique experiences, cultural consciousness and domain specific consciousness and practice and experience. The researcher proposed the dynamic and interactive process model (DIPM) to explain how Shona artists experience creative vision and inspiration that propel a field of art (Ngara, under review).

e) The DIPM model is based on belief systems. Hence, this study proposes that the artist’s values and belief systems are magic carpets for creativity.

f) Although cultural consciousness emerged as part and parcel of the psychological dynamics of Shona artists’ creative vision and inspiration in their domain, the study also highlighted Shona culture’s double standards when it comes to the emergence and realization of women’s talent in stone sculpturing art. While Shona culture acknowledges and values giftedness across gender (Ngara & Porath, 2004), the same culture imposes gender role scripts militating against the emergence and flourishment of women’s talents. This prejudices women’s
chances of making it to the top in stone sculpturing save for only a few resilient ones who make it to the top against odds and adversity in this male dominated field.

g) As Shona artists’ talent attributions appear to maintain consistency with Shona culture’s implicit theories of giftedness through *cultural consciousness*, ignoring (diverse) students’ constructions of reality through their *cultural consciousness* is disempowering them through the destruction of their self-efficacy and capacity to think creatively.

**Implications for Gifted Programming**

Consistent with Phillipson’s (2007) comment that “conceptions of giftedness usually serve a pedagogical purpose” (p.11), Shona culture’ views of giftedness were investigated in search of alternative conceptions that inform gifted programming from an African cultural perspective. Contrary to Anglo-Western exclusionary gifted programming practices that preclude diverse students’ talents, the Shona view of high ability supports an inclusive approach to gifted programming through the view that every child is presumed gifted from birth unless proven otherwise. Teachers should regard all students as potentially gifted and expose them to rich and stimulating learning environments capable of activating/ or reactivating their hidden talents (or inherent gifts) to fruition. As corroborated in Ndebele people’s views of giftedness (Ngara & Porath, 2007), though an individual might be born gifted, without nurturance (*ukukhuthaza*) the fruits of their gifts might not be realized. Hence, this study supports the argument for taking an inclusive approach to gifted programming stressing provision of the right environment that nurtures potential into expertise (Barab & Plucker, 2002; Cross & Coleman, 2005; Ford & Harris, 1999).

As evident in the study, gifts and talents emerge from participating in and contributing to community and school. Individuals have tacit knowledge that is rarely used in school learning
(Sternberg, 2007). Sternberg defined tacit knowledge as knowledge developed by individuals to survive in their environments based on practical intelligence. Practical intelligence or “contextual intelligence” is a third component of Sternberg’s (1985, 1988) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence which includes the ‘street smart’ who are not usually recognized for entry into gifted programming. It is through participation and involvement in a domain that the presumed potential for giftedness is confirmed. In this connection Shona folktales portray how gifted individuals distinguish themselves through solving community problems using practical intelligence. The participatory and community focus model is applied in class through organizing students to share with peers their expertise, skills and vision in community projects and group learning contexts. In this connection, Gibson and Vialle (2007) found gifted Aboriginal students to work better collaboratively in small groups than being singled out as individuals.

This study established that beliefs and value systems are *magic carpets* by which artists ascend into the unknown to unleash their creativity. In support of this study’s findings, Bloom (1982), though not focused on creativity, found beliefs in a child’s specialness to be talent makers. Consistent with Shona culture’s point of view, parents and teachers who believe in a child’s specialness set the momentum for his/her talent development. Specific beliefs are also acknowledged in Shavinina’s (2004) model of Nobel laureates. Consistent with the proposed dynamic interactive processes model of creativity (DIPM) suggested in this study, the capacity to create is *inherent*. If this be the teachers’ thesis and agenda, then provision of stimulating programming including organizing social proximity with attractive models (icons of creative works) might stimulate student creativity. This means belief systems cannot be ignored in gifted programming in our quest to enhance eminent achievements in students.

Teachers need to understand how diverse students’ thinking paradigm or *cultural*
consciousness influences the dynamic and interactive processes that explain creativity. Consistent with Vygotsky (as cited in Jeltova & Grigorenko, 2005), the “development of giftedness both shapes and is shaped by culture” (p.178). There is no way meaningful gifted programming can provide equitable education services to diverse students while ignoring their cultural consciousness.

Consistent with the Shona view of achieving success against odds and adversity as the true hallmark of giftedness shown by persons of humble backgrounds (Ngara, 2002; Ngara & Porath, 2004), Tusa (2004) also confirmed that great artists emerged from common backgrounds. During his interviews with top performing artists, Tusa found no evidence to support that a privileged background and basic education make an individual creative. Every child should be accorded the chance to be creative despite their home background yet, according to Ford (2005), economic imbalances and racial stereotypes impact negatively on both the expression and identification of diverse minority students’ talents in class structured societies. Confirming teachers’ erroneous beliefs that students from impoverished schools were not gifted, Bonshek (2002) warned, “There is a danger that giftedness may become a middle-class concept” (p.86). In this context, such supportable insights on giftedness as illuminated in this study strengthen the cause for diversity sensitivity in gifted programming through a consideration of indigenous views of giftedness. This underscores this study’s quest to search for alternative conceptions of giftedness that inform gifted programming from an indigenous cultural perspective (as espoused in this study on Shona culture).

To address the question of whether creativity can be taught, from the DIPM model established in this study, creativity cannot technically be taught because it is inherent (in individuals by degrees of their giftedness). Rather its growth can be enhanced from small ‘c’ to
big ‘C’ through encouraging profound and supportable beliefs about the value of one’s endeavors, capabilities, self-confidence and beliefs about personal standards which are part of the psychological dynamics of creative vision and inspiration that propel a field. It is, however, not suggested here that this can be done easily as there is so much we do not yet understand about how talent attributions develop and how they propel a field. Talent attributions are constructivist and beliefs of artists are subjective and personal.

**Overall Significance of the Thesis Research to the Field**

This thesis contributes to research on high ability studies, the field of gifted programming, and specific pedagogical issues. This thesis has broken new ground by focusing research effort on cultural conceptions to inform gifted programming from an African cultural perspective. By researching this area, the thesis contributes an example of African insights on giftedness to current debate and controversies surrounding current practice in Anglo-Western programming acknowledged elsewhere in research (e.g., Ford, 2005; Gibson & Vialle, 2007; Sternberg, 2007). This research pioneers culturally appropriate and reliable research procedures that can be used by other scholars keen on investigating cultural conceptions of giftedness and creativity.

In this quest to broaden our understanding of giftedness, the thesis has illuminated the Shona view of giftedness and its evaluation using Ziegler and Heller’s (2000) four parameters of giftedness and established that the Shona view has theoretical standing. This thesis therefore demonstrated that indigenous conceptions of giftedness may not be ignored in our search for a broad based and inclusive definition of giftedness. To this end, this thesis brought new insights that justify diversity sensitivity in gifted programming. Regarding pedagogical issues, the thesis sheds light on understanding talent attributions and how they propel a field. The DIPM model
proposed in this study (Ngara, 2007) helps teachers understand and facilitate the psychological processes through which student creativity can be enhanced in gifted programming with due regard to their cultural consciousness.

Consistent with Taylor and Kokot’s (2000) views, each society ought first to understand its own conceptions of giftedness before attempting to integrate other cultures’ conceptions of giftedness. The findings of this study entail the cultural constructs that may inform gifted education in Zimbabwe from a Shona culture’s point of view. Unfortunately, Zimbabwean teachers tend to despise indigenous knowledge as “backward… retrogressive, unauthentic, and unreliable since it could not be verified by scientific methods…” (Shizha 2004, p. 202). Such unprogressive thinking “increased the risk that students with giftedness in contexts and skills valued in their communities would not be recognized or supported by teachers in their development” (Mpofu et al. 2007, p. 243). The views of giftedness and creativity established in this and any other African studies are not enough on their own to sufficiently inform gifted programming in Africa. Consistent with Wright’s (2006) view that the African critical model of cultural studies informs a hybrid model based on a multiplicity of ways of knowing, this study equally supports the integration of contemporary and indigenous conceptions of giftedness to develop more inclusive, broad based, progressive and culturally relevant gifted programming in Africa.

To conclude, this thesis supports the quest for establishing alternative views of giftedness that address the shortcomings of current practice in gifted programming. From this example of an African perspective (espoused in Shona culture), this thesis provides a good basis for formalizing special education programs to develop students’ giftedness in Zimbabwe. It is hoped that the issues raised in this thesis may refocus the attention of other researchers to new
directions in gifted programming.

**Directions for Future Research**

This thesis breaks new ground in research in its quest to broaden our understanding of giftedness through investigating cultural conceptions of giftedness. To keep the momentum and perhaps become the spokesperson of cultural conceptions of giftedness, the researcher regards it his research agenda to carry out further similar studies in and outside Africa. Replication of this study is required before we can propose substantive culturally sensitive theories that inform gifted programming from an indigenous cultural perspective.

Belief systems are part of the psychological dynamics involved in creativity. Specific beliefs are also acknowledged in Shavinina’s (2004) model of extracognitive abilities of Nobel laureates and are corroborated in Bloom’s (1982) study as talent makers. What emerged in this study about belief systems has evoked the researcher’s interest to investigate how belief systems operate in talent attributions to propel a field.
References


and creativity crystallized (pp.124-147). New York: Cambridge University Press.


Appendices

Appendix A (1)  Ethical Review Clearance

Certificate of Approval

Principal Investigator: Forath, M.J.
Department: Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ
Number: B04-0405

Institution(s) Where Research Will be Carried Out:

Co-Investigator(s):
Ngara, Constantine, Counselling Psychology

Sponsoring Agencies:

Title:
Cultural Views of Giftedness from the Shona Society of Zimbabwe's Perspective

Approval Date: JUN 1 / 2004
Term (Years): 1
Documents Included in this Approval:
June 16, 2004, Cover letter / Questionnaire / Consent form

Certification:

The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:
Dr. James Frankish, Chair,
Dr. Cay Holbrook, Associate Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair
Dr. Anita Hubley, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.
Appendix A (2) Ethical Review Clearance

Certificate of Approval

Pereba, M.J.

Edue & Couns Psych & Spec Edue

B05-0806

CoInvestigators:
Ngara, Constantine, Counselling Psychology

SPONSORING AGENCIES

TITLE
Attributions of Vision and Inspiration of Icons of Creative Works in Zimbabwe

APPROVAL DATE
SEP 22 2005

The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:
Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.
Appendix B  Questionnaire on Shona Culture’s Views of Giftedness

Q1 How is giftedness or talent defined /or described in the Shona culture?

Q2 Identify any typical examples of what is considered as giftedness or talent in Shona culture. Your examples could be given in brief and simple descriptions.

Q3 Identify the attributes/ characteristics of giftedness portrayed in typical characters in well-known Shona folktales (ngano). Brief examples are welcome.

Q4 Cite any examples of giftedness manifested by girls and women in Shona culture.

Q5 In your opinion, is giftedness valued/or encouraged in Shona culture and traditions? Type x in the right bracket for answer.

Yes[  ]     No[  ]

Elaborate with examples wherever possible.

Q6 Is female giftedness valued in Shona culture and traditions?

Yes[  ]     No[  ]

Elaborate with examples wherever possible.

Q7 To what factor(s) does Shona culture attribute the origins of gifts and talents in some people? For example any typical beliefs held, etc.

Q8 Are there any particular forms of giftedness/or talent in which the Shona people of Zimbabwe are most recognized for?

Q9 Also cite any examples of eminent persons living/ historical/or legendary even in a folktales whose giftedness is acknowledged in Shona culture. Relate their accomplishments or talent.
Q10 In your opinion, is there consistency in the recognition and development of Shona cultural forms of giftedness in the Zimbabwean school curricula?

Q11 State any other information you feel should be considered to shed light on giftedness as reflected in Shona culture.

Q12 Who owns giftedness in the traditional Shona society? Indicate your response from options below

[ ] It is collectively owned by society/No copywriter rules

[ ] It is property of the individual

[ ] Not sure

**If you know any useful references on the subject in English or Shona language cite…

Thank you for your valuable contribution

Ndatenda/Mazviita.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Yea… it, it rings a bell</td>
<td>A thinking pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>May be [ ] I’m not sure</td>
<td>A gap indicates silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Ha! Ha!</td>
<td>Excitement (used in the usual way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Hum---I was somehow</td>
<td>Pulling speech/dragging voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>Some how___</td>
<td>Uncompleted speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Ha-</td>
<td>It was fun! Ha-ha!</td>
<td>This means laughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kw kw</td>
<td>kw kw</td>
<td>Clapping hands twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ss-</td>
<td>ss- I remember</td>
<td>hissing/whistle between the teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>After discovering that ( )</td>
<td>Brackets signal inaudible speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transcriber could not hear anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQ</td>
<td>Then CQ</td>
<td>clicking hands to stress a point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitals</td>
<td>While CREATING THIS</td>
<td>Capital letters signal emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>if not used in the usual way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nada</td>
<td>Nada (I refuse, Portuguese)</td>
<td>Italics show different language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>My’ My’</td>
<td>Shona high tonal inflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um~</td>
<td>Let me see- um~</td>
<td>expressing doubt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Adapted for use with native speakers of Shona language.
3 January, 2006

Dear Mr. /Ms.……………………

Preliminary Contact Letter

Re: Attributions of Vision and Inspiration of Icons of Creative Works in Zimbabwe: Focus on Stone Shona Sculptors

Constantine Ngara is carrying out research on creativity in esteemed Shona sculptors of Zimbabwe as part of his program to fulfil the requirements of his doctoral degree studies. Professor Marion Porath is his supervisor. When completed, this study will become a public document on the creativity of Shona stone sculptors in Zimbabwe.

You have been identified among Zimbabwe’s top creative sculptors. We would like to interview you and other identified top creative persons on issues relating to the origins and development of your talents. The interviews will not be a test of your knowledge. Your identity will remain private as your names will not be recorded in the study. You will be interviewed at your convenience on topics relating to the origins and development of your talent.

Participation in this study is purely voluntary. If you are willing to participate in this study, Constantine will personally bring you a formal consent form early in 2006. The consent form will give you further information on the study and you will be given time to consider whether or not you wishing to participate. Constantine will come home to Zimbabwe in January, 2006 and carry out the interviews until 31 March, 2006. The study may require you to be interviewed more than once, possibly as many as three times. The initial interview will take about one and half (1½) hours and subsequent interviews may take less time.

Thank you very much for considering participation in this study. Please feel free to contact either Marion Porath or Constantine Ngara for further information.

Yours sincerely,

Marion Porath (Professor & Principal Investigator) ---
Constantine Ngara (PhD Student) ---
Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4
Tel (604) 822-5351
Fax (604) 822-3302

Consent Form
Perceived Talent Attributions of Icons of Creative Works in Zimbabwe

Principal Investigator: Dr. Marion Porath, Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education. Telephone Number: ---

Co-Investigator: Constantine Ngara (PhD Student, Special Education), Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education. This study is being carried out as part of the requirements for Constantine Ngara’s doctoral degree.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to find out how creative talents develop in recognized creative persons like you. We believe that we can learn something important from talking to you about the origins and development of your talent. This study will contribute to our understanding about the way talent development is recognized and how it can be encouraged in schools.

Study Procedures:
If you choose to participate in this study, you and other selected stone sculptors will be interviewed individually by Constantine Ngara. Interviews will be done at a place and time most convenient to you. During interviews, you will be asked questions about your life in relation to the development of your sculpturing talent. This type of research requires you and others participating to be interviewed up to three times. The number of interviews depends on what is discovered in each interview. Initial interviews will take about one and half (1 ½) hours. Subsequent interviews may take less time. What you say in the interviews will be tape recorded. The recordings will be transcribed, translated and interpreted to answer the question of how you do such great works in your field. After the recordings have been typed, you will be invited to read and check if they are accurate. You will also be invited to read our interpretations of what was recorded in the study and comment whether you agree with it.
Confidentiality
Your name will not be recorded. Instead, we will refer to you by interview numbers. In the end, all research information will be put together such that the results will not be identified with any particular individuals. You will all be referred to in general as Shona stone sculptors. Interview information is strictly for the purposes of research. All recorded information on audiotapes and written translations in computer files will be kept safely locked for five years in Professor Marion Porath’s research laboratory at the University of British Columbia in Canada. Thereafter, the records will be destroyed.

Remuneration/Compensation:
There will be no payment for participating in this study. The researcher will meet you at a convenient place which will not involve expenses.

Contact for information about the study
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Porath at---

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-604-822-8598.

Consent
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study.

________________________________________________________
Subject Signature                                              Date

__________________________
Print Name
Appendix E  Key Questions (Interview Guide)

1. How did it all begin in your life for you to become such a great artist?
2. Where do you think your creative talent originates from?
3. What inspired you to join stone sculpturing art?
4. When in your life did you first become aware of your interest and ability in stone sculpture?
5. How did you first become aware of your talent and interest in stone sculpturing?
6. How do your creative ideas or vision come?
7. Where do you get these great ideas reflected in your work?
8. Do you think your creativity has improved with experience over the years?
## Appendix F
### Interview Coding Scheme (Turner, 1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.... is inborn otherwise those who don’t have it give up easily before they realize anything. They throw in the towel when things get tough. Like these days, things are pretty tough here because of our political situation but then we the born artists soldier on and live in hope. I’ve seen many youngsters come here very enthusiastic to try their lucky but many of them left unceremoniously.</td>
<td>Inherent /Inborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who started this, with whom we share this culture of sculpting, they started from a cultural background, portraying their cultural activities and it became a tradition that was handed down and developed over time and now we have got different sources of inspiration which spur culture on.</td>
<td>Cultural Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…I started playing with my father’s tools as toys since I was five years old. I grew up in an environment for art. All my lifetime, I was exposed to it. Though professionally I did something else but I developed a strong passion for art over the years until it was so much into me that I couldn’t divorce myself from it.</td>
<td>Unique Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…no matter how talented one is, one has to start from somewhere… it’s not possible because you have to see something. It’s like music when you hear it that’s when you see that you have your own way of doing it. One needs a platform…</td>
<td>Activation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But then with, time, patience and experience, I developed that idea, I made it whole and complete, acceptable and I refined it. Everyone … just admired it, you know, they just loved it whatever it was…that subject would bring praise about it. So experience does lend itself well when one is trying to develop themselves.</td>
<td>Practice Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual art touches your heart and soul. What it means to me is that, that stone is alive, and when I talk of life in the stone, lets not compare it with our physical life. The stone radiates a lot of energy around you the artist and you on your own you also radiate a lot energy back to the stone. So, you come and look at it with these two energies, you’re part of same. You start interpreting it in your own way according to how you are seeing it.

…there was a point when I thought if I could be like my father or another admired artist, then, I also wished if I could beat so and so then, I am there but you’re not anywhere there. But then, you discover that within that process of trying to beat that other artist, you grow and end up producing something which someone can come and say “A-ah! You will never surpass this!”

Then, eventually I said to myself, “Let me release the sculpture that is hidden in that stone.” But it wasn’t a spirit or anything it was just that I was seeing a vision in it; I was seeing something because the stone was telling me something.

I sometimes feel that I’m working with extra natural sense. It’s like you enter in to a dialogue with stone in order to release its spirit. That object that eventually comes from the stone after working on it is its spirit. You look at a stone and it tells you what it is which you can craft responding to it, and it is also responding to your imagination.
Appendix G  Institutional/ Collegial Support Letter

FROM: TELEBYTE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS  PHONE NO.: +263 4 784963  Nov. 04 2005 09:07:31 PM P2

P.O. Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, ZIMBABWE
(263-4) 302182

Director: Professor F. Zindi

HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

Date October 25, 2005

Centre for Training Awards Program
International Development Research Centre,
P.O. Box 8500,
Ottawa,
Ontario K1G 3H9-Canada

Re: Confirmation Letter of Affiliation for Constantine Ngara.
Research: “Creative Vision and Inspiration of Shona Sculptors of Zimbabwe”

Constantine Ngara, a Zimbabwean PhD Student of the University of British Columbia, has permission to conduct his research on “Creativity of Shona Sculptors of Zimbabwe” at University of Zimbabwe (UZ) as an affiliate member of Human Resources Research Centre (HRRC) a department of the Faculty of Education. The Directorate of HRRC will support his research effort on this critical area of research by providing the logistics for contact and support of other researchers on creativity, contacts with Shona stone artists, access to centre research lab, library, internet and printing facilities and any other assistance he may need within the limits of our institution’s capacity. While affiliated with us, we will assist him to recruit research assistants from graduate students in the Faculty of Education (should he need them) and as well give him moral support and collegial guidance from experienced researchers here.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

Professor F. Zindi

[Signature]

[Stamp: HERC OFFICIAL]