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## Creativity and Artistic Expression

The attributes and characteristics pertaining to creativity continue the debate over from where creative ideas derive and what provokes the mind to create original thought. The common man would suggest inspiration spawns creativity and the greatest impact and concentration of creativity occurs when the creator undergoes dramatic emotional change. Psychologists would argue that this interpretation is, in fact, somewhat true but there exists many other determining factors that may sprout originality.

To be creative, as Webster's New World Dictionary generalizes, is to have the quality of something created rather than imitated (p. 143). This explanation of creativity does not clarify the source of creation. One major fault in this definition is its use of the word "imitated." We can assume nearly everything we do, everything we create, and everything we imagine is, perhaps unconsciously, merely an altered imitation of something else we experienced throughout our lives.

The concept of creativity demands a more complex definition. Teresa M. Amabile (1996) believes creativity is not merely a dormant light switch that spontaneously triggers to create an original idea. Instead, she considers that a creative idea derives from a suitable blend of knowledge, skill, and motivation. Charles Spearman (1931) deliberates that the key factor in the generation of creative ideas lies in the individual's knowledge. He separates the broad topic of knowledge into two categories: qualitative and quantitative principles of knowing.

Spearman (1931) subdivides qualitative knowledge into three categories: the ability to apprehend experiences, the ability to create relationships, and the ability to educe correlates. Spearman speculates that the most important qualitative principle, when applied to creativity, is the principle of correlates. He recognizes that the ability of a person to relate certain instances of experience and knowledge to other, often seemingly

unrelated, circumstances is perhaps the most important attribute a creative person may possess. For example, the hot air balloon, invented by the Montgolfier brothers (Gillispie, 1983), was likely the product of the conceived relationship between the natural qualities of hot air and knowledge of the containment of air. Spearman (1931) also recognizes the quantitative principles of knowing, which consist of the individual's mental energy, retentivity, fatigue, conative control, and primordial potencies. The quality of one's mind may often dictate that individual's creative capacity. For instance, a person who contains a low mental energy, or brainpower, and lacks in retentiveness, or recollection aptitude, will most likely not have the competence and ability to create original ideas. Spearman also relates his views of creativity to pictorial art and states that one's creative ability to produce fine art relies on their depiction of truth, beauty, imaginative emotion, exaggeration, and style. He paraphrases his study by declaring "the final and most highly 'creative' act of the artist derives from transposing relations from their original fundamentals to others, thereby creating (mentally) the correlative fundamentals" (p. 78). Spearman presumes invention, reasoning, and creativity in general are highly influenced by the individual's mental development of extracting and extorting correlates, the tendency to creatively link seemingly unrelated thoughts together to form an original idea.

According to psychologist Joy Paul Guilford (1950), people use two separate thought patterns to generate solutions to problems: convergent thinking and divergent thinking. Convergent thinkers tend to grasp ideas in a manner that suggests one solution to a problem. When a situation arises where a convergent thinking individual faces a problem, he or she seeks the solution in the traditional manner of basing their conclusion on an answer that is explicitly right or wrong. Divergent thinkers, on the other hand, can liberate themselves from the restrictions of conventional, fact-based problem solving to create a solution from loosely related correlates, generating many possible resolutions. For example, consider a taxi cab driver. A convergent thinking cab driver knows only one route from your hotel to the airport. When approaching a closed road, the convergent thinker responds by following the road signs for the detour without considering other routes. The divergent thinker, on the other hand, may

develop several different routes based on knowledge of the city, choosing the best possible route based on intuition.

While divergent thinking houses one's creative competence, the foundation of an original idea lies within convergent knowledge. Inspiration develops from a concrete understanding of the problem at hand. The creator must facilitate at least a relative understanding of the correlates he or she extracts and extorts; otherwise the basis for their idea lacks the reinforcement of factual information.

Following Guilford's (1950) study that defined the difference behind convergent and divergent thinking, psychologists began to ponder the physiology of the two thought processes. Many psychologists hypothesized that the two methods of contemplation occurred in separate regions of the brain. Roger W. Sperry's (1961) experiments in particular confirmed the hypothesis that convergent and divergent methods of thinking do, in fact, take place in two different locations of the brain.

Sperry's study (1961) determined that the two hemispheres of the brain dictate the separate thought processes. The brain's right hemisphere accommodates divergent thinking. It controls the individual's ability to recognize patterns, manage images, and identify melodies, amongst other functions. The left hemisphere is responsible for convergent thought. This hemisphere grants rationality and logistics to the individual. Creative insight develops strongly when the right hemisphere becomes more active than the left hemisphere. However, it is the hemispheres working in conjunction that provide the creative output.

Spearman (1931) discusses style as a determining factor concerning one's ability to create fine art. Style refers to an individual's personality and includes an array of attributes pertaining to one's personal characteristics. The individual's active interest in perplexing concepts allows them to think openly and aesthetically, bridging gaps between seemingly disconnected concepts (Amabile, 1983). The determination and motivation to enunciate and develop these notions, when combined with the individual's personal intuition, empowers the creator to elaborate the concepts to create an original hypothesis. The creator's self-confidence, perception of ambiguity, and likelihood to take risks strengthens the hypothesis.

German physician Ulrich Kraft (2005) suggests that several other characteristics may contribute to one's creativity. He believes a sense of wonder and propensity to discover are both valuable traits of creativity. Kraft also states that the ability to effectively relax encourages reflection and pondering, which facilitate and often promote the construction of new ideas. An individual's capability to identify a problem within a specific task and redefine the problem may also encourage a creative mindset.

Studies conducted by Guilford (1950) in the late 1940s suggest a person's intelligence does not dictate their creative capability. In fact, an individual's intelligence may restrict their creative capacity. The discovery that intelligence is not directly linked to original ideas prompted many researchers to devise creativity tests in order to measure one's creative capacity. Developing a system that effectively measures one's level of creativity seems impossible considering the classification of anything creative lies primarily in the eye of the beholder. Past efforts have failed to discover a reasonable method to determine creative capacity. By examining general qualities of individual personality in a test group, however, we can broadly determine which subjects are more inclined to creative output than others.

In attempt to measure individual creativity, E. Paul Torrance created the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (1974). The tests score examinees using three components. First, researchers ask the subjects to participate in three exercises that focus on visual material. They are graded on five mental attributes: fluency, originality, elaboration, abstractness of titles, and resistance to closure. In the figural test, researchers ask their subjects to inspect several abstract, black and white pictures and respond with what mental images surface from the examinee's observation. The verbal section of the Torrance test presents a hypothetical situation to the subject and allows him or her to ask questions and make suggestions pertaining to the circumstance. Strict time restraints accompany each of the tests - a factor which limits the examinee to impulsive and somewhat instinctive responses.

Another popular creativity test, published in 1965, measures the examinees' association ability. In Wallach and Kogan's assessment the subject is asked to conjure up as many possible items they can associate

with a certain component, such as wheels. Four separate criteria determine the final results. The originality component places all the subjects of the tests against one another. An original response yields more points than common responses given by others in the test group. When grading in the fluency category, the researcher simply adds up the number of responses provided by the individual. The flexibility component measures the context of the answers given. For instance, if the examinee is given wheels as the subject for the study and they answer with “a car, a train, and a swing,” they score two points for examining two separate categories (the first two answers related to transportation and the third relates to recreation). The final component, elaboration, measures the amount of detail the subject provides. For example, answering “a train” in the test would score fewer points than “a train heading to Ohio” (Wallach & Kogan, 1965).

Educational psychologists Plucker, Beghetto, and Dow (2004) recognize several themes that often occur concerning the creation of an end product. They believe “creativity is the interaction between aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context” (p. 90). The interrelationship between these basic attributes of the mind limits the definition of creativity. However, we can use these factors to make several assumptions about the broad nature of the human mind. The impending processing power of the human mind facilitates the potential for the creation of original conception. The ability, or aptitude, of the human mind also appears to be an apparent determining factor of creativity. However, the aptitude and process factors, when combined with an environment that actually facilitates and promotes creation, is of utmost importance to the establishment of innovative and novel ideas.

Amabile’s (1996) extensive research on the construction of creative ideas has effectively confirmed that an individual’s creative ability becomes limited when they are placed in a work environment that they distinguish as confined and regulated. Similarly, when applying this idea to groups of people with varying personality types who are assembled together to achieve a certain goal, a member of the group may find themselves constrained by the personal ideals or diction of the other group members.

Modern society often demands sensibility and systematization. Within these societal restrictions, the brain may naturally sacrifice creative potential in exchange for a mindset that encompasses rationalization and reason. Repetitiveness and monotony often account for this habit-based mindset. According to Kraft (2005), through many years of conforming to the education system and societal norms, the mind begins to resort to familiar neural pathways, which is the brain's method of economically utilizing its power. Rather than exploring regions of the brain that foster abstract and unusual ideas, the mind tends to refer back to its well-established, proverbial neural pathways.

The act of creating is derived from one's ability to deviate from normal procedures of contemplation. It is evident, however, that modern education, work-related training, and media distractions may complicate an individual's creative capacity. Creativity spawns from disconnected ideas, which often seem unrelated. The dilemma limiting many young, creative minds loosely stems from the education system and cultural norms one must conform to for most of the initial twenty years of their life. The system generally introduces its students to problems and questions of which there is only one expected answer (Kraft, 2005).

Nearly every child enters this world with natural curiosity and love for discovery by means of cause and effect experimentation. As the child learns the tangible way in which the world operates and gains an increasing awareness and conviction that logical explanations exist inside nearly everything they find to be rather questionable, they begin to think less creatively. The human mind goes through a vast amount of cognitive development in the first eight years of life. Therefore, a child's mind is less obedient to the cultural norms and standards directed by adults. Most children possess an enriched level of sensory intelligence, a characteristic that most adults cannot access easily (Thomas & Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, most adults desire a secure predictable life full of certainty and devoid of mystery. This balanced lifestyle may limit one's ability to separate themselves from reality long enough to have a creative insight.

According to Kraft (2005), natural creative talent becomes progressively repressed throughout our lives. He believes the modern educational system may be partially to blame for diminishing creative

capacity. From very early ages, children are placed in institutions that commonly place an extremely caustic accentuation on instructing students to solve problems correctly and methodically. The education system is cluttered with factual-based testing and systematic instruction. In general, modern education disciplines students to think logically and traditionally. This teaching method ultimately molds the students' minds into conclusive, fact-based machines. Furthermore, public schools generally sever art programs first when undergoing budget cuts.

In the age of technology, individuals face an increasing amount of distraction from the media. The entire country is flooded with televisions, computers, cellular phones, billboard advertisements, and radios. All of these connected forms of media draw users' attention away from independent thinking. In fact, many people let media outlets think for them by devoting so much time to television and computers for entertainment.

According to recent statistics from A.C. Nielson Company, 99 percent of American households contain at least one television set. The statistics also project that the average American watches about four hours of television everyday. Additionally, Nielson reports that approximately 40-percent of Americans spend at least an hour using the Internet each day. The Internet phenomenon continues to grow stronger, diverting the attention of its users around the world.

The widely accepted plague of the media attacks the creative mindset in the same systematic way as professions and education. By focusing our attention on the media, we not only deprive ourselves the time it takes to think creatively, but we also condition our mind to think in certain ways. Over twenty-five years of research suggests the media may influence our behavior or personality by forcing us to unconsciously imitate what we view on television. This factor manipulates children to a much higher degree than adults (NIMH, 1972, 1982).

Conversely, the intense ascent of technological advancement may provoke people to find new means of creation. The digital revolution provides each individual with the proper resources needed to develop a digital creation to share with the world. Social networking services and blogs, for instance, allow users to share their videos, songs, voice clips, photographs, and other concoctions with others around the world. Andrew

Keen (2007) believes this phenomenon in user created media is dissolving our culture and ideas of expression. According to Keen, over fifty-percent of blogs posted online are based on individual opinion and experience. The downside to blogs is best exemplified by the online wonder of lonelygirl15. Lonelygirl15 was a video blog that was hugely successful on the popular video broadcasting website YouTube. Each week, millions of viewers tuned in to catch up on the experiences of Bree, the young, suburbanite creator of the video diaries. It was later discovered that the entire series was a hoax and lonelygirl15 was not actually fifteen years old and she probably wasn't lonely either (Keen, 2007).

Keen calls those who share their digital creations "noble amateurs" (p. 35). He believes that the democratic nature of the Internet promotes amateurism rather than expertise. According to research conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in June 2006, thirty-four percent of America's twelve million bloggers consider their online contributions a type of journalism. The problem with this excessive amount of amateurs derives from the democratic culture that emerged from the digital revolution. For instance, the popular online encyclopedia Wikipedia gathers all of its content from individual, non-expert users. Additionally, each individual entry faces editing by other users. This system bases itself on the common knowledge of its users. Wikipedia prefers amateurism to expertise, creating biased and potentially erroneous entries that many may consider to be factual (Keen, 2007).

Thomas and Johnson (2007) find that art and expression may be an effective means of healing a person who can't express their feelings verbally. He often suggests that children create art that pertains to their life, something that contains personal meaning and significance. For instance, in one activity with children, Thomas suggested that they paint rocks with symbols and objects of individual importance. Interestingly, most of the children painted symbols that pertained to their original culture. Natural symbolism occurred most frequently as the students painted representations of stars, the moon, the sun, serpents, and trees (p. 54).

Thomas (2007) believes that through art, children may demolish the walls that suppress their emotions. He believes the act of "letting go" allows the children to attain new insights and connections to their past so

they may apply them to their future. Thomas states, “through insights and expression come resulting change and the ability to let go of previous patterns and behaviors” (p. 133). When a person lets go, they empower themselves by enriching their wellbeing.

When presented with a problem, the creative mind is provoked to summon intuition, retrieve information from personal experience, and create an original idea based on these factors. The mind utilizes others’ perspectives and opinions to stimulate its thoughts and obtain new insights. Writer Jan Phillips (2006) defines creativity as “the energy that flows through us naturally when our emotional, spiritual, and mental channels are fully open” (p. 104). She believes the human race is creative by nature. However, we must teach ourselves how to open the three channels. Through practice and expression, Phillips supposes everyone possesses creative capacity. She states an artist lies within each of us and while not everyone considers himself or herself an artist, we each participate in shaping our own life and culture. Psychologist Robert J. Sternberg’s (2006) investment theory of creativity hypothesizes that creativity is largely based on decisions of the creator. The theory states one must “first decide to generate new ideas, analyze these ideas, and sell the ideas to others” (p. 90). Creators must initially convince themselves an insight will ultimately yield a reward worthy of their time and effort. Therefore, a student’s creative capacity increases if they believe their original ideas will generate beneficial results.

The creative mind remains one of the psychology’s major enigmas. Through research and experimentation, experts continue to unravel the cryptic marvel. To develop the ability to create and innovate is certainly one of the most important human abilities. Scientists may never unlock the unknown features of the creative mind, for it may be impossible to conceptualize the mind’s full potential. However, with each well-conceived experiment and logical hypothesis, we take one step closer to understanding the pure nature of the creative mind.

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