

1 Introduction: The Personal Side of Creativity

Individual Differences and the Creative Process

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The study of creativity is full of paradoxes. On the one hand, it is a topic of almost universal fascination and interest, and yet within academic circles it remains on the periphery of mainstream research programs and grant funding. Additionally, most people believe that creativity is original or novel thought and behavior, but in truth, the consensus among researchers is that it involves not only original/novel thought but also meaningful and useful thought and behavior. Finally, many people outside the field, especially those in the arts, would claim that creativity is inherently mysterious and beyond the purview of the scientific method, and yet there is a nearly 70-year history of scientific investigations into the creative person, process, and product. This *Handbook* is evidence of the most current part of this history. Indeed, the history of the scientific study of creativity has gained momentum over the last decade or two, and as with psychology in general, much of this work has recently focused on neural structure and function behind insight, imagination, and the creative brain (e.g., Vartanian, Bristol, & J.C. Kaufman 2013).

Truth be told, the fundamental question on researchers' minds is: what is creativity, and why do some people consistently see novel and meaningful solutions unseen by most? The basic assumption of the contributors to this book is that personality is one of the important answers to the "why" question of creativity. That is, individual differences in personality traits – especially openness to experience – provide important clues as to why some people consistently "think outside the box" in art, science, business, and industry. In short, particular traits of personality lower the threshold for creative thought and behavior.

It's always a good idea to define the main concepts of a book, especially a handbook that aims to be the definitive source of scholarly material on a given topic, in this case creativity and personality. So let us be clear by what we mean by *creativity* and *personality*. First, to foreshadow what you will read in many contributions to this book, there is a nearly unanimous consensual definition of creativity: creative thought or behavior must be both novel/original and meaningful (useful/adaptive) (e.g., Amabile 1996; Runco 2004; Sternberg 1988). It is easy to see why originality per se is not sufficient – there would be no way to distinguish eccentric or schizophrenic from creative thought. Both are original. But, to be classified as creative, thought or behavior must also have meaning to

other people. Being weird or different just to be weird or different is not creative. It is worth noting that Simonton (2013) has added a third dimension to these two criteria of creativity, namely, surprisingness. Creative thought and behavior must be not only original and meaningful but also surprising and nonobvious.

Next, personality consists of the unique behavioral dispositions of each individual (Feist, Feist, & Roberts 2013). More specifically, personality is the unique behavior of an individual over time and across situations. If a person has the personality trait of *friendly*, this means she behaves in a friendly way more frequently than most people (uniqueness), that she has behaved more friendly than most over a long period of time (temporal consistency), and that she is likely to behave in a uniquely friendly way in many different situations (situational consistency). Personality researchers, like many psychologists, argue that the primary overall cause of behavior is the interaction between personal (internal) qualities of the individual and his or her environment or situation (external). In this sense, they are more likely to look for internal (trait, motivation) explanations of behavior than social psychologists or sociologists, who focus on external, situational forces that shape behavior. Traits are the most common “internal” cause of behavior in personality. More important, we concur with Gordon Allport, who almost 80 years ago wrote: “Personality *is* something and personality *does* something” (Allport 1937, p. 43). We believe that what personality does is lower thresholds for trait-consistent behaviors—one of these being creative behavior as defined above. That is, particular traits raise the odds that someone will think and/or behave in a creative (original and meaningful) way. This book is an exploration of which traits do that and how.

Personality is all about the uniqueness of the person, and creativity at its core is about unique and meaningful behavior. Given this state of affairs, one would think that an authoritative handbook on the topic of creativity and personality would already exist. And one would be wrong. Over the last decade, many books – both popular and scholarly – have been published on creativity. These books have explored many important perspectives on creative thought and behavior, from intelligence, values, and emotion to genius, cognition, and domain-specific versus domain-general abilities. The field of personality, however, has not been neglected by researchers, as the chapters in this book will attest to. Yet there is no one single source that gathers the most current and cutting-edge research on how personality affects creative behavior. The purpose of this book is to fill that gap and be the first (and only) resource of its kind.

A few years back at a conference, the three editors wondered why it was that there was no definitive handbook examining how personality and creativity interact and influence each other. But where to begin? Given that we each had published on the topic of creativity and personality and were familiar with the literature, we first had to come up with a list of others who best exemplify current research on the topic. Fortunately, most scholars we contacted agreed to contribute. The next task at hand was how to organize and structure this

coherent but diverse set of chapters. After reading through the contributions, we opted to organize the chapters into the following three parts: I – Process and Structure of the Creative Personality; II – Emotion, Motivation, and Psychopathology; and III – Measurement and Social Influences. The general sequence of these parts tends to move from the most general and individualistic to the more specific and social.

The topics in Part I are broad explorations of the creative personality and its processes and structures. The part begins with a contribution by Oleynick and colleagues (Chapter 2) that sets the stage for much of the rest of the book. They lay out the main personality dimension involved in all forms of creativity, openness to experience, and argue for its division into two dimensions: openness (being imaginative and preferring aesthetic engagement) and intellect (preference to explore and understand abstract and intellectual information). In Chapter 3, Jung and Meadows build on this idea and examine the specific brain networks involved with both dimensions of openness to experience and creativity. Particularly exciting is their discussion of how the openness component maps more on to the brain's default mode network, whereas the intellect component maps more on to the cognitive control network. In Chapter 4, Woo and colleagues propose a working model of how openness to experience has different effects on creative achievement depending on whether the creativity is domain general or domain specific.

In Chapter 5, Feist reviews the past and present research on the association between all five of the major personality dimensions of creative scientists. He proposes a functional model of personality and creativity that attempts to integrate and explain the dynamic relationship between personality and creative achievement. Traits function to make behavior (including creative behavior) more likely. In Chapter 6, Karwowski and Lebeda explore the impact that creative self-concepts and beliefs have on creative potential and achievements across the spectrum from mini-c to Big-C creative achievement. In Chapters 7 and 8 we have contributions that discuss how diversifying experiences affect creative accomplishment. In Chapter 7, Damian reviews evidence that having unusual and unexpected experiences (outside cultural norms, e.g., death of a parent or belonging to a cultural minority) early in life have great impact on later lifetime creative achievement. In Chapter 8, Chang, Su, and Chen continue this theme by examining the impact that having multicultural life experiences has on opening a person up to ways to thinking and new kinds of knowledge that are both novel and adaptive, that is, creative. Given the overall importance of the Big Five model of personality in many of these chapters, it is only appropriate that in the final chapter of the part (Chapter 9), Fürst and Lubart provide some challenges to the model and propose a model that moves “beyond the Big Five paradigm.” In particular, they propose a more specific theoretical framework that more parsimoniously organizes the known relationships between personality and creativity than the broad traits found in the Big Five.

Part II concerns the interaction between creative personality and emotional and motivational traits. In addition, certain pathological traits can be

associated with the creative process, especially in literature and the arts. The part begins with a contribution by Taylor, McKay, and J.C. Kaufman on the topic of mood, creativity, and personality (Chapter 10). They argue that mood and personality affect creativity differently depending on the type of mood and the domain of creative achievement (e.g., art versus science). Ivcevic and Hoffman (Chapter 11) continue the theme of affect and creativity by developing a model that integrates emotion-related personality traits and emotion abilities such as emotional intelligence and emotional creativity. These abilities, in turn, facilitate creative achievement. In Chapter 12, and coming from a social-learning-model perspective, Joy examines how the drive and motivation to perform novel and innovative behaviors predicts creative achievement such as divergent thinking, self-reported creative achievement, and rated originality in art and writing tasks. The last two chapters in Part II both concern the connection between psychopathology and creativity. First, Simonton (Chapter 13) reviews the evidence that tends to support a positive relationship between artistic genius and psychopathology. Furnham closes the part with a chapter that explores how both the “dark” (pathological) and “bright” (normal personality) traits correlate with creativity (Chapter 14).

In Part III, contributions cover topics involved with either measuring the creative personality or determining how it operates in a social and organizational context. Beginning this part, Hornberg and Reiter-Palmon examine how different measures and criteria of creativity lead to somewhat different findings in the personality–creativity relationship (Chapter 15). In Chapter 16, Nusbaum and Silvia review whether and to what extent personality traits (the Big Five) predict individual differences in humor – a specific and yet understudied form of creativity. As with many of the chapters in this book, they reveal the strong association between openness to experience and humorous creativity. Next, Dollinger discusses how creative people tell richer and more individualistic stories about their lives using 20 self-photographs (Chapter 17). He also finds that those who are high in openness and low in extraversion tell the most creative and individualistic autophotographic life stories.

The last four chapters of Part III focus on the group, social, and cultural forces behind the creative process. Litchfield, Gilson, and Shalley discuss how personality exists at the team level in addition to the individual level (Chapter 18). From that they examine the association between team-level personality (as operationalized using the Big Five) and creativity. One interesting and surprising finding is that variation (standard deviation) in openness among team members is a stronger predictor of team creativity than the average (mean) openness scores of the teams. In Chapter 19, Akhtara, Ahmetoglu, and Chamorro-Premuzic address the question of whether entrepreneurial personality (at both the individual and the group levels) affects work-related innovation. After answering affirmatively, they discuss how social capital can be leveraged to develop entrepreneurial personality traits. Among the findings reviewed, Akhtara and colleagues report that entrepreneurs tend to have lower levels of agreeableness and neuroticism along with higher levels of openness and conscientiousness.

In Chapter 20, Fleith reviews the past few decades of educational interventions that have attempted to facilitate and improve creative thinking in students, with a special focus on Brazilian students. The final chapter (Chapter 21) provides a brief history of where the field has been, synthesizes some of the ideas presented throughout this book, and offers suggestions for future directions.

We are very pleased – proud even – with how this book came out, and we believe that it will offer students and scholars of both creativity and personality research the definitive go-to source for the most current and extensive research on how personality influences creative thought, behavior, and achievement. Certain personality traits (especially openness to experience) do make creativity more likely, but there is a lot more to it than that. Enjoy reading the rest of the book to find out how personality and creativity are a match made in heaven.

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