



B O N U S C H A P T E R

EVOLUTION OF THE 4PS OF CREATIVITY AND CREATIVITY RESEARCH

Throughout history, creativity has been an important factor for cultural and technological evolution. Artists, writers, musicians, scientists, inventors and others have practiced their creativity individually and in collaborations with others. Depending on the political and socioeconomic environment in different societies creativity has been celebrated during certain periods and suffocated during others. Considering the long history of humans and their creativity, creativity research is a relatively young discipline. Even though creativity is in all of us, only during the last two centuries have psychologists and other social scientists begun to investigate more closely what creativity is and where and how it happens.

THE PERSON IN CREATIVITY RESEARCH

During the early part of the twentieth century, many scholars believed that a person was either born creative or not. The research looked at

creativity from the perspective of the creative person. Psychologists focused on the individual creativity expressed by those they considered creative, noting any distinctive characteristics of those people.

For instance, American psychologist J.P. Guilford, one of the most important contributors to creativity research, developed a person-centered framework that analyzed personal, motivational and temperamental traits, as well as backgrounds and work methods of exceptionally creative individuals. Guilford based his description of creativity on the ability to manipulate ideas in original, fluent, flexible and elaborate ways (Guilford, 1950).

His traditional approach of creativity is based on the assumption that creativity is something done by creative people. Since creative abilities are equally distributed among the population, researchers can study whether a person performs creative work due to motivational and temperamental factors.

Guilford was a strong proponent of the idea that creativity is inherent in all humans. He believed there was an interdependent relationship between human intelligence and creative abilities. In other words, the sum of a person's knowledge and a person's intellect, or how a person actually uses that knowledge to generate ideas. He developed the "Structure of Intellect (SI) Model," for which he assumed that our thinking is based on three pools of knowledge: contents, operations and products. *Contents* refers to the sum of our knowledge, or, in other words, everything that we know. *Operations* refers to how we actually use that knowledge. *Products* represents all of the new knowledge and ideas humans can actually gain and accomplish as a result of thinking. All three parts combined make up our "intel-

lect." The SI Model provides a broader understanding of how human beings think and how we use the knowledge that we have and how we can eventually expand that knowledge in new directions.

In the 1960s, Guilford acknowledged that most of our problem-solving skills in everyday life involve divergent thinking. He emphasized that when people are generating ideas, they need to keep four qualities in mind. Depending on the task at hand, not all of the qualities will be used, or a few may be used more than the others. The four qualities are fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.

Fluency is the ability to generate a lot of options. Flexibility is the ability to find options in as many different categories as possible. Originality is the ability to think of unique and novel ideas. Finally, elaboration is the ability to expand upon an option in order to make it more interesting and richer (Isaksen, Treffinger (2004), page 89). All four of these qualities refer back to the principle of divergent thinking, which Guilford believed was vital during the problem-solving stage. He also argued that educational practices tend to emphasize teaching students how to find conventional answers rather than using these four qualities when generating ideas.

Building on this approach, E.P. Torrance (1966, 1974) analyzed the process of creativity and developed his famous Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. According to him, "creativity is a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solution, making guesses, of formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies; testing and retesting these hypotheses and possibly modifying

and retesting them; and finally communicating the results” (Torrance (1966), p.6). However, the traditional approach could not provide a lot of practical advice for people who wanted to become more creative in their work and was soon supplemented by different assumptions.

In the early 1970s, Abraham Maslow, another prominent American psychologist, examined human creativity. Maslow identified two stages of creativity—primary and secondary creativeness. He pointed out that primary creativeness comes out of the unconscious and that it is the source of new discovery. This is what Maslow called real novelty, and it is equivalent to the divergence component of creativity. Secondary creativeness represents logic, common sense and reasoning, and is built upon previous knowledge.

The more contemporary approach sees creativity as a capacity that lies within most humans and is influenced by the social environment. According to this standpoint, creative behavior cannot be explained only by studying the creative skills of so-called “creative people.”

THE PROCESS IN CREATIVITY RESEARCH

In addition to the dimension of person the dimension of process deserves attention when examining creativity. One of the oldest process models was developed by British social psychologist Graham Wallas. He discovered that people could improve their creative thinking skills when they applied a specific process. In 1926, Wallas differentiated four stages in a sequential model and developed a process that became known as the “Wallas Four-Stage Creative Process”: 1) the prepara-

tion stage involves a preliminary analysis of a definite problem, defining and setting up the problem and conscious work that draws on education, analytical skills and problem-relevant knowledge, 2) the incubation stage wherein the mind continues to work on the problem unconsciously, forming trains of associations; 3) the illumination stage is reached when the promising idea breaks through to conscious awareness like a sudden enlightenment; however, it is a delicate stage that can easily be disturbed by outside interruptions or by rushing the emerging idea; and, 4) the final verification stage in which the idea is further developed, evaluated and refined.

Amabile (1983) also described the creative process as having four phases: Problem or task identification, preparation, response generation, and response validation and communication. She also proposed a final phase of decision making about further work. As an outcome of the response validation and communication phase, a person may decide she is finished because a successful product is achieved or because the product was a failure, or she may return to one or more prior phases.

American psychologist Sidney Parnes in partnership with advertising executive Alex F. Osborn dedicated a substantial amount of time to researching creativity and how humans are able to increase their creative problem-solving skills by applying a creative thinking process. Osborn, the co-founder of the American advertising agency BBDO, improved the creative output of his employees by observing the staff in his agency and focusing specifically on how art directors and copywriters tackled agency problems when developing campaign ideas. Both a researcher and advertising professional, Osborn pro-

posed a more extensive seven-stage model of the creative process: orientation, preparation, analysis, ideation, incubation, synthesis and verification) with a distinction to Wallas' model in that an ideation phase entails the generation of multiple ideas. Osborn's further deductions concerning ideation focused on the search for several possible solutions and the development of various techniques for exploring them.

Some researchers have proposed a need to move beyond the overall creative process and to look further into subprocesses of creative thought. For example, Sapp (1996) developed a model that focuses on the point of creative frustration, which often occurs between incubation and the moment of illumination. If a person struggles during incubation and fails to find creative ideas, a point of frustration is reached. Then the individual can restart the process and possibly fall into the same trap again or accept a subpar idea although it may not be optimal or explore further directions and alternatives.

Treffinger (1983) updated Osborn's model and moved away from the concept of a fixed sequence of activities to three distinct sets of processes involving understanding the problem, generating ideas and planning for action. Understanding the problem entails mess and data finding involving searching of general information and gathering facts, and problem-finding processes. Generating ideas entails divergent thinking, elaboration of ideas and convergent thinking with evaluation of ideas. The last planning set involves developing and implementing ideas through evaluating, selecting and refining options (solution finding), and promoting an idea, seeking support and noting resistance (acceptance finding).

THE PLACE IN CREATIVITY RESEARCH

Other researchers have looked beyond the creative process and individual differences to the environment in which creativity takes place. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) noted that creativity cannot be studied by isolating the individual from the social and cultural milieu. He argued that creativity is the product of a system that includes the creator, the domain and the field (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Although Amabile (1983) suggested that all humans have a capacity for creativity, the environment is an influential determinant, especially where motivation is concerned. Mathisen and Einarsen (2004) also noted that organizations may actively create an atmosphere in which creativity and innovation are either fostered or stifled, both on individual group and organizational levels. Similarly research has shown that the combination of supportive and challenging environment is conducive to sustaining high levels of creativity in individuals as well as teams (West & Richards, 1999).

Instruments used to measure work environments that foster creativity and innovation point to other aspects of place that impact creativity. One noteworthy instrument KEYS to Creativity and Innovation, Amabile et al., (1996) identifies five contextual components that contribute to creativity: encouragement of creativity, autonomy of freedom, resources, pressures and organizational impediments to creativity. According to Mathisen and Einarsen (2004), KEYS is aimed at assessing the work environment for creativity, but it is also relevant to innovation because creativity is the seed of all innovation. Amabile et al. (1996) defined creativity as "the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain" and in-

novation as “the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization” (p.1155). Amabile (1994, 1996) has also suggested that the social environment can influence both the level and frequency of creative behavior, as well the creative individual’s intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Another notable instrument suggesting the importance of contextual variables is the Creative Climate Questionnaire (CCQ; Ekvall, 1996; Ekvall, Arvenen & Waldenström-Lindblad, 1983), which was designed to measure the organizational climate and conditions that stimulate or hamper creativity and innovation. Similarly organizational climate defined as “a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings and behaviors that characterizes life in the organization” (Ekval, 1996, p.105) has been viewed as an intervening variable in problem-solving, decision-making, communication, coordination, control, learning, creation, motivation and commitment (Mathisen & Einarsen, 2004).

Lubart and Sternberg (1995) describe six resources that work together with environmental assets and conative forces to form a person’s “investment” in a creative enterprise. Consistent with the importance of place, the environmental context along with motivation are two resources that influence creativity. In line with the importance of the person component, internal psychological processes are a primary resource that contributes to the “investment” in creative work. Additionally, knowledge is required in order to make an informed creative contribution in a specific domain. Further, certain intellectual styles facilitate the application of knowledge in mental processes. Three dimensions of these styles are legislative/executive, conservative/liber-

al and global/local. The fourth resource, the overall creative personality, is characterized by five essential attributes. Tolerance of ambiguity, perseverance, the willingness to grow, the willingness to take risks and individuality are perceived as necessary for the maintenance of high levels of creative performance over a certain period of time. In all, Lubart and Sternberg’s (1995) perspective reinforces the conceptualization of creativity as an integrative approach and points to the importance of another key component—process.

THE PRODUCT IN CREATIVITY RESEARCH

The product in creativity research represents the end result of a [creative] activity or production in a specific discipline or domain. Experts within that respective domain typically can assess those creations and products, and evaluate them. Since the experts interviewed for this book are all award-winning creative executives in advertising and marketing agencies, the examples mentioned mainly focus on the domain of advertising and marketing communication.

Many researchers agree that creativity is arguably the most important element in advertising success (El-Murad, West, 2004). Within the advertising and marketing communication industry the component of product represents the result of general and specific creative activities in advertising and marketing agencies. Therefore the relationship between the creative person (agency employee), the creative place (agency environment), the creative processes applied, as well as the creative product of advertising (advertising campaigns) deserves special attention throughout the book.

Advertising creativity research uses the same fundamental concepts found in general creativity research to describe what it means to say a work or product is creative. For example, it should reflect “creative thinking, ability, problem solving, imagination, innovation, newness, originality” (e.g. Simonton, 1999; Sternberg and Davidson, 1995; Sternberg and Lubart, 1999). Additionally researchers agree with the argument that originality is a required but insufficient condition for identifying creativity: the work must also be of value; that is, it should be “appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)” (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999, p. 3). The combination of “novelty” and “appropriateness” or “usefulness” (e.g. Amabile, 1983; Gruber & Wallace, 1999; Lumsden, 1999; Martindale, 1999; Mumford & Gistafson, 1988; Unsworth, 2001).

Effective and creative advertising are the two concepts that most frequently emerge in the practitioner literature (El-Murad and West, 2004). According to El-Murad and West (2004), effectiveness is valued by managers and clients as a means to achieve specific objectives, such as to create awareness, desire, interest and/or action, and typically associated with client briefs. Creativity is valued by creative teams, who tend to see the advertisement as an opportunity to demonstrate their own skills and aesthetic values, and thereby to promote their careers (Hirschman, 1989).

According to Brendan Ryan, president of Foote, Cone & Belding Worldwide, creativity is linked to the effectiveness of the ad as it becomes the vehicle to connect with consumers. More clients are realizing that creative ads work better, are more memorable and make their point more effectively in the marketplace. The connection between creativity,

likeability and recall would seem to be the essence of what advertising is all about: creating likable and memorable commercials as a prelude to selling products and services (Stone et al, 2000).

From their theoretical perspective, Smith and Yang (2004) suggest that creative ads are those deemed to be divergent, effective and relevant. Koslow, Sasser and Riordan (2003) favor an originality appropriateness measurement framework. According to these researchers, advertising creativity is a function of three constructs: originality, strategy and artistry (with the latter two constructs reflecting different kinds of appropriateness).

Rather than simply using individual subjective responses, some researchers favor using more objective markers such as the reaction of target audiences or expert opinion (Amabile, 1982; Bell, 1992, Stone, 2000). El-Murad and West (2004) point out that “many other examples of judge or expert measurements of advertising creativity” can be considered to have a more objective referent. In particular, expert opinion of agency work expressed in advertising competition has become an industry standard (e.g., Cannes Lions, The New York Festival, The One Club, The Art Director’s Club Show, Effie Awards). Along similar lines, Kover, Goldberg and James (1995) view creative award-show winners as the hallmark of agency creativity. As such, advertising award records have become more widely used in the research as a measure of advertising creativity. According to El-Murad and West (2004) this is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi (1999), who argued that creativity is “the ability to add something new to the culture” (p. 314) such that it is “sanctioned by some group entitled to make decisions as to what should or

should not be included in the domain” (p.314). “For someone to be creative their work must be recognized as such by those competent in the fields, who have reached higher levels of their profession” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

According to Simonton (1996), research has shown that “critically acclaimed producers in a field think differently and have distinctive personality structure in comparison to those peers who can only claim professional exper-

tise in the same disciplines.” Nevertheless Amabile (1983) argues that a product is creative to the “extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is creative.” According to White and Smith (2001), “appropriate” observers are typically advertising “creatives”—copywriters and art directors—who produce advertisements and vote to bestow industry recognition such as the Cannes Advertising Awards, One Show, Clio and Addy awards.

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