

Creativity Curriculum and Personality

Jennifer Harmon, University of Wyoming, USA

Keywords: Creativity, Creative Thinking, Personality

Literature Review. In various domains of work, creativity is an essential skill for success (Sung & Choi, 2009). “The...definition of creativity includes two parts: originality and functionality (Kersting, 2003, p.40).” Certain personality traits have been previously found to be related to a higher degree of creativity. Personality refers to the “the stable set of tendencies and characteristics that determine those commonalities and differences in people’s psychological behavior (thoughts, feelings, and actions) that have continuity in time” (Maddie, 1996, p. 8). People with different temperaments may be predisposed to certain behaviors or activities. McCrae and Costa (1992) outlined the five factors, or “big 5” traits of personality. They are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness (McCrae and Costa, 1992). In general, an extraverted person can be described as someone who is talkative and outgoing while an open person is likely imaginative and artistic (McCrae and Costa, 1992). An agreeable person is likely generous and kind, while a conscientious person is likely to be efficient and organized. Finally, a neurotic person is likely to be more anxious and tense. Previous research has investigated these five personality traits in relation to creativity. Conscientiousness and neuroticism have been found to be unrelated to creative accomplishments, while agreeableness was negatively correlated with creative accomplishments (King, Walker & Broyles, 1996). Further analysis revealed that only openness to experience is predictive of creative ability and creative accomplishments (King, Walker & Broyles, 1996). However, other researchers have found openness to experience and extraversion to be related to creative performance (Sung & Choi, 2009). The purpose of this research was to investigate how students in a Western University’s Design, Merchandising and Textiles program would respond to creative thinking challenges and what role personality traits would play in creativity. In these two courses, emphasis was placed on knowledge of creativity. Pre and post course measures were completed, in addition to creative works in class. The following predictions were made:

Hypotheses. 1) Students will report understanding the creative process and gaining in the area of personal creativity after completing the course.
2) Students scoring higher on creative personality traits will report more creative uses and creative achievement.

Methodology. *Study Design.* Two courses participated in this study, a junior level visual merchandising and promotion course and a sophomore level product development course. A total of 19 students participated the study, with 4 students taking both courses. In each of the courses, students completed a pre course survey to assess their creativity related personality traits and creative achievement up to that point. At the end of the course, students repeated the creative achievement questionnaire and answered open-ended questions about the creative thinking challenges. *Course Design.* In each course, the concept of creativity and the creative process were addressed through lectures and activities. Additionally, students completed creative

thinking challenges. In these challenges, students were given a small scale creative task to complete, within the 75 minute class period. There were two of these challenges in the product development class- designing a textile print based on a selected trend forecast and generating new, innovative product ideas. In the visual merchandising and promotion class there were three challenges- designing an advertisement based on a given example, designing a window display and developing a product for a niche market with a brief marketing plan. These challenges covered each content area of the course. *Measures.* Personality was measured with the 44 item big five inventory (Pervin & John, 1999). Creativity was measured with a creative uses activity and creative achievement questionnaire at the beginning and end of term (Silvia et. al, 2008; Carson, Peterson & Higgins, 2005). Answers to open ended questions were coded positive, neutral and negative based on the presence of the words “yes,” “yes and no,” and “no,” and derivatives.

Results. Qualitative. In regards to the question “Do you feel you understand creativity and the creative process after the creative thinking challenges?.” a majority of students (n= 13) reported feeling that they understood the creative process. The class was more evenly split in terms of whether or not they felt their personal creativity improved as a result of the challenges (n = 11 yes, n=7 no, n= 1 neutral). When students were asked their favorite aspect of the challenges, one element identified was being forced to think outside the box (n= 4). The least favorite aspect was the time constraint (n= 5). *Quantitative.* Due to the monotonic relationship observed in the data, a spearman rho correlation analysis was used for hypothesis 2. Openness to experience was significantly correlated with creative achievement on the post measure ($r_s(19) = .471, p < .001$).

Conclusion. From the results of this study, creativity specific curriculum mainly benefits students’ understanding the creative process and being pushed outside of their comfort zones. Openness was the only dimension of personality which was significantly related to creativity.

References.

- Carson, S. H., Peterson, J. B., & Higgins, D. M. (2005). Reliability, validity, and factor structure of the creative achievement questionnaire. *Creativity Research Journal, 17*(1), 37-50.
- King, L. A., Walker, L. M., & Broyles, S. J. (1996). Creativity and the five-factor model. *Journal of Research in Personality, 30*(2), 189-203.
- Pervin, L. A., & John, O. P. (Eds.). (1999). *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. New York, NY: Elsevier.
- Maddi, S. R. (1996). *Personality theories: A comparative analysis* (6th ed). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- McCrae, R. R., & John, O. P. (1992). An introduction to the five-factor model and its applications. *Journal of Personality, 60*(2), 175-215.
- Silvia, P. J...& Richard, C. A. (2008). Assessing creativity with divergent thinking tasks: Exploring the reliability and validity of new subjective scoring methods. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 2*, 68-85.
- Sternberg, R. J. (2006). The nature of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal, 18*(1), 87-98.
- Sung, S. Y., & Choi, J. N. (2009). Do Big Five personality factors affect individual creativity? The moderating role of extrinsic motivation. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal, 37*(7), 941-956.