Creativity, personality and psychopathology

ROSA AURORA CHÁVEZ BALDERAS
Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Ramón de la Fuente – UNAM, México

MA. DEL CARMEN LARA MUÑOZ
Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Ramón de la Fuente – UNAM, México

CARLOS CRUZ FUENTES
Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Ramón de la Fuente – UNAM, México
Science, Art, Technology have their foundation in the human capability known as Creativity, which implicates transformation of the existent or to generate something new, to extend aesthetic and rational conceptual fields, and transcendence (Chávez-Balderas 1999).

What is creativity?

There have been mainly four kinds of definitions related to ideology and economy (Rouquette 1973): creativity as a gift, a place to get; to focus on the product and its quality, considering the creator a producer; creativity as a personal trait; and creativity as a specific process.

For the purpose of this study we considered creativity as the human capability of generate something, transforming or transcending the existent through a process of three overlapping phases: Association: the person makes successive associations between outer and inner world elements, for a variable time sometimes with apparent latency. The process seems to begin when the person gets aware of the associations. Elaboration: purposely, conscious. The person uses the associations to do a work, a product. Communication: reproduces in others the associations, ends the process and begins a new one (Chávez-Balderas 1999).

The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking figural and verbal (Torrance 1963, 1990) are the must used instruments to evaluate creativity and there are more than 1500 researches done with them (Fishkin, Cramond, Olzewski-Kubilius, 1999) The TTCT provide a creativity index but also evaluate each creativity dimension: Flexibility, fluency, originality, elaboration, resistance to premature closure, abstractness of titles. Other creative strengths: emotional expressiveness, story telling articulateness, movement or action, expressiveness of titles, synthesis of incomplete figures, synthesis of lines or circles, unusual visualization, internal visualization, extending or breaking boundaries, humor richness of imagery, colorfulness of imagery, and fantasy. The TTCT have shown high reliability (>0.90) and high predictive validity.

Creativity and Psychopathology

Creativity and Psychopathology have been related at list since the Classic Greece. Plato described four kinds of divine madness: poetic, prophetic, erotic and ritual. According to his statements people create just when they are inspired, possessed, and enthusiasm drags them out from their senses.
For Aristotle creativity obeyed natural laws but he wondered why the greatest creators are predisposed to melancholy (Pérez-Rincón 1992). Of course the concept melancholy had different connotations at that time which could go from depressive to mania or even psychotic symptoms. During the Renaissance the idea of the link between geniality and mental pathology consolidated, Saturn aroused a generous melancholy able to transport the spirit to the world of ideas, an erotic furor where ecstasy opened a link with divinity and built an ideal of life and transcendence (Klibansky, Panoffsky 1991).

Maudsley (1867) pointed out this paradox: the genius as the highest expression of human potentiality but also of mental abnormality; and he proposed the theory of an altered physiology. Galton (1869) began the study of creativity from the Natural Sciences; he considered it as a natural biological skill, however he described genius as excitable and peculiar so they seem crazy sometimes.

During the last century possible associations between creativity and psychopathology have been proposed: psychopathology enhances creativity, psychopathology diminishes creativity, creativity predisposes to develop psychopathology. Mainly three kind of studies have been done on this field (Chávez-Balderas, Lara-Muñoz, 2000).


c) Research about creativity on psychiatric patients: Jamison 1980, 1996; Richards 1992, Stoll 1996 finding a relation between bipolar disorders, specially hipomania and creativity in patients and their relatives. Torrance (1963) found low creativity indexes among schizophrenic patients, Cromwell (1994) concluded creativity is not part of schizophrenia’s phenotype.

Kubie (1958) related creativity to the preconscious process which requires a free flow. He postulated that the psychopathological process blocks and affects the creative act, making it rigid and stereotyped behavior: flexibility is the measurement of health. Everything releasing the preconscious process, fluid and sensitive, enhances creativity. Guilty, fear, and anxiety cut down the creative process.

Creativity and Personality
Personality (De la Fuente 1959, 1992) is a concept which expresses the totality and individuality of the human being. It’s a dynamic organization with two dimensions: Temperament: the biologic one, heritable, represents a potential for development; and Character: environmental, social determinants and modeling forces.

Guilford (1968) related creativity with the predominance of divergent thinking, which produces a variety of different responses; and creative temperament with curiosity, flexibility, sensibility, going beyond the obvious, reflective thinking, humor, need of adventure, and tolerance for ambiguity. Torrance and Kathena (1976) consider these dimensions of the creative personality: sensibility to environment, initiative, self strength, intellectuality, individuality, disciplined imagination, self confidence, artistic sense, empathy. For Camacho, Vives Rocabert and Solís (1983) the creative person requires hyper sensibility to catch the surrounding and the inner worlds, exceptional symbolization capacity, and an environment facilitating the organization of an ego with autonomy.

Dabrowsky (1964) after studying creative adults and gifted children he developed his theory of development potential. The intensity and duration of the response to stimuli, called overexcitability (OE) by him is part of this developmental potential and it is present in five forms: emotional OE, sensual OE, intellectual OE, imaginative OE, psychomotor OE. In 1988 was created the Overexcitability Questionnaire OEQ and in 1999 Falk et al elaborated the OEQ II improving its reliability.

Cloninger (1983) described a psychobiological model for the structure and development of personality with four temperament dimensions: 1) Novelty seeking: exploratory excitability, impulsivity, extravagance, chaos. A relation with the dopaminergic system has been proposed. 2) Harm Avoidance: anticipatory preoccupation, fear to uncertainty, shyness, fatigability. A relation with the serotoninergic system has also been proposed. 3) Reward Dependence: sentimentalism, attachment, dependence. 4) Persistence: perseverence in spit of frustration. And three dimensions of character: 1) Self-directedness: responsibility, goal directedness, plenty of resources, self-acceptation, congruency. 2) Cooperativeness: social acceptation, empathy, service, compassion, integrated consciousness. 3) Self Transcendence: creative self-forgetting, transpersonal identification, spiritual acceptance.

Why study creativity?

The scientific interest on the creative process and the creative person has been increased in the last century. Specific instruments have been developed to explore its fine
aspects and dimensions. Creativity is so important for the individual well being and the social survival, and a better understanding of it could help us to develop this capability.

**Hypothesis**

Creativity is associated to certain characteristics of temperament and character: novelty seeking, self-directedness, self-transcendence; high overexcitability. Creativity doesn’t have a positive relation with psychopathology.
Between Creativity and Psychopathology raises personality

In order to explore the relation between creativity, personality (temperament and character, overexcitability) and psychopathology the authors made a comparative, cross sectional study, at the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón de la Fuente in México, on three groups: individuals with high creative performance, control individuals without mental disorders, and psychiatric patients. The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking figural and verbal, the Character and Temperament Inventory, the Overexcitability Questionnaire II and The Symptom Check List SCL-90 (Derrogatis 1973) were applied.

A peculiar personality profile was found associated to a high creativity index, but also a personality profile was associated to high scores of psychopathology. The findings, which will be exposed, suggest that to release the person from the psychopathologic process could make the creative process flow. Predisposition to develop psychopathology seems to be more related to personality than to creativity.
Address for correspondence:
The Torrance Center for Creative Studies,
329 EPSY Aderhold Hall, The University of Georgia, 30602, USA. (Until June 2002)

Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Ramón de la Fuente
Calzada México-Xochimilco 101, San Lorenzo Huipulco, Tlalpan, México DF. (From July 2002)

dra.chavez@correo.unam.mx
References


