



The Development of Self-Perception of Creative Abilities

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Questions

- Does self-perception affect creativity?
- Where does self-perception come from?
 - Are you a creative person?
 - At all times?
 - How often are you creative?
- Do others perceive you as creative?
 - Who?
 - Is your creativity critiqued?
 - Do you believe the critique?
- Is creativity most important for the creator or for others?

Research Methods

Surveys were distributed to students on two campuses regarding their beliefs about creativity and their own self-perception on personal creativity. Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) students and faculty during the fall 2010 semester were surveyed, along with students and faculty from Lamar University in the Summer 2010 session. In total, we surveyed 216 students and faculty; 48 from Lamar University and 168 from SFASU. Though we would have enjoyed conducting more extensive research, our surveys only cover college students at the two universities mentioned. Along with surveys, we also did extensive research regarding creativity throughout the academic community. As seen in "The Development of Self-Perception of Creative Abilities", we used a multitude of different resources to compare our research.

Findings

	GPA	Does field of study require creativity?	Does field of study restrict creativity?	Has your education limited your creativity?	Are you a creative person?	Are you more creative in some areas than others?	Do others perceive you as creative?	Are your creative abilities appreciated by others?	Are you satisfied with your creative abilities?	Do you feel comfortable displaying your creative abilities?
Does field of study require creativity?	-0.1266									
Does field of study restrict creativity?	0.0159	-0.1070								
Has your education limited your creativity?	-0.0968	-0.0628	0.0650							
Are you a creative person?	0.0152	0.3736	0.1093	-0.1630						
Are you more creative in some areas than others?	-0.0037	0.1746	0.0781	-0.0436	0.3466					
Do others perceive you as creative?	-0.1213	0.2209	-0.1070	-0.0975	0.3736	0.1132				
Are your creative abilities appreciated by others?	0.0683	0.2813	-0.0045	-0.1232	0.2672	0.0477	0.3164			
Are you satisfied with your creative abilities?	-0.0538	0.1411	-0.1806	-0.2176	0.1691	0.0743	0.2396	0.1635		
Do you feel comfortable displaying your creative abilities?	0.0405	0.2858	0.0852	-0.0635	0.3417	0.2132	0.3882	0.2749	0.3549	
How creative are you?	0.0561	0.2022	-0.0545	-0.0325	0.2700	0.0520	0.2490	0.2202	0.2032	0.2704

Conclusion

Does each individual perceive himself or herself as possessing creative abilities? Where does this self-perception of creative abilities develop? This self-perception is dependant upon each individual's definition of creativity. Research shows no consensus and offers a broad variety of definitions for the controversial word "creativity." After all, is creativity defined by academic research, social interactions, intelligence, or motivation? In the end, it is our own self-perception that defines, limits, and expands our creative abilities.

When researching creativity, there are a plethora of aspects to consider. Not only does one need to consider the many available definitions, one must also research creative ability and potential. We found that socialization has a great impact on self-perception, which in turn impacts an individual's creative potential, though these are not the only factors that must be considered.

The surveys indicated a very low correlation between "academic success" (for which we used the grade point average (GPA) to measure) and the students' self-perceptions of creative abilities. In fact, the correlational coefficient was 0.0561. Unfortunately, GPA is most likely not the best measurement of academic success. Rather the amount of learning and critical thinking accomplished would be a better measurement. But GPA is the measurement most widely used in the academic setting. This data supports our belief that academic success does not determine creativity nor does creativity determine academic success. It is encouraging to learn that the majority of students do not allow their academic record to dictate their self-perception of creative abilities.

Instead, we had hoped to find a stronger relationship between other's perceptions of one's creative abilities and one's own self-perception. 73% of those surveyed believed others viewed them as creative. 86% of those surveyed believed themselves to be creative. The correlation coefficient between the two was .3736. This is significantly higher than the correlation between self-perception of creative abilities and academic success. This data confirms our belief that self-perception of creative abilities is strongly related to social interactions. Perhaps this information is indicative of the problem with the system often used to identify gifted/talented students within the school system. Often times, grades are used to help identify these students when one's self-perception of creative abilities may strongly influence how creative one actually is. And this self-perception is strongly correlated to how creative others perceive one to be. When an authority figure labels one as "gifted/talented," this socialization may play an extremely large role in the development of one's self-perception. Social interactions seem to play an important role in one's creative abilities.

How is satisfaction with creative abilities related to the perception of others? There is a .2396 correlation coefficient between whether others perceive one to be creative and whether one is satisfied with their creative abilities. This implies that extrinsic motivation may play an important role in the development of creativity. Unfortunately, a full 25% of those surveyed did not feel comfortable displaying their creative abilities in front of others. This is almost equivalent to the number of those who said others do not perceive them to be creative. Are we doing so poorly at encouraging creativity in children that 25% grow up to be uncomfortable with displaying their creative abilities? We are greatly disappointed at the lack of confidence in creative abilities. In fact, only 11% of those surveyed rated their creative abilities as a 5 (with 1 being not creative and 5 being very creative). An astounding 88% rated their abilities as a 4 or less. We were pleased to learn that no one rated themselves below a three. This indicates that no one surveyed believed themselves to be below average in creative abilities. Perhaps we are not doing so poorly in the school system after all; maybe we are teaching students to rise above the standards, and in the process, are encouraging the development of each student's creative potential. This would be a question for further research.

Sadly, 68% of those who rated their creative abilities as a 3 (average) are satisfied with these abilities. Since when is "average" satisfactory? Aren't we supposed to be teaching our students to "reach for the stars?" I'm afraid this data indicates we are not doing a very good job of encouraging excellence. Either the extrinsic motivation we offer is insufficient or the intrinsic motivation is so lacking that the extrinsic motivation cannot overcome it. Either way, we must do a better job of encouraging more than mediocre performance. The data also indicates, however, that of the 11% who rated themselves as very creative, only 90% are satisfied with their abilities. This indicates that some of those surveyed do desire to achieve above and beyond. Whether this desire is developed through intrinsic or extrinsic motivation is yet to be determined.

Perhaps one reason so many rated their creative ability so low is the pessimistic attitude that one's abilities cannot be altered. 70% said that creativity was based on nature, implying that it is set and unchangeable. Only 30% believed that creativity can be developed and encouraged. This is in direct contrast to our belief that everyone is born with creative potential, and it is interactions with those around us who bring out that creativity.

In addition, assuming that people are more comfortable and relaxed when surrounded by well-known and encouraging people, it makes sense that 69% of participants said they feel more creative when relaxed than when they are under pressure. In contrast to previous answers, this implies that creativity may be dependant on social interaction more than those who were surveyed initially considered. Dependency on social interactions also indicates a strong relationship between nurture and creative expression.