

Felix Zappe

Fundamentals of Creativity. Introduction
of basic concepts and approaches regarding
creativity

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Fundamentals of Creativity

Introduction of basic concepts and approaches
regarding creativity

Assignment as part of assessment for the study unit
Qualitative and quantitative research methods – IOT 5004

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In regard of creativity in various scientific disciplines, there are plenty approaches and theories, each adding new dimensions, meanings of the term creativity or perspectives on the creativity approach towards the discussion, what creativity is, how it can be approached, measured and enhanced (von Wissel, 2012). The individual theories differ in different dimensions, e.g. focusing on creative geniuses and everyday creativity or paying attention to different aspects of creativity (for example the 4 Ps) in particular (Kozbelt, Beghetto and Runco, 2010).

However, for the sake of complexity reduction and the forced investigation of psychological issues regarding creativity, especially concepts of the field of psychology should be taken in regard for this work. Namely the authors deal with three concepts of creativity that shaped the psychological discussion around it for the last years and can add to the foundations of their own research.

The investment theory by Sternberg and Lubart (1995, cited according to Sternberg, 2003) is emphasized through two statements:

1. Creative people understand the idea of discovering good but unpopular ideas ("buying low") and then making them known ("selling high"). Because of this analogy with the economy, the investment theory is also known to be an economic theory.
2. Being creative is a decision. Sternberg and Lubart do not rule out the fact that there are some prerequisites (e.g. knowledge and motivation) for creativity, but they can be influenced or learned. For this reason the creativity is a decision.

The componential theory model by Amabile (1996) determines three factors which are a prerequisite for a person's creativity. It is through the interplay of factors that creativity can take place. Missing one of them, it will not come to a creative result. Further exploration towards this theory is provided by figure 1.

1. Domain-relevant skills: Knowledge of the subject area, technical skills and, if necessary, a special talent for the subject area are the factor of.

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2. Creativity-relevant processes: Cognitive processes, which are helpful in the development of new ideas. Some examples are concentration, self-discipline and original solutions. These processes are based on the personality of an individual, but can also be learned in some cases.
3. Task-motivation: Amabile has set the principle of intrinsic motivation. This implies that intrinsic motivation encourages creativity. This statement is supported by the constantly found correlation of creativity and high intrinsic motivation.

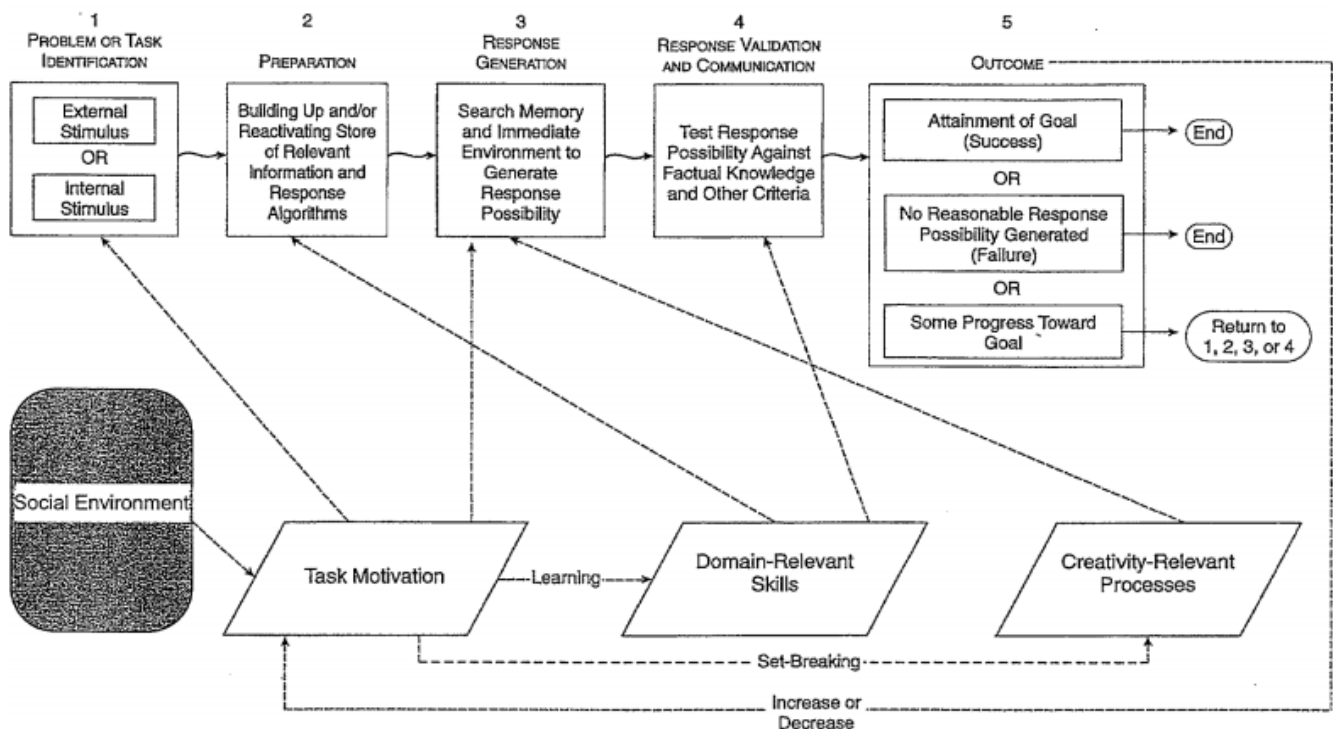


Figure 1: The componential theory of creativity (Source: Amabile, 2012, p. 10).

The systems model of creativity by Csikszentmihalyi (1999) underlines the importance of influences from three different factors. Further explanation is provided by figure 2:

- **Domain:** the subject area, which contains the currently available knowledge on a specific topic.
- **Field:** The group of people who decide whether a contribution is good enough to be included in the domain.

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- Individual: Creates contributions and pursues ideas, which are evaluated by the field.

Through their interactions a creative product emerges. Csikszentmihalyi does not deny individual differences as caused by personality characteristics, motivation, cognitive abilities etc. but this is restricted to the individual.

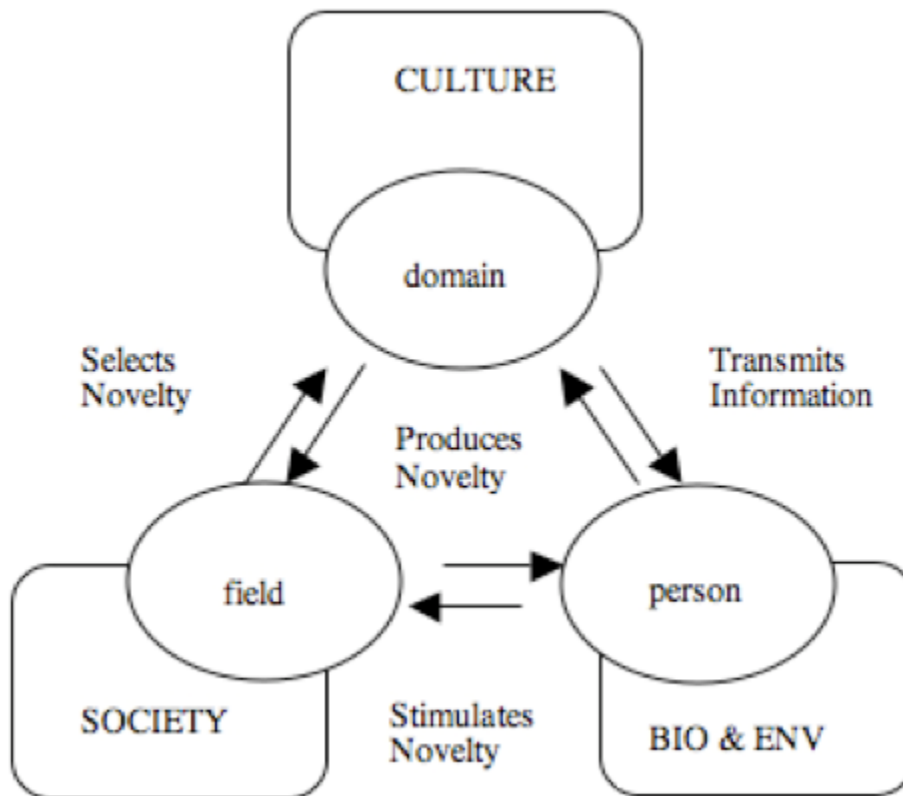


Figure 2: The Systems Model of Creativity (Source: Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 315).

Based on these concepts, it is possible to take a deeper look in some of the ongoing research questions of the psychological scientific community.

Of course, the search for specific personality traits for creative persons is an ongoing one. Here, many characteristics are combined. Feist (2010) distinguishes between cognitive, social and motivational-affective properties that contribute to creativity. These are e.g. openness for new experiences, independence, endurance, assertiveness and self-efficacy. He also finds a strong link between clinical disorders and creativity. Feist (2010) also emphasizes the

influence of genetics and epigenetics on the properties described above and thus on creativity.

Abuhamdeh and Csikzentmihalyi (2006) point out, however, that the stereotypical personality of a creative person depends on changes in the 'field' and the 'domain'. Thus, a "creative character" can never be clearly defined.

Another important debate is whether creativity is domain-specific or domain-spanning (Baer, 2010). From the point of view of an overarching creativity, it shows in different situations equally. But this could not be found by the research method of Amabile (1996). However a strong domain-specific expression is shown, which indicates that creativity is at least partly specialized in a specific field. Lubart and Guignard (2006) also ask whether creativity is initially interdisciplinary but is specialized later on.

The question of the conditions under which creativity unfolds best was examined more closely, especially the question of the effect of motivation. Someone is intrinsically motivated when he / she does a task because doing the task is self-rewarding e.g. by feeling joy, because one is interested in it. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is shown when a task is processed to achieve a goal that lies outside this procedure, e.g. a monetary reward or a good assessment (Collins and Amabile, 1999).

The findings summarized by Amabile (1996) seemed to indicate at the outset that extrinsic motivation impairs creativity e.g. not only are rewards reducing the creative achievement, but also expected assessment and observation. Increasing the salience of an extrinsic motivation reduces creativity. Three explanations were offered on these findings:

- On the one hand, interest in the processing of the task is now attributed to the reward, so the subjects feel motivated as extrinsic, and the creativity decreases (Amabile, 1996).
- In addition, the task is perceived not as "play", but as "work", so the task is linked with negative emotions and the intrinsic motivation decreases (Amabile, 1996).
- Hennessey (2010) also shows that extrinsically motivated people are looking for simple, less creative solutions.

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The explanation for the finding that rewards hinder creativity is the influence of motivation. In most cases rewards inhibit intrinsic motivation however, that is not always the case. Constructive feedback and task-related rewards such as more time, freedom, tools for editing etc. can promote intrinsic motivation and thus creativity, although they have been given externally (Collins and Amabile, 1999). This principle is called "extrinsics in service of intrinsics" (Amabile, 1996).

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