

Personality study on an artist sample across distinct artistic domains**Estudio sobre la personalidad en una muestra de artistas en diferentes campos de desempeño**Henrique Luis Román Salcedo¹, Olena Klimenko².**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to characterize the personality profile of an artist sample, proficient in different artistic domains. The research methodology was transversal quantitative, with a descriptive approach. The personality traits of the sample, from Colombia (23) and Argentina (3), were measured by means of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. The results exhibit a strong occurrence of psychopathological markers, with significant differences in the personality profiling from subjects in different artistic domains.

Keywords: personality, creativity, domains of artistic performance, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.

Resumen

Artículo presenta resultados de un estudio cuyo propósito fue caracterizar el perfil de personalidad en una muestra de artistas de diferentes campos de desempeño creativo, los cuales residen en Colombia (23) y Argentina (3). Se utilizó enfoque cuantitativo transversal,

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descriptivo, se realizó una medición de las características de personalidad de los participantes con el test MMPI versión abreviada (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory). Los resultados obtenidos corroboran los resultados de estudios anteriores que establecen una relación entre la producción creativa y las perturbaciones psicopatológicas.

Palabras clave: creatividad, perfil de personalidad, campo de desempeño artístico, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.

1. Introduction

The theoretical analysis of the broad concept of creativity, provides three intersecting angles that sustain the pretention of a research involving creativity and personality: a) the fact that creativity –as a construct- lacks an homogenous theorization; b) the stereotypical sociocultural perceptions, produce culture based knowledge that project the image of artists as deranged individuals with serious psychopathological deviations; c) the analysis of correlations found in background research, exhibit a divergent nature in the relations between creativity and psychopathology: numerous studies encounter pronounced positive correlations between creativity and psychopathology; on the other hand; studies that provide a significant negative correlation on the topic, are not scarce. The broad spectrum of action of this type of research, may include: the *deranged* artist, the *maladapted* employee, or the *problem* student. Be it as it may, the systematic approach on creativity research, appears as a fructiferous field that could possibly clarify creativity process, and why not, contribute to personality research.

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Chávez - Eackle, Lara et al. (2006) and Chávez – Eackle (2009) reveal a high degree of statistical normality according to psychopathological nosological criteria and populational tendencies, in subjects who exhibit elevated markers of creativity and high performance creative behavior. The conclusions of this research are conducive to profile characterizations of subjects in the spectrum of high creative performance, that generalize: elevated exploratory arousal, diminished harm avoidance, strong cooperative behavior, marked autonomy and self-oriented interactions with environmental stimuli. Deriving from the results proposed by this research, it is not farfetched to add that this sample of subjects do not fall strongly in the neurotic spectrum, as opposed by the sample of psychiatric patients who exhibited inferior creative performance, pronounced harm avoidance, scarce autonomy and diminished cooperative behavior. There's observed a strong and negative correlation between creativity and psychopathology, according to the aforementioned study.

Referring to personality traits and motivational components, according to several studies (Limiñaña, Corbalan & Sánchez, 2010; Young Sun & Nam Choi, 2009; Prabhu, Sutton & Sausser, 2008), broadly exposes that subjects who exhibit statistically superior creativity indexes; in their dispositional dimension, exhibit personality traits oriented to the satisfaction of social needs, creating profound and significant social bonds; regarding the cognitive dimension, subjects exhibited extraversion and openness traits with an empathic resonance informational processing. On an interpersonal level, results indicate social components of extraversion: confidence and asertivity, that operate as predictors of creative behavior, interestingly, those components don't predict with accuracy gregarious activity.

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Young Sun & Nam Choi (2009) points out that extraversion and openness personality traits, exhibit a positive effect on creative functioning: extraversion trait appears as the most significant predictor of creative performance. Motivation exerts a moderating role: data interpretation shows that the openness trait is triggered and amplified by extrinsic motivation in close relation to creative output. In other words, subjects with elevated openness trait markers, exhibit a tendency to act strongly on their innate trait when motivation is high for task execution, as well as receiving reinforcement for their performance. Conversely, extrinsic motivation did not elevate creative output in subjects with increased agreeability markers; admittedly, decreased extrinsic motivation, favored creative performance in the same group.

The precedent research background has been consistently presenting data that exposes a negative correlation regarding creative performance and psychopathological deviation. Conversely, the research design presented by Lee & Dow (2011) steers away from psychopathological normality, exploring the relation between malevolent creativity and personality, specifically antagonism, aggression and sympathy traits. The results suggest aggression trait to present a significant correlation with malevolent creativity.

Furthermore, regarding the abnormality spectrum, Perez-Fabello & Campos (2011) designed a study intended to test the hypothesis that dissociative experiences might approximate a comprehensive model of creativity output. The results derived the categorization of data in two (2) different subsets. In other words, the totality of test subjects,

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either pertained to one subset or the other, as consequence of data analysis: the segment of the sample that exhibited high scores in the Dissociative Experiences Scale, additionally exposed elevated markers of imaginative and experiential creativity.

Regarding the second subset, participants with low scores in the Dissociative Experiences Scale, additionally tested poorly in creativity functioning. Consequently, a conclusive relation is exposed concerning artistic performance and the dissociative spectrum (Perez-Fabello & Campos, 2011). Furthermore, on a similar personality spectrum, research designed by Wolfrad & Pretz (2001), encounter contrasting evidences: depersonalization correlated negatively to creativity, while exhibiting a strong relation to neuroticism. Research results contradict Wolfrad & Pretz (2011) theoretical analysis and hypothesis: transitory consciousness alterations were believed to support creative bursts. Notably, the two examples of studies involving the dissociative/depersonalization spectrum, evidently expose the divergent nature of background research which was adverted to the reader on the first moments of this paper.

On the whole, the last research representing abnormality spectrum, is presented by Joy (2008), the results produce conclusive relations between innovation and psychoticism traits, explaining to a certain degree, the association between artistic performance and maladaptive behavior.

Summarizing, the research problem is sustained by three intersecting angles: underdeveloped creativity theorizations; stereotypical culture based knowledge which posits

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the artist as a deviated subject. Finally, the divergence in research background results influences the scope of this study. The research background analysis failed to identify previous comparative studies pertaining the field of arts. Following this line of reasoning, a comparative approach designed to assess personality of artists, taking into account their performance field into data interpretation, suggested the possibility to reveal an approximate explanation or novel research routes directed at explaining the divergent results in the research corpus.

Consequently, this research proposes to treat the problem of personality in artists, on a comparative based approach, intended to reveal possible differences amongst artists that perform at different creative domains; attempting to answer the following: ¿What's the personality profile of an artist sample? ¿Are there differences in the personality profiling of artists from different artistic domains?

2. Theoretical background

Creativity conceptualization

Creativity concept, as seen in contemporary scientific corpus, appears as a relatively novel and precariously developed construct. Paradoxically to its conceptual immaturity, creativity research has been vast, and usually points to multiple hypotheses and theorizations that often appear contradictory. Factorization psychometric models result unsatisfactory in

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producing comprehensive process based models of creativity, while being useful in producing static factor based descriptions that fail to explain how the creativity process works.

Historically, from the last third of the 1800`s to the late 1920`s, there can be found references of authors who intended a scientific approach to get a grasp on creativity (Galton, 1869; Freud, 1908; Dewey, 1910; Poincare, 1913; Terman, 1925; Wallas, 1926; as quoted by Huidobro, 2002, p. 9). Nonetheless, a real interest in creativity study doesn't begin to proliferate until Guilford points out the scarcity of creativity research and the enormous statistical abyss when comparing creativity studies to other type of mainstream psychological research.

Through the vast number of scientists who have approached a grasp on creativity concept, there's not yet a consensus on its definition or methodological operationalization of variables. On this behalf, it's not likely to encounter a univocal definition or a homogenous conceptualization (Gretzels, 1975, as quoted by Fernández & López, 1998). Creativity presents itself as an elusive and polemic construct, commonly surrounded by myth and obscurity. *Geniality* was a broad used word in early psychological research of creativity, however, other synonyms appear in texts, i.e.: *inventiveness, originality, discovery and productivity*, among others (Monreal, 2000, as quoted by Chacón, 2005).

Corbalan, Martínez & Donolo (2003, as quoted by Chacón, 2005) point out the importance of maintaining a clear and taxative differentiation between creativity and

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aforementioned concepts because they're not interchangeable and posit operationalization difficulties (p.3). Other researchers claim an overabundance of creativity definitions; multiple factors contribute to creativity development, execution and domain (Donolo & Elisondo, 2007, p. 147). On the other hand, Runco & Sakamoto, consider creativity to be amongst the most complex of human behavior (Runco y Sakamoto, 2000, as quoted by Donolo & Elisondo, 2007; p. 148).

According to Feldhusen & Goh (1995), creativity models converge in the interrelation of 4 operational variables: person, process, product and culture –environmental context and sociopolitical factors that reciprocally interact with the creative subject, inhibiting or potentiating the development of ideas and paradigmatical shifts that offer social or technical value-. The main differences among creativity models, lies in the hierarchy attributed to some factors over others, and the distinctive relations between factors proposed by different authors (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995, as quoted by Fernández & López, 1998, p. 73).

Personality conceptualization

Psychological study of personality slowly rises in the early decades of the 20th century. The interest is rooted in three intellectual motifs from the 19th century: i) the sociopolitical and philosophical crescendo of *individualism*, and it's incidence in the rational, positivistic tendency of studying human behavior; ii) a rising interest in the *irrational* and *the unconscious*: a pendular motion shifts from the 18th century Age of Reason, giving way to the Romantic movement of the 19th century which heightens the interest on irrational

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emotionality, the unconscious, impulsivity and spontaneity in the arts, philosophy and literature. Early personality psychology receives a strong influence on Freudian discourse and theorizations, i.e.: *unconscious, id and primary process* (Winter & Barenbaum, 1999, p. 11); iii) psychology receives a strong paradigmatic influence from exact sciences – particularly physics and statistical factorization methodologies- attempting to study the complexity of human behavior by means of measurable objective data.

3. Method

The research methodology is cross-quantitative, non-experimental method and descriptive level. Population consisted of Latin-American artists above 18 years of age who volunteered to the study and satisfied the inclusion criteria –being an artist in any field: theater, music, writing, etc.; a minimum of 3 years of experience in their field; being recognized in their concrete social context for their artistic production-.

The 26 volunteer subjects from Colombia and Argentina, constituted a non-probabilistic sample. The sampling methodology of choice was the snowballing technique: consisting on recruiting one first participant that satisfies the inclusion criteria. The first participant will be asked to identify other participants and connect them with the recruiter who will verify the inclusion criteria are satisfied. New participants are to be instructed to

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act as recruiters. The procedure may be repeated if desired. Snowballing proves its value when researching subgroups or communities that are not statistically localizable in a pinpointed area. It would have been a mistake to choose a sample of artist students in any given university; where the results would have offered a statistical reference of psychopathological prevalence in artist students, but the conceptual relation between creativity and psychopathology would have been lost. In this sense, the present study doesn't pretend statistical generalizations. The main interest is the conceptual relation between creativity and psychopathology.

Personality was assessed using an abbreviated version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), with the following subscales: Hypochondriasis; Depression; Hysteria; Psychopathic deviation; Psychastenia; Hypomanic deviation; Schizophrenia.

4. Results

This research was developed with 26 study subjects. Their geographical distribution is as follows: 23 subjects reported either being born or residence based in Colombia, while 3 subjects appear located in Argentina. The artist sample from the former country, were habitants at: Medellin – Antioquia (77%); Cartagena – Bolivar (8%); Bucaramanga –

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Santander (4%). The artists residing in Argentina reported being based in Buenos Aires, representing eleven percent (11%) of the sample.

Furthermore, it's worth to mention that in spite of setting the limit on 18 years of age, test participants oscillated between a lower limit of twenty-six (26), and an upper limit of fifty-eight (58). A conglomerate comprehended between ages averaging twenty-six and thirty-five, represented sixty-five percent (65%) of the sample.

Gender wise, fifty-four percent (54%) of the sample consisted on male participants. The remaining forty-six percent (46%) comprehended the female portion of the sample. Interestingly, the majority of the male sample (94%) remains single, while the totality (100%) of the female sample, reports no current relationship.

Inclusion criteria set no limits to academic formation, nonetheless, there was found an eighty-eight percent (88%) of participants with professional degrees, whereas an eight percent (8%) reported a masters degree. The remaining four percent (4%) remained with a technical level formation.

Artistic field was not delimited in the inclusion criteria, interestingly; there was no participation of writers, cinematographs and dramaturges. The sample was conformed by ten (10) musicians; seven (7) painters; five (5) theatre actors, and four (4) plastic artists.

Consequently, a description of predominant traits found in the test subjects, will be presented, according to their artistic domain –field of expertise-

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Plastic arts subjects revealed the highest degree of psychopathological normality, according to nosological criteria and statistical populational tendencies. Their psychopathological normality contrasted notoriously with the other groups. A total of four (4) subjects were assessed, two (2) of which exhibited altered traits: one scored elevation in schizophrenia trait; whereas the other, scored highly in psychopathic deviation.

On the other hand, artists that excelled in painting as their creative domain produce the following data: seven (7) subjects were assessed, finding psychopathic deviation and schizophrenia traits on five (5) of them. Paranoia and psychasthenia traits were elevated in four (4) subjects. Three (3) subjects evidenced alterations in hypomanic deviation; while one (1) subject exhibited pronounced hysteria markers.

Considering this, the sample of artists of this field of performance, exhibit narcissistic and egocentric profiles, deploying tendencies towards fantasy and isolation; presenting risk of disintegration to their personality structure. Equally, distrusting attitudes, excessive caution, and aggression are commonly predictable from the data in this sample. Additionally, characteristic of this group sample are observed perfectionist tendencies, overly meticulous behavior and lack of constance in motivation, consequently, tasks are frequently left unfinished.

Regarding the theatrical scenic artists whose sample consisted of five (5), upper limit trait of psychopathic deviation scores above T 80, consistently appeared on all five subjects. Furthermore, trait schizophrenia scores exhibited the same statistical distribution, meaning

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the totality of the sample shared both traits. Discussing the hypothetical existence of an unknown variable that could explain this correlation is important but currently off topic. Digression aside, schizophrenia and psychopathy traits are only a few elements of a far more complex personality profile: four (4) subjects exhibited -coexistingly- : hypomania, paranoia, psycasthenia; finally, hysteria and depression coexisted on three (3) artists of the dramaturgical field. Theatrics, in comparison to other performance fields, seemingly evidence the most problematic profile. As in addition to the above traits, are notable depressive tendencies with manifestations of deep feelings of insecurity, on top of a pessimistic self-critical attitude, with regards to their own capabilities or goals. Contrasting with other artistic fields, a predominant characteristic of this field, (theatrical) is the higher prevalence of traits, consequently predicting an excessive need of approval with exaggerated demand for affection; a demanding attitude is likely to seek acceptance, affection and tolerance from others. As a result, manifestations of exhibitionism and histrionic behavior are not rare.

Lastly, high performance subjects from the musical field were assessed: ten (10) research subjects evaluation revealed that seven (7) individuals scored highly in psychopathic deviation trait. Psychasthenia trait markers were present in six (6) test subjects, whereas five (5) subjects evidenced schizophrenia and depression traits. Paranoia was prevalent in 4 participants of this specific field. Two (2) musicians scored elevated hysteria traits. According to this, it's reasonable to predict egocentric and narcissistic personalities, with marked tendencies towards excessively meticulous behavior; perfectionism characterizes

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their relationship with themselves and others. Furthermore, the profiling from this sample suggests preferences over pre-structured patterns, and a precise delimitation of activities and situations they may encounter. The high prevalence of the aforementioned traits result interesting, taking into account that musical expertise demands high level precision; musical training is characterized by the development and repetition of highly precise and intricate patterns.

As in other fields, schizophrenia traits were frequently noted, representing possible occasional confusions between fantasy and reality, posing risks towards isolation and fantasy. In addition to this trait, common to all artistic fields, a high prevalence of depression was measured in musicians, who scored higher than other artistic fields. In consequence, musicians from this sample exhibit intense feelings of insecurity, related to a highly auto critical attitude, and a pessimistic view of their own capabilities and goals. This trait results interesting, taking into account the high level of perfection expected in the musical field, where artistic excellence and virtuosity result imperative in sociocultural value of the artist. Additionally, a statistically significant elevation of trait paranoia is registered in this segment of the sample. Further research might shed light on the consistently elevated statistical deviation towards the abnormality spectrum. However, with regards to the paranoia trait prevalence in the musical field sample, an approximate explanation might suggest that trait paranoia marker elevation are indicative of the morbid competitiveness characteristic of this high performance field.

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5. Discussion

Personality traits will be exposed, according to their prevalence:

1. Schizophrenia trait, predominated in the sample, probably reflected in occasional confusions between fantasy and reality: representing personality structure disintegration risks. Additionally, notorious tendencies towards fantasy and isolation are to be expected; with consequent difficulties in their interpersonal dimension. The trait was distributed along eighteen (18) subjects belonging to sample of twenty-six (26) total artists. Data representing a sixty-nine (69%) percent of the sample, indicates a notorious deviation from statistical references. As a background reference, Joy (2008), exposes a notable and conclusive correlation between trait psychoticism and innovative behavior; explaining on some degree the association between creativity maladaptive tendencies, especially in artists.

2. Psychopathic deviation prevalence of sixty-five (65%) percent, represents 17 subjects of the sample. Data predicts the possibility of overt aggression and impulsive tendencies; responsibility avoidance and narcissistic, egocentric profiles, where significant interpersonal relationships are not to be expected.

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Following this line of reasoning, Lee & Dow (2011), explored the correlation of aggression, antagonism and sympathy traits. Data predicted a conclusive correlation between aggression and creative maladaptive behavior. In other words, subjects with elevated aggression markers and superior creativity indexes were more likely to incur in malevolent creativity. Consequently, the aforementioned construct might be understood: as a cognitive product which engages neuromuscular and dispositional systems towards producing harm. Finally, antagonism and sympathy traits exhibited no effect on malevolent creativity.

3. Third in prevalence, Psycasthenia trait, was distributed among fifty-four (54%) percent of the sample, representing fourteen (14) subjects whose profile characterizations predict: general elevated performance anxiety; overly meticulous and perfectionistic behavior, with rigid expectancies from oneself and others. Data interpretation suggests that affective and social relationships are likely to be conflictive in this portion of the sample.

On this behalf, the following research background results become of importance: Wolfrad & Pretz (2001) results indicate that primary trait *neuroticism*, doesn't act as a significant predictor of creative output. According to Wolfrad & Pretz, these findings are corroborated by earlier research: McCrae (1987), Eysenck & Furnham (1993), Martindale & Dailey (1996), as quoted by Wolfrad & Pretz (2001). Furthermore, data suggested that subjects who exhibited elevated creativity markers, registered low scores on the

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depersonalization subscale; which correlated positively with trait neuroticism (p. 306). On the other hand, Limiñana, Corbalán & Sanchez (2010) results suggest that test subjects with elevated creativity indexes; in their dispositional dimension, exhibit personality traits oriented to the satisfaction of social needs, creating profound and significant social bonds; regarding the cognitive dimension, subjects exhibited extraversion and openness traits with an empathic resonance informational processing. On an interpersonal level, results indicate social components of extraversion: confidence and asertivity, that operate as predictors of creative behavior, interestingly, those components don't predict with accuracy gregarious activity (p. 277).

4. Paranoia prevails in twelve (12) subjects, representing forty-six (46%) percent of the sample; segment whose profile characterizations, derived from data interpretation, may predict: suspiciousness, hypervigilance, excessive caution and the tendency to interpret stimuli in a distorted manner. Consequently, frequent aggressive bursts, may be understood as anticipated defense from environmental stimuli that are foreseen by the subject as an imminent or covert threat.

5. Eleven (11) subjects scored statistically significant elevations in the depression subscale, representing forty-two (42%) percent of the sample; characterized by feelings of helplessness and a self-critical attitude towards their own capabilities and expectations.

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6. Hypomanic deviation subscale, registered elevation in eight (8) test subjects, representing thirty-one (31%) percent of the sample; where the following profile characterization is to be expected: (...) dynamic, ambitious and energetic attitude; that is frequently the source of simultaneous and often grandiose projects, that are usually left unfinished. Socio-affective dimension is to be affected, resulting in the impossibility to establish meaningful bonds.

7. Finally, hysteria subscale registered a prevalence of nine-teen (19%) percent, distributed among five (5) test subjects. Meaning that this segment of the sample will most likely exhibit an overt demanding attitude for attention and acceptance, histrionic behavior is to be expected, accompanied by an infantile exhibitionistic attitude.

Hysteria, as a nosological category, reflects the conceptual confusions of traditional psychiatry. A definition of hysteria, extracted from ICD-9 (WHO, 1978) [the category was not found in successive editions], describes a condition in which the patient suffers, either a restriction in the field of consciousness, or sensory-motor alterations, resulting in dramatic but essentially superficial and transitory changes in personality. On the conversive variety, the symptoms are characterized by appearing localized in any given part of the body, i.e.: blindness, deafness, paralysis, tremors, seizures. The dissociative subtype, fundamentally

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exhibits a transitory restriction in the field of consciousness, as well as perceptual distortions that usually mimic psychosis, or more precisely: the patient's idea about psychosis.

As for creativity and its relationship to hysteria, research background results present conflicting evidence. Wolfrad & Pretz (2001) findings suggest a negative correlation regarding creativity and the depersonalization subtype. Contrastingly, Perez-Fabello & Campos (2011), reveal findings that corroborate the relationship between dissociative experiences and creative output; additionally revealing the relationship between creativity and dissociative experiences proposed by other researchers (Butler, 2004, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Seidl, 2003; Singer & Pope, 1981; Storr, 1983, as quoted by Perez-Fabello & Campos, 2011). Furthermore, Perez-Fabello & Campos (2011) point out the scarcity of similar research hinders the possibility of corroborating data that suggests creativity – dissociative experiences relationship (p. 40).

Finally, attitudinal interpretation results in eighteen (18) subjects presenting an exaggerated subjective experience, accompanied by notable self-critical tendencies. This might, to a certain degree, be explained by artistic virtuosity resulting critical in gaining sociocultural recognition, as any degree of success in arts is vital for a subject to make a career out of it.

6. Conclusions

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Data interpretation corroborates the line of reasoning that proposes a relationship between psychopathological deviation and creative performance. Furthermore, notable differences were observed in the personality profiling across the distinct artistic domains. The profiling differences –as well as the abnormally elevated psychopathological markers– broadly suggests, taking into account the small measure of the sample, multiple successive-stage research designs aimed at isolating variables that could account for the statistical psychopathological deviation. For instance, further research could take into account the sampling technique's incidence in psychopathological scoring.

Furthermore, results might be of interest to professionals involved at the design of mental health prevention, promotion and intervention strategies aimed at artistic population.

Creativity research posits a broad scope of theoretical and methodological difficulties; as a result, conclusive relations depend on broader, diverse creativity research; as exposed by Perez-Fabello & Campos (2011), who point out the scarce number of creativity-personality research, to derive conclusive results.

Data aside, creativity's conceptual dimension remains underdeveloped. On this behalf, Smith (2008) exposes the necessity for a specific personality theory that could support creativity theorizations. On the other hand, factor based psychometric study of personality averages: three (3), five (5) or sixteen (16) factor based models, as exposed by Cohen &

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Swerdlik (2006); with consequent implications on a standardized framework for contrasting research background and theoretical interpretation of data (p. 358).

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