PSYCHOLOGY, ART AND CREATIVITY

Shannon Whitten

ROUTLEDGE

Psychology, Art and Creativity

This comprehensive text challenges the taken-for-granted opposition of science and art by combining the fundamental principles of psychology, art, and creativity and presenting the interdependent disciplines together in one unique, clear, and accessible resource.

The author, Shannon Whitten, begins with an introduction to the foundations of art and psychology, providing readers with a critical understanding and history of the key concepts in both disciplines before establishing their interdependency. Drawing on a solid evidence base, the book then presents an assortment of extensive topics, from the human perception of color to the ability of art to impact mental health. The exploration of these topics enables the reader to reflect on the phenomenal power of human creativity. The chapters include vital categories of human psychology, such as emotion, perception, personality, and social psychology, to show the extensive connections between these elements of experience and art. Featuring a wealth of additional resources, this illuminating text equips the reader with sound knowledge of the vocabulary and issues in the study of empirical aesthetics through visual content and stimulating prompts for reflection.

Emphasizing the link between creativity and good mental health, the book is an essential read for students of the psychology of art, creativity, art therapy, and empirical aesthetics as well as any discipline within the humanities, arts, and science. It will also be of relevance to anyone interested in understanding the psychology behind creativity and its therapeutic effects on the artist.

Dr. Shannon Whitten received her PhD in cognitive psychology from the University of Memphis 2003 and is now a senior lecturer at the University of Central Florida. Her research interests include psychology of creativity, literature, and art. She has also undertaken several research projects, including readers' ability to infer the theme of a story, comprehension and memory for song lyrics, and the role of creativity in coping with academic stress. When she has spare time, she enjoys creating products using mixed media, watercolor, and acrylics and reading stories of all kinds; but she especially loves creative time with her four nieces and her nephew.

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To my father, Michael Edward Whitten. I miss you so much.

Contents

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Todd – May the force be with you. You are such a dork. ⋆
Jeff – Engage! You are also a dork. ⋆
Jenny – I do what I want. Actually, you are pretty cool. ⋆
⋆ So, you know this means I love you, right?!

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Introduction

Why I Wrote This Book (and a Call to Action)

Certainly, the most important principles guiding my life have been those of art and science. I find it strange that these should be separated, much less opposites. I find it even less believable that they could be *such* opposites that one can't inform the other. The empirical study of art is, to me, not an oddity: Art is important. Scientists study important things. So, of course, scientists study art. Yes, they can also study mutating viruses and the march of commerce, and those are also important things to study. But without the reflection on the human experience provided by art, defeating viruses and gaining money isn't meaningful. To me, art is the reason to take vaccines and go to work; art is what makes life worth living.

I wrote this book because I didn't have one like it when I was a student, and I really would have liked a book like this. This is the book I would have wanted for myself; it's the book I want for my students. The purpose of this book is to educate students coming from any discipline – humanities, arts, and science – in the vocabulary and issues in the study of empirical aesthetics. Each chapter is driven by questions and has note-taking prompts to consolidate memory and connect the material to examples and your own personal experiences. I have been teaching an undergraduate course called The Psychology of Art since 2004 and have often lamented not having a textbook that encompasses the scope of that topic.

That brings me to a few limitations of the book. The scope of it is both a strength and a limitation. It is great because in one textbook, a foundation can be made that touches on most aspects of this exciting, rapidly growing field of inquiry. Yet, the scope of this topic is *huge*. As a result, I have more pages of text that I have cut out of the book than pages that made it here! This topic is so broad that a lot of important material must necessarily be left out of a single volume. Moreover, what is left out is certainly influenced by my own culture and education. For example, there is an emphasis in this textbook on visual art and literature, which are my areas of expertise. But dance, music, theater, and so many more disciplines are certainly part of the family of art. Worse, this book reflects the lack of diversity found in the museums, media, and scientific journals of my own cultural experiences. It reflects what I have been taught – and I think there is value in the education I have received. But I am acutely aware that I am missing a lot.

So, I end this introduction with a call to action: for students who read this book to use the knowledge here as a mere foundation to go and create art, heal cultural rifts, and conduct experiments that represent the diversity of the human experience. Also, enjoy one of the most satisfying elements of human experience: learning.

1 Psychology

What You Will Learn

This chapter aims to provide actionable insights on psychology as a scientific discipline that leverages the tools of empirical observation and analytic reflections to further the understanding of what we refer to as the quintessential human mind. To begin with, you will learn some rudimentary psychological terms and concepts. Next, this chapter will provide a cursory overview of how psychologists adopt the scientific approach to advance their understanding of the mind. This point needs to be reiterated because a lot of what you learn from this book will use scientific terminologies introduced in this section. Thereafter, this chapter will take you to an exploratory journey of eight different branches of psychology that are most relevant to the understanding of art and creativity and the symbiotic relationship shared between them. Specifically, you will be better informed on how each branch gathers and then coalesces a diverse array of information to better understand what drives individuals against the backdrop of art and creativity. Notably, you will also learn how to use the pivotal tools of observation and reflection to deepen your personal experience of art in general and the creative process in particular.

Chapter Outline

What Makes a Good Artist or Scientist?
What Is Psychology?
What Are the Goals of Scientific Research in Psychology?
Why Is It Important to Apply Psychology to Art and Creativity?
Why Do We Study Psychology as a Science?
What Branches of Psychology Are Most Relevant to the Psychology of Art?
How Do Themes of Observation and Reflection Apply to Personal Experiences of Art and Creativity?

Terms to Identify as You Read

Archival Research
Bias
Case Study
Client-Centered Therapy
Clinical Psychology
Cognitive Psychology
Conceptual Definition

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Terms to Identify as You Read

Confirmation Bias
Default Mode Network
Empiricism
Experimental Psychology
Experimental Research
Folk Psychology
Historiometric Research
Humanistic Psychology
Measurement Variable
Model
Neuroscience
Nonexperimental Research
Observation
Operational Definition
Personality Psychology
Population
Positive Psychology
Psychodynamic Psychology
Psychology
Reflection
Reliability
Representative Sample
Sample
Science
Selection Bias
Social Psychology
Validity

What Makes a Good Artist or Scientist?

That's a million-dollar question! Before that, it may be helpful (and important) to point out that artists and scientists are more alike than different. Both science and art put in efforts to understand and make sense of the world around us. While the methods and objectives of achieving this goal are different, the goals/motivations fundamentally remain unchanged. After all, one of the most visceral needs of humans is to understand the world surrounding them and then share that understanding. Throughout the history of mankind, artists have proved themselves as great partners in the navigation and communication of scientific research. That is why existing practices in scientific research have much to gain by involving artists in the process early and often.

Coming back to the question, it often takes a combination of factors to unite in a cogent manner because, as is the case with fingerprints, the mind of each individual functions uniquely. Having said that, there are two key practices that are crucial to both the arts and sciences: observation and reflection. *Observation* can be defined as consciously using the senses to gather information. Observation is the art of genuinely looking, hearing, feeling, etc. at what is there rather than at the construct of what should be there. As an observer, you would consciously direct your attention to an object and use your senses to know more about it. *Reflection*, on the other hand, entails thinking critically and analytically about what you see to draw conclusions. Contrary to popular notion, the arts and sciences are united in their ever-evolving cycle of direct observation followed by

critical reflection and back to observation and so on. Let's get started and delve deeper to observe and reflect on art.

What Is Psychology?

Put succinctly, *psychology is the study of the mind, brain, and behavior of individuals*. Needless to say, this is a copious body of study that has inspired tens of thousands of books, literature, articles, discussions, conferences, and even policies. Given this backdrop, psychology inexorably encompasses the entire spectrum of the human mind. Some topics include mental health and mental disorders, the cognitive/perceptual processes that help us understand our environment, developmental processes of growth throughout the lifespan, and much more. It is important to note that although psychology may include the study of how culture and social systems influence individuals, within the scope of psychological research, those generic systems are not studied on their own.

When adopting the scientific approach to study psychology, the endeavor is to answer fundamental questions about humans' mental experiences and behaviors. In this context, some of these questions within the purview of psychological research are poignant: What thought processes lead to healthy experiences? What causes people to make maladaptive choices? How is it that people with an atypical neurological profile are able to lead their best lives? Why do people discriminate, and how can we alleviate discrimination? How can we improve learning in online courses? As you can see, the study of psychology is as diverse as humanity itself, evidenced by these life-transforming questions!

Psychologists use *scientific methodology* to answer these questions, primarily because it combines observation with logical reasoning to draw logical inferences about individual behaviors. However, do note that science is only one such approach; other approaches include the use of intuition, individual testimonials, or appeals to authority to examine these critical questions. However, these approaches have the disadvantage of exacerbating rather than reducing biased conclusions.

There is a difference between the scholarly study of psychology and *folk psychology* – that is, people's intuitive notions about how the mind works and the myriad behavioral catalysts. The fact remains that psychology is a rigorous scientific discipline. There are many accounts about how our intuitions are at odds with the reality documented by trained psychologists and social scientists. For example, it is a common perception that watching a violent movie or sport tends to be cathartic because it allows people to express their anger. However, many studies have systematically found that catharsis may actually exacerbate anger rather than subduing it (Bushman, 2002). In a similar vein, there is another widespread belief that positive affirmations like "I am a lovable person" will increase confidence; however, careful observations demonstrate these affirmations may backfire if the individual repeating them suffers from low self-esteem (Wood et al., 2009). Let us take another popular example: Are you a left- or right-brained person? This refers to the popular notion that some people use one hemisphere more than the other and that this accounts for individual differences in personality, with right-brained folks deemed the creative types and the left-brained as the logical ones. Many people believe that left- and right-brained personalities do exist, but research has disproved this idea (Kosslyn & Miller, 2013). This makes it fairly apparent that a dissonance exists between popular belief and what is found to be true through rigorous observation and analysis, which is a problematic scenario. Therefore, this book approaches the human experience of art and creativity from an essentially scientific perspective.

Throughout this textbook, we will rely upon, discuss, and frequently criticize scientific articles and findings, which is why it is paramount that you have an understanding of how psychologists approach questions about behavior through a scientific prism. We will start by reviewing the goals of research in the social sciences.

What Are the Goals of Scientific Research in Psychology?

Psychological research aims to achieve 4 goals:

1. Describe behavior
2. Predict Behavior
3. Explain behavior
4. Change behavior

First things first! Like any science, psychology is grounded on careful observation. Therefore, the first goal of psychology is to simply *describe* behavior by collecting careful observations through various methods: case studies, naturalistic or systematic observation, self-reports, surveys, or archives, to name a few. An example of a descriptive statement would be "38% of 47 artists had been diagnosed with a mood disorder" (Jamison, 1989). The second purpose of psychological research is to *predict* behavior. Under this goal, psychologists look to determine the likelihood of a behavior under a specified condition or set of conditions. A poignant example will be that mental illness does not predict entry into a creative profession for the majority of mental ailments (Kyaga et al., 2013). The third goal of psychology is to *explain* behavior. After psychologists observe and predict behavior, it is only natural for them to try to understand *why* a behavior manifests under certain conditions. An example of an explanatory statement would be: "Harsh early life experiences lead to the autonomy and independent thinking necessary to think creativity" (Ludwig, 1995). The important part about this quote is that is backed by scientific procedure and analysis. Finally, psychologists aim to promulgate the conditions of *behavioral change*. A critical tenant of psychology is to find ways of increasing healthy, desirable behaviors while simultaneously reducing unhealthy behaviors. An example of this would be "Systems of rewards are not effective for increasing creativity" (Pink, 2011).

NOTE-TAKING PROMPT: What are the four goals of research in psychology? Think of or find your own example of each.

Why Is It Important to Apply Psychology to Art and Creativity?

This, again, is a very important question that needs a convincing answer. Some erroneously opine that scientific approach is unsuitable to study art because art seems to be imbued with mystery and enigma. An extension of that core question is whether the arts are perceived as a psychological or spiritual capacity. As we will see in Chapter 3, creativity has traditionally been perceived as a spiritual capacity and only recently as a cognitive one. Be it possession by angels or demons, creativity has been relegated to the realm of the supernatural. Many continue to see it as a spiritual drive, often regarded as an overpowering possession that completely takes over some chosen (make that "special") people who have been warped or wired to see

beyond the mundane. In all fairness, there is something endearingly arcane about this view and for those who espouse it. As a case in point, you can't be held accountable for exhibiting a palpable lack of creativity if it comes from an unknowable realm. Another fear of approaching the arts from a scientific point of view is that it will undermine the spiritual value.

Here is why I think it is important to adopt a scientific approach to understanding art and creativity:

1. **Art and creativity become more inclusive**: Have you ever thought that you aren't quirky enough to try abstract art or innately talented enough to take amazing photographs? If you have convinced yourself that only special people have creative proclivities, you are not alone. But what if you are wrong? What if art doesn't come from a demonic possession, a quirky personality, or an inexplicable visceral talent? What if creative capacity is just another cognitive capacity that can be studied and honed? If that is indeed true, you might be more inclined to pick up that paintbrush or camera. An increasing number of studies demonstrate that anyone can develop their creative capacity *and* that acts of creativity have immense benefits. Thus, creative aspirations no longer have to be relinquished due to flawed perceptions of one's own self.
2. **Understanding doesn't undermine the awe factor of artistic work.** Unlike what you hear from those who claim to "know it all," understanding how something amazing was built doesn't necessarily detract from its power to inspire. In fact, it often adds to it. Similarly, understanding the nature, creativity, or advancement of an artist doesn't undermine the sagacity of his/her work.
3. **Art and creativity are foundations of our humanity, so let's use the best resources at our disposal to understand it!** Let's face it – science is one of the most sophisticated tools we have to further understanding of humanity. We might as well use this tool to understand one of the best parts of being human.

NOTE-TAKING PROMPT: What do you think about approaching art in a scientific way? Write out the reasons for approaching it systematically. Do you agree with each? Why or why not? Do you have any other personal reservations?

Why Do We Study Psychology as a Science?

What is science? In my view, the definition provided by The Science Council (2020) is very appropriate: *Science* is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence. In particular, these two terms used in the definition are worthy of further exploration: *evidence-based* and *systematic*, because they reinforce the importance of observation and reflection. Let's take a closer look at these terms:

Evidence-based: Importantly, science is rooted in empirical observation. *Empiricism* is the idea that knowledge should be obtained through evidence from direct observation, as opposed to reason alone. Though reason is an integral part of science, it is critical for this reasoning to be founded on observations and not potential subjective rationales.

Systematic: Systematic denotes something that is careful and planned. Scientists leverage the scientific method to carefully gather observations and formulate and test hypotheses as well as form and revise conclusions.

Note that we are merely referring to observation and reflection. *Empiricism* means observation, and *systematic* means processes set in place to carefully collect and clearly ruminate on those observations. To better explain these principles, let's take an example of one topic we will explore in this book: *Is creativity related to mental illness?* If we adopt a scientific perspective to this discussion, we will then be talking about carefully collected observations rather than traditional ideas, stories, or intuitions. But if that is the case, *why* is science deemed such a vital mechanism to answer this question? Asked differently, why *not* rely on, say, personal reflections to explore this question?

One of the biggest advantages of adopting a scientific approach is its propensity for making a reasonable, accurate prediction of behaviors. Specifically, science has many advantages when it comes to the ability to *generalize* – that is, to extend the findings of a study to many people. While there is a time and place for traditions, stories, and intuitions, science remains the most valuable approach when it becomes necessary to make observations that can be reliably and accurately applied to many people across situations.

Another advantage of using scientific methodology is its systematic nature, which emerges as a tool to reduce *biases*. For the unversed, *bias* refers to an inclination to perceive reality in a certain way that is both unreasoned and habitual. As a cognitive psychologist, I can testify that perceiving things in a very biased way is an intrinsic part of human nature. In fact, John Manoogian designed a graphic categorizing over 180 documented biases that stymie our thinking! This graphic is presented in Figure 1.1. For now, let's focus on two important ones: confirmation bias and selection bias.

One bias that is particularly difficult to surmount is a *confirmation bias*, which denotes the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that *confirms* one's preconceptions. You are likely to have seen this while scrolling through your favorite social media platform: very liberal or very conservative people tend to pay more attention to articles or stories that support their viewpoint. They are more likely to eagerly accept these stories without much in the way of criticism. Conversely, many tend to be *very* critical of any information that is in contrast to what they believe. That is confirmation bias at work!

In terms of our question, if we already believe that there is a linkage between creativity and mental illness, we may be more tempted to seek out biographies of artists who were known to be beleaguered with mental illness. To be more precise, we may wholeheartedly accept these accounts but dismiss counterexamples with statements such as "Oh, that artist is probably really insane but just really good at hiding it." We hang on to this tendency to confirm our preexisting ideas *despite* knowing all about this bias and its consequences. Confirmation bias is truly a difficult bias to shake off!

The aforementioned example I cited about selecting biographies that support our preexisting idea is referred to as a *selection bias*. This may be done consciously or subconsciously. Our choices are subconsciously motivated by our biases; we must follow a system of collecting and documenting observations that reduces biases. Yes, it is this system we lovingly call science. Put differently, the subconscious nature and stubborn persistence of our biases explains why embracing the scientific method is such a crucial basis for understanding psychology.

NOTE-TAKING PROMPT: What are some biases? How does a scientific approach help alleviate the effects of these biases?

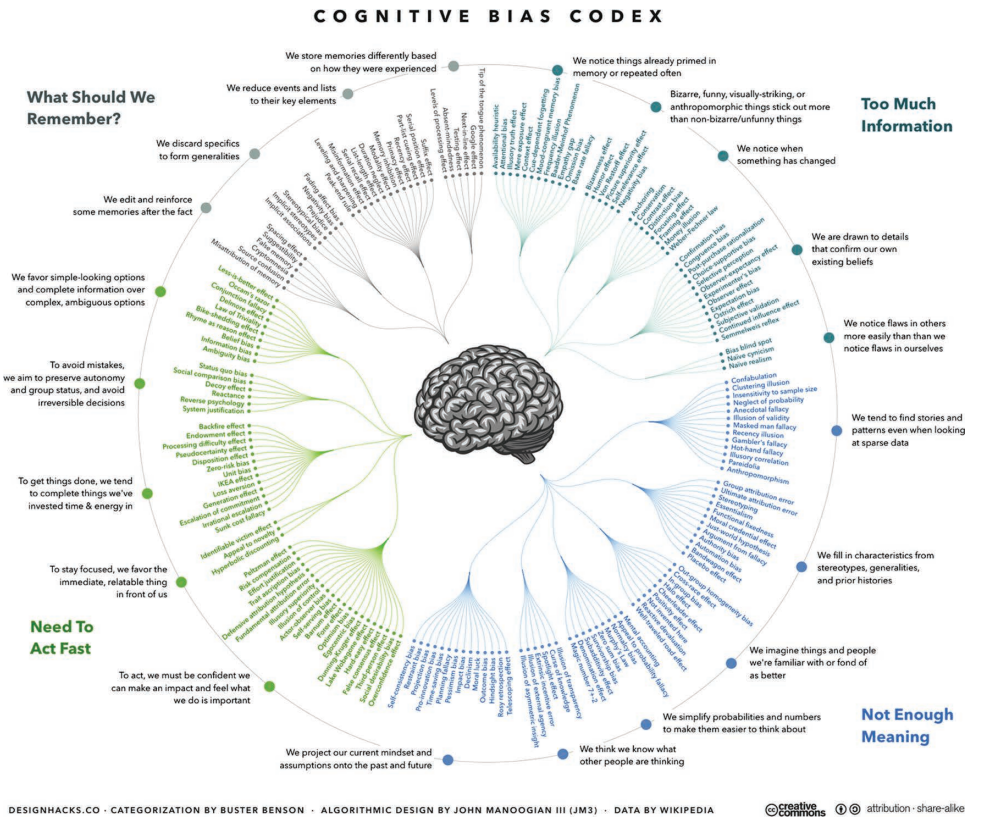

Figure 1.1 The cognitive bias codex illustrates the myriad of human biases that challenge our decision-making in an organized way

Source: From Heick (2020) TeachThought.com. Image designed by John Manoogian III.

The observations collected by scientists are called *data*. In this section, you will learn four methods of collecting data:

- Case study
- Archival research
- Nonexperimental (correlational) methods
- Experimental studies

A *case study* is an in-depth descriptive account of one *specific individual*. This account typically includes the individual's history, behavior, and other factors concerning the topic under investigation. In general, case studies are conducted with individuals with rare conditions or unprecedented circumstances, such as a particular genetic or brain disorder and/or exceptional level of creativity. As a case in point is psychologist Nancy Andreasen, who conducted a case study of the acclaimed author Kurt Vonnegut to unveil sources of his astounding creativity (Andreasen, 2014).

Archival research entails the use of existing information sources to carry out research. These sources may include statistical records and survey archives as well as written records like letters and newspapers. In this book, we will specifically reference *historiometric research*, a methodology that gathers numerical data from historic individuals and events before analyzing this information to form inferences. In order to understand them better, we will read many studies that have collected archival data on imminently creative individuals, using their medical records, interviews in periodicals, and letters from relatives, among others.

Nonexperimental (or correlational) methodologies refer to the use of quantitative variables to determine whether or not the variables are related to one another. Under this methodology, there is no control over the variables in question. By contrast, each variable is just measured to establish whether a relationship exists between them or not. For example, the question of whether or not creativity has a correlation with mental illness falls under this category since we cannot control who is creative and who is mentally ill. At best, we can measure how creative people are, measure their level of mental illness, and calculate the relationship between these measures.

By contrast, there is the *experimental method*, which helps determine whether or not variables are related wherein the researcher manipulates the independent variable and controls all other variables, either through randomization or by direct experimental control. Because of this control, no other variables – for example, family history, practice, dietary habits, etc. – could possibly account for the relationship between creativity and mental illness. As a result, we would have absolute control over who was creative and who was not, thus ensuring that creativity was indeed the root cause of mental illness. Of course, when we have a *participant variable*, which concerns something intrinsic to the individuals taking part in the study, we cannot use the experimental method because we cannot control who is creative, who is female, who is a smoker, and so on. That being said, we could utilize the experimental method using several varieties of nonparticipant variables, such as investigating the effect of instructions or settings on creativity. This is relevant because, for example, numerous studies have demonstrated that the involvement of a reward tends to render people less creative. We know this because, researchers randomly assigned participants to the reward group or the no-reward group before measuring the performance of each group on a creative task (Pink, 2011).

Causality is a very special term in science. Like the name Voldemort in the Harry Potter books, no one uses this term unless they are being *very* careful! This is because there are very specific conditions that must be met to arrive at the conclusion that one state causes another. Specifically, three conditions must be met:

1. **Covariation of cause and effect**: There must be a relationship between the cause and effect.
2. **Temporal precedence**: It must be demonstrated that the cause came first.
3. **Elimination of alternative explanations**: All alternative explanations must be eliminated.

Typically, you cannot meet all three conditions unless you can randomly assign people in your study to conditions.

NOTE-TAKING PROMPT: What are the four different methodologies discussed above? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each method?

As previously stated, we usually want to generalize our findings from a small sample to a larger population. Considering the aforementioned example, we want to carry out a study that is applicable to all creative people ubiquitously and not just the ones in our sample or at our university. Here are some useful terms:

A *population* encompasses all the people you want your study to apply to. All adults? All English speakers? All artists? All students? All creative people? If yes, then those individuals comprise the population. Put succinctly, whatever group you want to make a claim about on the basis of your findings, that is your population.

A *sample* comprises all the people you have included in your study. Despite our wishes to have this study apply to all adults in the world, we may have included only the 30 psychology students who answered our ad. This sample could be a problem because we want it to be representative.

A *representative sample* is one that truly reflects the population under investigation. Usually, a large random sample is desired to increase representativeness.

Now that we are grounded in some basics about data collection, let's look at what we are using to collect data: our *measures*. We want to make sure what we are using to measure our variables – creativity and mental illness in our example – is a quality measure. Otherwise, it'll be like a watch that is off by a couple of seconds – slowly but surely, we'll get into trouble by drawing the wrong conclusion. In order to talk about the quality of our measure, let's go over a couple of definitions: operational definitions and conceptual definitions. An *operational definition* is how the concept is defined in a specific study. It serves to quantify the concept being studied so as to investigate it. On the other hand, a *conceptual definition* is a general, abstract, or theoretical definition, much like a dictionary definition.

Some Examples of Conceptual Definitions

Creativity: The ability to routinely generate original and meaningful work
Mental illness: Having a mental condition that drastically impedes rational thought

As mentioned before, these are general, dictionary-like definitions. But we will need to quantify them to study these concepts.

Now, let's look at some possible corresponding operational definitions of creativity:

- Score on the Torrance Test of Creativity
- Number of paintings completed during a lifetime
- Having won a Nobel Prize

Mental Illness

- Score on a test of mental illness
- Whether or not the participant has ever tried to commit suicide
- Number of times a person has been admitted to a mental health institution

Owing to the fact that these definitions quantify the concepts of interest, it is possible to actually study them. Bear in mind that there may be varying operational definitions for

each conceptual definition, which can often cause problems for people trying to wrap their head around a concept because there is no uniformity in the way researchers themselves have defined it. In this context, it is worthwhile to note that we sometimes rely on tests to quantify concepts. When we refer to a score on a test – for example an IQ test or test of creativity or mental illness – this is referred to as a *measurement variable*. Using measurement variables as operational definitions requires us to confirm that the test is both reliable and valid.

This brings us to the first point. *Reliability* reflects whether or not the test measures consistently over time and situations. For example, if you get on a bathroom scale and it says you weigh 100 lbs., then get right back on and it says 200, it wouldn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that something wrong with the scale. Likewise, if we have a test of creativity that says a person is a creative genius at one point and a complete robot the next moment, we cannot rely upon that scale to assess creativity.

Validity refers to a measure that measures what it is supposed to measure. Let's suppose we have a reliable scale of creativity but it asks people to draw figures. In that case, we may actually be measuring drawing ability more than creativity. Similarly, we could have a reliable test of creativity that is verbal in nature, so we may actually be demonstrating proficiency with words rather than creativity. Indeed, creativity tests have been criticized on these grounds, which will be elaborated further in Chapter 3.

This was a very basic overview of the scientific terms you are likely to be exposed to in this text. I am sure I have overlooked some, but this is definitely a good start before we get straight into the remainder of the book. Now, let's digress into learning about the major areas of psychology most important to our investigation of art and creativity.

What Branches of Psychology Are Most Relevant to the Psychology of Art?

Two Main Divisions of Psychology

Generally speaking, psychology can be divided into two main branches: *clinical psychology* and *experimental psychology*. *Clinical psychology* is primarily concerned with the treatment of maladaptive behaviors and mental illness, whereas *experimental psychology* mainly pertains to the scientific understanding of behavior.

Clinical psychologists diagnose and treat people struggling with mental illness and help them to foster heathy functioning. They work in a wide variety of settings, including private practice, hospitals, schools, and even industrial settings. This book will explore both art and creativity from a clinical psychology standpoint in terms of their relevance to mental health and illness (see Chapters 4 and 5, specifically).

Contrastingly, experimental psychologists conduct scientific experiments to answer fundamental questions about the human experience. Working in universities and other research institutions, they typically publish findings for the scientific community to review. On that note, let me tell you that the information presented in this book was actually discovered by experimental psychologists, so a big shout-out to them!

As you would have guessed by now, the two branches are *not* mutually exclusive. Each informs the other, and it is common for practitioners to assume both roles; for example, they may work at a university as well as have their own private practice or consult with hospitals.

Psychology is a very broad area that covers a large number of subareas. Currently, the American Psychological Association (APA, n.d.) has 54 major divisions within its organization. For the purposes of this book, let's focus on eight general branches. An understanding of areas will inform our material in subsequent chapters.

NOTE-TAKING PROMPT: What is the difference between clinical and experimental psychology? How do you think they relate to one another?

The Eight Branches Considered in This Book

Although art may be of relevance to all 54 divisions of the APA in some way, this book will focus on the following eight. Let's consider how each branch might approach the following questions:

- Does engaging with the arts improve our well-being?
- Can creativity be improved?
- Does art facilitate social change?

All these questions have already been approached by researchers in the past. We will discuss these questions, along with many others, at various stages of this book. For now, let's look at how these different branches of psychology would approach such questions. The eight branches most relevant to art and creativity are the following:

- Psychodynamic Psychology
- Humanistic Psychology
- Positive Psychology
- Physiological Psychology and Neuroscience
- Cognitive Psychology
- Perceptual Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Personality Psychology

Branches With a Clinical Orientation

Psychodynamic, humanistic, and positive psychology are generally associated with clinical applications. That is, the goal of researchers within these branches is to eliminate dysfunction and promote well-being.

1. Psychodynamic (a.k.a. Psychoanalytic) Psychology

This branch investigates the role of unconscious motivations on behavior. A psychoanalyst would typically examine early childhood experiences that have triggered emotional responses below the individual's awareness. These emotional responses may create maladaptive behavior patterns that aggravate the individual seeking therapy. A psychoanalyst may conclude that the individual's behavior patterns are driven by unconscious motives to resolve hidden conflicts rooted in childhood.

Some Questions and Goals for Therapy From a Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Does the creation of art reveal symbols of unconscious motives or emotions?
- Can art be used for catharsis (that is, the purging of negative emotions)?
- Can the process of art making be used to integrate aspects of the self?

Wadeson's (1975) analysis of sexual symbolism in drawings by patients in the Research Ward of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, serves as a valid example of a psychoanalytic perspective. In this study, she examined a sample of the patients' drawings. One emerging theme was that many patients struggling with sexual identity draw themselves as asexual or childlike. What follows is a series of drawings by a patient. The first drawing, Figure 1.2, depicts her outside self as innocent. Meanwhile, the second one, shown in Figure 1.3, portrays her innocence dismantling and the "rotten core" within, whereas the third drawing was a depiction of her true "repugnant" sexuality. The artistic process is used here to help this patient not just identify but also transcend her maladaptive drives that are underneath the level of her consciousness. Notably, the psychodynamic approach is much less common today owing to paucity of scientific rigor, although many art therapists still practice a form of this general approach.

2. Humanistic Psychology

This branch of psychology postulates that individual behavior is influenced by our choices rather than by unconscious forces or the environment at large. Typically, humanistic psychologists claim that the attainment of personal growth and, as a consequence, a meaningful life is a primary motivation for behavior. They would examine the choices made by individuals to explicate their behavior. As an example, a humanistic psychologist may state that a natural desire to express themselves and discover what is meaningful to them may drive an individual to creativity.

Humanism makes three assumptions: 1) people are essentially trustworthy; 2) people are responsible for the quality of their own lives; and 3) people are capable of self-directed and meaningful change. According to Bruce Moon (Aron, page 204), humanism in therapy is most closely linked with the *client-centered therapy* put forward by Carl Rodgers. Some tenets of client-centered therapy are as follows:

- The relationship with the therapist is more important than the therapeutic technique.
- The client is regarded as the primary change agent.

Some Questions and Goals for Therapy From a Humanistic Perspective

- Can the art-making process be used to promote self-esteem and/or self-actualization?
- Can art making be used as a tool to foster the therapeutic relationship?
- Can art promulgate a meditative state of being fully in the moment, thereby enhancing quality of life?

Let's look at a real-life example of humanistic art therapy, Bruce Moon (2016) described a client called Lorraine who was hospitalized and deeply depressed. She refused to engage with

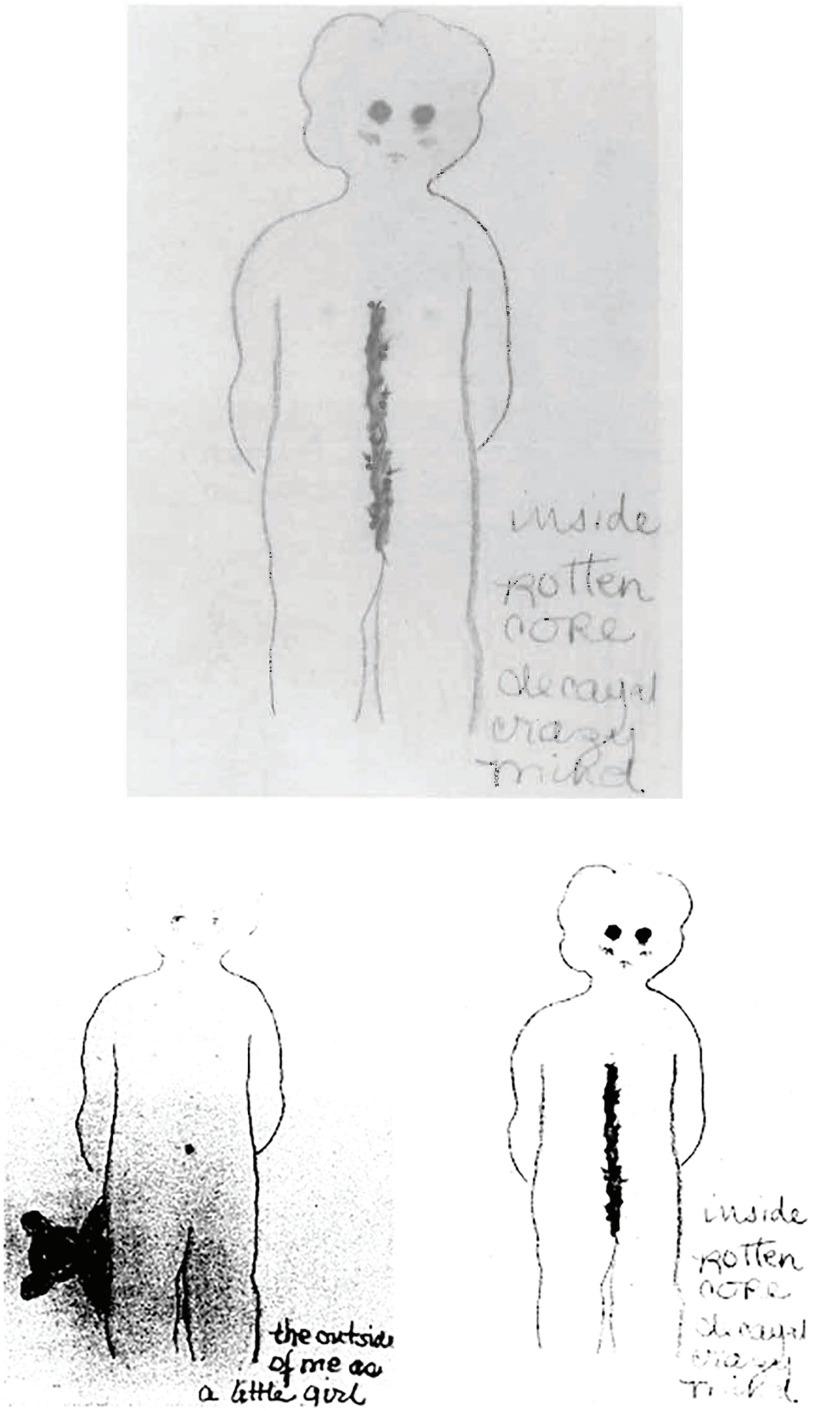

Figure 1.2 Images from Harriet Wadeson's (1975) art therapy session with a client struggling with sexuality.

Figure 1.3 Images from Harriet Wadeson's (1975) art therapy session with a client struggling with sexuality.