

This Week's Citation Classic

MacKinnon D W. The nature and nurture of creative talent.
Amer. Psychol. 17:484-95, 1962. [University of California, Berkeley, CA]

The meaning of creativity is explored. Three nationwide samples of architects, differing in levels of creativeness, are described in terms of assessment findings and revealed life history correlates of creativity. The implications of the research findings for the nurturing of creative potential are discussed. [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited over 195 times since 1962.]

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October 13, 1981

"It was from Henry A. Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic that I first experienced the excitement of studying persons and their lives. And it was again with Murray on the assessment staff of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II that I became fascinated by the problem of what in the person and what in the life history makes an individual become a highly effective person.

"The question was stirred by finding again and again that candidates of the most extraordinary effectiveness had had in childhood and adolescence the kinds of frustrations, deprivations, and traumatic experiences that would have led us in the light of the then accepted theory of personality to predict that they would have become crippled personalities.

"I returned to my academic post with a strong desire to establish through research a more adequate formulation of the development process by which potentialities of human development are realized.

"The chance to do this came with the establishment of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research on the Berkeley

campus of the University of California in 1949, thanks to a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. The expressed purpose of the institute was to develop further the assessment method not for purposes of selection but for basic research into problems of personality development and dynamics with special focus on the characteristics of effective persons and the life history determinants of their effectiveness.

"I had the privilege of directing the institute for 21 years (1949-1970) in its studies of highly effective persons in a variety of fields—writers, architects, research scientists, mathematicians, et al.

"The research reported in this paper, like all of my best research, had been done as a member of a collective, the other members of which in our creativity studies were Frank Barron, Kenneth H. Craik, Richard S. Crutchfield, Harrison G. Cough, Wallace B. Hall, and Ravenna M. Mathews.¹⁻³

"The kind of research that is described in the paper requires a home-like building in which staff and assessors live together during assessments that run for several days. We were fortunate to have as our institute a fraternity house remodeled to meet the needs of an assessment center. Bringing highly creative persons to our institute for study from all over the US was an expensive operation made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

"I believe there are several reasons why the paper has been so highly cited. It was written in English, not psychological jargon. It reports on a topic of wide interest, creativity, appealing to laypersons as well as to scientists in many fields. It was given prominence as one of the series of Walter Van Dyke Bingham lectures on 'the discovery of the talented' sponsored by the American Psychological Association. It has been frequently reprinted in 'collections' of papers and in 'readings' for students. Recent papers in this field have been published by myself and F. Barron and D.M. Harrington."^{4,5}

1. Barron F. The creative writer. *California Monthly* 72:11-14; 38-9, 1962.
2. Gough H G & Woodworth D G. Stylistic variations among professional research scientists. *J. Psychology* 49:87-98, 1960.
3. Helson R & Crutchfield R S. Creative types in mathematics. *J. Personality* 38:177-97, 1970.
4. MacKinnon D W. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Otto Rank: some implications of their work for the understanding of creativity. (Gryskiewicz S S, ed.) *Creativity week II, 1979 proceedings*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1980. p. 4-26.
5. Barron F & Harrington D M. Creativity, intelligence and personality. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 32:439-76, 1981.