

Creativity and Culture⁽¹⁾

The author, Dr. Nahid Ramzi, introduces her study by pointing out that women, on account of their relative seclusion, are more closely tied to their community and more liable to receive its influence than men. They are less free to think or to act differently from traditional patterns. In the field of creativity they are consequently affected by their cultural environment to a higher degree than their brothers.

Two basic theories have to be taken into consideration: The first is that creative ability is to a large extent a result of interaction with the cultural environment. Its development depends on opportunities open to individuals in a given society for contact with other societies and communication with other cultures. The second theory is that the method used by parents for upbringing their children is an important factor in suppressing or arousing their creative abilities.

The aim of this project being a study of the variables of cultural differences between various samples and the impact of this factor on female creativity, the author organized her study on the basis of three samples: One representing a cultural community considered more advanced than any other one in Egypt, namely Cairo. The other sample represented the district of Suhaj, supposedly one of the least culturally developed in the Qibli (Southern) region of Egypt.

To complete the picture a third sample was added, chosen from the district of Benha which shares many of the characteristics of Suhaj, except that it is located on the Bahri (marine or Northern) region of the country.

Two instruments were used:

1 – experiments testing creative abilities,

2 – a set of criteria of social interaction. The tests used to detect creative abilities included: 1) originality and inventiveness, 2) sensitivity to problems, 3) flexibility, 4) fluency, 5) maintenance of direction.

In testing social interaction, the family is supposed to represent a basic background for the individual's interaction with his environment. This interior interaction takes the following forms: 1) freedom or restriction, 2) closeness or remoteness, 3) liberalism or conservatism.

In preparing the test all three dimensions were considered. Therefore seventy questions were prepared and distributed over the above three dimensions in the proportion of eight standards of criteria related to the father, ten to the mother.

The samples were taken from secondary school girl students who had not come in contact with boys and had

been living in the care of their parents. They consisted of 113 students from Cairo, 110 from Suhaj, 99 from Benha. They all belonged to the same academic level; their average age was 17,8 years.

Results of the Study

1 – In creative abilities there were highly indicative differences between the results of the three samples in most, if not in all, of the creativity variants.

The Suhaj sample had the lowest rating while the Benha sample came higher and that of Cairo came highest on the scale.

A certain relationship was detected between the results of the Cairo and the Benha samples, which was lacking in the case of Cairo and Suhaj.

2 – In method of parental up-bringing, creativity proved to be negatively correlated to the conditions of mutual understanding with, and closeness to, the parents. The more creative students were those who were more remote from their parents and more independent in their thinking and behavior.

There exists, it seems, a negative correlation between parental friendship involving traditional thinking, and the ability to think independently from ready-made solutions and rigid information.

In the case of fluency, the study showed that this ability was facilitated by the intimacy of the respondent with one of the parents and her remoteness from the other.

Mutual understanding with one parent is likely to encourage fluency provided that it will not involve interference with the personal concerns of the respondent.

Conclusion

Cultural characteristics form a group of complex variables, in which the creative person is affected not only by the culture of his age, or his outer environment, but also, and to a large extent, by the attitudes and treatment of his family circle in the light of the particular traits or peculiarities of its members.

(1) Abstract of an experimental study of family upbringing of girls, prepared by Dr. Nahid Ramzi, from the National Center of Social and Criminal Research, published in Arabic in: **Readings in Social Psychology in the Arab Fatherland**, edited and introduced by Dr. L.K. Mulaika, published by Al-Hay'a-al-Misriyya-al-Aamma lil-Kitab, 1979.