Rupert Holmes wrote in the musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1979), “Would you not quite feel quite the fool of deception/To find the same face on both sides of the coin?.” To elaborate on this a bit, consider Hannibal Lecter’s escape from prison in *Silence of the Lambs*. He attacks and kills two guards. Rather than trying to run, he puts on a guard’s uniform, dumps the guard down an elevator shaft, and places the guard’s removed face onto his own. The responding officers assume that Lecter is actually the guard and put him in an ambulance – from which he escapes. Lecter is not only evil; he is also amazingly creative. Are his deviant behavior and creativity linked together as common traits, the way that a talented novelist also may write interesting e-mails? Or are they distinct entities in the same manner that a talented novelist also may make excellent birdcalls, cook tasty hash browns, or run a marathon? The relationship between creativity and deviant behavior – with the common ground of personality – is the subject of this chapter.

Personality is an immensely complicated facet of human psychology that is affected by heredity, social ties, environmental factors, biology, and the list goes on. Personality, in turn, affects human behavior in a variety of ways. Keeping Lecter’s creative maneuvering in mind, the important questions to consider are (a) Does personality cause deviant behavior? and (b) Can personality predict future likelihood of involvement in criminal behavior? Researchers have indicated that, to a moderate degree, yes, personality can be used to predict future deviant and antisocial behavior and is relatively stable across the life course (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2004; Mak, Heaven, & Rummery, 2003; Schaeffer, Petras, Ialongo, Poduska, & Kellam, 2003). Others, however, suggest that personality is fairly unstable in childhood, is malleable through adolescence and early adulthood (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998), and does not crystallize until
roughly age 30 (McCrae & Costa, 1990). Developmental research suggests that some correlates of personality do begin to solidify in adolescence (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005), but, as we will show, there is reason to believe that personality remains relatively unstable until adulthood. Those traits most associated with deviant behavior are also correlates of creative behavior. But is creative potential directly related to deviant behavior? This question is more complex. Certainly, creativity and deviance are linked, and one way to understand this linkage is to understand their emergence in personality.

Literature in psychology and criminology share a common understanding of the psychological and behavioral characteristics deviant and creative individuals share (see Agnew, Brezina, Wright, & Cullen, 2002; George & Zhou, 2002; Halpern, 2003; Lynam & Miller, 2001). Creativity literature has stipulated that creativity is not merely artistic expression but rather a departure from traditional expectations that accomplishes an intended goal, is unique, is modifiable or adaptable, and is carried out to completion (Cropley, Kaufman, & Cropley, 2008). Impulsivity can be used in a similar fashion, as a coping strategy to reduce stress potentially caused by negative affect (Zuckerman, 1994), ranging from risky sports to deviant behavior (Roberti, 2004). These impulses can be further exacerbated by the presence of what Yochelson and Samenow (1976) call “cognitive distortions,” which can color perception and, in turn, instigate deviant behavior. Creativity, in its cognitive form, like deviance, also can be termed a “problem-solving strategy” that aims at addressing a specific problem using creative solutions.

Creativity throughout youth and adolescence – in school and within peer groups – can be considered deviant given specific contexts and is often misidentified as deviant behavior, leading to mislabeling creative youth as “deviant,” especially in cases of problem behavior in school (Halpern, 2003) (see Chapter 16 in this work). The aim here is to understand the covarying expressions of creativity and deviance in behavior through personality. This chapter is uniquely geared toward bridging the gap between criminology and psychology, which is part of an already growing body of literature but has yet to adequately explore this covariance.

In this chapter we will address several key issues by answering the following questions: What is personality? How does personality vary across demographic characteristics? What is a creative personality? How can creativity be misunderstood as deviant behavior? Also outlined will be the cognitive processes leading to divergent, deviant, and creative outcomes and what demographic characteristics are important for determining the onset of creativity and criminality.
PERSONALITY AND ITS DETERMINANTS

Personality research has centered largely on the identification of “traits” that shape human behavior. Five overarching traits or “factors” have been identified, known as the “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1992). The “Big Five” are often highly correlated with their prescribed behavior, though contextual factors do play a key role in determining behavior (Roberts, 2007; Stryker, 2007). Researchers tracing personality across the life course have suggested that personality is not susceptible to “context-bound” psychological, social, or cultural factors. Baltes, Lindenberger, and Staudinger (1998) have suggested that people become less amenable to personality changes – caused by social interactions or life events – such that personality and temperament lose their elasticity and gain stability into the adult years. The five factors include

*Openness* (O), or variety in experience, curiosity, unique ideas, imagination, adventurousness, and appreciation for the arts.

*Conscientiousness* (C), which accounts for such behavior as diligence, being goal-oriented, self-discipline, and planned or methodical behavior (as opposed to spontaneous behavior).

*Extroversion* (E), representing surgency, positive emotionality, energy, and stimulus-seeking behavior.

*Agreeableness* (A) measures compassion and cooperation.

*Neuroticism* (N), manifesting as generally unpleasant emotionality, characterized by anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability.

Research surrounding the degree to which each of these personality traits is expressed in behavior has produced a significant amount of literature (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

**Age**

Much attention has been paid to the continuity and change of personality traits as they relate to age. Temperament is a key component in the determination of personality and is thought to be innate. It is considered to be genetically determined and, along with facets of the individual character, constitutes personality (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000). Temperament is expressed in early life and is indicative of personality in adulthood (Romero, Luengo, & Sobral, 2001). This does not suggest, however, that personality in adulthood is an exact reflection of temperament in infancy. In fact, in infancy, temperament is relatively unstable (Lemery, Goldsmith,
Klinnert, & Mrazek, 1999). Only modest associations between tempera-
tment in infancy and personality in early adulthood are reported (Fraley,
1998), although temperament was found to predict later life outcomes, such
as late marriage, downward mobility, and health-risk behavior in young
adulthood (Caspi, Elder, & Herbener, 1990; Caspi et al., 1997). Certain
types of psychopathology proved most consistent in terms of associations
with later expressions of personality, as well as impulsivity, which was
predictive of deviant behavior in adolescence (Kagan & Zentner, 1996). In
addition to mental illness, factors such as educational performance, birth
order, early parental loss, marginality, and the availability of role models
can have a significant impact on antisocial behavior, personality disorders,
creativity, and the degree of deviant behavior expressed throughout youth
and adolescence (Simonton, 2000).

It is no secret that deviant behavior tends to peak from late child-
hood to middle adolescence and then begins to decrease in late adoles-
cence to early adulthood. This peak at middle adolescence is where the
divide between adolescent-limited and life-course persistence begins to
form (Moffitt, 1993). The adolescent years mark a period of intense change;
deviance, risk-taking, depression, and familial infighting surface more
frequently in this period of development than in others (McCrae et al.,
2002). Still, how can we account for the significant drop in deviant behav-
ior after adolescence?

It may not be difficult to predict which personality traits are most
likely to change and which are most likely to remain constant over the life
course. Many researchers focus on changes across the life course (McCrae
et al., 2000; Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006), and yet others focus on
changes experienced during the more turbulent teenage period (McCrae
et al., 2002; Roberts, Caspi, & Moffit, 2001). McCrae and colleagues
(2000) found that across subjects, high-school-age youth exhibited mod-
est declines in neuroticism (N), extroversion (E), and openness (O) and
increases in agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). Temperament
was found to be particularly important in determining personality changes
from childhood into adulthood. Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, and
Potter (2002) found that between the ages of 9 and 13 years, youth exhibited
a steep decline in self-esteem. Romero, Luengo, and Sobral (2001) found
that E was strongly related with deviant behavior among youth between
the ages of 14 and 19 years; this trait was the most reliable predictor of
antisocial behavior in the longitudinal analysis. The authors of this work
assessed the participants twice over a two-year period among high school
students, college attendees, and incarcerated boys and found that several elements of impulsivity were important for determining antisocial and deviant behavior among those in the sample.

Gender

The gender-delinquency debate is one of those topics that historically has garnered a considerable amount of attention. This literature has fairly recently begun to adopt the understanding that offending processes are similar among males and females, but rather it is the manner in which they are experienced and, in turn, expressed that differs (Piquero, Gover, MacDonald, & Piquero, 2005). Cauffman (2008) found that female deviance was consistently correlated with higher incidents of mental illness among offenders, which was not as pronounced among males. Twenty years ago, the amount of deviance among males was four times that of females. This gap is narrowing, however. Today, figures indicate that males offend only twice as much (Carrington, 2006; Cauffman, 2008).

In a study of a high school population, McCrae and colleagues (2000) found that both males and females decreased in those traits most associated with deviance – both N and E, in particular (Romero et al., 2001). Throughout this same period, researchers found that both males and females increased in levels of A and C, which indicates increases in responsibility and rule-abiding development. Overall, this period was marked by decreases in the traits associated with impulsivity and risk-taking behavior. One interesting finding to note, though, is the change in O, which is most associated with creativity. This trait, although decreasing along with N and E, did not follow as clear a pattern as the other traits.

In a longitudinal study including participants from 12 to 18 years of age, McCrae and colleagues (2002) found that N increased for females and O increased for both males and females. In the period from 12 to 16 years of age, though, O was the only trait that exhibited a measurable change, increasing among 43.5 percent of the population.

Some researchers have noted the importance of environmental factors in shaping personality throughout the various changes exhibited across the life course. In this case, family is the determining factor. In particular, skills, values, identity, and attitudes develop under environmental conditions, which then shape personality outcomes and, in turn, behavior (McCrae et al., 2000).
Finn and colleagues (2001) studied 601 families and found that the effects of parental psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression and substance abuse), supportive parent-child communications, and household income contributed to personality pathways, which are associated with risky behavior (sensation-seeking behavior and social-deviance proneness). Thus overall family problems increased the likelihood that youth would become involved in deviant behavior. Having fewer than two supportive parents generally increased risk for deviant behavior, but this effect appeared stronger for boys than for girls. When combined with a parent with a mental disorder, the effects grew markedly, especially for girls, regardless of family income level. Even when those familial influences—including family risk factors such as instability, inconsistency, mental illness in parents, and alcoholism—were associated with deviance, female deviance proved to be markedly lower than males on average. Only when females were exposed to increased levels of deviant behavior via family history—history of mental illness and low parental support—did females approach males in the level of their deviance.\(^1\)

Some researchers suggest that personality is influenced primarily by social environment, in particular, family life (Schaeffer et al., 2003), whereas others suggest that environment is often confused with parenting style, which has little do with environmental conditions (Johnson, Su, Gerstein, Shin, & Hoffman 1995). Of the two, parenting style is a more valid measure, given its concreteness, than family life, which does not lend itself so easily to assessment (Johnson et al., 1995). Personality research focused on the hereditary and biological origins of personality has found linkages between parent and child personality inside and outside the shared family environment. Measurements of family influence on child personality have found strong relationships. Digman (1980) found that child-rearing practices proved to be only marginally determinant of child personality traits. These reports have found that parenting style possibly could be confused or conflated with heredity, which may prove problematic in determining the source of the actual influence. McCrae and colleagues (2000) suggested that life experiences have little or no measurable effects on personality traits (Baltes et al., 1998). But are personality traits always the same or are

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\(^1\) The researchers found that family-based risk had a stronger influence on deviant behavior exhibited by youth at ages 13 to 14 years than among those aged 11 to 12 years (Finn et al., 2001).
they situational? Other researchers suggest that environment may play a big role or at least an interactive role with personality (e.g., see Caspi & Moffitt, 1991, 1993; Fleeson, 2004; Magnusson & Endler, 1977). Indeed, some studies show that the heritability of personality lies somewhere between 40 and 60 percent (Floderus-Myrhed, Pederson, & Rasmussen, 1980).

CREATIVITY AND DEVIANCE

Most research- and theory-based definitions of “creativity” boil down to two components. First, creativity must represent something different, new, or innovative. But it is not enough to just be different – creativity must also be appropriate to the task at hand. A creative response also must be useful and relevant (Kaufman, 2009). A number of studies have found increased levels of the trait O, above all other personality traits, among creative individuals (e.g., Dollinger, Urban, & James, 2004; Eysenck, 1993; Feist, 1998; McCrae, 1987). Eysenck (1993) distinguishes between creativity as an artistic style, which involves intelligence, and creativity as a personality trait. It is the latter that will be the focus here. Dollinger, Urban, and James (2004) found that among creative individuals (artists, painters, etc.), O was correlated with all measures of creativity, which supports the idea that creative individuals tend to rely on their imagination and unique ideas throughout the creative process, which involves generating unique solutions whereby the person approaches a particular dilemma from several unexpected or normally unseen angles. This amounts to thinking “around” rather than directly through a problem. People who do not employ creative solutions often stay within perceived parameters, hindering the generation of novel or path-breaking solutions. But this idea may be somewhat ambiguous. By thinking “around” a problem, creative individuals (assessed as having a high degree of O as a personality trait) employ a creative cognitive process when generating solutions. So, when confronted with a problem, whether it be a math problem or attempting to escape from jail, like Lecter, the individual generates creative solutions, solutions that exhibit some unique quality; that is, (a) they are relevant and achieve a specific goal, (b) they are new and original, (c) they are elegant (meaning that the product is fully worked out or well engineered), and (d) they are generalizable and adaptable. The latter, though, relates more to creative products and not so much to creativity as a process for the generation of solutions, although they are related.

When thinking about creativity and its connection to deviant behavior, though, we should identity just what exactly is creative about deviant
behavior. It would be incorrect to suggest that all creative behavior is deviant, just as it is incorrect to suggest that all deviant behavior is creative. The judgment of creative/deviant acts is based not on whether the acts or products are right or wrong but rather on whether they fit the preceding criteria. Law serves the former purpose. Nonetheless, deviant behavior is a form of creative self-expression. Cropley et al. (2008) call this concept “malevolent creativity,” distinguishing it from “benevolent” forms of creativity in the intended purpose. Such behavior is the product of a creative problem-solving process, and personality is the mechanism through which it is expressed. Although artworks may be creative, given that they are crafted employing innovative processes, the cognitive problem-solving process itself is creative. This is known as “creative adaptation,” which is characterized by flexibility in thought and reflexivity and transformation of a person’s environment (Meneely & Portillo, 2005).

**Problem Solving**

There are few things that distinguish routine problem solving (as a cognitive process) and creative problem solving. Still, the cognitive process involved in generating solutions is a normative one (Sternberg, 1999). There is nothing fanciful about the creative process. Although there is some disagreement (for instance, Bransford & Stein, 1984; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976), sagacious creative thinkers are most productive when they employ solution-driven thinking for specific problems (Lubart 1994). Lubart (1994) suggests that there are four different ways that creativity can become part of the normal problem-solving process. Problem solving generally involves defining a problem, accessing relevant information, building a solution from that information, and evaluating and refining the proposed solution. Lubart (1994) breaks up each creative problem-solving technique into types. Type I involves the creative person performing one or more of the proposed steps more effectively than average. For instance, Hannibal Lecter, in planning his escape, had to be exceedingly methodical given the strictness of his incarceration. So, waiting for the most opportune moment, Lecter takes a pen and waits until food is brought into his cell, where the guard is attacked and killed. Certainly, Lecter’s ability to craft a solution with limited time and resources is performed more effectively than normal. The amount of time spent on any one step or the number of times each step is performed significantly increases the creativity of problem-solving solutions as well. This process makes up type II. Lecter’s incarceration undoubtedly afforded him a great deal of time to calculate,
Both Sides of the Coin?

look for opportunities, craft and reformulate his escape plan over and over again, amounting to a very creative escape. Type III involves performing steps in a different sequence, which can either increase or limit creativity. Preoccupation with the evaluative process, for instance, can hamper idea production. Finally, type IV involves introducing a wholly different stage to the process that most people would not think to employ. For instance, this may involve enacting a divergent thinking activity that aids in creative idea generation. Lubart (1994), in addition to describing creative steps that add to an already existing problem-solving process, also outlines a four-stage creative process that, although it has similar elements, is meant to specifically generate creative solutions.

This process first involves preparation of a solution: problem analysis, information and material gathering, and initial working of a solution. Incubation follows this step. By actively processing the information, allowing ideas to “play” (employ ideational fluency), and taking time to ruminate, you are able to generate creative solutions more easily. Following incubation is the illumination stage. Without thinking of illumination as a process where the person is mystically struck by an idea, this process involves ideas coming into the conscious as cohering cognitive patterns. And finally, the creative person verifies the ideas generated by this process. If solutions are found to be unworkable, they return to earlier steps to reformulate their solutions (Lubart 1994). The key elements of this creative problem-solving process are those involving divergent and bisociative thinking (synthesizing or bringing together several arenas of thought) (Koestler, 1964). Let us explore these further.

Creative brains allow in a greater degree of incoming stimuli from the immediate surroundings (Peterson & Carson, 2000). This is the “musing” creative people undergo. “Latent inhibition” (LI), as it is known, is a cognitive mechanism that inhibits the perception of a considerable amount of stimuli in normal people. The trait openness (O), as discussed earlier, is associated with LI as well as divergent and creative thinking (McCrae, 1987). The latter trait is essentially the behavioral equivalent of LI. When employing cognitive problem-solving techniques, people with reduced LI are able to relate completely unrelated ideas, activating bisociative thinking (Amabile, 1983; Koestler 1964) that produces creative outcomes; the more unrelated they are, the more creative they are (Mednick, 1962). LI is related to both O and extroversion (E) (Peterson, Smith, & Carson, 2002) – the lower the levels of LI, the greater is the association. Peterson, Smith, and Carson (2002) found that reduced LI in highly intelligent individuals is correlated with higher levels of creativity. They suggest that intelligence may
be used as a mechanism to handle the many different stimuli that a person with low levels of LI may be forced to encounter – intelligence may serve as a coping device, so to speak. A further possibility is that perhaps higher intelligence allows better management of potentially dangerous impulses. It seems that having reduced LI can be both a positive and a negative variable. What, then, are other implications of having low levels of LI?

Psychopathy, much like LI, also allows for “overinclusive thinking” (Burch, Hemsley, Pavelis, & Philip, 2006). But, whereas LI is characterized by the perception of normally undetectable stimuli, psychopathic people, in addition, are known for having no remorse and being shallow and manipulative, as well as egocentric (Miller, Lynam, & Leukfeld, 2003). Further, psychopathy is specifically associated with deviant behavior – drug use, deviance, aggression, and risky sexual activity (Miller et al., 2003) – which is not necessarily true of LI. Studies show that creativity correlates with some elements of psychopathy (Eysenck, 1993, 1995; Jamison, 1993; Ludwig, 1995), again owing to the presence of overinclusive thinking among both creative people and psychopaths caused by a weakened inhibitory device (Burch et al., 2006), although this association is not exclusive. Indeed, most creative people do not suffer from mental illness (Simonton, 2000). Whether considering psychopathy or low levels of LI, both facilitate fluency in thought and ideation, which, in turn, stimulates the “creative juices.”

As discussed earlier, when “ideational fluency” is employed, the creative person is able to generate a variety of unconventional and original solutions (Wallach, 1985). The productive process can be broken up into two types of ideas: convergent and divergent ideas (Guilford, 1956). If you employ convergent thinking, you are simply trying to find the correct answer. But divergent thinking is used to produce numerous solutions. Although ideational fluency and divergent thinking are important for the creative process, they are not the same (Chan et al., 2001). Ideational fluency is involved in the cognitive problem-solving process (Eysenck, 1993). Without a steady flow of possible solutions, the creative process would be stifled. Ideational fluency is what gives creative solutions their breadth. But divergent thinking as a broader concept is the key to generating creative solutions (Glover, Bruning, & Plake, 1982).

Creativity and Mood

Another debate is whether being in a bad mood (officially known as “negative affect”) will stimulate creativity. Some studies have found results that
support this connection. A few have found that positive mood inhibits creative performance (see Kaufman, 2003, for a review), whereas other studies have found that negative mood either has no effect (for instance, Grawitch, Munz, & Kramer, 2003) on creativity or can enhance creative performance. Kaufmann and Vosburg (2002) looked at positive and negative mood in creative problem solving. Interestingly, they found that a positive mood led to better scores in early stages of idea production (similar to past findings, most recently Gasper, 2004). But a negative mood led to better scores in later stages. George and Zhou (2002) found that negative moods were related to higher levels of creativity (as measured by supervisor ratings) when rewards and recognition for creative work were salient.

An equally large body of research, however, has found that positive emotions and a good mood can have beneficial influences on creative performance. Several researchers, many of the projects led by Alice Isen (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1994; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Isen, Johnson, Mertz, & Robinson, 1985; Isen, Labroo, & Durlach, 2004; Montgomery, Hodges, & Kaufman, 2004), have conducted a series of studies in which they induced good mood in participants (typically through watching a comedic movie or receiving a small gift of candy) and then measured innovation/creativity (typically through problem-solving tasks or verbal creativity measures). People in good moods tend to show higher creativity than those in neutral or negative moods.

Similarly, Lynton and Salovey (1997) found that students in a good mood wrote better – constructed fiction and nonfiction – than students in a bad mood; unfortunately, they were unable to get reliable ratings for the creativity of the pieces. Schere (1998) found that both writers and artists showed improved mood after being creative within their own domain (there was no effect when writers created art or artists wrote).

Still other studies have found no relationship. Verhaeghen, Joormann, and Khan (2005) found that rumination served as a mediating variable between depression and creativity in college undergraduates. Self-reflective rumination was connected to both creative interests and behavior and depression – yet being in a current depressed mood was not associated with creativity. Consistent with their findings is Forgeard’s (2008) finding that writers with unipolar depression were more likely to use words associated with cognitive thought (such as “know” or “understand”) than either bipolar writers or the control group.

One criticism of this research could be that in nearly all studies, mood was induced. In other words, the moods were triggered by being asked to remember a happy or sad memory or being shown a funny or upsetting
scene from a movie. Yet, typically, people experience moods based on their own thoughts, emotions, or spontaneously occurring life events. Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, and Staw (2005) studied the relationship between creativity and mood in organizational employees working on potentially creative products. They used the electronic event-sampling methodology based on earlier work by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1987), in which participants were e-mailed daily questionnaires about the day’s events. These narratives then were coded for both affective and creative thought. In addition, the creative performances of these employees were rated by their peers on a monthly basis. Amabile et al. (2005) found significant results across their multiple measures that creative performance (self and peer evaluated) was positively related to being in a good mood. There was no relationship between creative performance and being in a bad mood.

Hirt, Levine, McDonald, Melton, and Martin (1997) argued for a hedonic contingency theory explanation for the positive mood-creativity relationship. People in a happy mood want to maintain their happy mood and are careful to behave in a way to stay happy. People in a sad mood, however, are not so careful because most activities are likely to improve their mood (Wegener & Petty, 2001). Therefore, people in a happy mood, when faced with a divergent thinking-type task, try to make the task as much fun and as enjoyable as possible by being more creative. Hirt, Devers, and McCrea (2008) manipulated people’s beliefs in whether or not their moods could be changed. People typically believe moods are changeable, which makes sense. If you are generally in a good mood and someone kicks you in the shin or makes fun of your hair, you typically get into a bad mood. Indeed, with no manipulation, people generally were more creative if they were in a good mood. However, when people were convinced that their moods could be frozen, Hirt and colleagues found no connection between mood and creativity.

Related to a positive or negative mood is the idea of stress and anxiety. Several studies (Carlsson, 2002; Eysenck, 1995) have found that higher stress and anxiety are related to lower creativity. Carson and Runco (1999) found that students with better coping skills were more likely to be better creative problem solvers.

Criminal Thinking

As discussed earlier, is a significant portion of the academic literature dedicated to elucidating the cognitive process involved in creative problem solving. Similarly, there is a large of body of work that focuses on the cognitive process involved in “criminal” behavior. Specifically, we are
referring to the work, most notably, of Yochelson and Samenow (1976) and Walters (1990). These authors viewed deviant behavior as the product of faulty logic by way of clouded judgment called “distorted thinking patterns.” Yochelson and Samenow felt that deviant behavior resulted from flawed assumptions and decisions based on these distorted thinking patterns. Specifically, they outlined 52 “thinking errors” that lead to criminal behavior that are “mental processes required by the criminal to live his [or her] kind of life. They are ‘errors’ solely from the standpoint of society, and not from that of the criminal. For him [or her] these thinking patterns are indispensable to achieve objectives” (Yochelson & Samenow, 1976, p. 359) and lie along a continuum. Indeed, “they constitute his [or her] very fabric” (Yochelson & Samenow, 1976, p. 251).

Adding to this literature, Walters (1990), in his own work on the “criminal lifestyle,” felt that deviance was influenced by several “person and situation” conditions. Basically, personal makeup (e.g., age, level of intelligence, emotional temperament) and social characteristics (e.g., social class, drug use, family relationships, intake of media violence) could significantly influence a person’s likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior based on a combination of the preceding characteristics, which influence the person’s perception of a given situation, creating a belief system that justifies criminal behavior and is reinforced by each inciting occasion (Walters, 1990). The “ABC’s of human emotion,” developed by Ellis (1962), illustrate how this process works. Creative responses start with an Activating event, leading to a specific Belief about how to react, which results in a Consequent emotion. The more a person faces situations where he or she feels, given his or her distorted thinking, that deviant behavior is the only outlet or solution, the more conducive this behavior becomes for future deviance. In Walters’s estimation, a specific attitude toward an event encourages behavior rather than the event itself. Thus it becomes a self-supporting system of criminality, contributing to its persistence and creating a criminal lifestyle – a lifestyle based on distorted thinking. “The lifestyle criminal finds the immediate gratification of crime more reinforcing than the long-term stability of conventional life” (Walters, 1990, p. 109). In addition to distorted thinking patterns, much like negative mood, stress can play a role in determining a person’s likelihood of engaging in deviant acts that employ creative techniques.

Strain

Stress is a sign that change is needed. Change, or adaptation, works to alleviate the sensation of stress. For the immensely stressed, creative
expression is an important coping strategy (Torrance, 1965). Sensitivity to stressors facilitates creative problem-solving strategies. As mentioned earlier, creative responses are typical reactions to negative affect (George & Zhou, 2002). This process follows Ellis’ “ABC’s,” also discussed earlier.

From this perspective, the line between deviant and creative behavior is blurred. Both negate or contradict established modes of thought and behavior (Bower, 1999). A well-researched theory in criminology, namely, “strain theory,” indicates that rational choice is not involved in the commission of crimes or the engagement in deviant behavior. Rather, when committing crimes, the impulse results from strain (Agnew, 2006), which, in this case, can be understood as stress. Much like stress, behavior resulting from strain is an attempt to reduce the sensation of strain. Although crime and deviant behavior are uncommon reactions to strain (Agnew, Brezina, Wright, & Cullen, 2002), it is important to understand how people are propelled toward deviant behavior as a result. Ultimately, personality determines whether or not people are likely to pursue deviant behavior as a strategy for coping with strain. People with increased levels of neuroticism (N) are most likely to perceive events as stressful. As a result, the person feels angry or upset and can respond in a deviant or antisocial manner (Agnew et al., 2002). People who feel strained are most likely to engage in deviant behavior when several conditions are present. If a person feels that he or she cannot employ legal or constructive outlets, if the costs of the deviant behavior seem low, if the person has a favorable disposition toward deviant behavior, if the person has low levels of self-restraint, or if the person is impulsive, he or she is more likely to become deviant (Agnew et al., 2002). Impulsivity, Agnew et al. (2002) highlight, is critical for determining how people will react to stress, strain, and negative moods. Impulsive people commonly exhibit several of the preceding factors that contribute to criminal responses to strain.

Impulsivity

“Impulsivity” (also known as “sensation-seeking behavior”) is “defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27). Sensation seekers often become involved in risky behavior as a result of their disregard for consequences. Alcohol use, risky sexual behavior, gambling, and high-risk sports are just a few of these behaviors (Roberti, 2004). These impulsive behaviors at times can act as a coping strategy for stress (Agnew,
Impulsive people are drawn toward social situations, peer groups, and individuals whose stimulus-seeking behavior parallels their own. This acts to reinforce their impulsive behavior, which is especially true of substance use (Roberti, 2004). High-risk situations and environments seem nonthreatening to sensation seekers. They often downplay risk and consequence and typically cannot discern between right and wrong (Roberti, 2004; Zuckerman, 1994). Thus, to them, there appear to be no negative consequences (Lynam & Miller, 2004).

The preference for increased stimuli essentially influences reactions and activities that favor deviant behavior. Impulsive behavior allows people to channel their need for stimulation (Farley, 1973). This is especially true in environments where socially acceptable methods for attaining stimuli are in short supply (Agnew et al., 2002). When exacerbated by stressors, impulsive people frequently respond with negative moods (i.e., depression, anger, or anxiety) (Lynam & Miller, 2004).

**CONCLUSION**

Whether the discussion focuses on children in school or criminal geniuses such as Hannibal Lecter, the point at which personality, deviance, and creativity meet is one that has been evaluated in both psychological and criminological literature for some time. Their converging elements, however, have not been expressly explored to any significant degree. We believe that this lack of research is unfortunate given their implications. Some may not immediately see the pertinence of looking for creativity in deviant acts or vice versa, but understanding this may shape the way we as an academic community approach creative and deviant people conceptually. Creativity throughout youth and adolescence – in school and within peer groups – is considered deviant given specific contexts. It is often misidentified as deviant behavior, leading to mislabeling creative youth as deviant, especially in cases of problem behavior in school (Halpern, 2003). This area of research may offer a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms that drive and propel behavior by understanding the covarying expressions of creativity and deviance in behavior through the personality. Whether it is through personality or through the expression of creativity in problem solving, we should appreciate the complexity of deviant behavior not for its criminal implications but for its quality as a creative adaptation to a person’s environment that may be stressful or inhibitive of positive emotionality. This approach to understanding youth, personality, and cognition undoubtedly will open up new lines of psychological inquiry for the
evaluation, clinical assessment, and treatment of people whose behavior challenges the conventions of conduct.

REFERENCES


Both Sides of the Coin?


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