

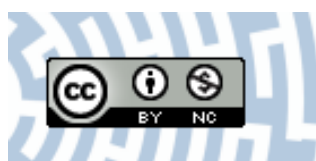


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## **Selected Aspects of the Family Environment of Creative People as Exemplified by Research Conducted among Academic Youth**

### **Abstract**

An emphasis on forming a creative attitude of a human being is a response to contemporary world changes. The attitude can be formed by environment influences, especially by the family influence. The article shows the results of the research the purpose of which was to answer the question about family environment characteristic features of people distinguished by creative and imitative attitudes. A diagnostic survey was conducted among humanistic studies students. The results of the survey were to show how the subjects – in their early youth period – describe the family environment, depending on their dominant attitude diagnosed on the basis on the Creative Behaviour Questionnaire KANH by Stanisław Popek.

**Key words:** *family environment, creative attitude, imitative attitude, creativity.*

### **Introduction**

The surrounding reality is full of dynamism and continuous changes. A contemporary person, especially a young one who just enters the adult environment, finds it more and more difficult to understand and find his/her place in this postmodern reality. A contemporary life requirement is to be creative, open to novelties and to accept changes and contractions. The category of creativity is a need or even a requirement of our times (Cudowska 2004, p. 14).

A creative attitude, understood as a formed cognitive and characterological feature which shows the tendency to transform the state of things, phenomena

and one's own personality, is a really desirable phenomenon (Popek 1988, p. 27). An active attitude of a human being towards the world and life, expressed by the constant need for getting to know, experiencing and consciously transforming him/herself and the surrounding environment is the essence reflecting a creative approach to life (Turska 1994, p. 27). Every individual has the potential possibility of forming a creative attitude because it is a commonly attainable feature which specifically distinguishes a human being from other species (Mendecka 2003, p. 9). A creative attitude can be stimulated through environment influences. The most significant spheres are in this case: school, peers and workplace. The environment which influences the individual for the longest time is the family which can both stimulate and inhibit the individual's creativity.

The purpose of the analyses was to identify some family attributes which could be both brakes on, or stimulators of a creative attitude towards life. The research was undertaken in order to identify (diagnose) the attitudes presented by academic youth, in terms of creativeness versus imitativeness, and to analyse certain family environment features as perceived by the subjects, depending on the presented attitude.

### **Identification of the research issues**

The presented research has become part of a broad reflection about the influence of the family environment on forming an individual's creative attitude. The population of the subjects comprised the third year students of selected faculties of Silesian University in Katowice. The surveyed group consisted of 120 people. All of them were students of full-time studies. The research into the development of creative attitudes and the influence of the family environment on the process of forming them was decided to be conducted within similar age groups because of the fact that the subjects are in the period of life where the impact of the family system has become much weakened and the subjects no longer treat their family so emotionally (Mendecka 2003, p. 24). Simultaneously, these people have not distanced themselves from their parents yet and their opinions can be a source of material for the research. In most cases, these people are dependent on their parents and that is why a parent family home is still, in the literal sense, their own home. All the subjects were humanistic studies students. These studies prepare students for the pursuit of a professional career connected with working with people (pedagogy, specialization: social and childcare education; political science, specialization: mass media and social communication; history, specialization:

teaching). It is these young people that will affect the shape of the modern world in different spheres of life in the future.

The main problem considered in the present article was formulated in the form of a question: what characterises the selected aspects of academic youth's family environment depending on the dominance of a creative attitude over the imitative one among the young people.

In order to answer the above questions, I used the diagnostic survey method, within the range of which the survey technique and the Creative Behaviour Questionnaire KANH by Stanisław Popek was applied. The survey questionnaire, formulated by me, concerns family environment features selected for the research, which are subjectively perceived by the subjects. The level of creative and imitative attitudes, i.e. Y dependent variable was studied using the Creative Behaviour Questionnaire KANH by Stanisław Popek – a device standardized in Poland (Popek 2000).

## **Analysis of the results**

Individuals with highly developed creative attitudes are creative people, with numerous attributes which enable them to function well in the rapidly changing contemporary world. Among 120 subjects, 23 showed dominance of this attitude. 16 people showed an opposite attitude, namely the imitative one. The subjects with an indefinite attitude were the largest group. The size of this group, in accordance with a personal analysis, was affected by the specific type of the research device. This group comprised both people with average creative and imitative attitude intensity and at the same time individuals who showed contradictory features with respect to the presented attitudes. The largest group with an indefinite attitude can be related to the tendency of standard features division, according to which indirect features are the most typical and they occur most often, whereas features located at the edge of the axis continuum occur relatively seldom.

For the needs of my own research, further analysis covered only the empirical material of the people with a definite attitude: the creative or imitative one. The subject area I have taken up allows me to reject the group with an indefinite attitude. A group chosen for further analysis contains 23 people with a creative attitude and 16 people with an imitative attitude. The correlation between sex and a creative or imitative attitude was not statistically important (Pearson Factor  $I \approx 1.04$ ).

### **A. Subjective perception of relation with parent family**

In most cases the subjects with both a creative attitude and an imitative one still live with their parent families. It is 20 people out of 23 for creative individuals and 14 out of 16 for the imitative ones. The fact of living in the same place is not the only important one for the purpose of the research. Also the subjectively perceived degree of relation with the family is crucial. Living in the same place can be only an external act, while by asking the subjects about their sense of connection with their families, it is possible to find out whether parents, supervisors, possibly other family members had a real influence on an individual. In case of the creative people, 70% of the subjects declared a strong relation with their families, whereas for the remaining 30%, the relation was average. Nobody felt weak or no relation. A similar situation was among the imitative people, where 69% had a strong relation with their families and for 29% – it was average. Such strong ties allow us to suppose that families had and still have a great influence on the subjects, also in the aspect of forming a creative attitude.

### **B. Family structure and its financial situation**

In my research, attention was paid to family completeness or incompleteness. 74% of the students with a creative attitude had a complete family, while 26% were brought up in an incomplete family. Among 17 people from the complete families, in 16 cases it was a natural family, and in 1 case it was a reconstructed one. There were 6 people from incomplete families. In 2 cases it was caused by the death of a parent, and in 3 cases – it was abandonment or a broken family. One person was brought up by a single mother. Every fourth subject lives in an incomplete family. It seems to be quite a large proportion. As results from the empirical material analysis, incomplete families are mostly families without a father, regardless of the fact if it was caused by death or marriage collapse. The lack of a father can be an important factor for developing a creative attitude. Probably it is some kind of a liberalizing factor, which may make the individuals more ingenious, open and creative. Although the loss of a parent is usually a traumatic experience, this fact can also affect the necessity of increasing the child's independence, which has a crucial influence on forming a creative person.

While studying the family structure it is worth paying attention to its size, which translates into the number of children in the family community. The research material analysis shows that a great majority of the subjects has siblings. This fact can be observed in 18 cases out of 23 creative students, which accounts for 78% of this surveyed population. Because brothers and sisters are considered important for these individuals, it can be concluded that the subjects derived the patterns

of behaviour from their siblings. The students from this group certainly learnt the standards of life in a group faster, which affected their later adaptation to the requirements of social life. Co-existence with a brother or sister taught them to cooperate, solve conflicts, negotiate and fight for their rights.

The next matter considered in the research is the subjectively perceived financial situation of academic youth. A great majority of the creative subjects perceive their situation as average and over  $\frac{1}{4}$  as good. The smallest proportion perceive their financial situation as bad. Hence, the optimal situation for forming creative attitudes in children seems to be an average financial situation. Most likely, the biological basic needs are satisfied then, but a child is not spoon-fed. A partial lack of resources to provide for more sophisticated needs favours activity and encourages undertaking action. On the other hand, it can be supposed that a good financial situation also fosters the development of creative attitudes – an individual has all his/her needs satisfied and can focus on the development of his/her own personality. Families with a high life-standard much more often take part in cultural life, they are also able to provide the child with a lot of enriching and stimulating experience, which also affects creativity at a later stage.

Unlike the population of young adults with a dominant creative attitude, all the imitative subjects came from families of a full and natural structure. By the same token, they were not deprived of a parent, so they had not suffered from traumatic experience in this regard. They had a full set of personality patterns. Nevertheless, it is likely that this situation did not require taking any activity from them and perhaps did not motivate them to make any creative effort. They did not have to take any defensive steps, which could also be creative activities for them.

Great differences in the family size are also worth noticing. In the surveyed population, the imitative people are mostly only children. 9 people do not have siblings, which accounts for 56% of this group. The financial situation of the imitative people's families is generally worse than that of the creative people. Only 13% of the people of the population perceive their financial situation as good, and not much more than a half – as average. A large proportion, namely 31% of the people perceive it as bad.

### **C. Parents' features and mutual relations between parents and children**

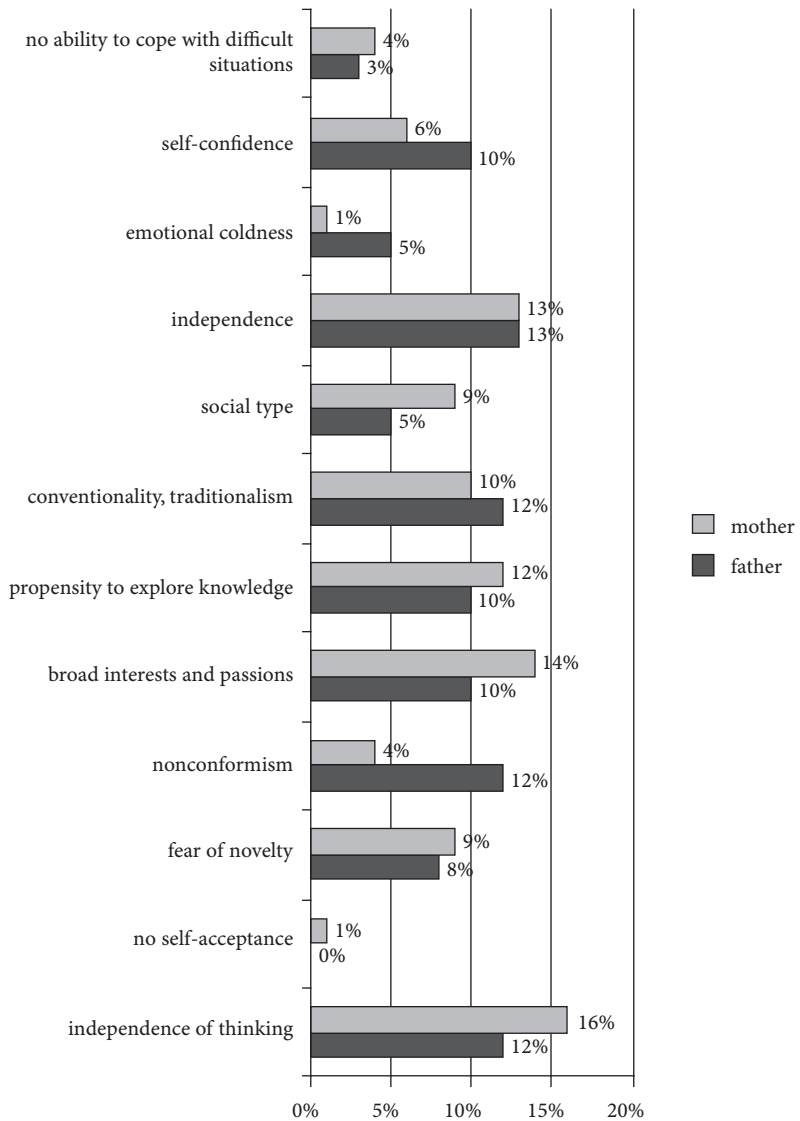
The level of parents' education has an influence on forming the child's attitude. The level of education is strictly connected with the social status and with knowledge values which are or are not respected by parents. This often translates into parents' career situation, and thus, into the family financial situation. It also frequently determines, at least in the general frames, the future path of the child's

education. In the group of creative people, secondary education prevails among both their mothers and fathers (61% and 52%). 1/3 of the fathers and 13% of the mothers have the higher level of education. The same proportion of the fathers and the mothers has vocational education – 17%. 4% of the mothers have elementary education, 4% have other education than listed in the questionnaire, namely they graduated from post-secondary school. The research results show that the imitative students' parents are characterised by a relatively low level of education. The majority of the fathers (44%) and the mothers (38%) have vocational education. Secondary education was completed by 31% of the mothers and 39% of the fathers. Every fourth mother and only every tenth father has higher education. 6% of the mothers finished only elementary school.

In addition to the demographic features, the parents' personality traits are also very important. The young subjects were asked to evaluate their parents and to assign three features to each parent from a set of twelve features. In the group of people with a creative attitude, maximally 23 choices could be assigned to a given feature in the case of the mothers, because there were 23 creative subjects. In the case of the fathers, 20 choices could be assigned to a given feature, because in two cases a father was dead and in one case the subject was brought up by a single mother. In general, there were 69 choices of a mother's features and 60 choices of a father's features. During the data analysis, the choices were converted into percentages. In the group of features there were six features typical of creative people: independence of thinking, nonconformity, broad interests and passions, propensity to explore knowledge, independence and self-confidence, and there were six features typical of imitative people: no self-acceptance, fear of novelty and change, conventionality and traditionalism, emotional coldness, no ability to cope with difficult situations and social type.

The parents with creative features are more likely to affect the child in a creative way. They will be able to stimulate the child and form a creative attitude. As shown in Graph 1, the features most often indicated as typical of creative people's mothers are: independence of thinking (16%), broad interests and passions (14%) and independence (13%). All these features are characteristic of creative people, so on this basis it can be supposed that creative people's mothers also show some creative features. In the case of the fathers, the most frequently indicated features were: independence (13%), independence of thinking (12%), nonconformity (12%) and conventionality and traditionalism (12%). The first three features are typical of the creative life orientation. Taking into consideration the context of the parents' personality characteristics, the relations between parents and children cannot be disregarded. From a set of definitions, the subjects could choose one that defined

**Graph 1.** Features of creative people's parents (in %) in the light of the survey results





the relations with their parents in the best way. In the case of the creative people, the relations with the mother are in 86% based on emotional closeness, in 9% on respect and in 5% they were defined as cold. The relations with the father were defined in 35% as based on emotional closeness, in 25% mostly on respect, while 20% of the subjects defined their relations with the father as indifferent and 15% as cold.

#### **D. Atmosphere in the family home**

Researchers do not share one opinion about which features of the atmosphere and climate of the family life foster the development of a creative attitude. The surveyed youth were asked to determine the atmosphere in their homes. The greatest number of the creative respondents specified their family atmosphere as changeable with occasional quarrels (30%). At the same time, a high percentage of the subjects declared a climate of love and mutual trust (26%). It may be assumed that the best environment in which creative people develop is an environment which combines a few features. This is also proven by the statements provided by the people who, after selecting the option "other," wrote that "the atmosphere is strangely mixed – a bit of quarrel and a bit of love" and "mutual trust, occasional quarrels, but there is love".

### **Summary**

The analysis of the collected material produced the following findings:

- In the surveyed population, the majority was characterised by an attitude which cannot be unequivocally qualified as creative or imitative. 23 people have a creative attitude and 16 an imitative one.
- A dominant attitude (creative or imitative) is not determined by the sex of the subjects. Creativity is not a specific feature of either a male or a female student.
- The majority with a dominant creative attitude come from complete families – they have families, however in 26% of the population there are incomplete families. Most creative families have siblings (78%). The subjects with a dominant imitative attitude come from complete families. Most students are only children (56%).
- The financial situation of the creative students is described as relatively better, and their parents' education level as higher than in the case of the imitative people.

- The creative students' parents show features of creative people. The students' relations with their mothers are, among others, based on an emotional tie, which does not play such a significant role in the case of the fathers. The atmosphere in the family home is described as based on the climate of love and mutual trust to almost the same extent as changeable with quarrels.
- The imitative students' parents show imitative features in such students' opinion. The relations with their mothers and fathers are in most cases based on respect. The atmosphere in the family home is to a similar extent described as changeable with occasional quarrels as based on harmony and mutual respect.

Therefore, it may be concluded from the research that the conditions which foster developing a creative attitude are: having siblings, a good financial situation, creative personality traits of the parents, satisfying the need of security, showing trust and appreciating the individual's efforts. The family structure is also an element which affects the development of a creative or imitative attitude.

As the family has a lot of influence on developing a creative attitude of a young person, parents should be instructed, at the earliest possible stage of their children's lives, how important it is to develop a creative approach to reality in themselves. Then they will have a chance to bring up their own children in a creative way. Creative children notice creative features in their parents, which seems to be confirmed by the thesis that creative parents have creative children. The definitely justified conclusion states that a child who is raised in an environment with the features of creative thinking is much more likely to develop a creative attitude than an individual brought up in an environment where a schematic thinking dominates, there is no stimulation or encouragement to be active.

The empirical research is only an attempt to identify the set of dependences between the family environment and forming a creative or imitative attitude in an individual. It can only serve as a contribution to further analyses taking into account other elements of the family environment, e.g., parents' attitudes, the way of communicating in the family and the style of upbringing.

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