



Universität Hamburg

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FAKULTÄT
FÜR PSYCHOLOGIE UND
BEWEGUNGSWISSENSCHAFT

Lecture

Universität Hamburg, Fakultät für Psychologie und Bewegungswissenschaft
Arbeitsbereich Pädagogische Psychologie und Motivation
Wintersemester 2021/22

The role of psychological flow experiences in creative achievement

Örjan de Manzano

Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt am Main

25. October 2021
14.15 Uhr – 15.45 Uhr
Online via Zoom

The term flow originates from the work of psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi who in the 1960s began studying the creative process of fine art students. He was intrigued by the observation that when painting was going well, the artists kept on working single-mindedly, disregarding hunger, fatigue, and discomfort—yet seemed to lose interest in the artistic creations once they had been completed. It became clear that for many individuals it was primarily the rewarding experience they felt when they were involved in the activity that motivated them, not external rewards such as money or fame. This form of intrinsic enjoyment was termed flow, based on many of the respondents describing the sensation as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness. Since then, the significance of flow experiences has been studied in relation to a number of real-life outcomes such as quality of life, skilled performance, and even creative achievements. In this research colloquium we will take a closer look at the relation between flow and creativity with a specific focus on music, and recent work showing that the frequency of flow experiences predicts both musical practice and level of musicianship, as well as the number of creative achievements among professional musicians. Lastly, three hypotheses will be presented and discussed for how flow might be related to creativity: as a source of motivation, as an epiphenomenon to optimal (creative) performance, or as intimately related to a creative state of mind, which implies a shared neural substrate.

Organisation: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Oettingen
Kontakt: Sekretariat Pädagogische Psychologie und Motivation
Tel.: 42838-5484 • E-Mail: sekretariat-fsmp@uni-hamburg.de