

Peer Review

Review of: "Applying Simonton's Definition to Japanese Creativity in Cross-Cultural Analysis"

Jonathan A. Plucker¹

1. Johns Hopkins University, United States

Ms. Title: Applying Simonton's Definition to Japanese Creativity in Cross-Cultural Analysis

Open Access Ms. Review for Qeios

Years ago, I eagerly anticipated the release of an international handbook on creativity, whose promotional materials included a table of contents that listed several chapters with culturally specific creativity chapters (e.g., Creativity Theory and Research in India). But I ended up being very disappointed by the chapters, which all entailed the application of Western models of creativity to non-Western contexts. Where were the examinations of, e.g., how Confucian thought informed our understanding of creativity? Hinduism? Etc.

For this reason, I have encouraged colleagues outside of the U.S. and Western Europe to dive into this rich topic, which would benefit all of us. Few have taken up that call (I'll cite an exception or two below). And it made me quite excited to read this paper, which felt like a long-overdue exploration of Japanese perspectives on creativity.

Although I enjoyed the paper, I did not meet my initial expectations. Despite including a great deal of information about Japanese cultural perspectives on creativity, the last sections of the paper fall into the common pattern of taking Western conceptions and examining how well they fit the Japanese context. That is still an important contribution – and it certainly provides a small extension of Prof. Simonton's definition – but there was potential for so much more here.

Indeed, the author calls the paper “groundbreaking” in the Conclusion. That was not my impression. The emphasis on creative utility in Asian cultures has been discussed frequently (as the author notes), so the main contribution, from my perspective, is linking the concept of satori to surprise (as defined by

Simonton and the U.S. Patent Office). That is interesting and thought-provoking, but it is not groundbreaking.

In the end, the paper could have been half as long and carried the same weight (and that more concise paper would likely be more effective). I encourage the author to consider streamlining the arguments.

Some additional thoughts:

- I'm not sure all of the introductory material on Japanese creativity and innovation is relevant to the author's main theme. I.e., in an exploration of Japanese cultural perspectives on creativity, does it matter how creative and innovative that cultural context is? I suspect not. At the least, I would summarize this to a sentence or two. E.g., Japan has a rich history of creativity and innovation, making it an especially apt society for the exploration of cultural influences on creativity conceptions.
- I was surprised by the reference to encyclopedias and dictionaries, which is rare in scholarly works.
- The assessment implications (section 2.4.2) are interesting and worth additional consideration. Indeed, a paper just on that aspect would be a good addition to current debates about creativity assessment.

See also:

Pang, W., & Plucker, J. A. (2024). Lofty aims, limited actors, fewer artifacts: A sociocultural analysis of Confucian conceptions of creativity and innovation. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 18(1), 105-118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000646>

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.