

Review of: "Why the Standard Definition of Creativity Fails to Capture the Creative Act"

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Brief summary

The manuscript of Anna Abraham contributes to the hotly debated topic—which might be called a bleeding wound of creativity research—the *definition of creativity*. The author neatly summarizes the main drawbacks of the standard definition of creativity and proposes to redefine creativity through novelty and satisfaction. According to the author's perspective, the suggested amendments will promote a shift from the external to the internal frame of reference in creativity research and overcome a failure of the state-of-the-art definition to capture the inner experiences of the creative mind.

Overall evaluation

I highly appreciate Anna's efforts to map deficiencies in the standard definition of creativity and bravely provide a fresh perspective on handling the issue. I would like to highlight that the manuscript is extremely well-written, with a clearly communicated rationale, good-articulated argumentation, illustrative examples, and elaborated research implications. Overall, it was my pleasure to get acquainted with the paper and give it a thorough read!

Detailed comments

I would be happy to join the discussion of the proposed definition and its implications, as well as outline more specific comments related to different parts of the manuscript. I sincerely hope that at least some of them will be of value during the revision. All my comments and suggestions are of a debatable nature. Please feel free to ignore or dismiss them if they go against the overall message or obscure the meaning.

== Major issues ==

M1. I think it might be beneficial to discuss the newly proposed definition of creativity (i.e., novel and satisfying) in light of the recent theoretical advancements and articulate their similarities and differences from the author's perspective (e.g., defining creativity through discovery in [Martin & Wilson, 2017](#); defining creativity through creative experience in [Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2022](#); process definition of creativity in [Green et al., 2023](#); extending criteria of the standard definition to authenticity and intentionality in [Runco, 2023](#)). By the way, the paper of [Runco \(2023\)](#) is also relevant in the discussion of the intentionality issue (see comment S7) and the author's reflections about computerized scoring of creativity tests (see

the fourth bullet point on page 9).

M2. Following the author's train of thought, replacing “value” or “usefulness” or “effectiveness” or “appropriateness” in the standard definition with “satisfying” will result in a broader definition of creativity that “(a) *encompasses all the other alternatives*, (b) *can be applied from the standpoint of an internal or external frame of reference*, and (c) *applies across low and high consensus fields*” (page 6). Although I agree that such words as “value” and “effectiveness” are highly functional and utilitarian for describing creative arts, I cannot get rid of the feeling that the suggested change is a sort of jingle-jungle fallacy. Is not the root of the problem lies in the fact that almost all variations of the standard definition of creativity — although there are exceptions (e.g., [Mednick, 1962](#)) — were formulated outside of creativity theories (i.e., the definition of creativity is not framed within any concrete theory or a set of theories) and the basic terms were left formally undefined (see [Simonton, 2018](#) as an exception)? The criterion of value was stated but not defined. And it does not matter if one names it “utility” or “usefulness” or “effectiveness.” As long as all of them remain undefined, everyone can interpret them as they wish, which leads to conceptual confusion. From this stance, a potential critic may question the utility of the turn from “value” to “satisfying” because the same effect can be reached by just adding to the standard definition a tiny correction: *creativity is an ability to produce ideas that are novel and appropriate in the given sociocultural context*. In fact, [Stein \(1953, p. 311\)](#) wrote that “the creative work is a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a group in some point in time” (emphasis added). Moreover, the sociocultural approach to creativity has always stressed the importance of the context for defining creativity (e.g., [Glaveanu, 2013](#); [Glaveanu et al., 2020](#); see also [Westmeyer, 1998](#)). My point is the following: is not a simple addition of “*in the given sociocultural context*” in the standard definition of creativity — which will allow to flexibly change a frame of reference from mini-c to Big-C (levels of creativity) and from effectiveness to beauty (science vs. arts) depending on the requirements — will do the same job as replacing “value” with “satisfying”? Should not we simply adjust the meaning of the “value” criterion based on the context of the concrete study? For instance, value can be defined either by the relevance of the means used to achieve the goal (e.g., writing a detective story following commandments of detective fiction) or the effectiveness of found solution (e.g., creating a new highly-effective drug for melanoma treatment) or the evoked aesthetic feelings (e.g., the perception of art masterpieces). I would highly appreciate it if Anna could consider these critical points and elaborate on why satisfaction is deemed to be a significant improvement over the context-embedded value!

M3. If the author suggests to creativity researchers to avoid conflating external and internal frames of reference when studying creativity, does it mean that redefinition of creativity in terms of novelty and satisfaction — when focused on the internal frame — can facilitate progress in studying creative metacognition? It would be great to know how the author perceives and conceptualizes her contribution in light of recent theoretical progress in creative metacognition (e.g., [Lebuda & Benedek, 2023](#)).

== Minor issues ==

S1. Page 3. “For instance, in defining a creative idea as one that is novel, valuable, and surprising, Margaret Boden advocated for the inclusion of “surprise” as the third definitional criteria...” Is it possible to give credit to the similar yet

more formalized approach to complementing novelty and utility with surprise by [Simonton \(2012\)](#) and [Simonton \(2018\)](#)?

S2. Page 3. When discussing a dynamic definition of creativity put forth by [Corazza \(2016\)](#), I wonder if it might be relevant to refer to the paper of [Walia \(2019\)](#). By the way, some of his points may resonate with the author's perspective: *“. a dynamic definition is proposed; it emphasizes providing insights into the creative act itself, a factor that has been neglected in earlier definitions of creativity.”*

S3. Page 3. Is it relevant to mention that according to some scholars, another limitation of the standard definition of creativity is its poor fit to the context of Eastern culture (i.e., criteria of aesthetics and authenticity; [Kharkhurin, 2014](#))?

S4. Page 3. I do not know if it is relevant for the current article, but there is a possibility to bring the discussion of value criterion to the philosophical grounds. In my view, the most compelling arguments for and against of value criterion in the definition of creativity are presented in [Sánchez-Dorado \(2020\)](#) and [Hills and Bird \(2018\)](#), respectively.

S5. Page 5. When discussing historical and individual creativity (H- and I-creativity), I wonder if it might be relevant to refer to the works of [Runco \(2007\)](#) and [Runco and Beghetto \(2019\)](#), who differentiated between personal (i.e., primary) and social (i.e., secondary) creativity as well.

S6. Page 5. *“At any level of magnitude, however, an external frame of reference cannot substitute for an internal frame of reference. How a work is received by an audience is separable from how a work is conceived of by the creator.”* I can be wrong here, but it seems the highlighted thought partially echoes an idea of synthesis between absolutist and relativistic accounts of creativity stated by [Sternberg \(2022\)](#). So, I wonder if discussing the position of [Sternberg \(2022\)](#) can strengthen the discussion.

S7. Page 7. *“...emphasis on “intentional” novelty in the definition proposed by Robert Weisberg (2015) may help circumvent this weakness, what needs to be clarified in that theoretical account is to what extent the “intentionality” of the creative moment necessarily reflects a conscious process. This matters because artists regularly refer to the essentially unconscious nature of the creative process (Gilbert, 2016).”* Two points. First, due to the reference to [Weisberg's \(2015\)](#) definition of creativity, it would be good to refer to [Pichot et al. \(2022\)](#), who conducted a comprehensive analysis of theoretical and empirical issues underlying the problem of creativity definition and finally inclined to the intentional novelty. Second, I fully understand the author's concern about “intentionality”, but I believe that intentionality may cause no distortion in accounting for the unconscious nature of the creative process. In particular, even though some processes within creativity may go beyond one's awareness (e.g., incubation), the creative process is still might be considered intentional (or conscious) since its initial and later stages (e.g., problem finding, problem definition, information gathering, verification, validation, and communication) are launched and controlled by one's intentions.

S8. Page 7. *“Wallas 4-stage model (Wallas, 1926)...”* Most articles and chapters describe the conception of Wallas (1926) as a four-stage model, but a closer reading suggests a refined picture of the five-stage model (see [Sadler-Smith, 2015](#)).

S9. Page 8. "...and when conclusions about the creative process of participants are made by merely correlating these external rater evaluations of participants' creative task performance with other psychological indices..." and "To put it plainly – an idea that is judged to be novel by the receiving person may not be one that is judged to be novel by the creating person, and vice versa". Great points! I thought about how one can make these claims bolder and suggest supporting them with some empirical evidence. What about the following papers: [Runco & Smith \(1992;](#) about interpersonal and intrapersonal evaluation of creativity); [Runco & Vega \(1990;](#) about parent and teacher evaluations of children's creative ideas); [Runco \(1989;](#) about parental and teacher evaluation of children's creativity); and [van Broekhoven et al. \(2022;](#) how task exposure impact inter- and intrapersonal evaluation of creativity).

S10. Page 8. "Empirical examinations of the creative process must therefore pay heed to the distinction between the creative experience and the creative product and do what is necessary to accommodate the internal frame of reference in the study design where possible..." In this paragraph, the author describes a study of Silvia et al. (2008) as an example of how a researcher can take into account participants' points of view in the assessment of creativity (with reference to the top 2 method). However, the author ultimately acknowledges that even the top 2 method only partially accounts for the perspective of the creator. Here I would like to list studies that might be even more illustrative: [Gilhooly et al. \(2007;](#) participants were asked to classify their ideas as "old" and "new"); [Silvia et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Miroshnik & Shcherbakova \(2019;](#) participants were asked to classify their ideas as "old" and "new" and rate them for creativity); [Benedek et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Benedek et al. \(2018;](#) a neuropsychological dynamics underlying the generation of "old" and "new" ideas as classified by participants themselves).

S11. Page 9. "Given the inadequate state of affairs in relation to the standard definition of creativity, some have proposed giving up on the prospect altogether by rendering creativity to be indefinable (Silvia, 2018)." In my opinion, [Silvia \(2018\)](#) did not assert that the field should give up on developing the definitions of creativity. He just claimed that a universally agreed definition of creativity is not a prerequisite for the field's flourishing: "Yet despite not having a tidy definition, creativity research is flourishing. Perhaps you don't need a nailed-down, pithy definition of something to know a lot about it" ([Silvia, 2018](#), p. 294).

Best regards,

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