

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

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This is a timely and highly relevant work. Anna Abraham questions the standard definition of creativity (a creative idea is one that is novel and useful) by emphasizing the limitation that this definition adopts an external frame of reference when estimating the level of creativity of an idea, i.e. it is not the person who has generated the idea who provides an assessment of the novelty and usefulness of the idea. The author proposes an “amendment to the definition of creativity which can be applied across different fields of experience that span artistic and scientific creativities – a creative idea is one that is both novel and satisfying.”

The key points of the paper could be summarized as follows:

1. The perspective of the creator (internal frame of reference) must necessarily be considered when examining their creative process.
2. The perspective of the recipient (external frame of reference) cannot substitute for the perspective of the creator when examining the creative process of the creator.
3. Most of the research that has been conducted to date to examine the creative process is flawed because the creator's perspective has largely been ignored when examining the creative process.
4. Most future research on the creative process will also be flawed if the recipient's perspective continues to be used as a proxy for the creator's perspective.

In the last paragraph, Abraham concludes that:

“By encompassing internal and external frames of reference, my proposed definition of a creative idea – as one that is novel and satisfying to the creator and/or the recipient – allows constructive inquiry and discourse that enables us to get to the heart of the phenomenon of human creativity.”

I will start my comments by pointing out that I admire author's key point about the need to replace “usefulness” with “satisfaction” with an emphasis on the satisfaction of the one who generates the new idea (the creator). I have two main points that could be used as a source of a reflection that could inform this or future works.

First, I believe that the word “satisfying” is too limited in scope. An alternative could be using the word “transformative”. I do perfectly realize that the sense of personal transformation could be seen as part of a higher degree of satisfaction. I do

believe however that it is worth considering it in the context of creative human activities and experiences. It will only amplify author's key point about the need to take the creator's mindset into account. In this sense, I agree with author's statement (p. 6) that "As a definitional element, the notion of 'satisfying' is also expansive as it permits the inclusion of the other alternatives." I would like to invite the author to develop this insight by exploring the personal transformative aspects of creativity. On p. 7 Abraham points out that "Other authors have emphasized related concepts in defining creativity, such that creative ideas are novel and meaningful (as in the case of everyday creativity: Richards, 2010)." The reference to meaningfulness and the context of everyday creativity could be a great starting point.

Second, the new definition assumes that the external perspective has already been taken into account, but its focus is predominantly idea/outcome-centric. In fact, it excludes the personal aspects of the recipient either, i.e. the recipient has been depersonalized. My point is that the appropriation of a novelty (be it for the sake of usefulness or satisfaction) is a creative act (especially in the case of more complicated technology-based everyday products but not only). In many cases, the recipient is forced to be co-creative by struggling to appreciate the value of a novel idea, product, or outcome. Here I will refer to a co-authored article of mine where we make this point in an explicit way:

Tanev, S., & Frederiksen, M. Harbo. 2014. Generative Innovation Practices, Customer Creativity, and the Adoption of New Technology Products. *Technology Innovation Management Review*, 4(2): 5-10. <http://doi.org/10.22215/timreview/763>

The degree of engagement of the recipient in a co-creative act could/should be also used in a proper definition of creativity. My conclusion is that the definition proposed by Anna Abaraham could be further enhanced by considering the co-creative impact of a new idea on the recipient.

I would like to conclude by referring to another key point of the author that may remain unnoticed. This is author's claim about the relevance of the new definition in the context of the latest "trends to use automated AI and machine learning tools to evaluate responses on creativity tasks." According to the author "With such methodological practices, we have now entered the era in which we ignore not only the creator's perspective but also the recipient's perspective when evaluating the creative process." I am personally not that skeptical about the potential of using automated AI in evaluating creativity. The point of using automated AI in this context is not about ignoring the recipient but enhancing the task of the recipient. I agree however that there are different ways of doing that and multiple ways of not doing it properly. So, for me, a new definition of creativity, such as the one proposed in this paper, could actually help AI experts in designing AI systems that could evaluate a creative process from both internal and external perspectives. This opportunity makes the paper even more valuable.