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Creativity or creativities?

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Abstract

Creativity is typically thought of in the singular—as an attribute. But it may instead be multiple. This article investigates three respects in which there might be multiple creativities—processes, domains, and styles. It considers different potential models for multiple creativities. It concludes by suggesting that the different respects in which creativity might be multiple are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

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1. Introduction

The field of creativity was practically somnolent when [Guilford \(1950\)](#) woke it up more than half-a-century ago with a presidential address to the American Psychological Association. He pointed out, correctly, that there was pitifully little research on creativity relative to the importance of such research to the field of psychology. Although his address instigated fresh research, [Sternberg and Lubart \(1996\)](#) argued many years later that the field was *still* under-researched relative to its importance.

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Today the field has seen an explosion of interest. Indeed, there is even an *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (Runco and Pritzker, 1999) and a *Handbook of Creativity* (Sternberg, 1999a). Moreover, current work addresses creativity—creatively—a condition that has not always been reached.

Some of the questions currently being addressed are illustrated in this special issue. Here is a sampling of the diversity of questions being addressed:

1. *What is creativity?* (Burleson, 2005; Edmonds et al., 2005).
2. *How can creativity be enhanced?* (Edmonds et al., 2005; Oppenheim, 2005; Fischer et al., 2005).
3. *How do previous sources of information contribute to present creativity?* (Bonnardel and Marmeche, 2005).
4. *How can the environment be designed to support creativity?* (Hewett, 2005; Oppenheim, 2005; Yamamoto and Nakakoji, 2005).
5. *What are the cognitive, personality, and motivational constituents of creativity?* (Burleson, 2005; Selker, 2005).
6. *What is the relation of creativity to knowledge and expertise?* (Burleson, 2005).
7. *What role can technology play in understanding and enhancing creativity?* (Bonnardel and Marmeche, 2005; Edmonds et al., 2005; Hewett, 2005; Selker, 2005).
8. *What is the role of social context in creativity?* (Fischer et al., 2005).

These questions, as well as many other similar questions, are often interpreted so as to assume that there is a single entity of creativity, typically defined along the lines of the ability to produce ideas and/or products that are novel and useful (see essays in Sternberg, 1999a; Sternberg et al., 2004). But perhaps there is more than one kind of creativity. This issue of the Journal implies as much in several places and in this paper the question is addressed explicitly by posing some specific questions.

Is there reason to believe that there are multiple creativities? If there are, then what forms might they take? In this article, I propose that there are at least three different forms multiple creativities might take: creativities with respect to processes, domains, and styles. Multiple creativities would exist if creativity was not only multi-dimensional, but multiple in nature. That is, it would exist if there is no one thing that is truly creativity, but rather, multiple things that are.

2. Multiple creativities: processes

Several models of multiple processes of creativity have been proposed.

2.1. Geneplore

One model of multiple processes is Geneplore (Finke et al., 1992; see also Smith et al., 1995; Ward et al., 1999). According to this model, there are two main processing phases in creative thought: a generative phase and an exploratory phase. In the

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