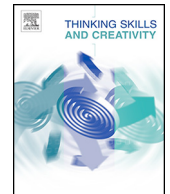




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Differences in creative mindset between Germany and Poland: The mediating effect of individualism and collectivism[☆]

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ABSTRACT

This study provides the first examination of cross-national differences in the creative mindsets, measured by the Creative Mindset Scale (Karwowski, 2014) and provides an explanation for these differences in terms of vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism, measured by the Cultural Orientation Scale (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Polish students ($n = 429$) perceived creativity as more fixed and less malleable than German students ($n = 332$). Drawing on previous theorizing that individualism is related to higher intensity of fixed theories, while collectivism is positively related rather to growth-type mindset, we hypothesized that cross-national differences in horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism were able to explain the relationship between country and both mindsets. This hypothesis was confirmed—vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism fully mediated the differences between countries in the growth versus fixed mindset preferences. The findings were discussed in relation to the creativity and cross-cultural research.

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Creativity, understood as a human capacity to produce ideas which are both novel and appropriate (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Zhou & Shalley, 2003), drives not only cultural (Sawyer, 2006) but also economic development (Florida, 2002). Hence, the striving towards creativity development is observed across the world (Florida, 2005), driven by the belief that being more creative will be an advantage in global economy.

However, to manage with the effort that creative activity requires, people should be convinced that their creative potential can be enhanced or trained. One of the most pervading creativity myths, not only in the field of education (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004) but also shared across disciplines (Sawyer, 2006) is that creativity is an inheritable trait, which cannot be developed. This assumption is in contrast to the scientific evidence that several interventions were highly successful in stimulating the creative potential (e.g., Dziedziejewicz, Gajda, & Karwowski, 2014; Dziedziejewicz, Oledzka, & Karwowski, 2013; Hu et al., 2013; Karwowski & Soszyński, 2008) and meta-analyses confirm the effectiveness of the enhancement of

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creative abilities (Scott, Leritz, & Mumford, 2004a, 2004b). However, laypeople often endorse a fixed creativity mindset (Karwowski, 2014), believing that one's level of creativity is stable and unchangeable.

In this paper, we address the question of cross-national differences between growth and fixed creative mindsets and examine the potential role of intercultural characteristics as variables explaining these differences. More precisely, we build on previous works on creative mindsets and examine the possible influence of cultural orientations on growth vs. fixed creative mindset. To our knowledge, this is the first study in the creativity literature which focuses on cultural explanations for creative mindsets. Previous analyses of the creative mindsets, understood as “the beliefs about the stable-versus-malleable character and the nature of creativity” (Karwowski, 2014, p. 62), focused on the structure of the mindset and their individual-level predictors. Karwowski (2014) has demonstrated that growth and fixed mindsets form two relatively independent (albeit negatively correlated) factors, rather than one continuum with two ends. The fact that creativity may be simultaneously perceived as both stable and changeable is very likely a consequence of the complex nature of the creativity phenomenon (Kaufman, 2016). As people are able to spontaneously recognize different types and forms of creativity (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2015; Karwowski, 2009; Kaufman and Beghetto, 2013; Puente-Diaz, Maier, Brem, & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2016) they may spontaneously ascribe different mindsets to different levels of creativity. People with higher expertise and the awareness that creativity is not only the Big-C characteristic, but mini-, little- or Pro-C as well (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009) may hold growth mindset for lower level of creativity, but at the same time have quite a fixed Big-C creativity mindset.

The two-factor structure of the creativity mindset was recently demonstrated with a Polish sample (Karwowski, 2014), as well as with samples from Germany, Spain, UK, Latvia, and China (Karwowski, Werner, & Tang, 2015). Importantly, a recent study (Karwowski, Werner et al., 2015) has also demonstrated the measurement invariance of the Creative Mindset Scale (Karwowski, 2014) across Poland and Germany, allowing for a direct comparison of latent means of these constructs in these countries.

Several individual-level attributes of both mindsets were tested to date. It was demonstrated that the growth mindset was strongly positively related to creative self-beliefs (Karwowski, 2014), like creative self-efficacy (Beghetto, 2006; Karwowski, 2011) and creative personal identity – constructs explaining creative behavior as well (Jaussi, Randel, & Dionne, 2007; Karwowski, 2012; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). It was also positively associated with the effectiveness in solving insight tasks, while the fixed mindset was a negative predictor of these abilities (Karwowski, 2014, Study 3). In another study (O'Connor, Nemeth, & Akutsu, 2013) growth mindset was positively associated with creative potential (i.e. fluency and originality of thinking), the interests in creative activity, and creative achievement. Importantly, even quite subtle priming with fixed mindset decreased creative thinking (O'Connor et al., 2013, Study 3).

Thus, the malleable (or growth) mindset seems to be especially beneficial for creative activities and, subsequently, future creative achievements as well. It was found to be positively related to academic risk-taking behavior and lower school-related stress (Yamazaki & Kumar, 2013). On the contrary, there are convincing empirical arguments, that the fixed mindset is positively associated with a “creative mortification”, i.e. “the loss of one's willingness to pursue a particular creative aspiration following a negative performance outcome” (Beghetto, 2014, p. 266, see also Beghetto & Dilley, 2016).

Despite the growing interest in the creative mindsets in creativity literature, little is known about potential cultural factors that may shape them. As creative mindsets fit into the wider category of “creative beliefs” (Karwowski and Barbot, 2016), there are good reasons to believe that creative mindsets develop under social and cultural influences as other self-beliefs do (Karwowski, Gralewski, & Szumski, 2015). More precisely, in one of the early discussions about the possible cultural differences about mindset in general (not specifically creative mindset) (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995a), it was proposed that the concept of the fixed mindset is much more typical for individualistic cultures and societies, while the growth mindset, strongly related to the effort, is not only highly valued, but also much more present in collectivist societies (see also Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995b; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Heine et al., 2001; Lillard, 1998). There is extensive cross-cultural research (e.g., Stevenson & Lee, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992) showing that in the collectivistic Asian culture the focus on the possibility of growth and treating cognitive traits as malleable is stronger than in the West, which is characterized by higher individualism. Hence our study takes into account the individualism vs. collectivism dimension as a promising candidate factor explaining cross-cultural differences in creative mindsets.

1. Individualism-collectivism and creative mindsets

Individualism and collectivism are “cultural syndromes,” based on which various social and psychological processes are organized (Triandis, 1995). This dimension of culture has been used extensively on a wide range of topics in psychological and social sciences (for a review, see Hamamura, 2012) and has been used very often to explain the differences between the East and the West in creativity studies as well (e.g., Niu and Sternberg, 2003; Werner et al., 2010; Yi, Hu, Plucker, & McWilliams, 2013).

By definition, individualism is a social pattern of loosely linked individuals who see themselves as independent rather than interdependent individuals. Primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights, such individuals give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others, and emphasize rational analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of associating with others. In contrast, collectivism is a social pattern of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives. Primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives, such individuals are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals, and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives (Triandis, 1995).

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