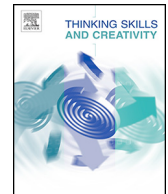




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## Implicit theories of creativity are differentially categorized by perspective and exemplar domain

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### ABSTRACT

We propose that thoughts about one's own creativity are related to implicit views about the similarity of one's traits to those of creative exemplars. In this study, 298 undergraduates were instructed either to imagine an example of an innovative product or to imagine themselves creating a product in one of three domains (art, music, or gadgetry). Following the manipulation, participants rated the fitness of a list of creative traits relative to their first or third person creative exemplar. Fitness ratings were generally higher for third person exemplars than for first person exemplars. Though ratings also varied by domain, there was a significant interaction between perspective and domain, such that first-person ratings (i.e., self ratings) did not vary by exemplar domain, while third-person ratings (i.e., an external exemplar) did vary by domain. Implications and future directions for the study of implicit theories and creative performance and achievement are discussed.

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What accounts for a person's creative development? Most research to that end has focused on evaluating the predictive validity of creativity tests (Cramond, Matthews-Morgan, Bandalos, & Zuo, 2005; Kim, 2006) but with little headway (Kim, 2011). An alternative approach is to examine the role of implicit theories: layperson's perceptions of creativity and the creative process (Hass, 2014a,b), sometimes also referred to as mindsets (e.g., Karwowski, 2014). Studies of implicit theories of intelligence have shown that a person's behaviors (Grant & Dweck, 2003) and goal orientations are significantly affected by the beliefs they hold about the nature of their own intellectual abilities (for a review see Dweck, 1986). The question remains, however, as to whether a similar relationship exists between implicit beliefs and creative performance.

A growing number of creativity researchers are turning their attention toward implicit theories of creativity in order to gain an understanding of how laypeople conceptualize the characteristics of creative people (e.g., Hass, 2014a; Lee, Kim, Ryu, & Song, 2013; Paletz, Peng, & Li, 2011; Ramos & Puccio, 2014; Tang, Baer, & Kaufman, 2015). Two studies in particular examined whether layperson's beliefs about creative people depend on the domain of creativity (e.g., art v. science, Hass, 2014a) and on the perspective of evaluation (self v. other, Lee et al., 2013). In both studies, participants rated a series of trait statements according to whether or not the traits accurately described a creative person. In both studies, trait ratings were heterogeneous across different experimental conditions leading to the conclusion that a layperson's implicit beliefs about creativity are not unitary.

It is important to note here that in these studies, the intent was not to examine how implicit *self*-theories about creativity influence creative performance (but see Karwowski, 2014), but just to establish an understanding what people think creativity is. The current study was designed in keeping with the latter research question and was motivated by two spe-

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**Table 1**

Trait dimensions from Sternberg's (1985) analysis. For the current study, each trait dimension on the left was calculated as the average trait rating among all trait statements on the right.

Dimension	N items	Items
Nonentrenchment	10	Makes up rules as he or she goes along; is impulsive; takes chances; tends not to know own limitations; tries to do what others think is impossible; is emotional; has a free spirit; builds castles in the sky; is a nonconformist; is unorthodox
Integration and intellectuality	11	Makes connections and distinctions between ideas and things; has the ability to understand and interpret his or her own environment; has the ability to recognize similarities and differences; is able to grasp ideas and focus his or her attention on those ideas; is productive; has a high IQ level; attaches importance to ideas; possesses ability for high achievement; is always thinking; is able to put old information, theories, and so forth together in a new way; Has intuition; has the ability to change direction and use another procedure
Aesthetic taste and imagination	7	Has an appreciations for art, music, and so forth; likes to be alone when creating something new; can write, draw, compose music; has good taste; uses the materials around him or her and makes something unique out of them; is in harmony with the materials or process of expression; is imaginative
Decision skill and flexibility	2	Follows his or her gut feelings in making decisions after weighing the pros and cons; has ability to change directions and use another procedure
Perspicacity	3	Questions societal norms, truisms, and assumptions; is perceptive; is willing to take a stand
Drive for accomplishment	4	Is motivated by goals; likes to be complimented on his or her work; is energetic; has a sense of humor
Inquisitiveness	2	Is inquisitive at an early age; is inquisitive

cific objectives. First, we attempted to replicate the findings described by Hass (2014a) that people hold different beliefs about the creative traits required for success in art-related fields compared with science or technology-related fields. This is important because it suggests that laypeople understand creativity in terms of real-world examples of creative people, and not idealized prototypes, and that they implicitly distinguish creators from different domains by their personal characteristics. Second, we wanted to contrast trait-fitness ratings following an instruction to imagine an existing creative product of their choice made by someone else (e.g., their experience with an iPod) with trait-fitness ratings following an instruction to imagine inventing a new gadget themselves. We see the second goal as an important step toward linking a person's conceptions of his or her own creative ability to creative performance measures. Before describing the study in detail, we provide a brief overview of research on implicit theories of creativity.

## 1. Implicit theories of creativity

Research on implicit theories of creativity began with Sternberg's (1985) study comparing layperson's beliefs about creativity with their beliefs about intelligence and wisdom. Sternberg surveyed professionals and faculty members from several different domains asking for lists of traits that aptly described successful creative people within each specific domain. He then asked undergraduates to sort the traits into piles and analyzed their sorting with multidimensional scaling. Sternberg concluded that the traits organized well into 8 categories (four dimensions, each with a positive and negative polarity), and Table 1 summarizes all but one of the categories (the *intuition* category had only one trait associated with it: "has intuition"). The central focus of Sternberg's work was to compare the creativity trait profile with trait profiles reflecting implicit theories of intelligence and wisdom. However, his results were limited by a lack of differentiation among traits that might be associated with different domains.

Since Sternberg's (1985) original analysis, many researchers have looked more closely at differences in implicit theories across different contexts and groups of people. This began with Runco and Bahleda's (1986) analysis of the different traits people generated when asked to describe, among other things, artistic creativity and scientific creativity. The studies that followed confirmed that people's implicit theories are far from unitary, and are often dependent upon more specific examples of creativity than Sternberg (1985) originally imagined (e.g., Paletz et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2015). Recently, Hass (2014a) refined this approach by instructing participants to imagine a specific example of a creative product of their choice, but manipulated the domain that the exemplar was drawn from (art, science, technology, design, music, or literature). Though the specific exemplar itself was not manipulated, participants were required to describe what they imagined in order to control for individual differences in their conceptions of creative products in each domain. The reasoning was that it would be interesting to tap into participants' existing knowledge of creative artifacts, rather than constrain their knowledge to a particular exemplar (e.g., an iPad). Participants then indicated how well the traits listed in Table 1 described the person that created their imagined exemplar. Like Runco and Bahleda, Hass found that people's implicit theories of artistic creativity differed from their implicit theories of scientific creativity.

Notwithstanding the interesting results just described, most of the existing research on implicit theories focuses on evaluations of the creativity of other people (i.e., third-person evaluations). Though Runco and Bahleda (1986) did elicit self-reports about participants' levels of artistic and scientific creativity, they were not asked to evaluate their own creativity in terms of the same traits they generated for others. In a recent study, Lee et al. (2013) asked the question of whether people hold general implicit theories about creativity and apply those general theories to instances of their own and of

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