

RUNNING HEAD: A social identity approach to creativity

**Inspired and appreciated by the group: The social identity approach to creativity**

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To appear in B. Nijstad and P. Paulus (Eds.) *Oxford handbook of group creativity*. Oxford,  
UK: Oxford University Press

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### Abstract

The processes of creative production and creativity recognition are both understood to be central to the dynamics of creativity. Nevertheless, they are generally seen by creativity researchers as theoretically unrelated. In contrast, social identity theorizing suggests a model of creativity in which groups play a role both in inspiring creative acts and in determining the reception they are given. More specifically, this approach argues that shared social identity (or lack of it) motivates individuals to rise to particular creative challenges and provides a basis for certain forms of creativity to be recognized (or disregarded). This chapter explicates the logic underlying the social identity approach and summarizes some of the key evidence that supports it.

### **Inspired and appreciated by the group: The social identity approach to creativity**

If one looks at an anthology of quotations, it is apparent that most people who reflect on the nature of creativity focus on the process through which creative ideas are generated. What leads a musician to write a great song, an author to pen a great book, or a scientist to make a great discovery? In fact, though, production is just one of three steps that are critical to the achievement of creativity. Certainly it is the case that a person — or a group of people — has to come up with an idea (or an associated product) that is novel and innovative. But to have any purchase in the world, that idea also has to be recognized as valuable by others, and as well as being recognized as creative, it also has to have an impact on other people. A great song that no one recognizes as great and that no-one ever sings may *be* creative, but it is unlikely to be a song that is *thought of* and heralded as creative (e.g., inspiring people to ask what it was that led to it being written).

In short, when people reflect on creativity, they have in mind a process that leads to products that are not only original but also useful and influential (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Nevertheless, when researchers examine the creative process they often neglect these last two steps. Moreover, even if they do not, they tend to treat production and recognition/reproduction as theoretically unrelated aspects of the creativity process. In contrast, in this chapter we outline a theory of creativity which sees each of these elements not only as central to the creative process but also as conceptually inter-related. More specifically, we suggest that the elements are linked by virtue of a social identity-based relationship that connects individual creators to groups that stimulate, appreciate, and respond constructively to their creativity. In these terms, the relationship between a creator and his or her (potential) in-group is seen to lie at the heart of the creative process as this has

an impact not only on the form of a person's creative output but also on the response that that output receives.

### **The Social Identity Approach to Creativity**

One basic premise of the social identity approach is that individuals can categorize themselves either as individual persons ('I', 'me') or as members of the groups to which they belong ('we', 'us'; Turner, 1985). For example, an artist, Margaret, can categorize herself as an individual (i.e., 'I, Margaret) or as a member of her artistic group (i.e., 'us Australian modernists' or 'I, the Australian modernist, Margaret'). In the former case her sense of self is defined in terms of the idiosyncratic characteristics that define her sense of *personal identity* and it is these that determine her behaviour (Prentice, 2006; Turner, 1982). In relation to creativity, other things being equal, when a person's personal identity is salient, it follows that their creations are more likely to reflect their own idiosyncratic style and that their evaluations of other creations are more likely to be guided by personal preferences. Under these circumstances, then, creative behaviour is likely to be informed by individual differences (e.g., Feist, 1998).

In contrast, when social identity is salient, individuals derive relevant aspects of their sense of self from their membership of a particular group and value their own and others' actions with reference to internalized understandings of that group membership (e.g., so that, as an Australian modernist, Margaret is interested in, and appreciates the value of Australian flora and geometric shapes). Put slightly differently, when a particular social identity becomes salient, individuals' self-perception becomes *depersonalized*, such that their perceptions, evaluations, and actions are informed more by the shared attributes that define their social group membership and less by their unique individuating characteristics (Turner,

1982, 1991). One direct implication of this for creativity is that when social identity is salient, a person's creative behaviour and their evaluation of the creative behaviour of others are likely to be informed by group values, preferences, and norms. For example, even though Margaret may strive for some degree of distinctiveness within the group of painters of which she is a part (Brewer, 1991; Codol, 1975; Jans, Postmes, & van der Zee, 2011a; Jetten & Postmes, 2006), when she thinks of herself as an Australian modernist, she will be more likely to paint and evaluate other paintings in ways that accord with artistic preferences that are shared within that group (e.g., preferring geometric representations of Australian flora to traditional representations of European subject matter).

In line with previous contributions by Haslam, Adarves-Yorno, Postmes & Jans, (2013, 2014), in what follows, we review some of the research that fleshes out this analysis by providing evidence of these identity-based processes at work. Because it is in many ways more obvious, we start by looking at the role of social identity in the recognition of creative products and then go on to examine its role in creative production.

### **The Recognition of Creativity**

Social identity theorizing (after Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) points to a number of relational factors that are likely to be implicated in perceptions of creativity. In particular, these perceptions should be affected (a) by perceivers' sense that they belong to a particular group (i.e., their self-categorization in terms of a salient social identity), (b) by the nature of a person's relationship to that group (i.e., their social identification with it), and (c) by the norms, values and ideals associated with the salient social identity. These elements are all interrelated — in particular, because social identification is an aspect of self-category accessibility that determines social identity

salience (Haslam, 2004), but nevertheless it is helpful to consider the importance of each in turn.

### ***The role of shared social identity***

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) argues that social identity and the recognition of shared (or non-shared) group membership are key determinants of people's orientation towards others (Turner, 1991). In particular, when people consider themselves to belong to the same group (such that they self-categorize as members of a common ingroup) they will be more motivated to engage constructively with other ingroup members. Put slightly differently, shared social self-categorization creates an expectation among group members that, on group-relevant dimensions, their perceptions and behaviour will converge (Asch, 1951).

The direct implication of this claim is that any given product is more likely to be perceived as creative and to be regarded favourably when its creator is seen to be a member of a psychological ingroup. In other words, in order to dispel the uncertainty that creative products introduce by disrupting the status quo (Mueller, Melwani, & Goncalo, 2012), a creator needs to be seen as 'one of us' who is 'doing it for us' (Haslam et al., 2011; Turner, 1991). Support for this idea is found in a range of settings (for experimental evidence, see Adarves-Yorno, 2005; Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2006; Adarves-Yorno, Haslam, & Postmes, 2008). For example, in organizational domains 'insiders' are often found to be antagonistic towards outsiders' contributions — leading to what management theorists refer to as *Not Invented Here (NIH) syndrome* (Katz & Allen, 1982; Lichtenthaler & Holger, 2006; Stein, 2003).

Likewise, in artistic domains, people are typically found to display ethnocentric bias when judging others' creativity (Simonton, 1984). That is, they consider 'our' creators and creations to be superior to 'theirs', and also regard creations (and dimensions of creativity) that valorise 'us' to be superior to those that valorise 'them' (Morton, Haslam, Postmes, & Ryan, 2006).

Illustrative of this point, Steffens, Haslam, Ryan, and Millard (2017) report an extensive examination of the Oscars awarded by the US-based Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the BAFTAs awarded by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (since BAFTAs inception of the category 'best actor/actress in a leading role' in 1968). Both awards supposedly reflect the objective quality of films. It is clear however, that awards are not a reflection of quality alone, but also of national identity. In particular, US actors/actresses have received 67% of Oscar nominations but only 53% of BAFTA nominations. On the other hand, British actors/actresses have received 31% of BAFTA nominations but only 19% of Oscar nominations.

Significantly too the tendency to valorise the efforts of national ingroup members is even more pronounced when it comes to the actual awarding of prizes (rather than just nominations): here US actors/actresses have received 78% of the Oscars but only 46% of the BAFTAs while British actors/actresses have received 42% of the BAFTAs but only 14% of the Oscars. More general evidence of this point also emerges from cross-cultural research which shows that what people actually mean by creativity (and hence how they measure and reward it) varies as a function of their cultural identity (e.g., Paletz & Peng, 2008; Raina, 1993).

A commonly observed corollary of these observations is that ‘outsiders’ routinely experience difficulty in getting those who identify with *other* groups to acknowledge and engage with their creativity. In extreme cases, this differential responsiveness to ingroup and outgroup creativity can mean that people refuse to engage with the creative efforts of outgroup members altogether. This can involve dismissing others’ creative efforts as worthless or else vilifying them as sinful, obscene, and corrupt. Evidence of this is found in the Nazis’ denunciation of the Bauhaus movement (Amatrudo, 1997) and of what they referred to as “Degenerate Art” (e.g., Dada) which they contrasted with “Decent Art” (i.e., that which embodied National Socialist ideals; Doering, Pekarik, & Kindlon, 1997; Goggin, 1991).

It is apparent too that, far from being immune to identity forces of this form, similar dynamics are observed in science and academia (Kathoefer, & Leker, 2012). Indeed, these are routinely encountered by researchers in the process of submitting their research for peer review (Mohoney, 1977). We can also vouch for the fact that this experience is no less uncommon when that research is on the topic of creativity. This observation goes to the heart of a paradox identified by Mueller and colleagues — namely that people commonly espouse the global virtue of creativity in the abstract but nevertheless end up rejecting many of the specific forms in which they encounter it in practice (Mueller, Melwani, & Goncalo, 2013; Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2009).

At the same time, the ingroup–outgroup boundaries that structure responses to creativity are not static and fixed but flexible and context-dependent (Doosje, Haslam, Spears, Oakes, & Koomen, 1998; Haslam & Turner, 1992). For example, the cinematic tastes of a young Australian woman may be dictated not only by her age, her nationality, her class,



her politics, or her gender, but also by the specific meaning of these (and other) ingroup categories in a given comparative and normative context. So, amongst other things, this may mean that she explicitly rejects films (and forms of creativity) that are supported by Hollywood studios and is instead a fan of independent or foreign cinema — because, in the context of going to the cinema, it is a particular political identity and not her nationality that provides the primary basis for her self-categorization. Apart from anything else, context-dependent variation in self-categorization thus helps explain why creativity is sometimes embraced in unexpected quarters by those who seem to be outsiders. This point is exemplified by the success of the Detroit-based singer-songwriter Rodriguez (immortalized in the documentary film *Searching for Sugarman*; Bendjelloul, 2012) — whose emancipatory songs became influential in post-Apartheid South Africa at the same time that they were ignored in his American homeland.

To give a real example of how this can work in practice, we can reflect on an extreme case where White researchers from Europe sought to encourage Black prisoners in a maximum security prison in Africa to embrace Buddhist principles of mindfulness (Adarves-Yorno & Mahdon, 2017). At first blush, one might consider this an impossible challenge, given the various dimensions of group difference at play here. However, in Naivasha, the largest Maximum security prison in Kenya, mindfulness principles and practices have not only have been accepted and incorporated into the prisoners' lives but have also stimulated a wide variety of creative initiatives. How was this possible? As Adarves and Mahdon (2017) note, the key to success lay in *identity leadership* that served to craft a new sense of common identity in which the prisoners' ingroup norms and values were redefined. More generally too, this process speaks to the fact that throughout history it is only through their skill as

*entrepreneurs of identity* (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005; see Haslam et al., 2011) that revolutionary leaders have been able to convince people to embrace the most extreme forms of creative challenge.

### ***The role of social identification***

A person's social identity, though, is not all that structures their appreciation of creativity. In particular, it also matters how important that identity (and the group with which it is associated) is to them. This argument flows from the observation that when a person identifies strongly with a given group, they will be more likely to interpret and engage with reality in a manner consistent with the values, norms, and ideology of that group (Turner, 1991). For instance, if Margaret's identification with the group of Australian modernist painters is strong, then (a) her paintings are more likely to conform to modernist ideals and (b) she is more likely to perceive other Australian modernist paintings to be creative than would be the case if she did not identify with this artistic group. Thus, identification with a group should lead a person (a) to converge upon views and actions that are characteristic of that group, (b) to be more committed to those views and actions, and (c) to be more open to influence from fellow ingroup members. All of these elements should in turn impact on perceptions of creativity and reactions to creative products.

Consistent with this proposition, research has shown that identification is indeed related to responses to creativity. In particular, identification with a creator and involvement in the innovation process have both been found to influence people's responses to organizational innovation (King, 2003). Furthermore, perceivers' social identification with the group that perceivers and creators are part of has also been shown to impact on perceptions of creativity (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2006).

Such findings have practical implications for the implementation of changes and innovations that depend on people's endorsement of creative ideas (Amabile, 1996). Specifically, it suggests that in an environment where people are uncommitted to, and lack identification with, the overall purposes of a group or organization (e.g., because they identify with a non-aligned sub-group), they will be less responsive to any innovation that the group or organization attempts to introduce (Mueller et al., 2012). This proposition is supported by a large body of organizational research which has explored people's divergent responses to organizational change through the lens of social identity theorizing. The general finding here is that the less people identify with an organization, the less enthusiastic they are both with the process of change and with the leaders who devise and seek to implement it (e.g., see Ellemers, 2003; Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2011; Jetten & Hutchison, 2010; Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002; Terry, 2003).

### ***The role of in-group norms, values, and ideals***

The foregoing analysis treats the contexts in which creativity is assessed as if they were value-free — so that, a priori, no one course of action or style is seen as any more desirable than another. In the world at large, however, this is rarely the case. For in most situations, normative criteria define the forms of creativity that are considered acceptable (or not) and these in turn serve to structure people's perceptions of creativity (Amabile, 1996; Haslam, Adarves-Yorno, & Postmes, 2014; Howe, 2000). This means that being recognized as creative is never just a matter of 'being different' but always of being different in *particular* ways.

In approaching this issue, it is interestingly to note that researchers have previously observed that normative criteria can work in opposite ways. Accordingly, some researchers

argue that creations need to follow normative criteria in order to be considered creative (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), while others argue that creative products need to deviate from normative criteria (Amabile, 1996; Eiseman, 1990; Simonton, 2000). We have argued that self-categorization principles help us to reconcile these contradictory observations by suggesting that the impact of group concerns will vary as a function of social identity salience (e.g., Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher, 1987; Spears, Lea, & Lee, 1990; Wilder & Shapiro, 1984). In particular, self-categorization theory predicts that group concerns should only inform individuals' judgments to the extent that the group in question (rather than a person's individuality or another group) provides the salient basis for self-definition.

One implication of this analysis is that when social identity is salient perceivers will tend to consider ideas and products to be more creative if they fall within the set of shared norms and ideals deemed acceptable by the ingroup (what Sherif & Hovland, 1961, referred to as the *latitude of acceptance*; see Haslam & Turner, 1992). On the other hand, when their personal identity (or an alternative social identity) is salient and particular social norms and ideals are explicit, people will tend to deviate from (or at least not act in line with) these and will therefore be more likely consider an idea to be creative if it too is non-aligned with them. These are propositions that Adarves-Yorno and colleagues (2006) examined in experiments that orthogonally manipulated both identity salience and group norms. The results of these showed that participants whose social identity was made salient perceived ideas to be creative when those ideas fell *within* the boundaries of group norms, but that participants whose personal identity was salient perceived ideas to be relatively more creative when they fell *outside* these boundaries.

This pattern supports claims that the recognition of creativity is essentially a social judgment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Kasof, 1995) that is grounded not only in a person's group membership (as noted above) but also in the specific criteria that are associated with, and define, that membership (Amabile, 1996). To be seen — and celebrated — as creative, creators therefore not only have to be seen as 'one of us', but their creations also have to be consonant with group members' understanding of what creativity should look like. This is one reason why it can be helpful to acknowledge (as Newton did) that one's creativity arises from "standing on the shoulders of giants" — because this signals clearly that your contribution extends upon the accomplishments of an ingroup with which you identify.

### **The Production of Creativity**

#### ***The interactive role of self-categorization and group norms***

The foregoing review makes it clear that identity-related factors have a significant bearing on perceptions of creativity. Yet, important as this is, as we noted at the outset, it is apparent that researchers in this field generally more interested in *actual creative behaviour* and performance. In this regard, a key assertion of self-categorization theory is that social identity serves not only to regulate individuals' perceptions but also their behaviour. It does this by providing the basis for them to have a shared perspective on social reality and to engage in mutual *social influence* (Turner, 1987, 1991; see also Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Postmes et al., 2005). This means that in a context where two or more people perceive themselves to share social identity, they will be motivated to co-ordinate their behaviour with reference to beliefs, values, and norms that define the group's shared meaning (Haslam, 1997; Postmes et al., 2001; Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2000).

For instance, a group of modernist painters is likely to develop particular artistic sensibilities and guidelines which then provide parameters for what is deemed creative (e.g., industrial rather than religious images; Crouch, 1999) and members of this artistic group are expected to paint with reference to those rules. In other words, to the extent that they see themselves as members of a distinct movement, individuals are likely to lay down and to follow group norms and ideals that define *what it means* to be ‘one of us’. These norms and ideals — which are internalized by group members and both describe and prescribe appropriate thought and behaviour within the group — then have an important social function as regulators of cognition and action (Bechtoldt, De Dreu, Nijstad, & Choi, 2010; Levine & Moreland, 1990; Nijstad & Stroebe, 2006; Turner et al., 1987).

It is important to note that the impact of group norms in shaping expectations and encouraging conformity should depend, amongst other things, on how central the issues in question are for the group (Levine & Moreland, 1990; Postmes & Spears, 1998; Sherif, 1936). The range of acceptable behaviours therefore depends of the centrality of the specific issues for the social identity in question (e.g., so that modernist painters are more likely to conform to modernist guidelines in their painting than in their dress). In this way, norms that relate to issues that are central to the group (e.g., painting) will tend to have a very narrow latitude of acceptance — such that the range of acceptable behaviours is quite restricted. On the other hand, norms that relate to peripheral aspects of group life (e.g., dress) will tend to have broader latitude of acceptance — so that there is a greater tolerance of deviance.

Put slightly differently, when social identity becomes salient, people tend to conform to norms and ideals that define their ingroup identity (Reicher, 1987; Spears, Lea & Lee, 1990; Wilder & Shapiro, 1984). Accordingly, a group member whose social identity is

salient is likely to behave creatively by *conforming* to norms and ideals. In contrast, someone whose behaviour is informed by personal identity is more likely to display creativity by deviating from the prevailing norm (Postmes, Spears, Sakhel, & de Groot, 2001).

These propositions are supported by experimental studies which show that the nature of a person's creative production depends both on the content of group norms and the degree to which those norms are self-defining (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2007). When their social identity is salient individuals thus engage in forms of creativity that involve following ingroup norms; but when their personal identity is salient their creativity involves departing from those norms. Importantly, this analysis helps explain why creativity can involve *both* acceptance and rejection of normative practices, and *both* divergent thinking (a.k.a., "thinking outside the box"; e.g., Mednick & Mednick, 1966; Thompson, 2003) and convergent thinking ("honing in" on a problem; Baer, 2003; Paletz & Schunn, 2010; Puccio & Cabra, 2009). Importantly too, it also provides a framework for understanding *when* it takes these different forms.

A further contribution of social identity theorizing on these issues is to make it clear that group norms *always* have a role to play in shaping creativity, but that this role varies dramatically as a function of creators' self-categorizations. When creators act in terms of a social identity that they share with others their creativity involves embracing group norms (and this can encourage either convergent or divergent thinking); but when they act as individuals (or in terms of a different social identity) their creativity centres on departure from those norms. Thus even when their work is inspired by the need to distinguish themselves from a particular group, successful creators still need to understand the nature of the group from which they seek to deviate. For example, when the Sex Pistols sought to

break away from mainstream popular music in the 1970s, they were marshalled by calls to “undermine [the establishment’s] pompous authority, reject their moral standards, make anarchy and disorder your trademarks” (Oedy, 2014, p.16). Ironically, then, the musical establishment of the time gave punk musicians a particular creative force (the desire to rebel), as well as a specific trajectory (something specific to move away from) and appeal (for those disaffected with mainstream popular music). As with other successful creative efforts, attempts to break the mold were therefore not quite so random and anarchic as their progenitors would have their devotees believe.

### ***The role of social identification***

Up to this point in our review, we have largely ignored processes of group creativity, and indeed it is notable that until relatively recently, this was true of most creativity research. One key reason for this is that researchers have tended to find that the creative output of groups is *less* than the expected sum of their individual parts (e.g., Diehl & Stroebe, 1987; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). As a result, most of the work on this topic is actually about group *non-creativity*. Indeed, for many commentators, the very notion of ‘group creativity’ is something of an oxymoron (see Staw, 1999).

On the basis of the analysis presented in the previous section, this observation is easier to understand once one recognizes that in much of this research, the groups in question are not particularly meaningful for their members (Hackman, 1998; Harkins & Szymanski, 1989). To the extent that individuals fail to define themselves in terms of shared social identity, it therefore follows that they should be less likely to engage with a group’s creative tasks (e.g., as shown by Tang & Naumann, 2016). By the same token, as shared social identity increases, so should group members’ creative endeavour. And although group



identification stimulates normative conformity, it is a mistake to assume that this will only manifest itself in acts of slavish reproduction (Haslam & Reicher, 2012a). Indeed, where they perceive change and innovation to be advantageous for the group, high identifiers should be more likely to embrace them (Packer, 2008).

In line with this point a number of studies support the proposition that individuals' engagement in, and support for, group innovation depends upon their identification with the group in question and its goals (Haslam et al., 2006) and that when group members' social identity is aligned with a demanding goal, this serves to stimulate their creativity, but when it is not, their creativity is stifled (Haslam, Wegge & Postmes, 2009). At the same time, though, as noted above, it is also apparent that this aspect of group creativity can be hard to recognize and appreciate because it is manifested in the form of *convergent thinking* and *conformity*. Nevertheless, although they are routinely denigrated, we have argued that these processes — which allow individuals to cohere around a shared mission — are essential for creative movements to progress (Haslam & Reicher, 2012b).

### ***The role of identity induction***

Our analysis up to this point has tended to imply that people generally have stable, social identities and a generally clear understanding of associated group norms and values. However, in many circumstances, the norms, values, and ideals associated with a given social identity are ambiguous and/or negotiable. Do British people value making rules or breaking them? Does my organization have a prevention or a promotion focus? Is Australia conservative or progressive? The fact that the answers to such questions is often “it depends”, means that even if individuals are highly identified and keen to buy into a group's creative vision, they will not always know how to act.

This situation is likely to be quite common when groups are newly formed, when the group's external context is highly changeable, and when a group experiences transitions in structure or leadership. Indeed, such ambiguity is one of the precursors to what Postmes and colleagues refer to as an *inductive* process of identity formation, wherein group members interact with one another with a view to developing consensus around new group norms and new understandings of shared social identity from the bottom up (rather than the top down; Postmes et al., 2000, 2005; see also Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994).

This process of induction has two interesting implications for manifestations of creativity. The first is that identity induction can be seen as a form of creativity in its own right in so far as this provides group members with the opportunity to contribute to the evolution of social identity (Jans et al., 2011; Postmes, Spears, Lee, & Novak, 2005; see also Haslam et al., 2011).. The second is that by incorporating individual contributions, identity induction encourages group members to be creative and develop independent perspectives on group-related matters. This has been confirmed by experimental research which shows that induction of shared social identity not only 'locks in' a diversity of viewpoints, but also promotes group creativity (Jans et al., 2012; Jans, Postmes, Van der Zee, & Seewald, 2013). In contrast to the idea that groups and social identification tend generally to stifle innovation (Baumeister, Ainsworth, & Vohs, 2016; Janis, 1972) it thus appears that induction of social identity can actually lead to the formation of groups that not only harness diversity but also promote pluralism and creativity (Haslam & Ellemers, 2016).

### ***The role of multiple social identities***

The previous section, outlined how the process of negotiating the meaning of social identity can itself promote creativity. However, few (if any) people are members of just one

group. Instead, they belong to, and identify with, many groups, and accordingly have not one but multiple social identities. This raises the question of whether if one social identity can stimulate a certain amount of creative behaviour, multiple social identities might stimulate even more.

This question has been a focus for research into multiculturalism which finds that people who have lived in two or more countries tend to be more creative than those who have only ever lived in one (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Godart, Maddux, Shiplov, & Galinsky, 2015; Leung & Chiu, 2010; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). However, it is apparent that people do not automatically become more creative once they move to a new country. Rather, this is brought about by a transformation in their sense of self. Speaking to this point, experimental and field studies by Tadmor, Galinsky and Maddux (2012) found that people who lived abroad (away from the country in which they grew up) showed greater creativity to the extent that they identified with the country they originated from *as well as* the country to which they emigrated. Not least, this is because when people identify with a relevant (cultural) group, any experience related to that group is more likely to facilitate (multicultural) learning in a form that tends to promote flexible and original thinking (Maddux, Adam, & Galinsky, 2010). It thus appears that people are more likely to reap creativity benefits from multiple group memberships to the extent they adopt an acculturation strategy of ‘integration’ that entails simultaneously staying connected to, and identifying with, both home and host cultures (Berry, 2005).

In line with this point, a large body of evidence now points to the fact that social identification with two (or more) different cultural groups helps to promote creative thinking. More generally too, it appears that this is true not just of cultural groups, but of *any* groups

that a person is a member of in so far as these are characterised by a unique set of shared norms, beliefs, and values (e.g., whether it be a family, political, social, leisure, or geographic group). Speaking to this point, studies by Steffens, Cruwys, Gocłowska, and Galinsky (2016) have shown that the more social identities a person has access to, the more ideas they generate on a creativity task (and the more original those ideas are). Importantly too, this research also rules out the possibility that such associations might be explained by personality (e.g., differences in extraversion or openness to experience; Feist, 1998).

Speaking to questions of mechanism, the research also indicates that the link between multiple social identities and creativity link is accounted for more by an increase in flexible thinking (invoking different semantic categories) than by greater persistence (see also Nijstad, De Dreu, Rietzschel, & Baas, 2010). This suggests that multiple social identities are associated with creativity primarily because they allow people to access a different stock of knowledge and experience (i.e., to see the world through different lenses; for evidence concerning multiracial identities, see also Gaither, Remedios, Sanchez, & Sommers, 2015).

### ***The role of audience***

We noted at the start of this chapter that in previous research being creative and being seen to be creative have been treated as largely distinct processes (with the former studies rather more than the latter). Although our analysis has also tended to reproduce this dichotomy, it is nonetheless clear that these elements often have a strong bearing on each other. Not least, this is because the norms that shape creators' productions will often shape the perceptions of those who judge their creative products (Postmes & Spears, 2002). Indeed, as we have seen, appraisals and acts of creativity have been shown to be structured by the same factors — namely, normative context and self-categorization (see Adarves-Yorno et al.,

2006, 2007). Yet, in addition to being underpinned by the same processes, perceptions and behaviour should also be linked through their grounding in particular contexts — where creators have a clear sense of the group that is going to evaluate their work.

Such contexts abound in everyday life for the simple reason that most creators expect (and want) their creations to be seen and evaluated by others (i.e., an audience of some form). In this, the audience corresponds to what proponents of the systems approach refer to as ‘the field’ and, as Csikszentmihalyi (1999) argues, this has the capacity to both stimulate and stifle creativity. From a social identity perspective one key reason for this is that the field can be seen to be comprised of others who either share or do not share identity with the creator. In line with the principles outlined in the previous two sections, these can then serve as a point of reference that creators either orient towards or deviate from.

Findings which support these claims (e.g., see Haslam et al., 2012) again indicate that the nature of creativity is structured by norms to which creators are sensitive as they set about the task of being creative. Significantly, too, they suggest that in order to have positive impact, those norms have to be internalized as part of an ingroup identity (Turner, 1991). At one level, this observation is entirely unremarkable. It is hardly earth-shattering, for example, to observe that the work of contemporary musicians tends to be guided more by the tastes of 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences than by those that prevailed during the Renaissance. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how little attention researchers have paid to the task of developing a coherent theoretical framework that might explain how social contexts (of which audiences are a key part) structure the equally important processes of creativity production and recognition. As we have argued elsewhere (Haslam et al., 2013), one of the most important contributions of a

social identity approach to creativity is to identify this as a major challenge for the field and to point to ways in which it might start to be addressed.

### **Conclusion**

The social identity approach that we have outlined above suggests that rather than involving entirely different principles, there is a close theoretical relationship between the two essential components of the creative process: on one hand, *acts of creativity* (i.e., individual behaviour that is celebrated for its originality) and, on the other, the *appreciation of creativity* (i.e., judgments of individuals' new ideas and products). The core argument here that it is processes of *self and identity* that connect these two components and that creative production and recognition arise from a dynamic interplay between social and personal identities and the norms which these either encapsulate or reject. .

In practice, of course, these two aspects of the creative process need not be aligned. In particular, the groups that have a role in stimulating creative acts will not necessarily be the ones that ultimately evaluate those acts. Not least, this is because the broader contexts of these two processes will often be very different, and separated by both place and time. Indeed, in a more general sense, one of the significant features of the creativity process is that there is inevitably some uncertainty about who will ultimately evaluate creative productions — and this is one factor that makes the ultimate success of creative ventures unspecifiable and unknowable (Richards, 2001). In the case of Margaret Preston, for example, the group influences that shaped her painting were very different from those that ultimately contributed to her reputation because one consequence of her creativity was that it started out as a rejection of one set of particular artistic conventions but ultimately served to embed another set. Indeed, as this example illustrates, the creative process itself will often *ensure* a lack of

alignment between production and recognition phases both because it is a catalyst for social change and because it is ultimately celebrated for the social change that it produces (Jetten & Hornsey, 2011; Moscovici, 1976).

This analysis integrates a number of significant observations that have previously been made by creativity researchers. In particular, it acknowledges the importance of social recognition (e.g., reputation; Galton 1869; Howe, 2000) to the creative process, and shows that the source of this lies in social consensus about the perceived value of creative acts (Amabile, 1983; Hennessey & Amabile, 1999). In line with systems and network approaches, it also suggests that in order to be recognized as creative, individuals need to have support (e.g., among potential critics) and be well-positioned within a relevant field (e.g., be aligned with relevant standards and norms and at the centre of a relevant social network; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Gronum, Verreynne, & Kastle, 2012; John-Steiner, 2000). It also recognizes that groups themselves can be both a stimulus and a site for creativity (Paulus, Brown, & Ortega, 1999) but whether this occurs depends both on the norms of the group (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993) and its meaningfulness for would-be creators.

The fact that the group norms which inform creativity differ dramatically (e.g., over time, across cultures) also explains why it is often hard to identify objective properties that define something as intrinsically creative (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1998) but why this task proves easier in domains where norms and associated social identities are consensually embraced and relatively stable (e.g., in mathematics as opposed to art). Nevertheless, even in hard science, we would argue that these same processes are at play. Here, though, their operation will often only be visible during times of profound upheaval (e.g., during scientific revolution; Kuhn, 1962).

As well as integrating these various observations, a particular strength of the social identity approach is that it provides novel answers to a number of thorny questions in the creativity literature — most obviously, Amabile's (1996) concern about what makes creative acts different from ordinary ones and what it is that stimulates them. First, the approach argues that creative performance is always defined relative to the norms of ordinary performance from which it deviates. It suggests, however, that the valorisation of deviation depends on the identity-based relationship between creators and relevant audiences. More specifically, creativity should generally only be appreciated to the extent that it is (or comes to be) understood to be motivated by the advancement of particular group interests.

One final observation that flows from this analysis is that it is the creation of new (or transformed) communities that lies at the heart of successful creativity (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2008; Haslam et al., 2011). These provide the basis for collective appreciation of the creator and they also provide the means to drive forward the social change that creativity envisions and that makes it an essential engine of culture. In the absence of such community, Margaret Preston's paintings attracted little interest. However, once they came to be seen as emblematic of nascent modernism and a new national identity, Australian art was never the same again.

In these terms, what is really interesting about the creative process is not that it shows how great creators are set apart from society. Rather, it is that it shows the very opposite: that great creations are produced by societies whose transformation then provides a basis for the creator's individuality to be celebrated. By this means, creativity comes to serve two essential inter-related functions upon which all social progress depends: changing the world and changing the way we see ourselves.



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