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# Creativity: Celebrations and tensions

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## Abstract

In 1950, the President of the American Psychological Association emphasised the economic and political importance of creativity for US society. His account of creativity exhibits a number of tensions that can be identified in other psychologists' theories and conceptualisations of creativity. This paper considers the tensions from the perspective of critical discursive psychology. In the terms of that approach, the tensions derive from multiple non-academic discourses around creativity, including popular discourses of creativity and art. The paper argues that conceptualisations of creativity from academic psychology have in turn entered wider discourses, invoked, for example, in recent celebrations of the global sector of the creative and cultural industries (CCI). The tensions within psychology's conceptualisations are significant, however, because they raise questions about the extent to which the psychology of creativity has a common reference and coheres around the study of a single phenomenon.

## KEYWORDS

art, creativity, critical discursive psychology, cultural and creative industries, discourse, psychology of creativity

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In 1950, in a presidential address to the American Psychological Association, J.P. Guilford proposed that the subject of creativity had been neglected by psychology. He called for the omission to be addressed because of the 'enormous economic value of new ideas', including for 'large industries that employ many research scientists and engineers'

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(Guilford, 1950, p. 446). He suggested that creativity was additionally important because 'inventive' people were needed as leaders in industry and government. The address therefore presented creativity as having practical applications, or 'utility' (Taylor, 2019). Other writers have suggested that in the Cold War context of Guilford's address, creativity was also credited with political significance. For example, the historian of science Jamie Cohen-Cole argues that creativity was valued as the counter to a tendency in 'modern American life' (2014, 38) towards not only conformity but also, potentially, authoritarianism. Cohen-Cole suggests that there was an assumption that 'In creativity could be found the inverse of all the personal, emotional, cognitive, social, and political deficits of the conformist' (54). Creativity was 'a trait taken to be interchangeable with autonomy, rationality, tolerance, and open-mindedness' (35). Accordingly, Cohen-Cole argues, psychologists set out to identify a creative person who would be the upholder of American values of autonomy and democracy, resistant to conformity and the lure of authoritarianism (Cohen-Cole, 2009, 2014).

Guilford's call for psychologists to help the USA meet its need for creativity and creative people has been identified as a prompt for the subsequent development of the field of the psychology of creativity (e.g. Brouillette, 2013). This paper briefly reviews the foundational claims about creativity made by Guilford and other psychologists whose work has been particularly influential within the discipline. The paper proposes that there are tensions within their conceptualisations of creativity, some of which can be traced back to the persistent association between creativity and art. Adopting a perspective from critical discursive psychology (Taylor, 2015; Wetherell, 1998), the paper considers this association as an example of the interplay of discourses. The paper argues that, in a further example of this interplay, varied conceptualisations from academic psychology have entered wider discourses of creativity since Guilford's address. Academic psychology has therefore extended popular understandings of creativity, and also the ideological power of the concept, recently invoked in celebrations of the global sector of the creative and cultural industries (CCI). However, the tensions within psychology's conceptualisations are significant because they raise questions about the extent to which the psychology of creativity has a common reference and coheres around the study of a single phenomenon.

## 2 | FOUNDATIONAL CLAIMS AND TENSIONS

Guilford's call to the APA indicates several tensions or potential contradictions around psychology's conceptualisations of creativity. The first tension concerns whether creativity is special or ordinary. Guilford rejected any association of creativity with extraordinary gifts. His address proposed that creativity is not limited to a few exceptional people or to those rare creative acts that are of 'an unquestioned order of excellence' (445). He argued, instead, that almost anyone can be creative. His characterisation of creativity as a capacity or at least a potential possessed by everyone, rather than a gifted few, is echoed by Abraham H. Maslow (1962/2011). In an account originally published in 1956, Maslow celebrates a 'widespread kind of creativeness which is the universal heritage of every human being that is born' (106). He carefully separates this self-actualizing (SA) creativeness from the talents and genius of famous names from the arts, and from the 'special talent creativeness', used, for example, in painting, writing poetry or composing music. According to Maslow, SA creativeness is a marker of psychological health and 'essential humanness' (113): 'a fundamental characteristic, inherent in human nature, a potentiality given to all or most human beings at birth, which most often is lost or buried or inhibited as the person gets enculturated.' (108) He associates SA creativeness with a free and positive approach to life and almost any activity: he refers to home making and social service as possible examples.

Both Guilford and Maslow therefore present creativity as a universal capacity or potential rather than a special gift. Anyone can be or become creative, they can exercise creativity in ordinary or everyday activities and, in Maslow's conceptualisation, they pursue self-actualizing creativeness because it is 'almost synonymous with, or a sine qua non aspect of, or a defining characteristic, of essential humanness' (113). In this respect it might appear that psychology democratises creativity. However, alongside this claim, psychologists also invoke the specialness of creative people and a capacity to be creative, often through references to famous and celebrated people. For example, Maslow names

Wagner, van Gogh and Byron, and Guilford's 1950 address mentions two famous scientists, Darwin and Edison followed by one playwright, Eugene O'Neill, and the Ancient Greek scientist and thinker Archimedes.

Although the 'great names' that Guilford mentions are predominantly from fields outside the arts, his statement that 'It is probably only a layman's idea that the creative person is peculiarly gifted with a certain quality that ordinary people do not have' (1950, 446), is strikingly similar to a later claim by the sociologist, Howard S. Becker, about art and artists: 'Both participants in the creation of art works and members of society generally believe that the making of art requires special talents, gifts, or abilities, which few have' (1982, 14). The parallels point to another tension, around the extent to which creativity is linked to the arts. In Guilford's own references, the arts are repeatedly mentioned but generally given a lesser importance compared to other fields. For instance, in his 1958 paper, Guilford proposes that creative behaviour is exhibited by scientists, and also 'artists, designers, writers, and composers; architects, designers, and builders' (6). Elsewhere, he suggests that different types of practitioners, such as 'the inventor, the writer, the artist and the composer' (451), differ in the kinds of creative abilities they possess. The ordering of his list again indicates that the person outside the arts, the inventor, is the most important. The greater emphasis on scientists and engineers fits with Guilford's emphasis on the utility of creativity, because the arts, and especially elite arts like painting, sculpture, music and poetry, are commonly associated more with luxury than practicality, even though they have always served political and social purposes, for instance, to challenge or reinforce prevailing social orders and the status of leaders. Nonetheless, Guilford's recurrent references to the arts and the implication of specialness recall the generally accepted image described by Becker.

There is a similar tension in Maslow's accounts. Although he emphasises that creativity is not limited to the arts, as discussed, after an account of how self-actualizing people are able to resolve or dissolve dichotomies, he concludes: 'But this is precisely what the great artist does. He is able to bring together clashing colours, forms that fight each other, dissonances of all kinds, into a unity.' The artist therefore stands as the first exemplar of 'great' creativity, even though Maslow then presents a longer list of 'greats', including 'the great statesman, the great therapist, the great philosopher, the great parent, the great inventor' (109). Guilford's and Maslow's writing exhibits the same pattern: after celebrating the creativity of practitioners and practices from outside the arts, their accounts return, repeatedly, to references to the arts and artists.

A further tension that follows from the association of creativity with the arts concerns conformity and the relationship between a creative person and a wider society. Guilford suggests that creativity can only emerge when people are freed from the controls and restraints that society imposes on them. The implication is that society benefits from creativity but also threatens it. For instance, Guilford blames existing 'mass education methods' for inhibiting the development of 'a creative personality' by promoting conformity (448). He also extends the blame for discouraging creativity to American society more generally, suggesting that 'present-day living' and an 'intricate social machine' (4) have taken away a requirement for creative thinking that had been stimulated in America's ancestors. As evidence of this lost capacity, he cites the USSR's launch of the sputnik satellite. America was not meeting the 'Soviet challenge' in the space race because it had lost 'Yankee ingenuity' (3). The claim is a further example of the political significance conferred on creativity. Guilford therefore suggests a rather complex relationship, in which a creative person needs to be shielded from social pressures yet is able to benefit society precisely because they are robust enough not to conform to it.

The value of the non-conforming creative person is similarly emphasised by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014) in the introduction to a collection of his extensive writings on creativity. He describes how during the Second World War the US air force found that many of their pilots could not deal with a sudden emergency because they were too much inclined to 'go by the book' (xviii). The solution to the performance problem was to find pilots who were more creative and less constrained by conformity. Csikszentmihalyi reports that the air force asked psychologists for a test for creativity to supplement the physical tests and IQ tests they were currently using in pilot recruitment. Again, there are parallels with the image of the artist as a 'Bohemian character who adopts a disdainful attitude towards a conventional way of life' (Bain, 2005, p. 29) or, as Becker describes it, 'the romantic myth of the artist [which] suggests that people with such gifts cannot be subjected to the constraints imposed on other members of society; we must allow

them to violate rules of decorum, propriety, and common sense everyone else must follow' (14). Sarah Brouillette has set out the assumed connection between utility, non-conformity and the (image of) the artist: 'since the early 1950s influential psychologists and management theorists have tended to present the study of artists as straightforward evidence that the social is a form of constraint to be transcended by the effective working self' (31).

These claims about creativity, whether implied or stated directly, raise a further tension, concerning how far a non-conforming creative person would be oriented to the needs of society and motivated to serve it. According to Guilford's account, creativity is to be celebrated and encouraged in order to further the interests of society and the nation. Yet creativity is also associated with a person who might be expected to have limited interest in these larger contexts. This individual is, in Maslow's description, a free spirit who possesses the innocence and freedom of 'happy and secure children' (108) and in, Csikszentmihalyi's example, a non-conformist who does not follow established practices. Maslow partly resolves this tension through a distinction between primary and secondary processes. He suggests that for the kinds of activities that Guilford cites as having utility, such as science and building, and even literary work, SA creativeness will be the primary process. It produces the inspiration and ideas that will subsequently need to be developed in a less exciting secondary process, involving hard work. The self-actualizing creative people who provide the initial creative ideas will be different to the ones who subsequently carry out 'production-in-the-world' (112). In addition, Maslow offers a somewhat different description of self-actualizing people as integrators who can carry out both the primary and the secondary creative processes because they are able to resolve dichotomies. They dissolve the oppositions between 'selfishness and unselfishness' and 'cognition versus conation ('heart vs. head, wish vs. fact)', duty and pleasure, work and play, they exhibit strong egos and individuality but also can be 'easily ego-less, self-transcending and problem-centred' (109).

In summary, this section has shown tensions in psychologists' foundational mid-twentieth claims that follow from more generally accepted ideas about creativity, including the association with the arts and the image of the artist described by Becker. The outputs of creativity are recognisably special yet, Guilford's claims would suggest, can be expanded, seemingly without limits. Relatedly, creativity is a capacity that is exhibited by exceptional people yet both Guilford and Maslow characterise it as near-universal. It is linked to an anti-social non-conforming individuality associated with the artist that is nevertheless separable from any elite or Bohemian tendencies, enabling the efforts of creative people to be harnessed to the possibly prosaic needs of a wider society. The next section considers how these tensions have been addressed in subsequent theorisations in academic psychology.

### 3 | ALTERNATIVE THEORISATIONS AND COUNTERS TO THE TENSIONS

The tensions around creativity that can be identified in the work of Guilford and Maslow are countered in different ways in other psychologists' work. In particular, the tension around specialness has been addressed by separating out different levels of creativity. For example, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) distinguish between 'eminent' or Big-C creativity' and 'everyday' or little-c creativity. Similarly, Margaret A. Boden (2012) separates historical or 'H' creativity, which produces something that is new to history 'so far as we know', from psychological or 'P' creativity that gives rise to an idea which is new only to the person who produces it. Kaufman and Beghetto suggest that the little-c category counters some 'common misconceptions about creativity', such as that creativity is special or, in their words, that 'only certain people can be creative, the only creativity that matters' is Big-C'. In addition, they carefully deny that 'creativity involves negative forms of deviance (e.g. drug use, mental illness)'. The need for this denial might, again, be taken as an acknowledgement of the persistent association of creativity with the non-conformist Bohemian artist.

Other distinctions proposed by psychologists relate specifically to the process of being or becoming creative, indicating, again, that this capacity is not limited to an elite of special people. Anyone can be creative, at least to some extent. Kaufman and Beghetto suggest, like Maslow, that there may be an initial creative process that is distinct from the second process which produces 'recognisable (and in some instances, historically celebrated) creations.' (4). Mini-c 'represents the initial, creative interpretations that all creators have and which later may manifest into recognisable (and in some instances, historically celebrated) creations' (4), that is, Big-C. Similarly, Boden (2012) suggests

that P-creativity is a necessary first step to H-creativity. Kaufman and Beghetto expand the trajectory in the Four C theory which distinguishes mini-c, a personal insight that precedes little-C. Little-C can develop into the pro-C of professional and experts, as a preliminary to eminent Big-C creativity. Other theorisations consider creativity in a larger context, distinguishing different aspects of creativity, rather than different types. For instance, in a 2019 review, Kaufman and Glaveanu, mention the Four P framework of Rhodes (1961) which proposes that to operationalise creativity, four questions must be considered, about Person, Product, Process and Press. Glaveanu (2013) extends this to a Five A framework of Actors, Audiences, Actions, Artifacts and Affordances.

Another distinction avoids the issue of specialness and counters the association with the arts by considering context in terms of domain. 'Domain specificity' (Baer & Kaufman, 2017, p. 9) assumes that there are different creativities associated with, in one overview, the traditional arts, the sciences, business and other areas of contemporary life, including law, 'gastronomy', teaching and craft (Kaufman et al., 2017). Kaufman et al. suggest that the concept of domain has been useful for identifying different kinds of creative people; for instance they mention the relevance of conscientiousness to science. Relatedly, the concept of domain is relevant to research on the creativity involved in the effective take-up of technological innovations. Boden (2012) makes a similar distinction to domain in other terms, referring to the different 'structured styles of thought' or 'conceptual spaces' with which creativity can be associated. Her examples include 'ways of writing prose or poetry; styles of sculpture, painting, or music; theories in chemistry or biology; fashions of couture or choreography, nouvelle cuisine and good old meat and two veg' (32). Her final example, of prosaic plain cooking, returns to the point that runs through Guilford's address and so much subsequent work in psychology, when she states that, creativity is 'not a special faculty, but an aspect of human intelligence in general (29)' and 'it isn't confined to a tiny elite: everyone of us is creative, to a degree.' (30). In these counter-claims, it is possible to see, yet again, an attempt to refute the persistent association of creativity with the arts.

The concept of domain can also be seen to counter a focus on creativity as an individual capacity. The systems theory of creativity proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi emphasises that creativity arises in the interactions between the creative individual, the 'domain' or wider cultural context, and the 'field' of a community or social network. There are interesting parallels with Howard S. Becker's account of 'art worlds' which proposes that the status of art is not an absolute but a categorisation conferred by a 'network' of actors, including producers and audiences, who interact and cooperate in the activities that maintain an art world, variously reinforcing and challenging conventions. Becker argued that art is therefore a social phenomenon, its definition and recognition dependent on a particular context. Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (2014) proposes that any creative contribution will build on existing knowledge within the domain, and then be taken up, or not, by people within the field, such as critics or experts. Keith Sawyer develops this aspect of social selection in a model based on systems theory: some innovations will be recognised and accepted into the canon while others will not be taken up Sawyer (2003). Csikszentmihalyi emphasises that the investigation of creativity must consider the whole system: to look only at a creative individual would be 'like listening to one hand clapping' (Xxi). In this respect, systems theory shifts the focus away from an artist-like creative individual. Somewhat differently, sociocultural theories in psychology present the creative unit as a collaborative relationship, not a lone individual. For example, Vera John Steiner (2000) argues that artists, scientists and other significant creative people always work with partners and co-contributors, acknowledged or unacknowledged. Keith Sawyer (2007) relates these ideas back to the kind of practical applications celebrated by Guilford, proposing that industry can benefit from 'group genius' to produce innovations.

Although the different conceptualisations reviewed in this section can be seen to address some of the previously discussed tensions around creativity, including as the capacity of a special individual, the introduction of social context and value introduces a new quandary. The designation of creativity becomes dependent on consensus and conventions within a particular domain and field and therefore, logically, liable to change, including over time. Like Becker's account of art worlds, the systems theory of creativity problematises the phenomenon under discussion, raising the question of whether its identification in one context carries over into another. A similar issue follows from the 'standard definition' that Runco and Jaeger (2012) propose in relation to creativity research more generally. If, as they state, 'Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness' (92), the identification of a contribution as

creative will vary, for instance, as its market value changes or its 'usefulness, fit or appropriateness' is superseded. Becker discusses how some practitioners and their outputs will initially be denied recognition within art worlds, then achieve it later, while others will remain outside. Systems theory and other accounts within psychology that similarly contextualise creativity put in question any continuity in its designation and therefore the extent to which the different accounts are considering the same phenomenon. Kaufman et al. (2017) hint at this issue in relation to 'domain specificity', noting that there is sometimes, but not always, assumed to be an underlying 'domain general' creativity. Logically, if this does not exist, then an argument could be made that creativity disappears or at least, that psychologists discussing different conceptualisations have no common focus or reference.

One way to explore the tensions and issues that have been discussed would be to consider their connection to the different paradigms and premises associated with separate subdisciplines of psychology, such as cognitive psychology and sociocultural psychology. Instead, this paper adopts the perspective offered by another, relatively new area of the psychology discipline, critical discursive psychology (e.g. Taylor, 2015; Wetherell, 1998). In the terms of a critical discursive approach, the tensions that have been discussed are unsurprising and follow from the multiple meanings and associations around creativity. These 'discourses' or 'discursive resources' accumulate over time in a loose aggregate rather than a coherently organised body of knowledge. They are taken up selectively in talk and other language use in order to perform actions and social functions. Any inconsistencies and tensions within the resources may remain unacknowledged, or even become useful in themselves, for instance, by contributing to a richer, more complex image of a creative person as both non-conforming and dutiful. Critical discursive psychology investigates the discursive work that is accomplished through language use, and its wider implications or ideological effects. For example, the potential economic and political implications of Guilford's address, discussed by Cohen-Cole and others, can be seen to follow from the invoking of already available and recognisable associations of creativity, as positive and desirable, that themselves derive from the discourse of the arts. An additional point of interest for critical discursive psychologists is in how new meanings and connections are established over time, becoming available to do different discursive and ideological work. Such changes can be driven in part by new academic theories and research which eventually enter general or lay discourses (e.g. Hacking, 2004; Rose, 1996). This process can be seen in relation to psychology and creativity: approximately 50 years after Guilford's address, it appears that a new public celebration of creativity is informed by and draws on some of the accounts of creativity that have been reviewed in this paper.

#### 4 | A NEW CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY

This paper has argued that psychology's multiple conceptualisations of creativity demonstrate a number of tensions. An older association with the arts that confers specialness on creative people, their activities and outputs sits alongside an assumption that creativity is a universal capacity or potential, and one that has practical uses or utility in different domains, available to be harnessed to benefit both the national economy and society in general. A connection with the elite arts in particular, invoked through references to 'great names', implies that creative people possess innate gifts and individual talents, in contrast to the assumption underlying various models and frameworks, that creativity can be fostered and developed. Social theorisations from psychology consider creativity in context, countering the individual associations that derive from a well-established image of the artist. Yet that same image contributes to an assumption that also appears in psychology, that creativity counters conformity: the useful contribution of the creative person, whether economic or political, will derive in large part from their readiness to defy conventions. From a critical discursive perspective, this multiplicity indicates how discourses or discursive resources accumulate and shift in a more complex and dynamic process than would be implied by a linear account of the development of meanings (such as Raymond Williams' (1976) exploration of creativity as a 'keyword'). The multiplicity contributes to the potency of the concept of creativity, exemplified in the way the very positive status of creativity, seemingly derived from the implied connections with the arts and 'great names', can elevate the status of possibly prosaic

applications. This section presents a contemporary example of this dynamism, providing a brief overview of how psychology's conceptualisations have been taken up into non-academic discourses of creativity.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, academics (e.g. Florida, 2002) and policymakers (e.g. DCMS, 2001) identified and promoted the global sector of the so-called cultural and creativity industries (CCI). An examination of claims made for the sector as a whole and by some of the creative practitioners working within it, indicates the taking up of conceptualisations from psychology that have been reviewed in previous sections of the paper. This movement from academic to non-academic contexts can be seen in UK public communications about the cultural and creative industries. For example, in an echo of Guilford's original address to the APA, UK policy makers and government representatives have repeatedly suggested that individual workers will generate wealth for the nation through the use of their creative talents (DCMS, 2001). Claims for the utility of creativity are re-stated in a 2017 government review: 'The cultural and creative sectors are the engine of the UK's international image and soft power' and 'It is human creativity that drives the success of this sector' (Independent Review of the Creative Industries, 2017, gov.uk). However, like psychology models and theories that propose a process in which creativity is developed or operationalised, the political rhetoric suggests that the creative potential of individuals must be fostered: 'I want to see us putting creativity at the heart of education, encouraging our children to develop their innate talents' and 'It is in our gift to create the conditions for creativity to thrive' (Minister for Digital and Culture Creative Industries speech, 2016, gov.uk). The latter statement, in a 2016 speech by a government minister, is followed by a reference to 'humanity' which recalls Maslow's account of 'essential humanness': 'We can and must strive to create the circumstances in which the essential humanity of every person can find expression'. Similarly, the 2017 review states: 'It is human creativity that drives the success of this sector'. Another parallel with Guilford's address is the suggested importance of creativity in an international political arena ('International image and soft power'). The 2017 review calls for 'this creative strength' to be 'nurtured through our education and skills systems else we risk falling back as countries such as China move forward'. The fear here is of Chinese advance rather than Russian, as in Guilford's address, but the argument is identical. Claims for the utility of creativity were made again during the main period of the Covid pandemic when UK journalists and other commentators emphasised the need for support for the creative industries as a vital sector of the UK economy: creative workers would make a key contribution to post-pandemic economic and social rebuilding.

A different but overlapping contemporary take-up of Maslow's writing on creativity relates to his conceptualisation of SA creativeness as 'synonymous with health itself' (113). Arguably, this has contributed to the well-established association of creativity with psychotherapy and treatments for mental illness, and in more recent connections drawn between creativity and wellbeing. A 2017 UK government working group reported: 'The act of creation, and our appreciation of it, provides an individual experience that can have positive effects on our physical and mental health and wellbeing' (APPGAHW, 2017, p. 10). A few years later, during the pandemic period, public and media discussion also cited the therapeutic utility of creativity. It was recommended that the public embrace creative practices in order to protect their mental health and maintain well-being during lockdown. A 2022 report refers to 'improvements to health and well-being' as a 'spillover' effect from the creative industries (A Design Sprint for the Creative Industries Sector Vision Maximising the Spillover Value of the Creative Industries to the Wider Economy, 2022 Design Council, p. 10).

References to the utility of creativity and its contributions to health and wellbeing are also combined in the claims of contemporary creative practitioners themselves, interviewed in research studies with creative workers, aspiring workers, students and people who pursue creative activities alongside more conventional work. The particular form of utility cited by some practitioners is the supposed therapeutic value of creativity. They cite their creative practice as beneficial for their own mental health: for example, 'I'm so absorbed in what I'm doing that you know you have no worries everything just kind of disappears into the wind really so it's very very therapeutic' and 'I just love it I find it so therapeutic it's what I call my bliss' Taylor (2018) (p. 335). The claim is extended to the value of a creative practice for other people. Many of the practitioners teach their practice to others, sometimes presenting this as a justification for a practice which might otherwise be viewed as selfish or self-indulgent (Taylor & Paludan, 2020, p. 71). Participants

refer to creativity as both a special capacity and a universal or near-universal attribute or potential, as in Maslow's reference to 'essential humanness'. On the one hand, the practitioner is claiming a special capacity, albeit one that can be shared, and on the other, is suggesting that everyone else is creative too and should exercise their creative capacities for their own well-being. For example, a practitioner who runs workshops in her specialist practice for 'the community' says 'it's really lovely when it helps people feel better' and 'it makes it really worthwhile that you can share your gifts and let other people do amazing things' (Taylor & Paludan, 2020, 0.24).

Participants take up discursive resources around creativity that derive from psychology alongside the persistent associations of art and the artistic life. For instance, they present their creative work as special and able to offer what Reckwitz has called a 'fascination' (2017) that they have found lacking in other life activities. Practitioners who had been in more conventional occupations describe taking up or resuming a creative practice because without it 'there was always something missing in my life' (Taylor (2018) p. 338) and 'you have to squash yourself into this little box and part of what I'm doing now is about finding a way out of that box and doing something that hopefully is more in tune with who I am' (Taylor & Littleton, 2012, p. 125). So creative work and creative practice offers an escape from the constraints of conformity and 'ordinary' work. The reference to 'who I am' and, elsewhere, accounts of turning to a creative practice and occupation because previously 'I wasn't doing anything much for myself' (p. 338 BW) invokes Maslow's promise of self-actualisation through creativity (Taylor, 2018, 2019; Taylor & Paludan, 2020).

Other resources can also be identified, and new tensions. Researchers have found that creative practitioners may also make claims of utility that relate to a larger political or moral project. For example, in an interesting counter to the supposed economic utility and wealth-generating capacity of the cultural and creative industries, Banks (2007) has noted that many creative workers are 'openly antagonistic' to associated capitalist values such as 'profit maximization, disinterested exchange or wealth accumulation' (184). Instead, they may focus creative projects on social and political causes, like the promotion of environmental protection. They may link their creative work and practice to charities, or to support for local barter-based economies. Similar concerns appear, for example, in a practitioner's account of creative outputs that present a message about people working under bad conditions (Taylor, 2019, p. 468).

Critics of the cultural and creative industries have noted the potential ideological effects of these combined discursive resources around creativity, arguing that the promise of politicians' claims about the creative industries is seldom fulfilled. Creative work is likely to be poorly paid, short-term and insecure. The experience and qualifications of the workers are insufficiently rewarded, and existing employment inequalities are perpetuated and even exacerbated. Yet the positive associations and ideas from psychology and the arts supposedly blind workers to these difficulties, encouraging them to accept exploitation and even exploit themselves, for instance by working excessively long hours for little return. The promise of self-actualisation through creative activities seemingly provides a greater motivation than financial reward or secure employment. The personal nature of a creative project blurs the boundary between work and the rest of life, encouraging workers to put in long hours without complaint. The association of art confers a 'romance' on creative work that is promulgated through university courses, mentoring schemes, reports and TV programmes that target young people and young women in particular (McRobbie, 2016). A further criticism of the sector is that the image of the artist underpins the individualisation of work. In their pursuit of individual projects and their acceptance of individual responsibility, creative workers are said to have abandoned the more collective culture of old-style work, relinquishing hard-won employment protections as they accept, and sacrifice themselves to, the competitive market-driven ideology of enterprise culture and neoliberalism (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Some critics have even referred to a 'creativity hoax', suggesting that mundane occupations are talked up as 'creative', with the ultimate effect that young people are forced to do bad work to serve the interests of the neoliberal economy (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018).

## 5 | CONCLUSION

Beginning with Guilford's mid-twentieth century celebratory address to the American Psychological Association, this paper has explored psychology's conceptualisations of creativity. The paper argues that the foundational claims

of Guilford and others draw on an aggregate of ideas and associations around creativity, including those linked to art and the image of the artist. In the terms of critical discursive psychology (e.g. Taylor, 2015; Wetherell, 1998), the aggregate constitutes popular discourses or discursive resources around creativity. The paper proposes that psychology's own conceptualisations have extended these discourses. Ideas about creativity from academic psychology have become part of wider contemporary discourses, contributing new understandings of creativity that have been taken up in non-academic contexts, including in relation to the global sector of the cultural and creative industries. For example, Guilford's address proposed that creativity has practical applications, or 'utility' (Taylor, 2019). In the Cold War context of Guilford's address, that assumption conferred ideological significance on creativity, linking it to the USA's economic and political advancement. The recent celebrations of the cultural and creative industries again refer to the utility of creativity and also promise that the sector's workers will achieve fulfilment or, in Maslow's term 'self-actualisation' through creative work. Critics of the sector point to the ideological significance of these new claims, suggesting connections to so-called neoliberal policies and the exploitation of creative workers.

The paper has identified tensions in psychology's foundational accounts of creativity. From a critical discursive perspective, such tensions arise from the multiple discourses around creativity. In non-academic contexts, these are not inevitably problematic. The tensions may even contribute to the richness of 'creativity' as a resource for discursive claims, expanding the possibilities for discursive work; for example, creative practitioners can variously claim to be engaged in an artistic, therapeutic and moral project. However, a popular discourse of creativity, encompassing the meanings and associations that have accrued over time, is conceptually different to a coherent theory, including in its academic authority. For the psychology of creativity, the tensions therefore remain an issue. Within academic psychology, some of the tensions that have been discussed are partly resolved through new conceptualisations, for instance, with reference to different levels and domains of creativity. However, other developments raise a further issue, concerning the extent to which any identification of creativity is separable from its context. Psychology's study of creativity remains open to the challenge that it lacks a common reference and does not cohere around the study of a single phenomenon.

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