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Thinking Skills and Creativity 38 (2020) 100727

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Thinking Skills and Creativity

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tsc

Are Creative People Better than Others at Recognizing Creative Work?

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Creativity
Assessment
Ratings
Expertise

ABSTRACT

It is often assumed that people with high ability in a domain will be excellent raters of quality within that same domain. This assumption is an underlying principle of using raters for creativity tasks, as in the Consensual Assessment Technique. While several prior studies have examined expert-novice differences in ratings, none have examined whether experts' ability to identify the quality of a creative product is being driven more by their ability to identify high quality work, low quality work, or both. To address this question, a sample of 142 participants completed individual difference measures and rated the quality of several sets of creative captions. Unbeknownst to the participants, the captions had been identified *a priori* by expert raters as being of particularly high or low quality. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that after controlling for participants' background and personality, those who scored significantly higher on any of three external measures of creativity also rated low-quality captions significantly lower than their peers; however, they did not rate the high-quality captions significantly higher. These findings support research in other domains suggesting that ratings of quality may be driven more by the lower end of the quality spectrum than the high end.

1. Introduction

"Not everybody is perfect and I don't think we should be looking for perfect people,"

– Simon Cowell

(*"Paula Abdul dodges about review"*, 2005)

Personnel selection is often based on the assumption that the most important part of being an evaluator is being able to select the best candidate. When one thinks of reality competitions such as *American Idol*, it is easy to gravitate to the most famous winners from Kelly Clarkson to Carrie Underwood. Yet it is perhaps even more impressive to note the many stars who made it to the finals, such as Grammy and Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson, Grammy nominee Adam Lambert, and American Music Award winner Clay Aiken. Distinguishing the absolute best from a strong array of finalists is difficult, but being able to quickly recognize the many clearly un-

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