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FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

Creativity at the Opening of the 21st Century

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At the beginning of the 21st century, creativity is changing, both in the way we conceptualize and understand it and in the practices of creativity. In this article, we summarize the emerging changes and articulate their outlines, drawing on creativity research, popular culture, the "networked" society, and a variety of other sources.

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Creativity is a fascinating topic, and we would like to introduce this issue of *Creative Nursing* by outlining some of the remarkable changes in the discourses about and practices of creativity that have occurred over the last 30 years. Creativity has not only been a topic of popular interest—always somewhat mysterious—but also the subject of much mythologizing and misinformation (Berkun, 2007; Melucci, 1994; Montuori & Purser, 1995).

In the first decades of the 21st century, there seems little doubt that the world is in the throes of a remarkable transformation (Morin & Kern, 1999; Ogilvy, 1989; Slater, 2008). The complexity, pluralism, and uncertainty of life and the rate of change appear overwhelming. We are arguably in the middle of the *Future Shock* discussed by Toffler (1984). For the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, "solid" modernity has become "liquid" modernity: Everything is fluid, changing; there is no predictability, no certainty, no stability; and human beings have to become flexible, adaptable, capable of working under conditions of great uncertainty (Bauman, 2005, 2007, 2008). Sardar argues that we are in postnormal times, an "in between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense" (p. 435). In this period of transition, this postnormal age, creativity is changing, too. The way we understand creativity is changing, the way we practice and express our creativity is changing, and this new creativity is in turn influencing how we are changing. Indeed, creativity is increasingly viewed as an avenue for exploring the adaptive responses needed in this transitional period, from individuals, communities and organizations to educational institutions, governments and social systems.

In this short article, we offer a brief historical contextualization of creativity to illustrate these shifts. We point to emerging directions in creativity research, how the new creativity is influencing social change, and some of the implications of a more relational creativity.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Creativity has not only been a topic of popular interest – always somewhat mysterious, but also the subject of much mythologizing and misinformation.

In the West, the concept of creativity as we know it today emerged in the Renaissance (Tonelli, 1973). It coincided with the birth of humanism and individualism (Wittkower, 1973). It blossomed with the genius myth of romanticism in the late 18th century (Goehr, 1992). Until the 1980s, research on creativity in the West was situated mostly in the discipline of psychology. It focused primarily on what were known as the three Ps: Person, Process, and Product (Runco, 2007). In the romantic mythology underlying this atomistic, individualistic view, the creative person was mostly a lone, often eccentric, genius (Montuori & Purser, 1995). The unit of analysis was almost exclusively the exceptional or "eminent" individual.

The "how" of creativity occurred exclusively "inside" this individual, the creative person. The classic image of the creative process was of a light bulb going on over the creator's head during the "Eureka" moment. The creative process was viewed as a solitary one, initially with mystical or divine sources, and then increasingly associated with unusual mental states and psychopathology. The "what" or creative product was associated with "big bang," earth-shaking insights and products (Montuori & Purser, 1999b; Runco, 2004, 2007). The "where" of creativity was confined to specific domains, mainly the arts and sciences. We can see this in the great traditional exemplars of creativity, almost entirely male and almost entirely made up of artists and scientists such as Van Gogh, Einstein, Mozart, and Feynman (Barron, Montuori, & Barron, 1997).

This dominant view—of creativity as inherently residing in exceptional individuals—is radically shifting today. Creativity research now includes a strong emerging focus on *everyday* creativity rather than on "eminent creatives" or major contributions, and is not limited to the arts and sciences (Richards, 2007; Runco & Richards, 1997). The notion of everyday creativity occurs in everyday life by "everyday people" and does not have to take the form of a major work of art or scientific discovery. Creativity is increasingly seen as a phenomenon that permeates every dimension of life. The where of creativity is now potentially *every*where, most notably in the realm of human relations (Montuori & Conti, 1993; Pachucki, Lena, & Tepper, 2010). There is also an increasing recognition of group and collaborative creativity, which can be found in new research on innovation, group creativity, jazz, and an increasing appreciation of "the wisdom of crowds" as opposed to an exclusive focus on the individual genius (Barron, 1999; Borgo, 2006; Montuori, 2003; Montuori & Purser, 1999a; Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; J. E. Sawyer, 2006; Schrage, 1999; Surowiecki, 2005).

THE FUTURE OF CREATIVITY

There are strong indications that in the 21st century, the discourse and practices of creativity itself are changing dramatically (Montuori, 2011a; Pachucki et al., 2010). The emerging research on, and practices of, creativity can be summarized in the following propositions.

Creativity is the fundamental nature of the universe—the process of creation itself, rather than the spark of a (C/c) creator. It is therefore a basic "everyday, everyone, everywhere" human capacity (Barron, 1995; Bocchi & Ceruti, 2002; Ceruti, 2008; Davies, 1989; Kauffman, 1995, 2008; Kaufman, 2004, 2007; Montuori, 2011c; Peat, 2000; Swimme & Berry, 1994).

Creativity is a networked, ecological, historical, and relational process rather than an isolated phenomenon (Barron, 1995; Harrington, 1990; Kearney, 1988; Montuori, 1989; Montuori & Purser, 1999a; J. E. Sawyer, 2006).

Creativity is paradoxical/cybernetic. In the characteristics of the creative person, process, product, and environment are found to be seemingly incompatible terms. For instance, creativity requires *both* order and disorder, rigor and imagination, hard work and play, idea generation and idea selection, times of introspection and solitude and times of interaction and exchange; the relationship is one of cybernetic "navigation" rather than exclusively either/or choice (Barron, 1995; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Hampden-Turner, 1999; Montuori, 2011c; Rothenberg, 1979).

Creativity is an emergent process, arising out of interactions of a given system and therefore unpredictable (Amabile, 1983; Montuori, 2011c; J. E. Sawyer, 2006; R. K. Sawyer, 1999).

The notion that individuals can "create" their own lives is the subject of serious philosophical, sociological and psychological reflection as well as the stuff of wildly popular television shows such as Oprah and the entire New Age movement.

From the modern individualistic focus oriented toward "eminent" or uncontroversial creatives (Gardner, 1994) producing exceptional products (Einstein, Picasso, Mozart, Feynman, etc.), there has been a shift toward a more collaborative, "everyday," ecological understanding and practice of creativity. The focus is on generative interactions in a variety of mundane or everyday activities and contexts, rather than on the individual lone genius working on a major contribution. This change is also generational, as millennial college students associate creativity with everyday activities and with social interaction (Pachucki et al., 2010).

The transformation of creativity has tremendous implications, not least because of the centrality creativity seems to be taking on in today's world. Technological innovation is creating rapid change and the development of an increasingly networked, globalized world. In business, creativity and innovation are now core competencies. At the personal level, the notion of self-creation is beginning to take root: whereas at the beginning of the 20th century, our lives were shaped if not entirely determined by our race, class, and gender, in the 21st century, the notion that individuals can "create" their own lives is the subject of serious philosophical, sociological, and psychological reflection as well as the stuff of wildly popular television shows such as Oprah and the entire New Age movement (Bauman, 2008; Foucault, 2008; Maslow, 1959; Sloterdijk, 2013).

If creativity was once the province of the lone genius, the artist or physicist, today we see a recognition of how creativity can permeate our everyday lives and can be tremendously useful in strengthening adaptive responses to the rapid change characterizing these times. Einstein (1956) wrote that "one of the strongest motives that lead men to art and science is to escape from everyday life, with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness" (p. 227). This sentiment encapsulates a lot of what has become deeply problematic about the modern view of creativity. We know for instance that "the painful crudity and hopeless dreariness" of everyday life was, of course, the domain of women—of wives, mothers, secretaries, and nurses. Viewing art and science as escapes from life sets them in opposition to the alleged dreariness of everyday existence and in opposition to those forced to remain in that dreariness—the conforming masses, the wives, secretaries, and so on. The emerging creativity moves from the rarefied realm of the genius in the arts and science to precisely that everyday life Einstein believed we want to escape from. It involves a reenchantment of the everyday as well as an acknowledgment of the creativity that is possible in these traditionally more prosaic domains.

Above all, it is a more relational, contextual creativity that recognizes how we can create generative environments that foster creative behavior, allowing for freedom and collaboration (Montuori, 2003, 2011a, 2011b).

The transformation of creativity is the ongoing opportunity to shape and indeed embody a new way of being in the world. It opens up possibilities as we challenge the limited and limiting hierarchical dualisms that cut right through modernity, such as male/female, public/private, hard/soft, and objective/subjective (Latour, 1993; Morin, 2008; Ogilvy, 2002). It also leads us to valorize the stereotypically "feminine" qualities and activities (Eisler, 2007; Montuori & Conti, 1993) and competencies that were undervalued in a mechanized, routinized view of the world. A relational creativity invites us to reinvent how we think and act in the world and embody that change in the very process of reinvention.

Viewing art and science as escapes from life sets them in opposition to the alleged dreariness of everyday existence, and in opposition to those forced to remain in that dreariness—the conforming masses, the wives, secretaries, nurses, etc.

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