



Creativity in Leisure: A Psychologist's Perspective

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Creativity is about constructing novel and meaningful life experiences. Leisure is about living a good life and pursuing quality of life (see Yeh, 1993). Creativity for constructive growth is articulated in the context of leisure as a synthesized paradigm for contemporary efforts toward positivity and care for oneself and others. This is a timely articulation. The synthesized paradigm broadens the contemporary conceptions of creativity in the mainstream psychology by building on we-paradigm of creativity in the cultural context. It denotes the significance of care, love, compassion, hope, positivity, and strengths in novel and appropriate behavior of mankind in good and difficult time. Constructive creativity is for common good, resilience, and growth. As such, creativity in leisure is a joint-personal, socio-cultural and community's commitment and competence. During creative leisure (e.g., play, flow) we generate novel and ethical ideas, processes, performances, and actions for person well-being, collaborative innovation, social harmony, and world peace. I envision growth as the ultimate outcome of creativity in leisure for cultivating positive minds and building strengths for self-care and care for others.

Keywords: Creativity, Leisure, Care, Positivity, Growth, The common good.

There has been four phases of development in creativity research in psychology from prior to the 1950s to the present. Glaveanu (2010) summarizes them as the pre-psychological phase focusing on the studies of geniuses (or *the He-paradigm*), the beginning of psychological phase of creativity from the creative person's perspectives (or the *I-paradigm*), the start of social psychological phase of creativity within the person and his(her) contexts (or the *We-paradigm*), and the revival of the person and culture phase within the inter-subjective space (or the *Cultural paradigm*). In short, the creative person's characteristics accumulated in the I-paradigm phase, the insights into interaction between the person and context in the We-paradigm phase, and the interdependence of the person and culture in the Cultural paradigm phase.

In connection with multiple paradigms of creativity psychologists acknowledge creativity as a characteristic of human beings. Every person has the potential to be creative. There are multiple forms of creativity. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) outline four forms of creativity: Creativity for self-transformation in informal

learning (*mini-c*), creativity in the context of formal learning (*little c*), creativity for domain-relevant innovation and invention (*professional c*), and creativity for breakthroughs (*Big-C*). The display of forms of creativity varies according to our experience, needs, circumstances, and availability of resources. The framework of the four forms of creativity suggests that every person is able to engage in creativity that leads to self-transformation and in everyday creativity. Professionals with specialized expertise are able to engage in domain-relevant creativity. Eminent scientists are those who experience breakthrough creativity. We regard the *mini-c*, *little-c*, and *professional-c* of creativity as important for everyday life and work. *Big-C* creativity is essential for scientific discoveries and innovations.

In this paper, we claim that creativity relates to leisure through community engagement as well as cultural activities and products in an iterative, cyclic, dynamic and reciprocal manner. Creativity is about having novel experiences and pursuing meaningful perspectives in life. Leisure is about having a good life and pursuing happiness (Yeh, 1993). Play and flow are creative experiences in leisure. To Vygotsky (2004) creativity or imagination is associated with realities and emotional reality is part of imagination. Play is experiential and it is important for children's development. In play, children take the roles they observe in adults' worlds. They act in various roles and construct the world of experiences that they have yet to fulfil in everyday life. Creativity is thus developmental, transcendental (Frankl, 1984) and transformational (Rogers, 1961). Creative imagination enables children to work and rework on their existing experiences they gather themselves and/or through other people and adults in their communities (Vygotsky, 2004). In play, children learn to represent problems, generate ideas, evaluate options, and etc. Children experience emotion which is induced positively. Their cognitive repertoires are broadened. They likely build personal and socio-cultural resources be resilient and creative (Fredrickson, 1998). Children then experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Supportive space and sufficient time in play facilitate creative experiences.

Leisure enhances our health and quality of life. When we engage in creative tasks and leisure activities we are likely open to all experiences. During leisure, we spend time engaging in our interest and in relationships with our loved ones. We construct space to accommodate our chosen activities. Our behavior is likely constructive and creative (Rogers, 1961). Memorization allows us to recall successes from the past. Creativity relates our past to the present and projects the future. Creative engagement is part of learning (Guilford, 1950). Our creative products include signs, tools, languages, arts, music, dances, sciences, technologies, and cultures. Leisure activities are creative products of human societies: Relaxation exercises (e.g., Yoga, meditation), recreation (e.g., drinking tea, listening to music, watching movies), performing (e.g., dance, sport), sightseeing and travel. Meaningful leisure activities likely connect us to our minds and hearts, our communities, and our worlds peacefully and in harmony.

Reflections on Creative Leisure for the Common Good

Creativity in leisure adopts a synthesized paradigm of creativity and highlights the dynamics of knowledge generated during the i- we-cultural paradigm phrases. Our conceptions of creativity focus on establishing the common good such as humanistic care, ethics, social responsibility, cooperation, positivity, and growth. In relation, creativity is the human ability that generates novel and contextually appropriate behavior in the collaborative, dialogical, and relational spaces for the common good. Creativity is *developmental and interactive* between the person and his(her) environments, as well as *interdependence* and *dialogical* between the people and their cultures. Creativity in leisure observes the principles of the common good: Making comprehensive and interconnected inquiries, recognizing the common good, understanding creation behind creativity, and restoring realities and meanings in life.

Making Comprehensive and Interconnected Inquiries

Taking the common good as a guide, we shall make inquiries that are not confined to one aspect, one dimension, or one-directional, linear process (Dewey, 1938; $A \rightarrow B$, $B \rightarrow C$, hence $A \rightarrow C$). Disciplinary inquiries (*professional-c* and *Big-C*) must be holistic, taking life as the main course of concern. Comprehensiveness and interconnectedness are core values of inquiries. Inquiries must revolve around the common good, involving biological, cultural, social, ecological, and psychology processes. The outcomes of inquiry are beneficial to all parties. The principles of continuity and interaction in dialogical spaces are present (e.g., success in business and in maintaining a congenial climate, clean oceans, and safe transportation routes, Velasquez, 2010).

Recognizing the Common Good

Creativity in all forms including disciplinary-specific creativity (*professional-c*) shall adopt a selfless, non-dogmatic spirit of discovery (Popper, 1959). Laypersons and scientists alike shall refer to the principles of the common good, taking the needs of the world as the guideline and regarding wellness of all living beings as the aim of their discoveries. They shall examine feasibility of existing theories, knowledge, and expertise. They shall find gaps in human knowledge and skills. They shall admit incompleteness of human intelligences and unpredictability of the nature. They must observe ethics, practice care, and take non-dogmatic stands in deciding socio-economic, political, educational, and technological policies and in implementing corresponding plans. Creativity in all domains has to be collaborative, relational, ethical, and transformational.

Understanding Creation Behind Creativity

Beyond the creativity we have to understand the intention, purposes, aims and philosophies of the creation (Kitaro Nishida; Nishitani, 1991). The purposes of creativity behavior shall be understood (*especially for Big-C*). What makes a person engage in a creativity act, performance, cognition, and so on? What can the creator and his(her) communities benefit from his(her) creative thoughts and behavior? Under what circumstances are creative solutions, ideas, and products essential? Do creative inventions, innovations, and discoveries serve only the needs to obtain recognition from others? Do inventors, innovators, and creators place saving resources, care for life, and instill meanings and positivity in everyday experiences into their list of creation's priority? Do the creativities fit into the principles of common good? Are creativities guided by the will to uphold common good?

Reconstructing Realities and Meanings in life

In facing unavoidable chain of events, I envision constructive growth or the common good as the ultimate outcome of creativity (e.g., *mini-little-and-professional cs*). Unpredictable changes and unavoidable life events (e.g., earthquake, tsunami) trigger the reconstruction of meanings in life. In the process of searching for and attaining new meanings in life, we rework, combine, and restructure existing and past information, as well as reconstruct knowledge and skills. We create new spaces for dialogues, and reset priorities in life. Our emotional, cognitive, and experiential realities alter by the events and change accordingly in the *inter-subjective* spaces. Tools and signs emerge and alter the existing cultural artifacts. Collective efficacies (Bandura, 1986) are enhanced through dialogues, interventions, and reflections. Care and positivity have to be exercised appropriately and timely in the new phase of development for all concerned in the communities and all observed in the world.

Knowledge of Creativity in the I-We Paradigms

Creativity researchers (e.g., Guilford, 1950; Gardner, 1983) in the *i*-paradigm of creativity phrase, among others, enlightened us about the creative potential of every person and the characteristics of the creative person (e.g., making independent judgment, maintaining deep motivation, having strong desires to live on, being patient, and being able to tolerate for ambiguity) (Glaveanu, 2010). Creativity researchers of the *we*-paradigm of creativity advanced the understanding of creativity with reference to person-context interactive relationships in facilitating or hindering creative behavior or performance (see Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Culture preserves variations that are sustainable over generations. The variations were transmitted in the forms of shared values, skills, and expertise to the new generations in the course of human civilization, development, and societal

advancement (Simonton, 1999). The *we*-paradigm of the creativity phase advanced the discourses of creativity in cultural contexts, and broadened understanding of creativity from mainstream theories and research of psychology. Theories of creativity have made reference or integrated mainstream theories such as Bandura's (1986) theory of self efficacy, Piaget's (1985) theory of cognitive development, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of development. Human beings are efficacious in altering information they receive to fit their cognitive structures (assimilation) or in altering their cognitive structures to fit the information (accommodation) (Piaget, 1985). Our interest (Amabile, 1983), positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998), and humor (Frankl, 1984) can influence our creative engagement and performance. We learn informally from significant others (parents, close kinship, caregivers, etc.) and formally in schools and other social institutions ways to socialize, solve problems, and behave appropriately (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). We co-construct our worldviews, knowledge, and expertise; as well as establish ethics of knowledge and common goods in social relations.

Knowledge of Creativity in the We-cultural Paradigms

The *we*-paradigm of creativity is elaborated by including culture as part of transactions, and as resources and mediators of problem solving and creativity. Human beings and their culture are interdependent. The cultural-historical view of psychology informs us that our creative imagination is based on our experience in emotional, socio-cultural, and historical realities (Vygotsky, 2004). Culture is described as a web of significance, an interworked system of construable signs (Geertz, 1973). Culture is also understood as a system of accumulative artifacts (Cole, 1996). The human mind is inherently dialogical; it conceives, creates, and communicates social realities (Markova, 2003). The transactions that define human beings and their cultural contexts generate the symbolic world (Zittoun, 2007); which the latter spurs out the processes of meaning-making and co-construction knowledge (Valsiner & Ross, 2007).

Creativity and cultural experience are twinborn, in the process of potential or transitional space; or in the *relational space* between the creator (the inner self) and environment (the external life) (Winnicott, 1971). Creativity primarily emerges in a relationship; as such dialogue (as meeting, mating and testing grounds of the body of shared knowledge and thought, Gruber, 1998) and dialogicality become instrumental. Creativity occurs in the *intersubjective* space. When we face a rapture or discontinuity of our taken-for-granted ordinary experience (of ourselves, our relations with others and the environment), we engage in the process of transactions and resolve to symbolic resources to elaborate meaning and to externalize the outcome (Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Iverson, & Psaltis, 2003; Zittoun, 2007). Culture as a resource and a source of creativity involves the process of recontextualizing meaning into a newly resulting socio-cultural formation (Zittoun *et al.*, 2003, p. 418).

Constructive Processes

Constructive processes of creativity for growth are described in the light of constructing and co-constructing life with care and restoring positivity in life. The adjective *constructive* entails connotations such as *being open to all experiences* (Rogers, 1961), *being ethical*, *being positive*, *being humanistic*, and *being able to self-care and care for others*. Constructive creativity is for developing the common good (maintaining health, quality of life, happiness, well-being, peace, and humanness). In the context of leisure constructive creativity focuses on cultivating care and positivity. In envisioning constructive creativity in the context of the common good, we highlight the interplay of creativity and culture, as well as the roles of emotion in creative act and behavior (e.g., love). We stress the importance of ethics of care and positivity. Leisure is essential for all forms of creativity. Play, being there, volunteering, taking a walk and drinking tea enhance caring and positive creativity.

Care

Care emerges as a response to a need, which demands explicit acknowledgement and respect, and immediate actions (Pantazidou & Nair, 1999). Tronto (1993) proposes five phases of care. The first phase is *care about*, the phase of *recognizing the correct need and realizing that care is necessary*. Self care is as essential as care for others. The second phase is *taking care*, the phase that *involves assuming some responsibility for the identified need and determining how to respond to it*. The third phase is *care giving*, the phase where the need is met. Care for others was articulated through words of sympathies, and help was extended to the victims on sites through relevant authorities.

The fourth phase is *care receiving*, that is the phase where the object of care will respond to the care it receives. Care is in relation and is guided by the four principles of creativity: Observing the common good, making comprehensive social and cultural inquiries, understanding creation behind the creativity, and reconstructing meanings in life. The unit of care is the person and his/her loved ones (Saunders, 1990) or the family. The need of the unit of care varies. Care for the person includes paying attention to the needs of the unit of care, to take responsibility to do something about these, to develop the competencies and the adequate means to achieve that, and to listen to evaluation of caring actions (Smeyers, 1999). Qualities that support growth of caring dispositions and competence include motivation to self-care, patience, friendliness, trust, forgiveness, respect, love, and happiness. The care of the self concerns a life of receptivity (*Gelassenheit*), or “letting things be” (Edwards, 2000). Openness to all experiences leads to creativity which is constructive. Creativeness in the present can become a moving force for growth (Dewey, 1938/1997). Continuity in growth is dependent on present experiences that can be fruitful and creative in subsequent experiences.

Positivity

Developing constructive relationships presume caring, consistent, and successful behavior of all people in the close and large communities: An atmosphere of positive emotions that enables expansion and integration of personality and that permits optional adaptation to the environment (Fakhrutdinova, 2010, p. 41). Recognizing the importance of emotions in regulating new learning is a first step toward constructive and caring creativity. Emotions are the results of our own assessment of our relationship with the environment; emotions stimulate activity, as well as stimulate and regulate our relationship with the environment (Bozhovich, 2009, p. 69). Emotional experience shall be promoted hand-in-hand with developing imagination, creativity, and cultural awareness. In developing constructive creativity for the common good, we attain satisfactoriness and satisfaction after self-regulatory processes. Full life occurs when we possess positive emotions as well as when we lead an engaged and a meaningful life. People can change on the receptions of life if they are aware of their strengths (Clifton & Harter, 2003). They can experience positive emotions, be engaged in activities, and pursue greater meaning in life, if their strengths are identified and if they have the opportunities to use these abilities (Seligman, 2002).

Engaged Positivity with Care for Others

I cite a nurse's accounts on a one-month stay in Japan after the March 11 earthquake-tsunami and aftermath incidents. On the day of departure, Mueller who was a red-cross nurse penned the following sentences in her diary (Mueller, 2011): "spring has arrived in Japan; the cherry blossoms have bloomed, normally a symbol of joy. Perhaps this year the blossoms will also bring with them renewed hope for the future." Mueller extended the symbol of joy at the moment to the renewed hope for the future. Positive emotions about the future, especially hope and optimism, can serve as buffers against depression (Seligman, 2002). In her diary, Mueller (2011) shared her engaged life with the victims of the earthquake-tsunami incidents. She recorded her observations of a Japanese nurse who ran to the hospital immediately after she heard about the news of the earthquake to extend her helping hand. The Japanese nurse's life was safe, but her home was swapped away by the tsunami that arrived when she was in the hospital providing voluntary help. Another nurse tried to build intimate relations with the victims. Her unconditional love guided her creative strengths. A child kicked the ball he had repeatedly to release boredom and to gain some sense of determination to live on. An old man smiled all the time to all people. He believed that smiling is compassionate, and is a symbol of strength in life. The *engaged* life pursues involvement and absorption in work, intimate relations, and leisure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In time of difficulty, the presence of positive institutions such as red-cross or other voluntary organizations, family, community, politics, and nation provide the place

where we can serve to establish a meaningful life, and in so doing, produces a sense of satisfaction and the belief that one has lived fruitfully (Myers, 1992; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Performing or carrying out voluntary, reconstructing, and rebuilding activities produce a sense of meaning and are strongly correlated with happiness (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).

Final Remarks

Constructive creativity calls for a joint-personal, socio-cultural and community's (or interconnected) commitment. Together we develop strategies and competence. We carry out novel and ethical ideas, processes, performances, and actions for personal well-being, collaborative innovations, social harmony, and the world peace. Human existence is mediated through the symbols and norms that constitute culture. The symbols and norms are preserved and transmitted to the next generation; but open to change, elaboration and transformation. We communicate, even if we are in solitude, with our mentors, our audience, and our critics, etc. Leisure ranges from simple, personal to complex, community engagement. Creativity in leisure adopts a synthesized paradigm that highlights interdependence between human beings and their social cultural contexts. Constructive processes of creativity exercise care, extend positivity, and cultivate compassion for growth of all.

Our conceptions of creativity for growth alerts us of the importance to appreciate life, celebrate unity, and interconnect minds and hearts with care, patience, compassion, love, and positivity. Creativity in leisure challenges us to reflect upon knowledge generated in various paradigm phases of creativity. In everyday life, we likely encounter novel challenges and face constraints that are beyond our everyday practice and comprehensiveness. Creativity in leisure can help us restore our faith, beliefs and meanings in life, humanistic values, and cooperation. Considering the ethics of care, we reexamine basic needs and prioritize them. We redefine *time* and *space* in an interconnected context. In a relational, dialogical, and collaborative world, we develop our strengths for continual growth, uphold positivity in the midst of reconstructing life, and enhance self-care and care for others for a hopeful future.

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