

Creativity and Social Interactions*

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ABSTRACT

In this editorial we discuss the reasons behind choosing social interactions as the theme for this CTRA special issue. We briefly describe the transition in creativity research from a paradigm centered on the individual and his/her intra-psychological predispositions to one focused on the social, systemic approach to creativity in which this phenomenon is not only facilitated or inhibited by social factors, but embedded in and multi-directionally connected to the socio-cultural and material context in which it takes place. We end with a brief description of the contributions to this special issue.

During the Christmas party, a couple of friends argue about who is the author of the famous song “Last Christmas”. She says that it is George Michael, while he claims it is the band Wham. They check it on the Internet... and the man ruefully admits that the woman is probably right, because even though the band performed this track, it was George Michael who authored and produced it, so it is more “his song” and therefore “his success”. “Fiendishly talented guy” - he adds in recognition. This example, in which the emotional charge cannot be easily described, points to the need we often have to attribute a product to a single creator. And, while most of us are aware that the success of songs and other similar artifacts “has many fathers”, we still share this tendency, akin to the fundamental attributional error, and we are inclined to interpret behaviour and its results as an effect of aptitudes, competence or motivation of the person performing it.

This is specifically the case for creativity, when we attribute it to creators’ internal disposition largely ignoring non-dispositional influences (Kasof, 1999). Such an individualistic

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perception of creativity has been demonstrated repeatedly in the assessments made by lay-people (Lebuda & Karwowski, 2013), and it continues to be shared by creativity researchers who tend to prioritize the subjective, especially intra-individualistic aspects of creative activities over social and cultural ones (see Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1998; Glăveanu, 2010, 2015a, 2015b; Hennessey, 2003a, 2003b). Perhaps due to the fact that both the beginnings of research on abilities (Galton, 1874), and reinitiated scientific interests in the subject of creativity (Guilford, 1950) were associated with research on intelligence, reflections and exploration in this area dominated the so-called He and I paradigms, where the focus is placed on the individual and his/her personal resources, especially psychological ones (Glăveanu, 2010). Gradually, the accent in research shifted towards a more social paradigm (the We-paradigm; Glăveanu, 2010), in which creativity is defined in terms of communication, collaboration and develops as a result of socialization and social interaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1998; Fischer, Giaccardi, Eden, Sugimoto, & Ye, 2005).

It seems that today the vast majority of scientists agree on the fact that it is impossible to understand the creativity in isolation from the social world (see e.g. Glăveanu, 2015b), meaning in isolation from the context in which it is formed, developed and presented (e.g., Stein, 1953; Simonton, 1975, 1976). The necessity of adopting a more comprehensive approach to creativity is depicted in an autobiographical story by Igor Stravinsky, who wrote:

I shall never forget the adventure which later befell me in crossing the frontier at Chiasso on my return to Switzerland. I was taking my portrait, which Picasso had just drawn at Rome and given to me. When the military authorities examined my luggage they found this drawing, and nothing in the world would induce them to let it pass. They asked me what it represented, and when I told them that it was my portrait, drawn by a distinguished artist, they utterly refused to believe me. 'It is not a portrait, but a plan,' they said. 'Yes, the plan of my face, but of nothing else,' I replied. But all my efforts failed to convince them, and I had to send the portrait, in Lord Berners' name, to the British Ambassador in Rome, who later forwarded it to Paris in the diplomatic bag (Stravinsky, 1936, p. 106)

This anecdote is, in our opinion, a good example of the fact that the reception of the creative product is influenced not only by its quality, the workshop or creator's prestige, by the place and time at which the recipient "meets" the product, but also by his or her willingness to understand the message and ability to "read" the cultural codes or new ideas contained in the product (see Bilton, 2007). Inspiration for developing a multifaceted approach to creativity can be found in the system model of creativity that emphasizes personal and socio-cultural interaction (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1998; Glăveanu,

2010; Gruber & Wallace, 1999). In this approach, creativity goes beyond the intra-psychic attributes of the creator and is not only conditioned by social factors but immersed in culture and becomes a thoroughly social phenomenon. This model, built on by the editors and contributors to this special issue, postulates that in order to understand the creativity it is necessary to analyse the interaction between all the elements of the creative system (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Essential in this regard is taking into account the multilateral relations established *between* the person, i.e., the creator and his or her resources, the domain, an area of discipline in which product is developed, and the field, the gatekeepers who ultimately decide “the fate” of the work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). More broadly, including also the level of everyday, non-professional creativity, we need to understand the relationships established between the new artifact (material or conceptual), self (creator) and others (broadly understood as a community), in the context of the existing symbols and norms (Glăveanu, 2010).

In such a holistic approach to creativity it is important not only to leave the human-centric, or in fact cognitive-centric, model of the phenomenon behind, but above all to draw attention to the role of interaction, especially social interactions, in creative activities, both at the level of potential as well as in its realization within everyday, professional and eminent creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). At the same time, we would like to point out that a comprehensive social psychology of creativity shouldn't focus only on social relations in the form of collaborative process (e.g., Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009) or group creativity (e.g. Paulus & Nijstad, 2003), but also on the broader dynamics of multilateral exchanges between people participating in creative systems, embedded in particular spatial and temporal contexts. Although the idea that creativity research should put more emphasis on the social aspects of the phenomenon is not novel, the dearth of research in this area is still obvious, and researchers are looking for more examples of studies which undertakes the challenge of examining interaction elements within the creative system and adopting a holistic approach to the problem (Glăveanu, 2015a, 2015b).

Therefore, despite the awareness that studies conducted in this paradigm face numerous research challenges, and require in-depth reflections on terminology (Glăveanu, 2013), we were guided by a shared belief in the fundamental importance of social interaction for creativity (e.g., Gruber, 1998; Fischer et al., 2005; Negus & Pickering, 2004; McKay, Grygiel, & Karwowski, in press; Lebuda, 2016) and a series of common interests, when we invited creativity researchers to exchange experiences and share research results related to the topic of “Creativity and Social Interactions”. We have compiled in this issue a series of papers which, we believe, make a worthy contribution to ongoing discussions about the social context of creativity. In the first text “Creativity is always a social process”

Romina Elisondo (2016), based on the triangulation of two independent studies, brings evidence that creativity, both in its everyday and eminent form, is always a social process, emerging from dialogues, interactions and social practices shared with others. This thesis is supported by the contribution of Charlotte L. Doyle (“Social interaction in the art of acting: Forms and phases”; 2016), who shows that even in the art of acting, which is largely based on the work of the individual actor, an important role is played by social interactions described in terms of Schütz’s multiple realities. Mark Runco, Ning Hao, Selcuk Acar, Jing Yang and Mengying Tang (“The Social Cost of Working in Groups and Impact on Values and Creativity”; 2016) present findings from an empirical study of the extent to which working in groups is associated with efficiency in executing of creative tasks, depending on the personality (extraversion) of group members. In another contribution, “Overcoming Impasses in Conversations: A Creative Business”, Ilaria Torre and Frank Loesche (2016) apply conversation analysis (CA) to existing text, emphasizing the deep relationship between language and creativity. Linguistic social interaction, in this sense, is not only important for creativity but deadlocks in communication become opportunities for creative problem solving. Surprising, unexpected courses of interaction are discussed in another article, “Creative Openings in the Social Interactions of Teaching”. Ron Beghetto (2016) introduces here the concept of creative opening used to designate unexpected breaks in otherwise planned teaching interactions and shows how creativity plays a key role in social interactions within the classroom. Two other texts focus on the domain of education. The first one, “Imagineering: Re-Creating Spaces through Collaborative Art-Making”, by Jo Trowsdale (2016) considers the significance of the types of learning relationships developed between children and adults during a creative arts and engineering project: The Imagineerium. In the second one, “Teachers’ Beliefs About Creativity and the Possibilities of Developing it in Polish High Schools: A Qualitative Study”, Jacek Gralewski (2016), on the basis of the qualitative thematic analysis, examines teachers’ beliefs about creativity and their beliefs about the possibility of developing it in Polish high schools. Other articles relate to social interaction and the Internet, an environment that we believe has rarely been explored as a creative context until now. In the paper “Same but Different? Distributed Creativity in the Internet Age”, Literate and Glăveanu (2016) draw on the example of crowd sourced art to show how the Internet affects social mechanisms within distributed creativity. On the other hand, Daniel Gruner’s (2016) article “New Digital Media and Flow: A Study of Experience”, based on data collected using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), points to the psychological impact of social networking on low and high media users, among others showing that high media users reported fewer positive moods and were significantly less creative and less energetic on a daily basis.

In a different article, “From Big Bang to Big Gap? Potential Links Between Agency-Communion Orientation and Perception of Creativity in Computer Science”, Marta Kwasnik considers in what way stereotypical social perception, operationalized as participants’ agency-communion orientation, is connected with one’s own perceived creativity. Last but not least, the issue includes as well an article that takes into account interactions at a macro-social level. In the paper, “Love for Frequent and Low Flow Activities in the United States and India”, Monica N. Montijo and Angela R. Mouton present cultural differences among participants in the United States (US) and India regarding loved activities that are inherently flow producing (Frequent Flow Activities) compared to those that are not (Low Flow Activities).

In our view, the this collection of papers offers an interesting overviews of theory and empirical research in the social psychology of creativity by showcasing the use of different methodological approaches, and describing issues related to creative potential as well as creative achievement, be it professional, eminent or mundane. There is also a clear reference to social interaction at different levels: from sharing ideas in the dyads and bigger groups, to focusing on inner dialogues with internalized others, from relational experiences in specific environments like school and the Internet, to reflections on the relation between creativity and cultural norms. By providing this special issue, we hope that the interaction of the authors, mediated by the arguments presented in each paper, will serve as an inspiration for readers of the journal and help them reach new and valuable conclusions about creativity. In the end, should there be any shortcomings on our part, please note that the attribution trends from which we started our discussions are called errors for a reason. Enjoy the edition!

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