

**CAM 17 OCTOBER 2020**



**#creativeHE Discussion**

# **Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression**

# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

**Curated #creativeHE Discussion March–May 2020**

**Edited & Produced by Norman Jackson & Kieran Matthews**

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Cover image by Phantomcoconut



The image was devised by an anonymous student in 2010 and published on their blog. It was produced in response to this design brief.

*"Everyone has a different way they choose to express themselves, what is yours? Is it your fashion, your lifestyle, your art or what you do. Your Superpowers, Your Style is a challenge that celebrates your creativity and individuality. We want you to showcase your superpowers and how they propel you to conquer life. We want you to celebrate your style and how you express it. We are looking for your creative interpretation of this theme in an Ad format. Engage us with eye popping advertisement that showcases your swagger. It is open to the artistic medium of your choice. This is a "express your style" challenge, which means there are no wrong answers here. We are simply looking for the*

*most intriguing Ad image and concept that conveys Your Superpowers, Your Style."*

The anonymous student's celebration of his/her own creativity captures well the spirit of our on-line conversation and so we would like to dedicate this issue to this unknown creative human being. In their words...

*I've decided to post up some of my random illustrations and graphic designs that were brewed and boiled in my head. I really enjoyed just putting pen to paper and let whatever was inside me, out. This could give me a clue on how to advertise myself honestly.*



## Our Tributes to Sir Ken Robinson

Within a day of starting the production of this magazine in late August, news was released of the death of Sir Ken Robinson, who for more than twenty years had been the articulate and often humorous voice for why education systems need to profoundly change in order to nurture the creative talent that humanity surely needs.

The passing of a great man or woman is always cause for reflection. This is especially so if you can directly relate to their work and contribution. I never met Ken, but such was his affable media personality and presence on the internet, that I felt I knew him. I have watched many of his recorded presentations to live audiences: he had a wonderful gift of making you feel he was talking to you – often posing questions after he had shared a thought to check that you felt that way too. There is a reason that his talks are watched by millions and it's because what he says resonates with what we also believe.



Through his humorous personal anecdotes and carefully crafted stories he caught our attention and imagination and conveyed his wisdom. This style of communication was as effective in his books as it was in his much loved TED talks. He was a performer, entertainer and persuasive public speaker and did, perhaps more than anyone else, explain why education needs to make the development of learners' creativity a priority if we are to cope with the unimaginably complex, uncertain and turbulent world we will have created in decades to come.

I first came across his ideas and work when I started working on creativity in 2001 for the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). In 1998, following the election of the Blair Government, because of his long and well known commitment to creativity in education, Ken had been invited to Chair a National Committee of Inquiry on Creative and Cultural Education. When I read his report, "All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education". I was bowled over by the common sense and vision contained in the report and how the arguments put forward for why creativity is important in school's education were just as relevant for higher education. This work became one of the foundation stones for the Imaginative Curriculum project and network I led for the LTSN and later Higher Education Academy, and more recently the work of Creative Academic and #creativeHE.

Ken's unique contribution was to give creativity a voice – a voice of reason that transcended cultures and systems, a voice that made sense to ordinary people, to teachers and academics working in education, to business leaders and to the politicians that govern us, who ultimately, are responsible for the target and assessment-driven education system we have created for ourselves. He spoke in a clear, forceful, truthful and compelling manner, that brought about changes in the ways we understood and valued creativity in its many forms and contexts. In doing this, he gave others the confidence to do these things for themselves.

Ken's untimely death is a great loss to all of us who care about creativity in education. But, through a life well lived, he has created a wonderful legacy of ideas, writings and recorded talks that will inspire generations of educators to come. Indeed, this magazine and its open exploration of creativity in order to gain deeper understandings that can inform educational practices, is a concrete manifestation of his values and ideas that enthuse every member of the Creative Academic and #creativeHE community.

In the following tribute Paul Kleiman, who knew Sir Ken, shares his memories and offers a perspective on the difference he made to the people he met and world of education.

Norman Jackson  
Founder Creative Academic  
& Commissioning Editor

Image credit: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/ken-robinson-you-dont-want-caste-system-creativity/1403876>

# Sir Ken Robinson 1950 - 2020

## Paul Kileman

In 1995, I was a member of the small group who were hard at work designing and setting up what was to be the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA). Our main task was to create what we all agreed was to be a curriculum which placed notions of creativity and collaboration at the fore. Uniquely, for a performing arts institution in those days, LIPA very purposefully had all the major performing arts disciplines 'under one roof'....literally: acting, dance and music alongside community arts, design, management and sound technology. We also, uniquely, with the exception of sound technology, had just one degree with the six 'degree routes' within it. A particular challenge we faced was to fit our somewhat radical ideas with the validating university's regulations and requirements. One of those requirements, like all higher education institutions in the UK, was to appoint a group of external examiners. Each degree route had its own external examiner, but we also were required to appoint a 'Chief External Examiner'. As we sat around the table discussing who this might be, only one name was greeted with unanimous approval: Ken Robinson.



Ken's famous TED talk 'Do Schools Kill Creativity?', the most viewed TED talk ever and the one that propelled him into educational superstardom, was eleven years in the future, but his reputation as a champion for creativity, was already high in the UK and internationally.

I had come across Ken in the mid-1980s when he was leading the wonderful, ground-breaking Arts in Schools initiative, not long before he was appointed Professor of Arts Education at Warwick University. I had just married Jo, a Canadian musician who was based in London. I was living up on the moors to the north of Manchester and I persuaded her to come 'up north' with the promise that there was work for someone like her. Thankfully I was right, and she applied for and was appointed as Composer-in-Residence in Wigan, which was one of the Arts in Schools 'hotspots', with a wealth of arts and creative activities, led by artists of all kinds, going on in schools, galleries, libraries and communities right across the borough. Ken visited Wigan several times and Jo, with others, met and spoke alongside him at various meetings and conferences. She thought he was just brilliant - his ideas and his personality.

At LIPA, alongside my responsibilities as a Head of Department, I also had responsibility for assessment and for Chairing the Exam Board. That led, in those early roller-coaster days when the whole enterprise felt like one giant rather risky experiment, to a number of meetings and conversations with Ken, as our Chief External Examiner, about what we were trying to achieve and how we were trying to achieve it. He was always incredibly supportive. Any doubts he had about our perhaps too-radical ideas were always couched in the most constructive terms accompanied, inevitably, by his disarming charm and wonderful wit.

At one exam board, as we all sat around looking and discussing the vitally important but often mind-numbing business of student grades and progression, we came across a number of cases where students had received a final grade of 69. In my role as Chair I could see Ken frowning. Finally, he raised his head, and said: "You cowards!", accompanied, of course, by a disarming smile. And he was right. As a new HE institutions, with many new staff, we had been over-cautious and nervous about adhering to what were perceived to be the norms. But we also had a significant number of wonderful, creative, talented students who were capable of producing excellent and, sometimes, exceptional work. Ken gave us permission to properly reward wonderful work when it clearly met the relevant learning outcomes, criteria and expectations.

At the same time Ken had just been appointed, by the then new Labour government, to chair an inquiry into how creativity might be enhanced across the state education system. His report 'All Our Futures' (1999) was inspiring and ground breaking for education.....and ignored by the government. But the ideas in it remain as valid today as they were then.

The report argued that a national strategy for creative and cultural education was essential if the UK was to thrive in the 21st century. It put the case for developing creative and cultural education: forms of education that "develop young people's capacities for original ideas and action" and which "enable them to engage positively with the growing complexity and diversity of social values and ways of life". There were, of course, "significant implications for methods of teaching and assessment, the balance of the school curriculum and for partnerships between schools and the wider world".

By that point, Ken had already established himself firmly on the international stage. More than 200 European companies voted Robinson "Speaker of the Year 2000" at a convention hosted by the European organization Speakers for Business. In 2001 Ken left the UK, with his family, for California, having been appointed by the Getty Trust to be their Senior Adviser to lead their educational initiatives. As he explained "It was cold and wet - what would you do? We went as fast as we could."

We lost touch after that, apart from the occasional email and electronic Christmas card but, like many, I kept a close eye on what he was doing and publishing. And then, in 2006, that TED talk exploded onto the scene, and Ken began the stellar part of his already illustrious career travelling the world, advising governments, writing best selling books, producing videos and podcasts that were viewed many hundreds of thousands of times.



In the network around this publication and #creativeHE there is often discussion around the idea of a 'creative ecology'. Ken was perhaps one of the first to make the link between, and to talk and write about, creativity and ecology. In 2006 he spoke about "our only hope for the future is to adopt a new concept of human ecology...we have to rethink the fundamental principles in which we are educating our children".

In the last podcast he made, produced just two months before he died when he knew that he did not have long to live, Ken was even more explicit about that ecological link: connecting the way we educate our children to the way we treat our planet. He argued that human resources are like the earth's natural resources. They are highly diverse and often buried deep beneath the surface, and they need to be discovered, refined and applied. His felt deeply that education often promotes a narrow view of ability (as do many corporate organizations) and, as a result, many people are unaware of the variety of their talents and depth of their potential.

I will remember Ken particularly for the incredible support and encouragement he gave me and my colleagues during those early, exciting and exhausting times at LIPA. We literally could not have achieved what we did without his support. He was a warm, funny, incredibly generous man, armed with a razor-sharp intellect alongside a deep humanity and humility. His death is a huge loss. But his exploration and understanding of the diversity of human intelligence and creativity and the processes that best cultivate them are a wonderful legacy. Ken lit and held a torch for creativity in education (and much more) and, thankfully, there are an increasing number of us for whom it is both an obligation and honour to carry that torch into the future.

## SIR KEN ROBINSON CHANGING PARADIGMS



# RIP

# **Introduction to the #creativeHE Conversation**

## **March to May 2020**

### **“Exploring & Celebrating Creative-Self Expression”**

#### **Turbulent World**

Spring 2020 was like no other spring I have known. It was a time when societies and economies had been shut down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption, which is still going on 6 months later, forced us to adapt and improvise, search for and discover new ways of living, communicating and being.

This world in turmoil provided the context for this year's World Creativity and Innovation Week and for our contribution to this global event- an online discussion between participants in the #creativeHE community.

During April and May of this year, Creative Academic encouraged and facilitated discussions around the idea of *creative self-expression* and the relationships between creativity, health and wellbeing. This issue of the magazine curates the discussion while CAM 16 is formed around a number of articles that informed discussion.

Over a 6 week period members of the #creativeHE community were invited to be mindful of how they experience their own creativity in their daily life and to share their experiences, feelings and insights through online discussions in the #creativeHE forum. Our conversations were supported by Dr Marta Ockuly, who has spent a number of years inquiring into her own creativity as part of a doctoral study and devised a personalised definition of creativity that has been adopted for the UN's World Creativity and Innovation Day.

Inquiry and discussion was driven by many questions including:

- What do we mean by self-expression?
- What does it mean to express yourself creatively?
- What are your favourite or preferred mediums / materials for creative self-expression?
- What factors or circumstances encourage you to express yourself creatively?
- Are there particular times when you feel the need or desire to express yourself creatively?
- Do you have daily or other regular routines through which you express yourself creatively?
- Have you developed particular skills in order to express yourself creatively?
- What emotions do you experience when you express yourself creatively?
- Do you engage in a process when you express yourself creatively?
- Who do you share your creative self-expressions with and why?

#### **Structure**

Each week we explored a different theme and these provide the structure for this magazine as well as the structure for the conversation. Six themes were explored:

Theme 1 The Idea of Self-expression

Theme 2 Creative Self-expression

Theme 3 Practices of Creative Self-expression

Theme 4 Educational Implications of Creative Self-expression

Theme 5 Creativity, Health and Wellbeing

Theme 6 Living Through Lockdown: Our Stories of Creative Self-expression

Creative Academic is very grateful to everyone who participated in the discussion and generously shared their thoughts, ideas, experiences and practices.



## **Meet the New Executive Editor**

Kieran Matthews is the new Executive Editor responsible for the production of Chalk Mountain's two Magazines – Lifewide Education and Creative Academic. Kieran holds a masters in publishing and is part of the editorial team for a commercial magazine. He joined us as a volunteer to widen his editorial experience of books and magazines.

### **Creative Academic Editorial Team**

Kieran Matthews — Executive Editor

Norman Jackson — Commissioning Editor

Johanna Payton — Assistant Editor

## Exploring and Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

### *Transcript: Week One*

### ***Theme 1: The Idea of Self-Expression***

**Q1: What does self-expression mean to you? By what means do you express your “self”? Please share stories and examples.**

**Norman Jackson (Facilitator)** Before focusing on creative self-expression we invite you to share your perspectives on the idea of self-expression.

**Paul Kleiman** Self-expression means when we do something, make something, say something, write something, create something that originates in the inner core of our being and is expressed unfiltered by social conventions.

**Norman Jackson** I like the core ideas of 'doing something motivated from core beliefs and values' and the ideal of it not being mediated by the culture we live within, but suspect that culture is an important influence.

**Jennifer Willis** Communicating with others to convey what we are feeling or thinking. This may be simply through a facial or verbal expression or more formal through the creation of an artefact.

**Paul Kleiman, *On self-expression: taking a note for a walk***

In these somewhat dark, depressing and dangerous times I find myself drawn increasingly to my piano during the isolated days. I've always played the piano, but with a busy life and work schedule, it hasn't been a priority. I usually play it when I'm tussling with a particularly knotty work-based problem. When I'm stuck, simply fed-up, or just need a break, I'll cross the hallway from my office to the room with the piano and play for 10, 20, maybe 30 minutes. I might choose to run through one or two of the classical pieces I've learned to play reasonably well over the years. Or I might choose a jazz or popular standard that I've picked up by ear, which involves a bit of improvisation in that sense of working relatively loosely within a recognised framework. I never play the same tune in exactly same way; but then, who does?

But now, it's different. Playing the piano is now a solace, a comfort, a means to lose myself deeply in something for a while.

So I just sit on the piano stool, breathe and sit quite still for a few moments, then place my hands over the keys. And I wait to see what happens. I have no idea of what is going to happen before it takes place. Something stirs. Something starts. A note or a chord is played. And off I go. Or off 'it' goes, because I feel I'm not in conscious control of my fingers. I am, of course, but it doesn't feel that way. Sometimes I close my eyes and let my hands wander where they will.

Playing the piano has been a constant in my life for over sixty years, and as the notes flow – or not – my mind either focuses, zen-like, on the present moment or connects me to my past, present and future.

David Sudnow, in his remarkable account of his own attempts, as a classically-trained, 'must-have-the-music-in-front-of-me' pianist, to learn to improvise jazz piano, describes having the most vivid impression of his hands making music by themselves. Sometimes, for me, it feels a bit awkward as I travel down some musical cul-de-sac or find myself in a particular and sometimes too-familiar groove. Other times it just flows, I'm 'in the zone', and I know, especially when it really flows, that it clears and refreshes not only my mind but also my spirit.

**Norman Jackson** A really nice illustration of the idea of ‘making something’ (musical sounds) in response to a deeply felt need and a means to engage with a challenge and or to lose yourself as a way of gaining peace and security. I sense a number of things from your account. Firstly, self-expression feels like an impulse – a sudden ‘uncontrollable’ desire, something you feel you have to do. Secondly, that making/playing feeling music is an important part of your core identity – connecting self-expression to personal identities and to knowledge and skill that is embodied. Thirdly, self-expression flourishes in a strong emotional environment. You have to feel and care about stuff in order to be motivated to express your ‘self’. Do these things makes sense to you?

**Kevin Byron** I think there are two forms of self-expression, and without wishing to muddle this up with the 4C's creativity model, we could call them simply small 's' and large 'S' self-expression.

Little 's' refers not to one self, but a myriad selves that are animated by a spectrum of emotions identified with our hopes, fears, wishes, desires and instincts. These subjective selves constitute one half of the relationship we have with people we know and interact with, that is to say the soap opera of our daily, and (in part) our





professional life.

Large 'S' self-expression is what I would call 'Super You'. It's still, by necessity driven by emotion, albeit at a lower level, but has a more dominant driver in our unique expression of talent and creative abilities, in whatever forms they take. Big 'S' expression has as its highest aim to externalise more objective truths about the state of being human. These Truths cannot be articulated in literal, ordinary language, so we draw on – through the application of imagination – a variety of alternative or metaphorical forms to express them.

We could list these more tangible forms as music, art, dance, invention, poetry etc. This is not to say these media are expressing 'Self Expression' all the time – they often have other intentions. If we are not the creator of such celebrated forms, we experience self-expression indirectly through the work of others (assuming we have learnt to recognise it). Not everyone excels in these aforementioned creative forms, yet by definition are in equal possession of these human truths. Here big 'S' self-expression can simply be summed up by the famous quote of Polonius in Shakespeare's Hamlet: "...above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to anyone".

**Norman Jackson** Hi Kevin, great attempt to open up the idea of self-expression to multiple identities and creative selves. I will be interested to hear what others say.

**Doug Cole** First, apologies for the ramblings that follow, but I wanted to contribute. This is a really interesting question Norman and it immediately got me thinking about my conversations with my 13 year-old son on our daily walks together each evening. I wondered if I asked him to express himself, what would he say? What would he think? I may well test it out this evening and report back.



Another immediate thought is that I am drawn back to the notion of 'identity' here which is a key feature of the model I recently shared. So thinking about who we are and who we want and aspire to be in the future and how this is influenced by the world around us too. I do wonder if we do enough in education (thinking of my son here again) to help him better explore and better understand who he is as an individual – his beliefs, his interests and passions, and his motivations. Without that depth and experience of effective reflective practice, as an underpinning to his learning journey, I wonder how he will assimilate this self knowledge and as a result, potentially then express that 'self'?

I think, from this perspective, the narrow focus that exists around knowledge and skills and which dominates the learning landscape in that sense may be potentially hindering our young people's abilities to ultimately express themselves. Where in education do we value this type of reflection and thinking to explore and discover these areas? Where do we value differences? Takes me back to the Ken Robinson TED talk on killing creativity. I am talking generally here and you will be able to give me examples of where this happens, in creative writing, art, design etc, but even then, this may be determined by an assignment or classroom task, so how free is this activity of all boundaries? Then, secondly, how is this happening at scale and throughout the education journey for all children as a critical feature of their education? I don't see evidence of this at a systematic level, I just see a narrowness to how we educate people. I may be completely wrong here. Just a few initial thoughts on this for now.

**Paul Kleiman** Hello Doug. I agree – as I suspect most, if not all, involved in this discussion will – about the narrowing of our curriculum. But that rejection or dismissal of self-expression has been a feature of the UK educational system for decades, e.g. rules about school uniform and appearance etc. It is, as Robinson argues, a system based on the industrial 'widget making' factory model. But there are, of course, for those that can afford it, very different models, e.g. where identity, individuality and self-expression are valued and nurtured. From a creative arts perspective, I know from a number of conversations over the years with colleagues, that the first year of higher education is often seen and designed as a 'de-schooling' year.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks Doug. Interesting idea that self-expression is not only about who we are based on past histories but who we would like to be/become.

**Doug Cole** Paul Kleiman, I totally agree this is not a new issue in education, it has been so for a long time. On your final point, isn't there something similar with Liberal Arts degrees in the US where the focus in the first year is more on who you are as an individual, rather than purely subject focused?

**Simon Rae** Hi Paul Kleiman, I like your comments about our widget making educational system but I have a reservation about your rules about uniform theme. I was lucky/unlucky enough to go to a boarding school with a fairly relaxed notion of uniform (sports jacket, grey trousers, white shirt, house tie) that was rigorously enforced, but the rebel boys ALWAYS found a way to subvert the rules. They would pick the threads on their ties to create more black stripes, they would thread white Wrigley's gum wrappers onto their belts and, when everyone did the same, would thread the red juicy-fruit wraps instead just to stay ahead. And the same with daughters at school who turn their skirt over and over at the top to shorten it.

Rules, as they say, are made to be broken.

(How those boys who broke the rules did after school I've no idea, the school's mission was to turn out 'Leaders of Men' so maybe they went on to lead – but not on any public stage that I've ever seen.)

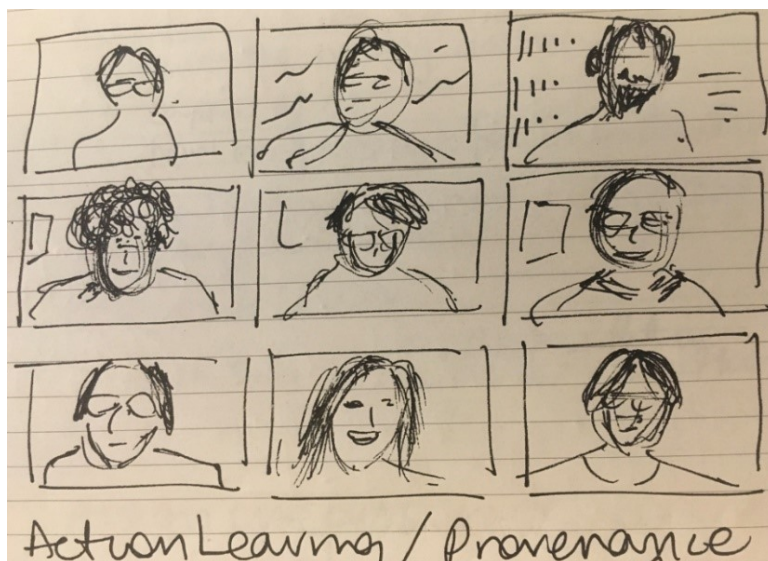
**Norman Jackson** Thanks for showing us, Simon, that self-expression at individual and group level can and does flourish in environments that seek conformity. I think many of us can relate to stories of mild rebellion against

school rules! Indeed, being a teen in the 1960's was like one long battle for self-expression relating to group identity. I feel the need to consult my school chums who are not in this group.

**Paul Kleiman** Hello Simon, yes there were and no doubt still are the 'rebels'. I went to a high-achieving, high-expectation all-boys grammar school with a very strict uniform policy. Right next door was an all-girls comprehensive, and over the road an all-girls convent school. Distinctly remember seeing the girls from both schools 'adapting' their uniforms as soon as they left the school gates. To the point where the schools posted teachers and nuns at various key points along the roads either side of the schools to ensure compliance!

**Norman Jackson** Mitchell Green's work on self-expression<sup>1</sup> suggests it's an outward manifestation (utterance, appearance, behaviour or action) of an internal psychological state. I don't have access to his book but I came across a critique by Michael Martin<sup>2</sup> which contains some of his core ideas.

Mitchell Green offers us an elegant, economical, and powerful theory of expression which reaches from a grimace or curled lip, through verbal behaviour, to Mahler's Ninth and the Angel of the North. A seemingly diverse group of psychological phenomena and behaviours are brought under the discipline of a common purpose. From the revelation of affect in behaviour and play, engaging in linguistic communication, letting others know how you really feel, to using artistic artifacts for the expression of emotion or mood, all of these are to be explained as examples of expression. Green sees 'expression' as a mode of communication: one shows one's psychological state through either making it perceptible; showing that one is in that state; or showing how it feels.<sup>2</sup>



For Green, expression is often about making a connection between our psychological states and other people; allowing these people to come to be acquainted with our feelings. The inputs to expression are psychological states which are introspective, and its outcomes (when an audience takes up the expression) are either the showing of something, or the showing that something is so: either a showing of a psychological state to the audience, or the audience's being shown that one's thoughts or feelings are so.<sup>2</sup>

Now, this may invite puzzlement – how can expression fail to be self-expression? For, leaving aside cases of vicarious expression, one is only in a position to express one's own psychological states, so surely one couldn't express anyone else's psychological states. If self-expression is expressing the psychological states of self, then all expression must be self-expression.<sup>2</sup>

Green maintains that the fundamental contrast between that discernible aspect of an individual's behaviour or disposition which is expressive and that which is not is carried by the distinction between what is signalled and what is not. What unites all of this is the following thought: an agent engages in expression where she signals her subjective point of view.<sup>2</sup>

**Sources**  
1 Mitchell S. Green (2007) Self-Expression: Oxford: Oxford University Press  
2 Martin M G F (2010) Getting on Top of Oneself: Comments on Self-Expression. Acta Anal 25:81-88  
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**Marta Davidovich** In my view, humans construct meaning when engaging with self-expression in ways they find personally meaningful and/or pleasurable. The value is determined by the person engaging in the process of expressing, rather than the culture at large. I appreciate Kim and Ko's definition because it is simple, foundational, and free of evaluation (real or implied).

**Norman Jackson** Marta Davidovich, while this is undoubtedly true when a person is free to express themselves without any social-cultural constraints, are there not situations where self-expression is mediated by the environment and circumstances someone is in? Also perhaps what a person finds meaningful is shaped by their past history of making meaning in a culture from which meanings have been learnt?

**Cathryn Lloyd** My world right now – exciting, exhausting and deeply concerning. COVID-19 is our wake up call to rethink and reframe. We have to make radical changes to human activity.

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Cathryn Lloyd – and you are able to express and share with others how you feel through your sketch, and words and actions by posting in this public forum. A lovely demonstration of self-expression in an environment that I hope facilitates and celebrates self-expression.

**Simon Rae** A lot written about self-expression is from the expression perspective and, as you say Norman Jackson, surely all expression is self-expression (not sure if this was a quote from Mitchell or Martin or yourself?). My take on it is more self, as in selfish, as in 'this is me and I don't give two hoots what others think'. I'm doing this because I must (and this presupposes that I have an adequate support system that allows me to be this selfish). To my way of thinking, the great examples of self-expression are by totally selfish people. Take Picasso, fabulous work, speaks a lot to me and others, but a monumentally selfish person. If you or I behaved like that we would be shunned and /or sacked! You don't become a star without thinking of number one. Self-expression is about self, not about communicating with others. It's about doing what you have to do (Paul Kleiman - blues, me - drawing). Sometimes what you do strikes a chord with others and they buy it and your climb up the ladder of fame begins,

but it started with doing what you have to do.

**Norman Jackson** And being who you have to be, Simon Rae? Is the self in selfish the same as self in self-expressive? SELFISH—concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself: seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfish>

**Marta Davidovich** Simon Rae, thank you for sharing your perspective. I have been in this field for 40 years and I have seen more shyness and self-denial of personal creativity than 'selfishness'. We live in a world that says it values creativity, but it builds systems based on conformity. Expressing our creativity is what helps humanity learn, grow and evolve. Nothing comes into this world except through the imagination, but there is ample evidence that society, educational systems, and political systems are more interested in discouraging rather than encouraging creative change. Because there is recognition now that all creativity begins with personal creativity, people who engage with what they find personally meaningful and energising, are poised to create and collaborate (help others) rather than isolate. Hedonic pleasure to excess can cause harm (might you be referring to narcissistic people who care about themselves?). Altruism and eudaemonic pleasure (joy) comes from overcoming obstacles and contributing to flourishing in the world. Surviving alone is not enough reason to be alive. Sharing what brings us joy, gives us a reason to live ♥.

### **Relationship of Self-Expression to Culture & Environment**

**Q2 How is self-expression shaped by our culture and our environment?**

Kim and Ko define 'self-expression' as: *"expressing one's thoughts and feelings, and these expressions can be accomplished through words, choices or actions"*.



This seems a little bland. Are there other features of self-expression that can usefully be brought into this definition to make it more inclusive? It would be particularly interesting to explore the cultural dimension of self-expression.

Kim and Co's definition implies that self-expression is a process that links a person's internal psychological world and their actions and being in the social-cultural world they inhabit. But this must be a two-way process. The responses of the outer world must feed back and impact on the person's inner world. It would be interesting to explore this dynamic and particularly the way in which a person's social-cultural environment shapes the ways in which they (are able to) 'express themselves.'

Kim, H. S., & Ko, D. (2007). Culture and self-expression. In C. Sedikides & S. J. Spencer (Eds.), *Frontiers of social psychology. The self* (p. 325-342). Psychology Press.

**Do all different social-cultural environments value self-expression in the same way? It would be great to get a range of perspectives from different cultural settings.**

**Paul Kleiman** Reading through the previous thread I've been wondering how the notion of genuine self-expression – which, I assume, is what we are discussing – meshes with the ideas that originate in Goffman's 'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' in which all social interactions are a form of performance, as in 'All the world's a stage'. What, where and how is 'self-expression' when we are constantly adopting different masks, roles, scripts, personae etc, when we are interacting with world?

**Norman Jackson** I think you are opening up multiplicities, Paul Kleiman – multiple identities and ways of being, multiple contexts, multiple social-cultural environments.

**Paul Kleiman** Which is why, like you, I find Kim and Ko's definition somewhat wanting.

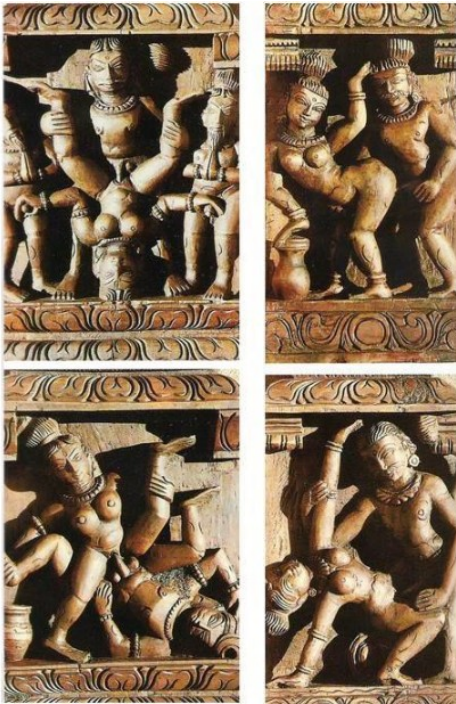
**Kevin Byron** I would go further than: "The responses of the outer world must feed back and impact on the person's inner world..." in that our behaviour is largely a product of the culture or cultures in which we were raised. So, in effect we echo our cultural mores etc in our normal daily life. Much of this behaviour is conditioned, unconscious behaviour even at the basic level, eg which side of the road we drive on. We only really notice this conditioning when we observe how other cultures do things differently.

**Norman Jackson** So, Kevin Byron, are you saying our expressions of self are to a greater extent determined by our past history and present circumstances in the social-cultural settings we inhabit?

**Kevin Byron** Yes and our institutions have a vested interest in maintaining that status quo (the term 'Establishment' speaks for itself!). Of course there is also the concept of 'Progress' that aims to expand our self-expression into new territory, but that is limited inasmuch as it has to be referenced to existing traditions. Revolutions, of course, occasionally disrupt tradition!

**Jennifer Willis** I quite agree, Kevin Byron. Here is what I had written in response to Norman.





**Images of temple carvings from India**

Self-expression in different cultures is a special interest for me as (like many of you), I live in a mixed cultural environment. My husband is a Tamil, Hindu, originally from Sri Lanka but having spent more than half his life in the UK. He is also a doctor, and this brings me to my point: it is striking how many of the cases that end up at the General Medical Council under accusation of malpractice are doctors who hail from abroad. My theory is that they are often misunderstood, and that what is perceived as inappropriate behaviour is, rather, a different (sometimes naïve) sense of self-expression.

Some years back, a friend found himself at a GMC tribunal accused of having a sexual interest in a female psychiatric patient. Part of her case was built on the fact that the doctor, an Asian, had invited her to sit in his car when they met by chance in the hospital grounds. You and I may see this as naivety on his part, but for him, it was an innocent means of his supporting her and expressing his professional concern.

More recently, self-expression through art has reminded us of cultural sensitivity. One of the themes that my husband and I have worked on together for many years is stigma. He teaches junior doctors and other colleagues on various aspects of this, including how stigma operates in the context of sexuality. We travel extensively and have a vast collection of artefacts and images taken in religious sites across the world. Many of the ancient Hindu sculptures are explicitly sexual, reflecting an innocent appreciation of the body and joy of sensuality.

To Western eyes, however, they may appear lascivious. When invited to hold one of the artefacts (which is usually on display in our home), one participant in a workshop was so offended that it led to disciplinary action.

Both examples demonstrate the need for self-awareness, especially when one is moving between different cultures: is the Asian, Hindu or whatever

other sub-culture, acting in accordance within the home cultural boundaries?

I attach some images of temple carvings from India for you to assess your own sense of acceptability.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Jennifer Willis. Yes, living in a family environment that is culturally mixed certainly highlights differences in forms of self-expression, and mediates how we express ourselves.

**Kevin Byron** There is an interesting kind of anomaly regarding culture-bound 'Self-Expression', and that concerns the tradition of story-telling. All cultures have their own wealth of stories, and by this I mean traditional tales rather than anecdotes or factual historical narratives. Apart from having an important role in sustaining cultural traditions and values, they also have a teaching function that can reach much further than conventional 'localised' education. More of this later, as I'm sure this will appear in our exploration of creative self-expression. I just wanted to pick up on the fact that there is a real benefit from crossing cultural self-expression as it were, through hearing traditional tales from other countries rather than our own, because they can sneak under the radar of our cultural conditioning.

**Norman Jackson** Perhaps stories can themselves become a form of cultural conditioning? I am thinking of the way the stories of the Bible, which originated in a different time as well as a radically different social-cultural and environmental setting, underpin a religion (social practice) with the potential to influence beliefs, values and individuals' expressions of self.

**Kevin Byron** Norman Jackson, yes it is a two-edged sword – all depends whether or not the stories have been recruited as part of a doctrine!

**Marta Davidovich** I see self-expression as a condition of being human. The moment we open our eyes we begin communicating and taking in information through embodied learning. We engage in self-expression through sound, gestures, movement, emotions, facial expressions, reactions to discomfort, contentment, distress or fear, comfort and love. As soon as we can move on our own, curiosity becomes our teacher and imagination and creativity begins to blossom. My parents were born in Ukraine, but they met and married in Cleveland, Ohio. I am their first born. Ukrainian was the primary language spoken in our home. I learned English from playmates when I began kindergarten at age 4, and spoke enough English to communicate well. I believe all stories are important because they evoke self-expression. I also view self-expression as part of who we are as human beings. We are born with much more than what can be seen with the naked eye. We are part history and mystery. DNA is different in all of us who are not twins.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Marta Davidovich. I agree from the moment we enter the world we begin to interact with the world and start our perceptual journey as we try to make sense of how it works for us. We begin to express ourselves, although initially we have no awareness of self and much of our exploration in the material and social world is geared to forming identities and concepts of ourselves. Once these identities are formed we can, in a more deliberate way, express ourselves in the world.

### **Freedom of expression**

Some countries have codified the right to freedom of expression.

**"The right to freedom of expression is justified first of all as the right of an individual purely in his capacity as an individual. It derives from the widely accepted premise of Western thought that the proper end of man is the realization of his character and potentialities as a human being" – Thomas Emerson**

Emerson, T I (1963) Toward a General Theory of the First Amendment [https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/2796/](https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/2796/)

Through this discussion I am moving towards an ecological view of self-expression in which people (their mind and everything they embody) and the social-cultural environments in which they express themselves are indivisible: an idea neatly captured by anthropologist Tim Ingold's view of our relationship with our environment.

"A properly ecological approach ..... is one that would take, as its point of departure, the whole-organism-in-its-environment. In other words, 'organism plus environment' should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality"<sup>1</sup>.

By expressing ourselves we change the world: "the world as it exists and takes on meaning in relation to [ourselves], and in that sense it [comes] into existence and undergoes development with [ourselves]"<sup>2</sup>.

(1) Ingold, T. (2000) Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment, *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, Routledge, p.16-20.

**Jennifer Willis** When I responded to yesterday's first question, I included in my spontaneous definition of self-expression a reference to communication with others. Whilst I totally agree with Marta Davidovicha and Norman Jackson's comments on our natural, social tendency, I couldn't help remembering how, when I was young, my father and I used our creativity to invent our own language (as children often do). In our case, we read and spoke words backwards. Whilst this enabled us to communicate with each other, it did so in order to exclude others. In other words, our self-expression was a means of restricting the 'club' to which we belonged.

Is this not what culture with a bigger 'c' does? To take up the earlier discussion on religious stories, on the one hand, as Kevin Byron points out, they are a means of social control, but on the other they provide us with an identity which differentiates us from others. This may be an identity we consciously choose.

Self-expression is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive.

**Kevin Byron** Had to smile when you mentioned inventing a new language because when I went to infant's school, and was taught to write, as soon as I picked up the pen I wrote from right to left in perfect mirror writing. The teacher was quite puzzled by this strange language and she alerted by parents. They then consulted the village GP who suggested that I might be left-handed. You see it was the convention for everyone to hold a pen in their right hand. As soon as I started using my left hand everything looked normal, although I was an untidy writer. Even now I can still write in mirror writing using my right hand!

**Jennifer Willis** Lovely, Kevin Byron! As you probably know, in some cultures left-handedness has been severely punished. Even today, my Korean colleague attempts to deter students from using their left hand!

**Marta Davidovich** I smiled as well – but it was because I felt delight imagining my father had invented a little game that only the two of us could share. He worked many hours. His priority was being a good provider and probably never imagined even playing for one hour with his child had value. He was a wonderful, loving dad, but he came from a culture where life was hard and 'play' or imagining or inventing were not on his agenda.

## Western and Eastern Perspectives

**Norman Jackson** This extract from 'Culture and Self-Expression' by Heejung Kim<sup>1</sup> highlights the way culture mediates self-expression.

*Cultures differ in their values for speech as the expression of individuality. Speech and self-expression hold particular importance in individualistic cultures (eg, European American cultures) (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Kim & Markus, 2002; Kim & Sherman, 2007). Whether it is a catch phrase in an advertisement or a song or a book title, the phrase "express yourself" is an ubiquitous inspiration and encouragement in the US cultural context. Self-expression is a notion that is closely associated with a horde of positive concepts, such as freedom, creativity, style, courage, self-assurance, and even healing and spirituality. The freedom of speech symbolizes one's ultimate freedom to be oneself. Thus, speech enjoys a special privilege in these cultural contexts, and the freedom of speech is one of the most important rights of individuals in the US.*

*In contrast, speech and self-expression do not hold the same degree of importance in the more collectivistic cultural contexts, such as East Asian contexts. Thoughtful and self-disciplined silence is often valued above speech and speech is practiced with relatively great caution because the potential negative social implications of speech are more salient in these cultures than in the US. (Kim & Markus, 2002; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996). Thus, speech and self-expression are not commonly and routinely encouraged or emphasised in East Asian cultures (Kim & Markus, 2002; Kim & Sherman, 2007).*

*These different cultural assumptions and practices influence whether and how individuals express their thoughts and feelings, and in turn, how acts of expression affect psychological and biological outcomes for these cultural participants*

(1) Kim, H. (2010) Culture and Self-Expression American Psychological Association <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2010/06/sci-brief>

**Jennifer Willis** This is an interesting observation. Without wanting to pre-empt later discussion of how we are responding to the Coronavirus, I wonder whether self-expression in different countries will observe this model or whether we may see a more global response.

**Norman Jackson** Globalisation and its impact on cultures and concepts of creativity is interesting, Jennifer Willis. While traditional notions of self-expression persist within a particular culture, self-expression within what might be termed popular culture is perhaps more pervasive.

**Norman Jackson** I have just discovered these interesting ideas from something called a World Values Survey: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSCContents.jsp>

The WVS has over the years demonstrated that people's beliefs play a key role in economic development, the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions, the rise of gender equality, and the extent to which societies have effective government. Using the survey data, political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel assert that there are two major dimensions of cross cultural variation in the world:

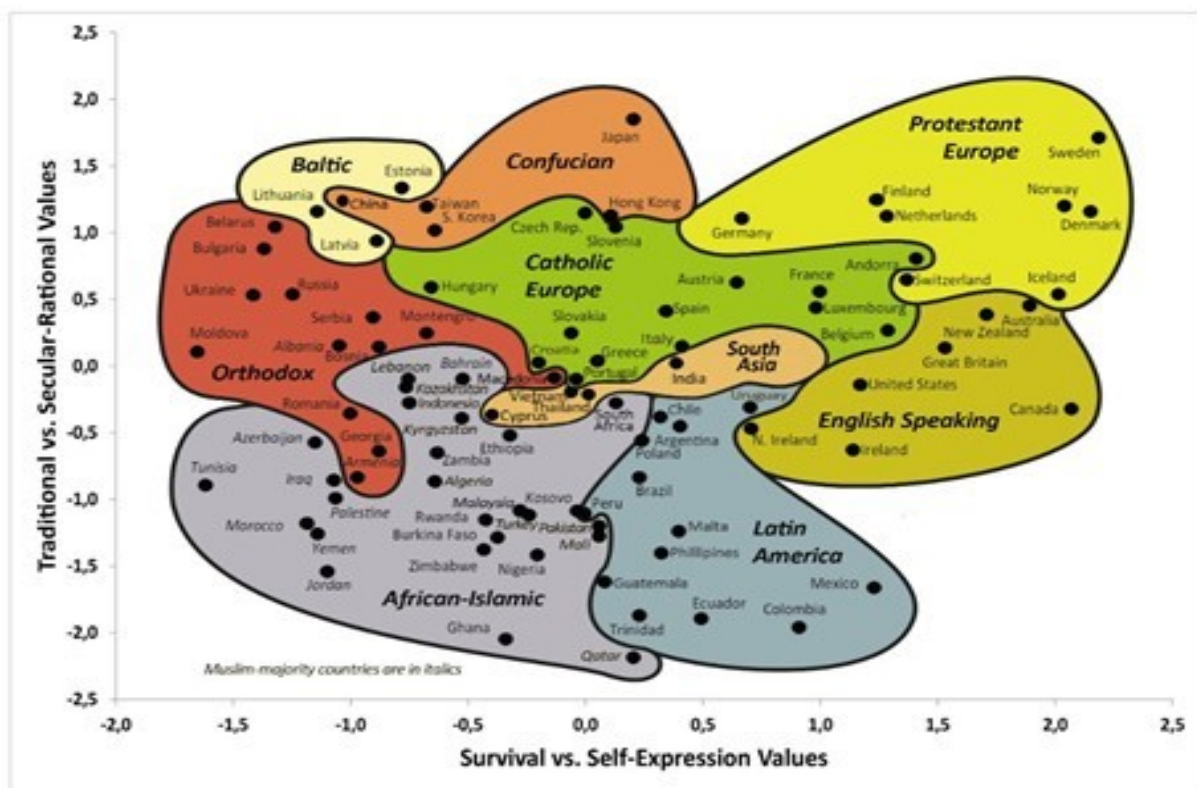
- 1) Traditional values versus Secular-rational values and
- 2) Survival values versus Self-expression values.

The global cultural map shows how scores of societies are located on these two dimensions. Moving upward on this map reflects the shift from Traditional values to Secular-rational values and moving rightward reflects the shift from Survival values to Self-expression values. Inglehart and Welzel suggest that following an increase in standards of living, and a country's transit from developing to industrialised, to post-industrial knowledge society, a country tends to move diagonally in the direction from lower-left corner (poor) to upper-right corner (rich), indicating a transit in both dimensions.

### Values synthesis

*Traditional values* emphasise the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook.

### Global cultural map



*Secular-rational values* have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common.)

*Survival values* place emphasis on economic and physical security. It is linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.

*Self-expression values* give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians, and gender equality, with rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life.

*Survival values* are characteristic for eastern-world countries and self-expression values for western-world countries. In a liberal post-industrial economy, an increasing share of the population has grown up taking survival and freedom of thought for granted, resulting in self-expression being highly valued.

### Sources

World Values Survey: Findings and Insights' <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSCContents.jsp...>  
Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarín & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. World Values Survey: Round Six - Country-Pooled Datafile Version: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>. Madrid: JD Systems Institute



**Jennifer Willis** Thank you for this Norman Jackson. It is absolutely fascinating, and deserves more than this brief response. I look forward to seeing the profile for phase 7, 2015-2020. I would also like to come back to this later in our discussion, when we look at self-expression during the pandemic.

I know how difficult it is making sense of a discussion, and my experience has led me to try and keep on top of this daily. I offer below my own summary of day 2. Apologies if I have missed anything- I am sure you will let me know.

### ***Day Three: What Do We Mean By 'Self' in Self-Expression?***

During yesterday's conversation Simon Rae raised the issue of who is the self in self-expression? (re-posted below). Perhaps we make an assumption when we talk about "ourselves" that others share the same concept of what we mean. But research suggests that culture exerts an important influence on our concept of self and therefore our understandings of self-expression.

A great strength of this forum is the cultural diversity of our members. We would like to harness the power of our community by inviting you to share your perspectives on self and post up to three words that describe or define what 'self' means to you. We will assemble the words into a cloud to see if any patterns emerge.

#### ***Summary of themes for Day 2***

##### **Theme: Is self-expression shaped by our culture/environment?**

##### **4 participants**

Kin & Ko definition: expressing thoughts and feelings through words, choices and actions  
Inner and outer world

- A two-way process
- We are conditioned by our outer world
- Ecological view of self-expression in context of society/environment

##### **Social control**

##### **Values**

- Do all socio-cultural environments value self-expression in the same way?
- Institutions have a vested interest in maintaining status quo
- Little scope for progress other than through revolution
- Two examples of personal repercussions when two cultural models fail to understand mutual expectations
- Role of stories e.g. bible in inculcating acceptable behaviour
- World values survey

##### **Potential for self-expression**

- Individual has freedom for self-expression, but this relies on personal drive for self-actualisation

##### **Exclusion and inclusion**

- Self-expression can be both inclusive and exclusive e.g. enables you to belong to/be excluded from others
- Examples: creating a personal language; mirror writing; culture where no time for play

##### **Cultural difference**

- Use of speech for self-expression in the West but not traditional in East
- Assumptions of what is acceptable determine the medium of self-expression
- Will the pandemic impact on how different cultures express themselves? Video of one response
- Will there be a more global response?

### Reposted from earlier conversation

**Simon Rae** A lot is written about self-expression from the expression perspective and, as you say, Norman Jackson, surely all expression is self-expression (not sure if this was a quote from Mitchell or Martin or yourself?). My take on it is more Self, as in Selfish, as in 'This is me and I don't give two hoots what others think'. I'm doing this because I must (and this presupposes that I have an adequate support system that allows me to be this selfish).

To my way of thinking, the great examples of self-expression are by totally selfish people. Take Picasso, fabulous work, speaks a lot to me and others, but a monumentally selfish person. If you or I behaved like that we would be shunned and/or sacked! You don't become a star without thinking of number one.

Self-expression is about self, not about communicating with others. It's about doing what you have to do (Paul Kleiman - blues, me - drawing). Sometimes what you do strikes a chord with others and they buy it and your climb up the ladder of fame begins, but it started with doing what you have to do.



**Jennifer Willis** Today's discussion is prompted by Simon's reminder of the differing notions associated with 'self'. An excellent introduction to this theme can be found in a chapter entitled 'Individual, relational and collective self: partners, opponents, or strangers', written by Constantine Sedikides and colleagues, available at: *Advances in Experimental Psychology*, volume 48. ISSN 0065-2601 dxdoi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407188-9, 00005-3

The chapter begins with a definition of individual human identity being composed of tripartite selves:

#### *The individual*

"The individual reflects a person's subjective uniqueness. This representation comprises characteristics – such as traits and behaviours, hobbies and interests, aspirations and goals – that differentiate the person from

others. Also, this type of self is relatively independent of dyadic relationships or group memberships."

#### *The relational*

"The relational self reflects dyadic bonds or attachments (e.g. romantic liaisons, friendships). This representation comprises characteristics that are shared with close others and may define roles within the relationship. The characteristics differentiate the relationship from the relationships other people have."

#### *The collective*

"The collective self reflects membership in, as well as similarity and identification with, valued social groups. This representation comprises characteristics that are shared with ingroup members and may define roles within the group. The characteristics differentiate ingroup from relevant outgroups."

The authors remind us that each form of self assimilates and contrasts, and all are vital to humans, for both physical and mental wellbeing. From a purely scientific, non-judgemental perspective, they posit and test the notion of a hierarchy of selves. They find that the individual self is primary, followed respectively by the relational and collective. Slide 1 illustrates the degree to which each self contributes to affect in their study.

The researchers also identify cultural differences in how the selves are balanced. Slide 2 is one example of the contrast between American and Chinese respondents and slide 3 broadens this to Eastern versus Western cultures.

The chapter concludes:

"The individual, relational and collective selves are fundamental elements of identity, as they contribute pivotally to human experience. The balance of concerns (e.g. growth, goal pursuit, exploration) associated with the individual and relational self is critical for wellness (...) as is the balanced satisfaction of the needs of the individual self, relational self and collective self (...)" Yet, at time of an antagonistic relation between the selves, this balance is disrupted in favour of the individual self."

I wonder how you would respond to this idea of self-expression? I am also interested to see, as the discussion moves on, how (if?) self-expression is affected by our current pandemic. What do you think?

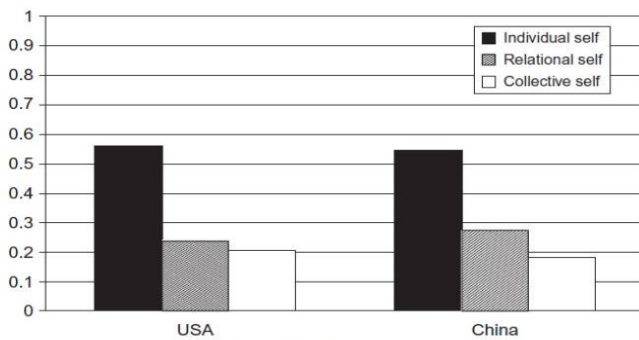
**Simon Rae** This slide really surprised me. The apparent similarity between the US and Chinese response! I had assumed that the slide would show almost 100% difference, as is the case in the 2nd slide, so much for assumptions!

Slide one



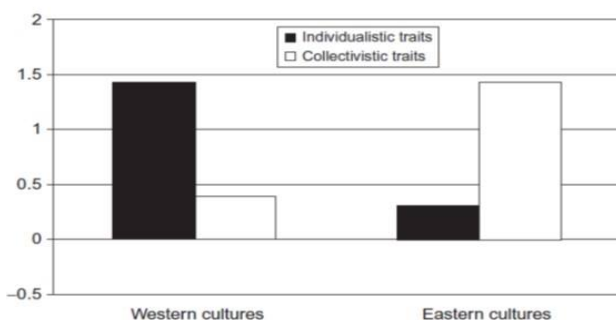
Figure 5.4 Effect on life, positive mood, and negative mood as a function of losing a self. Note: Ratings ranged from 1 to 5 with higher numbers indicating a larger effect on life, more positive mood, and more negative mood, respectively.

### Slide two



**Figure 5.8** Mean proportion of goals attributed to each self as a function of culture. Note: Participants listed 12 goals for their future and subsequently attributed each goal to one of the three selves (Gaertner, Sedikides, Luke, et al., 2012, Study 4).

### Slide three



**Figure 5.9** Individual-self enhancement as a function of culture and trait dimension. Note: A positive (negative) effect size indicates that a trait was considered more (less) descriptive of self than of peers (Sedikides et al., 2005).

and situations I encounter or create. And these selves do not stand alone, they intermingle – eg, sad detached self who wants to work alone but feels totally uncreative. So the question arises what holds all these selves together?

Is it the conceptual self? Our defining set beliefs, values and concepts of ourself. By maintaining the concepts that make sense in our present situation, de-emphasising or eliminating those concepts that no longer seem appropriate, and adding new concepts, we sustain and develop ourselves.

**Image credit:** <https://medium.com/@beaugordon/my-brain-is-made-up-of-multiple-selves-3361ad2a5346>

**Tami Eleanor** Infinite, universal, knowing.

**Simon Rae** My 'up to three words describing/defining "self": Alone; Absorbed; Anarchic.

Norman Jackson, Beth Cross and Paul Kleiman, is it the inability of an unfortunate few to balance these multiple selves that drives them 'over the edge'? That most of us manage to keep the balance point within an acceptable zone and that 'creative types' inhabit a grey, dangerous area close to the edge?

**Norman Jackson** Could be Simon Rae going back to your selfish idea I think people who pursue a creative line at any cost deliberately seek to be out of balance. They want to be at the edge of chaos. I hadn't thought about it until your prompt but perhaps Ralph Stacey's concept is relevant to this conversation. I attach a figure from Paul Kleiman's article learning at the edge of chaos which explains where creative souls often want to be in the zone of highest creative potential. Perhaps it also illustrates the interdependence of creative selves and environments where creativity can flourish.

**Doug Cole** Just asked my 13 year-old son on our evening stroll, he said, feelings, identity and choice. It was actually a surprising conversation, I really like choice particularly as that could be self-driven or influenced by others. We spoke about self expression too and he spoke about emotions and personality and the influence of others around us and events. I haven't heard him speak like this before. He is a clever boy but I am actually really impressed how well he articulated this! Better than me!

**Marta Davidovich** Conversations like you had with your son are priceless.

**Doug Cole** Marta Davidovich, thanks and I totally agree, it has put a big smile on my face. He is normally very measured in how he communicates, I love that he is so thoughtful in this respect, but when we do go a bit deeper,

**Jennifer Willis** I agree, Simon Rae. Some research I did on wellbeing a few years ago confirmed the assumption we both share on different motivators, as this slide indicates. Perhaps things have changed over the last decade?

### Many Me's - a multiplicity of selves

I can imagine several combinations of words around which to form a concept of myself but me, we and us come to mind as I write this post.

Paul K opened the idea of multiplicities – multiple identities and ways of being (ourselves) each of which are capable of being expressed as we participate in are daily doings. Here are some of the multiple selves I recognise in my own make up.

From vulnerable to invincible  
From timid filled with self-doubt to confident full of self-belief  
From selfish to selfless  
From confused to clear  
From happy to sad  
From detached to engaged  
From competent to incompetent  
From a self that wants to work alone to a self that needs to work with others  
From knowledgeable to ignorant  
From creative to uncreative  
From the selves I once was to the selves I would like to be.

I do not like some of these selves and I will try to hide them but I have to acknowledge they are all a part of a whole integrated self that is me and they may emerge whether I like it or not in the contexts I stand alone, they intermingle – eg, sad detached





it's so nice to hear him speak like this. From an employability, wellbeing and overall human perspective, this is so important.

**Holly Warren** Self = my outline filled by my social, historical, economic and cultural context. The outline is like a boundary that changes or a petri dish. What I see is the reflection of this. My three words: curious, questioning, searching.

**Johanna Payton** Self — the inner light. Self expression — the opposite of self-consciousness. My three words: truth, freedom and colour.

**Doug Cole** Johanna Payton, Kayden spoke about showing your true colours too last night, he was quite pleased about that one.

**Johanna Payton** Doug Cole, I'm going to ask my 15 year-old (if I can get him off the PlayStation!)

### What is self? Some definitions:

the union of elements (such as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self>

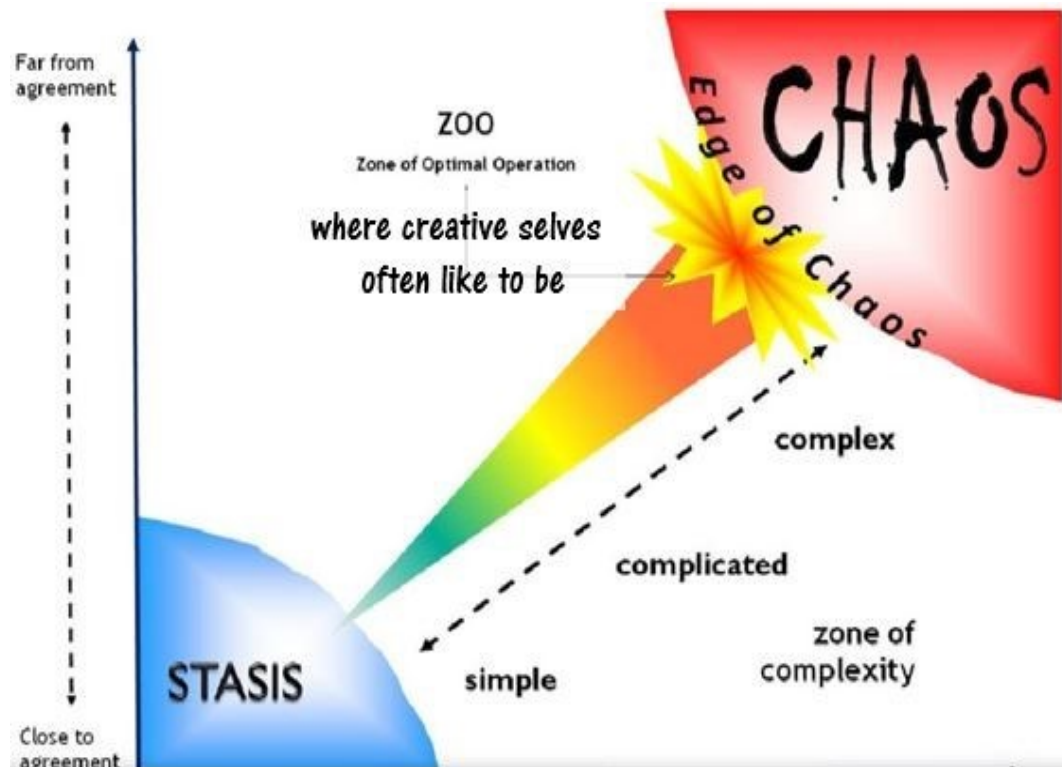
the set of someone's characteristics, such as personality and ability, that are not physical and make that person different from other people:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self>

## Cultural influences on self-concepts of self

Kim and Sherman's study<sup>1</sup> suggests that culture exerts an important influence on our concept of self and therefore our understandings of self-expression.

*"One of the most fundamental assumptions shared within a given culture is the definition of self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997; Triandis, 1989). Different cultures often hold different assumptions about what are the core features of the self. The most prevalent view of the self in Western cultures, such as in the United States, is the independent self. This view holds that the individual is understood and practices as a separate or distinct entity whose behaviour is determined by some amalgam of internal attributes. Central to our present analysis, a person is assumed to possess a set of internal attributes — thoughts, preferences, motives, goals, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities — that uniquely define the individual and enable, guide, and constrain behaviour (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998). One of the most*



obvious roots of this understanding is the Cartesian notion of the person that emphasises thinking as the very core of human existence. As Descartes (1637/1993) put it, "I am a substance the whole nature or essence of which is to think" (p. 28).

There are, however, other views of the self. In many cultural contexts in East Asia, the person is understood not as an independent entity but primarily as a relational entity. In these cultures, relationships define the self, and the person is viewed as connected with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989). These cultural views of the person stress social and relational concepts such as reciprocity, belongingness, kinship, hierarchy, loyalty, honour, respect, politeness, and social obligation to a greater extent than individualist cultural views. Typically in these contexts, an individual's self is thought to be enabled, guided, and constrained by his or her social relationships, roles, and norms, rather than his or her own thoughts (Fiske et al., 1998). These different cultural definitions of the self and models of relationships

have implications for how individual participants of a culture act to socially define themselves. In particular, these definitions of the self influence cultural views on the importance of self-expression.”

– Kim, H.S. and Sherman, D.K. (2007) “Express Yourself”: Culture and the Effect of Self-Expression on Choice  
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 92, No. 1, 1-11

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6598609\\_Express\\_Yourself\\_Culture\\_and\\_the\\_Effect\\_of\\_Self-Expression\\_on\\_Choice/link/00b4951925607a1e71000000/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6598609_Express_Yourself_Culture_and_the_Effect_of_Self-Expression_on_Choice/link/00b4951925607a1e71000000/download)

**Nikos Mour** Hi all, I would say that the self is the harmonisation/balance between my inner "voice" (ideas, beliefs, emotions, experiences, memories) and my multiple contexts (personal, intra-personal, or-organisational, cultural, etc). So I guess that the three words would be harmonisation, inner, external.

**Amy Harriett Miller** Me, Ego, Soul.

**Lisa Ma** Three words!! Can I do lots of three word contributions? Here goes: Self - Work in progress

**Lisa Ma** Constructed, deconstructed, reconstructed.

**Lisa Ma** Jennifer Willis, I changed mine so many times from present to past participles and didn't like any of them.

**Jennifer Willis** You came up with an interesting set Lisa Ma. It captures well the dynamic and ecological process.

**Lisa Ma** Jennifer Willis, that's what I was aiming for – hence the need for both past and present participles. I also want to add something like: "Somewhere beyond language"; "hovering above language" to indicate that self construction / "the self constantly encounters the limits of language. Nice activity to limit us to three words! Very creative!

**Maria Kefalogianni** Hi all, sorry I am getting slow with the conversations!( thought we were starting on the 15th oops!) Self and self-expression, (this was not complete post) because my reality is shaped by dealing with a little one at all times (bare with me Jennifer).

For me self is "spirit expressed through a physical existence"... I don't believe there is ONE solid self... Margaret warner talks about "configurations of self" ... we have multiple selves -the more you dig the more we find....YET we have none.... there is ONE consciousness perceiving all that is being expressed as the "SELF"... and any of our expressions is being shared AS that consciousness... we appear to need a self to survive life... through years of meditation and mindfulness im recognising the utter illusion in this belief :)



**Jennifer Willis** That's 2 words Maria Kefalogianni. do you have a third?

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Maria Kefalogianni no need to apologise its great you are able to join us and thank you for the unifying concept of consciousness.

3-WORD DEFINITIONS OF 'SELF' as at 06.04.20

Respond 't	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3
1	identity	mask	monkey
2	freedom	clarity	purpose
3	feelings	thoughts	medium
4	alone	absorbed	anarchic
5	feelings	identity	choice
6	curious	questioning	searching
7	truth	freedom	colour
8	infinite	universal	knowing
9	infinite	universal	curious
10	alone	wandering	searching
11	freedom	growing	compassion
12	harmonisation	Inner	external
13	constructed	deconstructed	reconstructed
14	me	myself	I
15	teacher	human	ambitious
16	honest	connected	liberated
17	fluid	multiplicity	contradictory
18	me	ego	soul
19	we	me	our
20	who I am		

### **Summary of Day 3**

13 participants, 45 comments

**Theme:** What do we mean by 'self' in self-expression?

**Stimulus:** post by Simon Rae suggesting that self is about being selfish

#### **Tripartite model of self by Constantine Sedikides**

- We humans comprise the individual, relational and collective selves
- We are constantly balancing these
- They each influence one another
- Research shows a hierarchy, with the individual self usually being primary
- This is value-free, necessary for survival of the species
- Different cultures balance the selves differently
- Surprise was expressed that the US and Chinese models Sedikides finds are so similar
- Comparison with research by JW in 2009, when greater cultural differences were found.

**Does this reflect cultural change over time?**

#### **Multiple selves**

- We have multiple identities (selves, roles) and we constantly switch between them
- They are dynamic
- They are conditioned by and in turn condition the environment

#### **Social control**

- Socialisation can be interpreted as a form of symbolic violence
- Freedom and choice are recurrent themes in the discussion
- When we fail to balance our multiple selves and competing forces, we are seen as 'going over the edge'

#### **3-word associations**

At the time of writing, 20 participants have suggested their 3-word associations with 'self'. These are listed verbatim in the attached image and are reproduced as a word cloud to draw attention to the most frequent words. The following emergent themes are identified:

- The uniqueness/individuality of self yet universality
- Multiple selves
- The 'self' comprises elements of spirituality, affect and personal characteristics
- The outer world is characterised by disorder, fluidity, multiplicity
- We are constantly seeking for understanding, meaning, harmonisation and liberation through interaction with the environment.

The conversation continues across days, and any additional definitions will be included in this list as we advance. Meanwhile, what meanings can you make from these words to describe self? Please add your thoughts to today's conversation, Week 2, Day 2.



## Day Four: Can We Create Better Definitions of Self-Expression?

In week 1 of the discussion we have developed some perspectives on the ideas of 'self' and 'self-expression' before engaging more directly with the creative dimension of self-expression in the coming weeks.

Kim and Ko define 'self-expression' as: "expressing one's thoughts and feelings, and these expressions can be accomplished through words, choices or actions".

**Q4 Having explored the idea of self-expression, can we offer new richer and potentially more useful definitions of self-expression that take account of the perspectives we have developed?**

**Jennifer Willis** I guess this has given everyone pause for thought Norman Jackson. Or perhaps the glorious weather has tempted them away from their screens. Nice to see that yesterday's conversation is still going on, though.

I am collating the 3-word responses and will analyse them in order to give a response to today's question.

**Paul Kleiman** My three words: Alone, Wandering, Searching.

Regarding the definition: borrowing from and adapting Laurel Richardson's work on the post-modern, I propose that a useful image for the "self" for is the crystal which has an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities and angles of approach. The notion of 'crystallisation' provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the self. "Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know."

**Norman Jackson** A nice metaphor, Paul Kleiman thank you for having a go at providing a metaphor that gives us another way of thinking about self- and self-expression. The idea of a metaphor rather than a definition is quite liberating and I have added the prompt to the invitation at the top of this discussion strand.

As a student of geology, I had to learn mineralogy and crystallography and my concern with the crystal metaphor is that a crystal is a highly ordered and organised structure so its growth is controlled by rules – ie, atoms interact and are ordered in a particular way and this ordering generates the form of the crystal. A multiplicity of forms cannot co-exist. A particular chemical compound will only produce one or a small number of forms. Perhaps we are programmed through our DNA up to a point but I see selves as forming through our history of interactions with our social cultural environment so for me the metaphor for self- and self-expression needs to be one of fluidity and ecology that generates a multiplicity of forms.

**Paul Kleiman** Yes, but surely that 'highly ordered and organised structure' also leads to infinite variety. No diamond or snowflake is the same. Also the 'light' within a crystal shifts as it turns around. Similarly we, as humans, have a highly ordered and organised structure but with an infinite number of variations, and the 'light' within us, the self, shifts as we interact with our environment.

**Norman Jackson** I take your point, Paul Kleiman, about the snowflake but it cannot transform itself. Once it starts to grow it keeps to the same pattern, similarly to the diamond it can only grow in one way. Organic growth is much more complex as we can transform our 'selves' through whatever influences us as we change our understandings and discover new meaning.

**Paul Kleiman** Then perhaps a better metaphor is the liquid crystal!

**Jennifer Willis** Not a suggested metaphor, more a comment, Norman Jackson and Paul Kleiman.

As a child, I had a recurring nightmare in which a flower kept growing and growing beyond my comprehension. I was petrified because I couldn't understand it. The nightmare only went away when, as an adult, I learnt the humility of accepting that I couldn't comprehend what life is all about. I often reflect now on this quote from Thomas Szasz:

A child becomes an adult when he realises that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong.

Read more at: <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/thomas-szasz-quotes>

**Norman Jackson** Stimulated by Paul Kleiman's metaphorical approach, I offer a possible organic ecological way of looking at self and self-expression. Please share your metaphors.

### Possible organic metaphor for self- and self-expression



*The self is dynamic, continually interacting with its material, social-cultural environment, and adapting to it*

*The self is connected and is an integral part of the broader social, cultural ecosystem*

*The self responds in unpredictable and emergent ways“*

*When we experience something, we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences John Dewey*

This is not a definition but an underpinning commentary for the organic metaphor.

We cannot think about the collection of selves that constitute us as a whole person and the thoughts, embodiments and deeds we express without attending to the environment in which we are living. As Tim Ingold puts it “Every organism has an environment: the organism shapes its environment and environment shapes the organism. So it helps to think of an indivisible totality of “organism plus environment” - best seen as an ongoing process of growth and development”<sup>1</sup>.

While all organisms learn to live with, and when necessary adapt to, their environment, ‘learning’ – understood as the making and sharing of new meanings – becomes a force for significant lifelong and lifewide effort and activity, in order to grow and develop in human eco-social systems<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps what we appreciate as our many ‘selves’ is the inner expression of ‘organism plus environment’ and how we express ourselves is the outer expression of ‘organism plus environment’, and our growth as a person (the growth of our selves) is dependent on this intimate relation and ongoing interaction.

Even (or especially) in lockdown we search for ways of interacting in a meaningful way with our environment. We change it through our interactions and in that process it may change us in ways that we may not fully recognise.

**“DEEP WITHIN, A LIGHT  
TO GUIDE ME AS I WANDER  
THE UNTRODDEN PATH”**

#### Sources

1) Ingold, T. (2000) Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.

2) Lemke, J. L. (2000). Across the scales of time: Artifacts, activities, and meanings in ecosocial systems. *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 7(4), 273-290. Available at <http://www.jaylemke.com/storage/Scales-of-time-MCA2000.pdf>

**Jennifer Willis** An observation, Norman Jackson. As I broke down this definition, I began to question whether all three points were not actually one eg, surely 1) ‘adapting’ corresponds to 3) ‘responds to unpredictable’ and 1) ‘interacting’ is the same as 2) ‘connected’? I was going to use the definition as a framework to compare our three words, but it won’t work for this very reason.

**Norman Jackson** Hi Jennifer Willis, is the framework you are seeking something like? 1) inner cognitive/ psychological world 2) outer environment (the world as it has meaning to our selves 3) the ways and means that these two worlds are connected and the effects of connecting and interacting these two worlds – the making of new meaning, new perceptions, new imaginings, modified environments, new artifacts.....GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT in Ingold’s words.

**Haleh Moravej** Personally, self expression is about recognising and affirming myself for who I am intrinsically. Who I am intrinsically is not based on my appearance or even my abilities; instead, it is who I am, my everyday deeper character. Deep inside my DNA & my purpose.

My three words are freedom, growing & compassion.

**Paul Kleiman** Haleh Moravej,  
Deep within, a light  
to guide me as I wander  
the untrodden path.

**Haleh Moravej** Deep within especially now that I’m spending so much time in self isolation which means I’m digging deeper & deeper.

**Marta Davidovich** I was very moved reading your post. Your words resonate deeply with I have found to be at the heart of personal creativity.

**Nicole Kraller-Brown** I am sorry for being late to this party (story of my life).

I agree with Haleh Moravej, that self-expression is who I am, but I also agree with Paul Kleiman and Laurel Richardson’s crystal. BTW, I wouldn’t need the “liquid” added to it.

**“SELF-EXPRESSION IS NOT  
JUST AN EXPRESSION OF  
WHO I AM BUT ALSO WHO I  
AM AT A SUBCONSCIOUS AND  
UNKNOWN, BUT FELT LEVEL.  
AND THAT MAY WELL BE  
MESSY.”**

Like the light shining onto a crystal creating different structures, colours, shapes and patterns, I find that I am also different in particular circumstances, eg in my son’s presence, my self reverts to the mum, when with my parents I become the daughter etc.

With that in mind, self-expression is not just an expression of who I am but also who I am at a subconscious and unknown, but felt level. And that may well be messy.

Edited to add: this messiness is where the creative expression comes in really useful because it helps formulate what we may not consciously be aware of in the first place – but I jump ahead here.

**Norman Jackson** I find the idea of reverting to past selves and inhabiting different selves in the present very interesting, Nicole Kraller-Brown. I am in an ongoing dialogue with two mid-teens school friends from over 50 years-ago and the language and humour we are using is as if we were still at school.

**Nicole Kraller-Brown** Exactly that, Norman Jackson. I am originally from Austria, so grew up with German as mother-tongue, where we make a clear difference between informal and formal versions of you in addressing others. Although I have been offered to use the informal you by long-standing family friends, and I use that

informal “du” I find myself reverting to the little blond girl I was when I addressed these people with “Sie”.

**Jennifer Willis** Nicole Kraller-Brown, I witnessed another example of this recently. We were in Sri Lanka at a conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of Colombo Medical School. Many alumni, past and current professors were attending. On seeing for the first time in over 40 years one of his respected professors, my husband (in his 60s and a consultant here in the UK) immediately addressed him as Sir. Every time we met he did the same. It's partly cultural in that older people are still accorded a respectful title (my husband never calls my father by his name), but it also gave me a glimpse of the student he had once been.

**Chris Wilson** Thanks for the invitation, Norman Jackson. What 'self' means to me in 3 words? Honest, Connected, Liberating.

**Navid Michael** Sorry for being late! I like the idea of trying to come up with a metaphor, it allows us to deal with complex problems more simply. The metaphor I'd like to go with is a little winding mountain stream.

The reason I think this works is because of the importance of the external environment on the self. The multiplicity of self has been well described by others, but what I can't see having been mentioned in such detail is the importance of the environments on the different selves we have (eg. my self-expression at home is different to my self-expression at work, is different to my self-expression with friends), and the nature of these different environments alters me and my self-expression.

**“I THINK THE SEPARATION OF SELF-EXPRESSION INTO THE ARTISTIC FIELD IS A WESTERN FIXATION.”**

In the same way, the course of the river is changed by external factors such as boulders or logs that may be placed in its way, and the speed of the river is dependent on the amount of water from rain etc. There are intrinsic factors of the water (eg. viscosity) which also play a role but the overall nature of the river is in a large part a product of its environment.

I think we can extend the metaphor as well, to emphasise the fact that one's self is subject to change. Much in the way that if a river is consistently pushed against one bank, it will alter the direction of the river, so too our self will change based on the things that are repeated in our lives.

As for my three words: Fluid, multiplicity and contradictory.

**Norman Jackson** An interesting metaphor, Navid, and an interesting choice of words reflecting a many layered, dynamic and perplexing concept of self. I like your metaphor because it introduces the idea of flow between the self and their environment.

The river exists because of its environment. It does something to the environment and the environment does something back and both are changed through this exchange of energy and material. So what is the exchange that is going on between people and their environment during acts of self-expression?

**Jennifer Willis** Humanity, Norman Jackson?

**Norman Jackson** Jennifer Willis, it's definitely about being human but if you were to press me for a three word answer I would say 'searching for meaning' or 'making new meaning'. Perhaps the idea of flow will emerge again when we talk about acts of creative self-expression.

**Jennifer Willis** Do you think everyone is searching for meaning Norman Jackson?

**Jennifer Willis** Interesting that you have chosen to give a phrase rather than three ideas Norman Jackson. This will make analysis even more difficult!

**Norman Jackson** A slightly more considered response than my first shot, Jennifer Willis. Perhaps a lot of self-expression is geared to searching for meaning, or confirming meaning but when creativity is involved in this exchange between mind and environment via the things a person does to express themselves, then perhaps we enter the realm of 'meaning-making' or 'making-meaning'. I hope these count as one word answers.

**Sandra Sinfield** My three words for 'self' are not as poetic or evocative as other people's – but they are fundamental. Self = 'Who I am'. And thus I think that I express that in everything that I do, not just in artistic endeavour.

I think the separation of self-expression into the artistic field is a western fixation. It allows us to act like, perhaps, unprincipled and unethical people in work situations – we can rationalise that away as acting appropriately in that context. We are only obeying orders – and thus we can conduct a mental juggling act that means we have to feel no guilt or personal pollution in those acts. But if we are always our whole selves, then self expression runs through all that we do.

I think the world could be a very different place if we in the west did not operate in this dualist way.

**Harry Muskett** Self in three words –

**no one else**



**Jennifer Willis** As responses are still coming in, I don't want to offer my analysis yet. Instead, I want to digress into another dimension of self-identity: language itself, and its relationship with thought.

The first thing that struck me as I began to analyse responses to the three-word associations was that some respondents used adjectives/verbs acting as adjectives, whilst others used nouns. This is not my sphere of knowledge, so I dipped into some linguistic texts to see if there was any literature on the significance of this.

The subject is too vast for me to be able to answer my question yet, but it was interesting to be reminded of some early theories of the relationship between language and thought.

There are two extreme positions in linguistic theory:

(1) \*Mould theory\* sees language as casting thought in a mould

(2) \*Cloak theory\* according to which language 'is a cloak conforming to the customary categories of thought of its speakers' (Bruner et al, 1956)

An alternative, behaviourist view is that language and thought are identical, i.e. thought is determined by language. In the early 20th century, the Sapir and Whorf developed a mould hypothesis comprised of two related principles: 1) linguistic determinism – our thinking is determined by language; 2) linguistic relativity – speakers of different languages have different perceptions and thought about the world.

Opposite to mould theory, universalists argue that we can say whatever we want to say in all languages hence what is said in one language can be translated into any other language.

Moderate Whorfism of today differs from its early form in-so-far as:

- The emphasis is on the potential for thinking to be influenced by, as opposed to determined by, language
- This is a two-way process: how we see the world influences the kind of language we use, and vice-versa
- Influence is ascribed to use within a language, rather than language itself eg. a sociolect, the language used by members of a specific social group
- There is emphasis on the social context of language rather than linguistic issues

Why I digress into this linguistic realm is to remind us that the responses each of us has given to the three-word definition are inevitably rooted in our social conditions. I note, too, that later submissions are clearly influenced by some of the discussion.

I will come back with a lighter post tomorrow. Thanks for all the contributions so far – more are very welcome!

Adapted from Daniel Chandler (1995) *The Act of Writing*, University of Wales

#### *Sources*

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# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

## Transcript: Week Two

### Theme 2: The Idea of Creative Self-Expression

In the first week of our discussion we explored the ideas of self and self-expression. Each of us will have taken different things from the discussion but what emerged for me was the idea of a multiplicity of selves that have the potential to give rise to a multitude of expressions, some of which are creative. What also struck me is the way in which our self-expressions are the means by which we connect and enable interaction between our inner cognitive and psychological world with the material, social, cultural and virtual world – the environment we inhabit.

In the second week of our discussion we will begin to focus on the creative expressions of our 'selves'. Today's question:

**Q1 What does it mean to express your-self/selves creatively? Is it different to any other form of self-expression?**



Given that we have recognised in our discussion that there are many forms of self-expression, I am perplexed as to why we often associate self-expression with artistic activities? For example, in the Cambridge Dictionary, self-expression is defined as 'expression of your personality, emotions, or ideas, especially through art, music, or acting'. Do you have any thoughts on this?

This week we will try to engage with a range of topics – motivations and inspirations; forms and mediums, processes and routines; knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Next week is world creativity and innovation week and we will focus on 'practices' with encouragement to share expressions of your creative self.

**Doug Cole** For me creative self-expression clearly has many forms and is ultimately concerned with how we translate the internal, our feelings, thoughts, values, etc, externally, being considerate that the external may also directly influence the internal. So I think I see this as this constant shifting back and forth, the balance of how much movement there is in each direction being determined by the individual throughout their lives. There's that fluidity about it, constantly shifting and evolving as we portray the internal to the world. So this is about more than what we 'do' eg, all those creative physical actions you highlight, Norman, and I agree it's about so much more – it's about who we are fundamentally as people. I come back to the notion of 'identity' again, it's about the intangibles, what we think, feel, say and do and how each one of those constructs is then articulated to the outside world. It's complex and its messy, but then that's life, particularly right now!

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Doug Cole. So you are linking creative self-expression to an identity or identities that hold certain values and beliefs about the ways in which our interactions with the world should be conducted?

**Doug Cole** Norman Jackson, I think I see it more that creative self expression is a reflection of our identity / identities, but where this is free from limits, if that is even possible? So not sure 'should' is the right word and how I was thinking it would be framed. More 'can', the art of the possible here perhaps?

**Josefina Ramirez** Thanks! I believe that self-expression in the many ways and forms that take, because of the characteristic of coming from many "selves", IS a way of art. Defined as "an activity through which people express particular ideas." My view is that any kind of knowledge (scientific, mathematical, linguistic, etc..) is brought to life and becomes "art", when expressed and "put together", in a particular way by someone. Our persistent need of separating knowledge has made art live outside the other knowledges, and I believe art is the way of self-expressing such knowledge (whatever nature of knowledge).

A group of students at college or university take a particular course with one teacher or another, because they like the way the teacher expresses that knowledge: astronomy may be the same, but the way it is expressed by someone is what makes it interesting and makes sense for some people. So self-expression being art, for me, it means taking an area of knowledge and express it in meaningful ways through self-expression.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Josefina Ramirez. There are loads of interesting ideas here which I will let others digest. But I remember a conversation with Prof Tim Ingold, who I had asked to review an article I had written about a geologist making a geological map. I was arguing that the geologist's process involved creativity and the map was the artifact arising. I kept his email reply and reproduce part of it below. I think it supports the point you make "my view is that any kind of knowledge (scientific, mathematical, linguistic, etc..) is brought to life and becomes "art", when expressed and "put together", in a particular way by someone."

Email from Tim Ingold:

*"First, it seems to me that the paper touches on a key area in which the actual practice of science (here,*

*geological mapping) flies in the face of 'official' scientific protocols, and comes much closer to the work of art (and indeed of anthropology). For in it, imagination and experience are creatively fused rather than held apart, as official science requires; moreover that fusion is deeply embedded in the personal sensibility of practitioners, in their hands and minds, in their perceptual acuity and ways of working. Geologists literally become one with their rocks! And that is quite contrary to the principle of scientific objectivity which requires that scientists remain personally immune to what they study, an immunity conferred by 'methodology'. I have written about this in my Anthropology and/as Education book (specifically, pp. 70-1). from his creative and scientific self-expression."*

I will try to dig out his work and share.

**Josefina Ramirez** Norman Jackson, love the idea that geologists become one with the rocks! Human activity is never "not subjective".

**Norman Jackson** Here is the quote from Tim Ingold's book:

*Scientists' hands and minds, like those of artists or craftspeople, absorb into their ways of working a perceptual acuity attuned to the materials that have captured their attention, and as these materials vary, so does the experience that comes from working with them. Surely in practice, scientists are differentiated - as much as are artists and anthropologists, and indeed people everywhere - by the specificities of their experience and the skills arising from them, not by the territorial demarcation of fields of study. Science, when it becomes art, is both personal and charged with feeling; its wisdom is born of imagination and experience, and its manifold voices belong to each and every one who practices it, not to some transcendent authority for which they serve indifferently as spokespersons. And where scientific pathfinding joins with the art of inquiry, as in the practice of anthropology, to grow into knowledge of the world is at the same time to grow into the knowledge of one's own self.*

Ingold T. (2018) Anthropology and/as Education p71  
[file:///C:/Users/norma/Downloads/Antropology%20and%20as%20Education\\_2pass\\_SC.pdf](file:///C:/Users/norma/Downloads/Antropology%20and%20as%20Education_2pass_SC.pdf)

**Paul Kleiman** The idea that self-expression is linked to artistic expression is as false as the idea that creativity is also inextricably linked with artistic expression. It has always irritated me that we talk about the 'creative arts' but never about the 'creative sciences'.

**Norman Jackson** It may well irritate you, Paul Kleiman, but why is this view so deeply entrenched to the point where dictionaries include this as fact? What is the historical root of this narrative?

**Kevin Byron** The reason may well be that the Arts as a discipline has a much longer history going back to ancient times than Science, which only gained recognition, at least in the West, in the 17th century. Engineers and inventors were regarded as second-class citizens in classical Greek times!

**Marta Davidovich** I hold a similar perspective, Paul Kleiman. My research puts the focus on personal creativity because "all creativity begins with personal creativity"(Runco, 2019). Personal creativity is authentic and can be expressed in any area, focus, or field of interest the person feels intrinsically guided to explore. I share this maxim at the start of every class I teach: "All art requires creativity, but not all creativity requires art." I recommend reading: "Creativity as a Dynamic, Personal, Parsimonious Process" (M.A. Runco, 2019), published in Beghetto, R, Corazza, G. (eds): "Dynamic Perspectives on Creativity, Creativity Theory, and Action in Education", Vol.4., Springer, Cham.

**Paul Kleiman** Simon Rae, sent me, via Twitter, this fascinating Google Books Ngram which shows that the term 'creative arts' came into use in the mid-1960s. A time when new universities were springing up left, right and centre. Is there a correlation?

**Jennifer Willis** Thank you, Simon Rae and Paul Kleiman for sharing this. It is a fascinating question, and I am sure we will all have our instinctive response. I am sure it won't have escaped your notice that there has been a sharp decline in its use in recent years. I am equally sure that we can all explain this!

#### Use of the term 'creative arts'







**Trowsis McBaum** Like others, I've got a range of perceptions of self-expression, and of the component words "self" and "expression", terms which could occupy many volumes, never to be written by me! I read the fascinating posts so far and began to focus on the meaning of "express". It seems to mean convey, communicate, represent, cause or squeeze out. Does this imply "use language or any other means of externalising what's going on in your mind, body, spirit, soul?" Clearly, it includes the look on your face and any more obvious physical actions. But this raises more questions, like whether or not expression is intended or accidental, conscious or unconscious, deliberate or reflexive.

There's a strong implication – some would say necessity – that there's a viewer, reader or audience of some kind. Can this be just yourself? Marta fuels our thinking on this: self-identifying as a writer and communicator, she envisages sharing with the world, while the energy of her self-reflection confirms an intrapersonal agency, too, acting "alone or with others".

This is helpful, I think. It explains why a friend of mine, already an accomplished guitarist, continues to have lessons, to practise diligently and to learn and play complicated and technically demanding pieces, with no other audience than himself. When I suggest he form a band and entertain people, he rejects the idea utterly.

So, is self-expression creative self-realisation, and is self-expression also a repeatable confirmation of one's own existence? If I were more organised (let alone creative), I might be able to pull these ramblings into better shape – to express things better; however, I already feel that I've existed more today!

**Norman Jackson** Thank you for your contribution, Trowsis. You offer us some interesting ideas to think about. I like your perspective on express "to squeeze out by any means", that which a self needs or wants to communicate. I think we will explore the "means" when we look at practises and talk about mediums and vehicles for creative self-expression. You ask, "so is self-expression creative self-realisation?" Well I guess it is when creativity is involved and if it's not that leaves us with the idea of "self-expression as self-realisation" or "fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities of one's character or personality" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-realization>)

I would be interested to know what others think of this idea.

**Marta Davidovich** Carl R Rogers offers this humanistic perspective: "The mainstream of creativity appears to be... [wo]man's tendency to actualise [her]himself, to become [her]his potentialities" (1961, p. 351).

**Norman Jackson** Which brings us back to the idea that self-expression is an organic living thing enabling us to develop and pursue an intimate relationship with our environment and the things we care about and grow through the process.

**Marta Davidovich** Well, Norman – I would certainly agree self expression is a lived experience of an individual informed by present and past experiences and environments. I believe we are all part of something bigger. Feeling intrinsically motivated to explore, learn and grow fuels actualisation of our potentials with joy. It can be emergent or deliberate, and holistic in a way that reflects and is informed by that person's environments, experiences, intuitions, and embodied movements or actions. Systems scientist George Land noted: "Growth cannot occur independently – it requires interaction and interrelation between the growing thing and its' environment" (1997, p. 11).

Trowsis McBaum, thank you so much for sharing your reflection related to self expression and some of the perspectives I shared. I was particularly drawn in by: "So, is self-expression creative self-realisation, and is self-expression also a repeatable confirmation of one's own existence?" I would say 'yes' to both. Through my self-expression I do experience 'confirmation of my own existence' as an agent as well as an observer of my experience. Then when I journal my observations those observations often lead to deeper dimensions. I actually never thought of them that way, but your words really triggered that connection.

**Marta Davidovich** Trowsis McBaum – thank you so much for your comments. I do believe self expression brings forward all aspects of self associated with living in this time and place. The physical and non-physical, conscious and unconscious. Expression can be verbal and non-verbal, or emotions and affect. In my research inquiry, my task was to capture, reflect on, witness, and share my lived experience as it unfolded in real time. It was much deeper than writing something autobiographical. It was intimate and revealing and required pushing aside fears and vulnerability. This wondering caught my attention: "So, is self-expression creative self-realisation, and is self-expression also a repeatable confirmation of one's own existence?" My personal perspective says 'yes' to both. Through my self-expression I do experience 'confirmation of my own existence' as an agent as well as an observer of my experience. Then when I journal my observations those observations often lead to deeper dimensions. I actually never thought of them that way, but your words really triggered that connection.

**Norman Jackson** This edited passage from an article by Nancy Andreassen on the arts-science & creativity schism:

*For many lay people, the word "creative" evokes images of novelists, poets, composers, and visual artists. If prompted, they would acknowledge the creativity of mathematician/physicists such as Einstein or inventors such as Thomas Edison, but there is a general tendency to assume that creativity is more associated with the arts than the sciences.*

*This stereotyped view of creativity led C. P. Snow, who was both a physicist and a respected novelist, to deliver a provocative lecture, later published as a book, complaining about the perniciousness of the schism between the “two cultures”.....*

*The schism between the “two cultures” described by Snow would have been astounding to many great creative figures of earlier times, such as Plato, Aristotle, Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, or Francis Bacon. For them the study and observation of the world around them, often referred to as “nature” or “the natural world,” was their source of inspiration, truth, and wisdom. In the absence of technology, “nature” was their laboratory. Using this laboratory, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations for much of modern physics and mathematics, as well as more “artistic fields” such as aesthetics, ethics, and political science. Leonardo, a devout “student of nature,” was a painter and sculptor, but he was also an engineer, inventor, and anatomist. Michelangelo was also a painter and sculptor, as well as a poet, but he also was an engineer, anatomist, and architect. Francis Bacon is considered to be the founder of modern scientific methods, as articulated in the *Novum Organum*, but he also had a brilliant command of English prose writing, as demonstrated in his *Essays*. As he says in Aphorism 1 of the *Novum Organum*: “Man can act and understand no further than he has observed, either in operation or in contemplation, of the method and order of nature.”*

*Any of these people would have been amazed if someone told him that clear boundaries exist between artistic and scientific thinking and creativity. What has in fact occurred during recent times, particularly the past century, has been an increasing emphasis on specialization, with is frequently encouraged by educational systems and the structure of government agencies that fund education, the arts, and the sciences. Particularly in Great Britain and other European countries, students must choose an area of specialization prior to applying to university, where they are tracked into specific disciplines such as literature, social sciences, law, medicine, physics, and mathematics. The American system is more flexible, but specialization is still encouraged. There is very little time for doing studies that might “bridge the schism” described by Snow. Implicit in this specialized organizational structure is the notion that arts and sciences are driven by fundamentally different ways of thinking – and ultimately creating...*

Andreasen, N.C. (2012) Creativity in art and science: are there two cultures?  
Dialogues Clin Neurosci. 2012 Mar, 14(1): 49-54. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3341649/>

**Marta Davidovich** I do not use the word “art” or “artistic” in terms of creativity – my own or others – unless the creator is someone who self-identifies as an artist. This relates to my humanistic stance of honoring my internal locus of evaluation (C. Rogers, 1961). The idea that ‘evaluation kills creativity’ is well documented in the literature. In my experience ‘external evaluation’ promotes conformity rather than originality when it is applied to personal creativity.

**Doug Cole** Marta Davidovich and that’s the whole issue with metrics driving policy and funding in education. A lot of collective creativity required to find an alternative.

**Marta Davidovich** I have searched dictionary definitions of creativity full-time for the last decade. I have yet to find one that is dynamic, descriptive, precise and actionable in a way that relates to a person (human) engaging in a process over time. Creativity is not static. It evolves through a process, not a product. I have found the current British English definition of creativity in the Oxford English Dictionary the closest because it relates to: “the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness”. The American English version is similar but shows an arts bias. It defines creativity as: “The use of imagination or original ideas, especially in the production of artistic work.”

**Nicole Kraller-Brown** Such a great discussion already! And I agree the terms are difficult to define because of the connotations they come with. Having said that, in relation to self-expression it may be that we refer to, draw on or use the arts to help us, because the arts have that function of connecting with others on an emotional level through empathy, understanding, love, compassion, or on the opposite end, disgust and shock – and every nuance and experience in-between.

**Marta Davidovich** Your suggestion certainly has merit, Nicole Kraller-Brown. There is no ‘right or wrong’ here. In my work, I have found students relate to the terms creative expression or expressive creativity more willing to engage in process. Art is a possible outcome if they choose to call it that. Since I teach “Awakening Creativity Potential for Personal and Professional Growth” more non-artists than artists are registering for it. I really encourage using the term or terms that feel right for you personally as well as your audience. I self-identify as creative and expressive. I do not self identify as an artist. When I share my expressive creativity, I am sharing an artifact of my creative process using materials within my reach. These works come together intuitively in the moment or over time. The collage below represents the ‘creative synthesis’ of my heuristic inquiry, the methodology I used for my doctoral research.

**Johanna Payton** I always go back to Ken Robinson’s definition of creativity (“original ideas with value”), and I do think creative self-expression is different to other forms. I might express myself in an argument, in the way I swim, in the way I teach a concept I’ve taught many times before, but those means of self expression are not necessarily novel, or have any real value beyond the moment. When I express myself creatively I’m in the old process of flow; when there’s a problem that requires a solution, or I’m inspired to do something I’ve never done before of my own design (in any field). Although I work in a “creative industry”, like others I’m desperate to move away from the idea that creativity = music, art, writing, etc.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Johanna Payton. A few minutes ago I came across a quote by the influential American Designer Charles Eames:

“It’s almost impossible to reconcile self-expression with the creative act”

After scrabbling around for a bit I found that the context was the foundational belief that underpinned his work that ‘design should not be an act of creative self-expression but rather a process of problem solving’. I am wondering whether there is something in this idea that is relevant to this discussion. Once we move away from

creativity in a spontaneous self-expression mode and enter a problem solving mode does a process other than self-expression take over? As a practitioner in the creative industries I would be interested in your thoughts and anyone else who works in the design field.

**Johanna Payton** Norman Jackson, this absolutely resonates with me. The process often starts with free, authentic, creative self expression – “the sky’s the limit” thinking. It’s there in my imagination, in my ideas book, or my pre-storyboard sketches. It’s a creative conversation with myself. But when I move to the next stage – if I believe my creative self-expression has value – I need to communicate it with others, and then briefs and boundaries come into play. To have value, my expression needs to make sense, to entertain, to have value to others. To solve a problem. My creative self-expression is the starting point, but I absolutely think the problem-solving mode kicks in, whether that’s because hiring a hot air balloon will just be too expensive, or because the language I’ve used to express myself creatively won’t suit the publication I’m writing for, but the idea it’s communicating has value to others. I think we often start with a creative goal that is a manifestation of our creative self expression, but reaching that goal means we need to tackle practical, social, financial parameters along the way to reaching it – and that shapes the idea constantly, and triggers problem-solving throughout that part of the process. You could probably map out the proportion of problem-solving and creative self-expression across any creative process and watch them ebb and flow, perhaps when they are in harmony, the process is the most rewarding, or feels the most successful?



*It is almost impossible to reconcile self expression with the creative act.*  
*Charles Eames Influential American Designer*

Underlying his work is the principle that design should not be an act of creative self-expression but rather a process of problem solving (Ostroff 2015)

*Ostroff D (2015) An Eames Anthology: Articles, Film Scripts, Interviews, Letters, Notes, and Speeches*

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Johanna Payton, for a wonderful and informative elaboration of your personal experience which helps me (and probably others) move forward in our understanding. My question arising from your explanation is – does it always begin with self-expression even when you are handed a design brief? Where does the self-expression begin? Is it when you read the brief and try to grasp the problem? And moving out of the design context into everyday life?

**Norman Jackson** Johanna Payton, I like this idea of an evolving dynamic that draws on the emotional and imaginative responses to a perceived situation – self expression? – to connect and grapple with a problem that also requires more systematic and disciplined thinking and reasoning from which further imaginings emerge. A merry dance perhaps. This intuitively feels like a living organic process that resonates with my own experiences in many different contexts. We will talk about the educational consequences of this discussion later in our process.

In today’s inquiry I am inviting people to share their working definitions of creativity. Do you work with a concept that embraces the sort of process you are describing above? Please share in today’s post.

Where does the creative self-expression begin? Is it when you read the brief and try to grasp the problem? Where does it end – when reasoning takes over? Join the discussion at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/creativeHE/>

**Marta Davidovich** I find self-expression free-flowing, and working for a client on a specific task more deliberate. I spent decades as a Creative Director in ad agencies and corporate settings. I believe doing work for a client takes it out of the realm of self-expression. The client sets parameters/priorities/guidelines and the context for the task, and I added my visionary thinking, ideation skills and marketing knowledge to the conversation

## **Working Definition of Creativity & Motivation for Creative Self-Expression**

If creative self-expression means *trying to be creative* we might get stuck here unless we unpack what being creative means. This requires either a working definition that can be applied to all situations of creative self-expression and/or concrete examples of practice in which creative acts can be appreciated, understood and explained. We are making the assumption that everyone participating in this discussion has a multitude of experiences of expressing themselves creatively and this is the experiential knowledge we are drawing on.

Today’s inquiries - thinking of specific situations where you have expressed yourself creatively:

**Q2** Do you have a concept or definition of creativity that explains your creative self-expression?

**Q3** What were the sources of your motivation to express yourself creatively? What factors or circumstances encouraged you to express yourself creatively?

**Lisa Ma** A kneejerk response as to what motivates me: I know I will feel better afterwards. I actually don’t have a huge drive to express myself creatively (it can be hard work), but I’m fully aware of the benefits to my sense of wellbeing and, when I produce something I’m proud of, to my long-term sense of self.

**Jennifer Willis** Does it matter, Lisa Ma, whether you received external approval of what you have produced?

**Lisa Ma** Not to me, really, unless it is something formal. Have to admit, though, that most of my creative acts are



for formal purposes, so I find it more difficult to get into the care-free zone. Good question, though, as not caring about the output can help with the act of creativity.

**Nikki Daly Q2:** Amabile's Componential Model of Creativity helps define creativity for me as it encompasses the social and psychological components for an individual to be creative. The theory is grounded with the definition of creativity as being the production of ideas or outcomes that are both novel and appropriate to some goal. I believe everyone has the ability to be creative. Creativity is often misunderstood as part of the arts and crafts but creativity can be anything from solving the problem of a wobbly table to creating a tangible piece of art.

## **“CREATIVITY CAN COME FROM ENCOUNTERS WITH DIFFERENCE.”**

Q3: what motivates me to be creative is having a goal. Whether that goal be an intrinsic motivation of satisfaction/achievement/peace or calm or the external motivation of having the created piece and/or the appreciation of others. Creative output for me has to be meaningful to me in some way. Whether it is a personal meaning or whether that meaning comes from creating or gaining reaction from others. In relation to the comments prior, approval from others, for me, is NOT a requirement.

Sometimes disapproval is the aim or goal for creativity, thus human reaction and response is required but not necessarily approval.

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Nikki Daly. You suggest that motivations derive from a number of potential sources both intrinsic and extrinsic. I wonder to what extent the source and balance of motivations changes as you progress through a project? And what role feedback from the environment you are working in plays a role in motivation as you strive to accomplish your goals.

**Doug Cole** For me personally I get great energy from bouncing ideas around with others. My whole career I have strived to try and be different, to develop and move things forwards. Living in Asia for a number of years I felt really super-charged that creativity side too. Living in a completely different culture things were just done differently and you had to have an open mind and adapt. It was a great experience and I loved the sheer variety that occurred every day, no two days the same! I have never been one to just continue with the status quo, not change for change sake, but to enhance the position or experience for others. I would say I probably have too much creativity at times, too many ideas and not enough time to make them all happen in practice. Not sure I am a natural completer finisher if that's the right terminology? Can you be uncontrollably creative? At what point does creativity become a distraction? Sorry Norman I may be doing exactly that on this thread!

**Lisa Ma** Agreed – creativity can come from encounters with difference. Applying different ideas to a new context can fire the creative spark. I've worked with lots of starters but not finishers and vice-versa.

**Doug Cole** Lisa Ma, we need a mix of both I think, that's what makes a good team.

**Simon Rae Q2:** Concept or working definition of creativity? No and yes. I've never consciously worked out a concept, theory or definition for myself, as Jennifer Willis says, I've always thought of myself as artistic (this was the 50s – I don't think we used the word creative then as we do now) and others labelled me as arty. Unfortunately, I didn't have any critical awareness/reflection and no-one close or at school to help me develop one. And at Art College everyone was in thrall to the late 60s 'anything goes' mantra.

So yes, I do have a working definition and it's basically that there is no definition. I am creative full-stop. Which isn't a good thing. I don't work well, or at all, if I'm asked to be creative. Any attempt of outside control makes me freeze. I'll not do anything until I want to.

Motivation? Well, the lockdown has been a great motivator, alongside the weather. I've been able to get out into the greenhouse and make something, but normally I'll just disappear and do something private. I've given up doing for people – I can't take any critical discussion about it and I just retract into my shell.

**Andrew Penaluna** The moment you define it – you limit it, or at least that's what I have been learning all these years. ;-)

**Marta Davidovich** I see definitions as launch pads. We need to start somewhere to begin our journey. A shared understanding of definitions is foundational. We don't need to agree, it simply shines a light on the other person's perspective. I firmly believe there is no 'be all, end all' definition of creativity. It is a complex, phenomenon-based construct (like love). Sometimes I write definitions of creativity to match my mood. Or to reflect emergent metaphors of creativity. I include 32 of my own definitions of creativity in my thesis. Plus a decade by decade listing of 75 diverse definitions of creativity, with an appendix citing 65 more. Along with 25 examples of implicit definitions from my prior study. That adds up to 197 and represents the largest collection in the literature. Being able to see all these perspectives can help spark new connections that feel right to you. Thanks for sparking this 'train of thought' for me, Andrew Penaluna!

## **I SEE DEFINITIONS AS LAUNCHPADS. WE NEED TO START SOMEWHERE TO BEGIN OUR JOURNEY.**

**Doug Cole** Andrew Penaluna, welcome to the group first off, it's great to see you in here. Andy is a good friend of mine from the world of enterprise and entrepreneurship – a space where I view him as a leading light! I will leave Andy to introduce himself properly at some point though. It's an interesting one because I know in my work in employability, the first step for me is always to define it, in context, related to the subject area / discipline, so that we have some idea what it is we are trying to develop, I would say the same for enterprise and entrepreneurship too. Yesterday, I tuned in to a webinar about resilience where the presenter also defined the term as a starting point. I don't see these definitions as needing to be tight or restrictive though, as Marta said, more of a starting point, a direction of travel, providing some kind of loose framework and objective for our learning. There's the opportunity here to be creative in how we define the term and in that sense I am not sure there is a single answer or a right or wrong, for me it's the defining process which is key, not necessarily the definition itself. As you know me very well Andy, I am slightly obsessed with language in my area of work and I see time and time again how there is so much misunderstanding and misconceptions out

there of what particular terms mean. For example being creative is about simply painting pictures and arts-related, which we know is simply not the case. So I think this defining stage, at least in a more fluid sense, is a key starting point for me, so that educators at what ever level they teach can go on to own and shape experiences that create appropriate learning opportunities to nurture this particular personal quality. Some pre-6am ramblings, hope it makes some sense and great to have you as part of the group again.

**Paul Kleiman** When I did my original research into creativity I asked individuals, via a survey, what words or phrases they used to describe creativity or being creative. When I analysed and categorised the responses and looked at verbs that people used, they came in the following order: Thinking, Making, Doing, Solving, Dreaming. I reckon that, though not exactly a definition, captures the spirit of what we're discussing.

**Marta Davidovich** This absolutely does capture the spirit, Paul Kleiman! Your participants shared words associated with their lived experience of creativity. In 2011, during my first course at Saybrook University, Dr Ruth Richards (my professor and mentor) challenged me to do a study. "Loving or fearing creativity? It's all in the definition" (Ockuly & Richards, 2013) was the result. I used social media and an on-line survey to ask: 1) What does the word creativity mean to you? Share your own personal definition. 2) Creativity is: \_\_\_\_\_ (type in the 1st word or words that come into your mind. 95% of the responses framed creativity as a process rather than a product.

## ***Working Definitions, Concepts & Processes***

**Norman Jackson** I have been thinking and writing about creativity as a phenomenon for over two decades and I don't think I have ever defined it, preferring to explore its many dimensions and features in a way that is not constrained by a single definition that forces me to exclude much of its complexity. I don't see creativity as a free-standing entity, preferring to see it as an entanglement of thinking and actions of a unique person with a unique history living in a unique world (the world as it has meaning to him/her). I believe that acts of creativity involve the full cognitive spectrum – perception, imagination and reasoning and the constellation of emotions that particular contexts, situations and circumstances evoke.

I have slowly worked my way towards an ecological understanding of creativity drawing on Tim Ingold's view of organisms and their environment. "Every organism has an environment: the organism shapes its environment and environment shapes the organism. So it helps to think of an indivisible totality of "organism plus [social-cultural-material] environment" – best seen as an ongoing process of growth and development"<sup>1</sup>. I think creativity and its expression lies in the process by which a person connects and becomes one with his/her world and the primal motivations for creative self-expression stem from this organic and innate desire to be connected and related to something that is bigger than ourselves and to grow and develop through this process.

For me, self-expression when suffused with creativity is my attempt to connect, relate and interact what I am thinking and feeling (my cognitive psychological world) with 'things' I care about and are interested in, in my environment usually to achieve a purpose – something I care enough about to spend time and energy doing. It is the way I become indivisible with my world as I extend my mind, through my body and the mediums, tools and techniques I am using into my environment in order to allow/enable the environment to enter me. In this way I change my environment and my environment changes me. In John Dewey's terms, I 'undergo'.

At the heart of this process is change or undergoing and at its most extreme (most creative) transformation and I have argued that 'Transformation' NOT 'Originality' is the core concept that should underlie the idea of creativity. After watching a TEDx talk by Greg Bennick<sup>2</sup> I adopted and adapted the definition he used as a pragmatic way of working with the idea.

"creativity is the process through which we take elements of [ourselves and] the world around us and transform them into something new that reflects what we want, what we need, what we can imagine [and in that process we transform ourselves and the world]"<sup>2</sup>

Engaging with the world in ways that involve my creativity is a dynamic emergent process and the imaginative, resourceful, inventive elements of the process are so entangled with thinking and behaviours that would not be considered creative, that I believe you have to see it in the whole being and doing, or making or accomplishing. Creativity must be but one element of practice and not the whole of it.

While I don't wish to define my creativity I think it is possible to describe the process and dynamic through which the phenomenon becomes manifest in a person's life and Carl Rogers notion of a creative process comes closest to capturing this ecological dynamic for me in his concept of a creative process, "the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, or circumstances of their life"<sup>3</sup>. This is a highly situated concept of creativity in which an individual's agency is stimulated or inspired by the affordances (directly perceived or imagined opportunities for action) they can find as they try to achieve something they value in particular contexts and situations, in their particular environment.

If you would like to find out more about these ways of viewing creativity, I am developing an ecological model for learning and practice within which creativity is embedded.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Sources***

- 1) Ingold, T. (2000) Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.
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- 3) Rogers, C.R. (1960) *On becoming a person*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p350.
- 4) Jackson N J (2019) *Exploring Learning Ecologies Chalk Mountain* : LULU <http://www.lulu.com/shop/norman-jackson/exploring-learning-ecologies/paperback/product-24288878.html>

**Paul Kleiman** Thank you, Norman Jackson, that is fascinating. Transformation is also at the centre of the conceptual map of creativity I created out of my research. In drawing the map I tried to capture, visually, by using overlapping ovals, the sense of fluidity and uncertainty.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Paul Kleiman. It is through studies like yours that I think we can push the idea that concepts of creativity in education (as well as everyday life) are best served through the idea of transformation – since the moral purpose of education is to transform people and their lives. After all one of the characteristics of creativity is taking ideas, materials and other resources and transforming them into something new.

**Johanna Payton** Q2: Like Paul, during the course of my research last year I created a (much more rustic - apols!) conceptual map of the creative process, with a starting point of Ken Robinson's definition of creativity as "a process, not an event". In terms of creative self-expression, my definition takes in making and doing with passion/personal skill, individual thoughts/actions and, perhaps crucially, intuition. Q3: Inspiration. It comes from so many different places/sources. My partner, my son, my colleagues, students, films, music...it's everywhere. But there's also a constant 'yearning', from the centre of myself, to create. Making things makes me feel alive, so there's a constant need to do it. Perhaps I subconsciously, constantly seek inspiration to feed that need.

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Johanna Payton. I think maps are more useful tools for exploring the idea of creative self-expression than definitions (being an ex-geologist I would say that wouldn't I). I like that you have introduced the idea of flow and wonder whether self-expression is the vehicle for flow – ourselves flowing into the world, interacting with it and the results flowing back into us and changing us – perhaps satisfying an emotional need.

**Johanna Payton** Norman Jackson, your point around "an entanglement of thinking" really resonates with me. If I \*had\* to define the 'creative' in creative self-expression, it might be when that entanglement of thinking yields clarity (thanks to intuition?). Then I can articulate what my idea is (with myself), communicate it with others and even turn it into something tangible.

**Norman Jackson** Johanna Payton, but sometimes (often?) this process is emergent, although we might be clear on the next step we only know what you are seeking when we have done it? We might then construct a pathway backwards and then use it to convince ourselves that we knew all along what we were doing. It all depends on whether we read creativity forwards or backwards.

**Johanna Payton** Norman Jackson, possibly. I'm just playing with the idea that 'self-expression' is the process and the 'creative' is the end result (if there is one). Self expression certainly allows you to seek/discover but sometimes you never actually get to the point of 'finding' anything.

**Norman Jackson** Johanna Payton, it would seem to be the means to explore, play, experiment, discover and perhaps create.

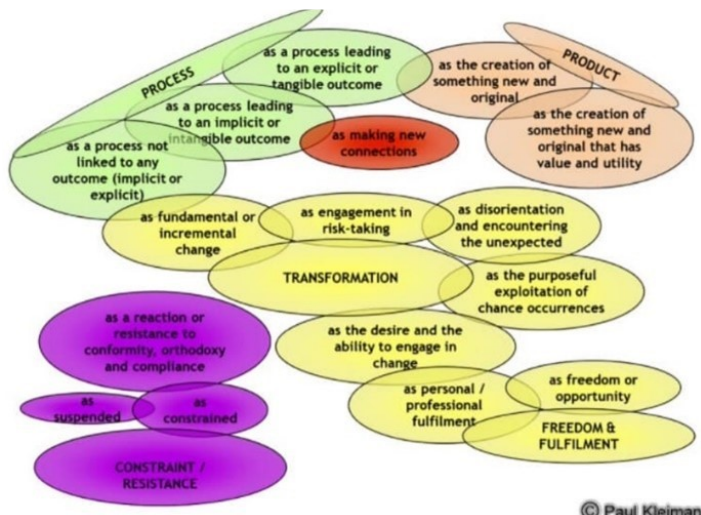


intuition. I'm also delighted to think about how perspectives may shift by understanding creativity 'forwards or backwards' – brilliant, Norman Jackson!

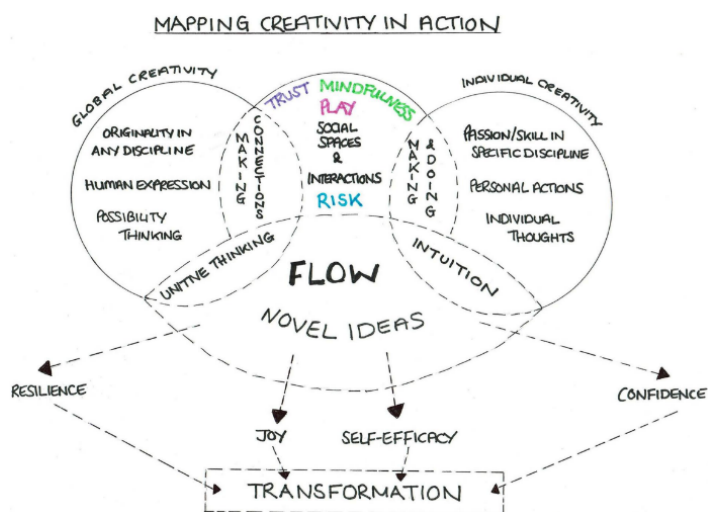
**Doug Cole** When I say 'defining' I probably mean more exploring the features of what is involved as you say, Norman, rather than a cast iron or restrictive definition as such. In practice I would talk more in terms of creating models and what this might look like in context, but this for me still is a form of defining what the terms are about and as a way of then explaining and exploring this with others?

**Andrew Penaluna** The big question is at the top right of Paul Kleinman's chart in my view – do you wish to have demonstrable value as an outcome? This is a key question, for example, when discussing who is an artist and who is a designer because the 'value' is created (or not) is evidenced at different points of the process / journey.

The flow (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi) of creative thought is influenced by emotion (Kounios) too of course, and how



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**Jennifer Willis** ... or destroy?

**Norman Jackson** Jennifer Willis, sometimes its necessary to destroy in order to create something different.

**Marta Davidovich** I love the emergent aspect, as well as gaining clarity though both embodied 'feelings' and



well we have learned to trigger our own associative neurological responses.

Based on the premise that creative thought has to precede innovation, we did an interesting experiment with 29 countries for the OECD's 360 Enterprise project – we looked at how differently teachers looked at things when we asked them to separate the evaluation of learning into two 'I' categories. Were they assessing implementation (to known 'correct' answers) or were they assessing performance related to innovation (assumes novelty, newness of neurological connections in the mind of the learner)?

To cut to the chase, when a balance was attempted the teachers became far more aware of what they were doing in their individual contexts, because out of context evaluations fall short.

**Norman Jackson** Andrew Penaluna, perhaps when we bring creative self expression down to an individual's small world where they are both the creator and evaluator, then such things as value, usefulness, appropriateness and novelty for a context become highly subjective and personal rather than socially judged as being significantly different to the norm in the prevailing culture.

**Marta Davidovich** Norman Jackson – thank you for bringing this perspective into the conversation. My definition relates to personal creativity. In my experience, it develops with practice and persistence over time. I find developing an internal locus of evaluation is nutritive, generative and appropriate. In arts-based and expressive creativity related research, external evaluation and/or labelling is seen as something that can steal power from the creator and cause damage. The 'expert' in personal creativity is the creator. Natalie Rogers suggests: "We need to find ways to recapture our spontaneous freedom of expression, without looking to others for approval"(1993, p. 18). She also noted: "the key to unleashing our creative energy is finding the deepest sense of approval within ourselves"(1993, p. 21).

**Andrew Penaluna** Norman Jackson, if we take things that simply, yes, but if we factor in the perceived values of others, as with enterprise education, these aspects of subjectivity change, though subjectivity is itself impacted by the context of timing.

The evidence thus far (Jung-Beeman) on individuals thinking creatively suggests that neurologically speaking, we have to permit / give permissions for neurones to act in a more child-like way to side-step the inhibitory and promote the excitatory dendrite connections. This doesn't happen naturally in stressful situations, though can be learned apparently.

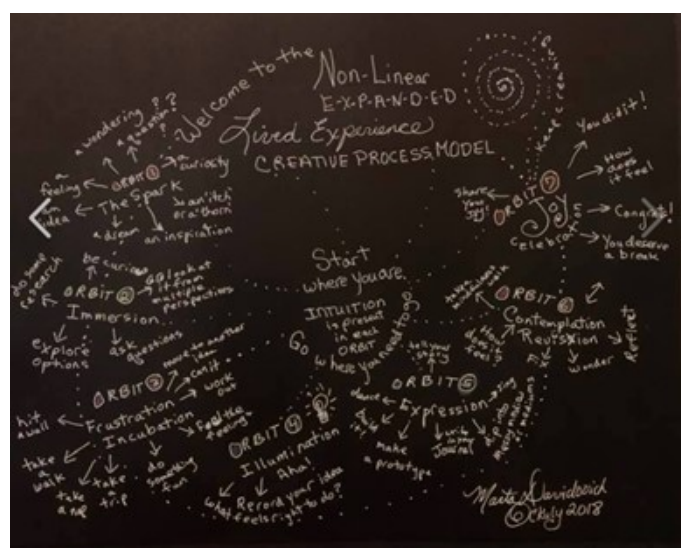
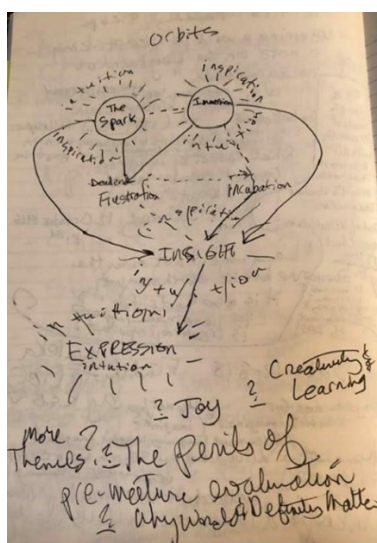
Without this we don't make new links in our minds, and without that, where are we with creativity?

**Andrew Penaluna** The contexts of situations and person(s) as well as time, together with the way people perceive and make use of affordances (their perceptions of opportunities for action) in their everyday life, all add up to making personal creativity entirely subjective. Only an individual knows what his or her norms of thinking and behaviour are and therefore know when they are thinking and acting outside these norms. Even if no-one else believes that what they are thinking or doing or have produced is creative, if they believe it is, then it is so. Which is why our own self concepts of creativity are so important.

These thoughts and words by Vygotsky's underpin the idea of creative self-expression and personal creativity:

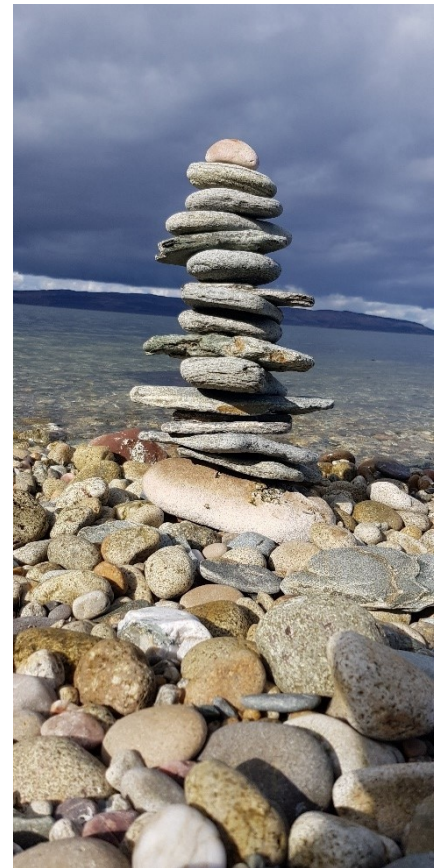
*"Any human act that gives rise to something new is referred to as a creative act, regardless of whether what is created is a physical object or some mental or emotional construct that lives within the person who created it and is known only to him."*

**Marta Davidovich** My non-linear creative process model – from beginning sketches to final hand-drawn version.



## Mediums for Creative Self-Expression

Self-expression requires a medium(s) and media – the vehicle(s), means and tools of expression.<sup>1</sup> According to Ken Robinson<sup>2</sup> “If you’re doing something creative, you have to be working in a medium. My experience is that the most creative people love the medium that they work in. Musicians love the sounds they make. Writers love words. Mathematicians love the abstractions that numbers make possible. Engineers and architects love building things.”



**Q4 What mediums / media do you use for creative self-expression? Do you experiment with other mediums?**

**Q5 Why or how did this/these medium(s) become important to your creative life?**

**Q6 Have you developed particular knowledge and skills in order to make creative use of these mediums?**

Questions for today's inquiry:

1. McGinness M. (2018) Find Your Medium, Choose Your Media <https://lateralaction.com/articles/medium-media/>
2. Robinson, K. (2007) Fresh Perspective: Creativity and Leadership: Sir Ken Robinson in Conversation with Russ Volckmann Available on line: <http://integralleadershipreview.com/5377-fresh-perspective-creativity-and-leadership-sir-ken-robinson-in-conversation-with-russ-volckmann/>

**Jennifer Willis** Nowadays, the media I use most for creative self-expression are cognitive (does this count as a medium?) and linguistic.

As a child, I threw myself into anything creative: in those days, and as the granddaughter of two skilled needle women, I sewed, knitted, embroidered, crocheted and did everything else you could imagine with needles, wool, fabric etc. I drew and painted, even went to a Saturday class when 12; I took ballet lessons and dreamed of being a professional dancer; I made miniature Japanese gardens in bowls, created artefacts from stones and shells, wrote copiously; I collected and pressed flowers, there were no boundaries to my creativity and joy in making something. You will note the absence of music: I had declined piano lessons in the wake of seeing a film in which a brilliant musician died young! But here is stray into question 5.

How, then, did I ‘evolve’ from this voracious creative spirit into the person I am now, where my creativity is reduced to my intellectual and linguistic skills? Partly, it was down to that very precocious intellect that I gradually eliminated things. I knew that very few people make it as a ballerina, and that I did not have sufficient talent to be one of them. I have written in a previous forum of how my aspirations to be an artist were quashed by a dismissive teacher (at the very Saturday class I mentioned). I continued with my needlework throughout my life, always having something in hand as I ‘watched’ television. Until, that is, nature intervened. After decades of use, my hands are now riddled with arthritis, so I had to abandon this medium of creativity. I moved on from creating miniature gardens to tending my own, ‘real’ gardens. My drawing became of source of adolescent amusement as accompanied my teaching with sketches on the board or home-made flashcards.

In other words, my creative expression was gradually refined by external factors, self-awareness and physiology as I aged. I retained my ability to write, and used advancing technologies to facilitate this, first learning to touch type on a typewriter then graduating to the electronic keyboard. The invention of desktop computing and the internet has been central to my creative expression for the last 20 or more years.

Writing draws on my analytical and intellectual skills, as well as my fascination with words, their sounds and combinations. In the past, I have received external approval of my poetic work, which has perhaps encouraged me to continue, though I do not seek public approval for such creativity these days. I spend hours on end absorbed with work on the computer. This allows me to bring together academic, linguistic and visual dimensions and has been most evident in outputs such as Creative Academic Magazine and Lifewide Magazine, both of which I edited until recently. Every year, I produce a calendar for my father, using photographs of his flowers and garden. Whenever we have been on holiday, I make an album full of pressed flowers, shells, photographs and other realia. I have researched my family history in depth and printed several books on this. Clearly, some of these creations invite extrinsic approval, but they are essentially sources of immense intrinsic pleasure.

This brings me to question 6, how I had to acquire new skills and knowledge in order to produce these outputs. Most computer learning has been self-taught, with the occasional insight into shortcuts from colleagues when I was still working. You will all be familiar with the frustrations technology can cause, but I am a lifelong and lifewide learner, so my creativity is nourished by the opportunity to learn new skills.

I cannot finish without returning to the question of teaching. For teaching is, and has been for 45 years, a magnificent opportunity to be creative. Every interaction is different and new, calling on creativity not only in what and how something is taught, but on the ability to keep fresh, adapt and LEARN.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Jennifer Willis, for a great description or map of your mediums for creative self-expression. Perhaps, as well as skill, there is also a question about the time you invest in a medium in order to explore and exploit its creative potential?

You open up very nicely how the mediums we use for creative self-expression evolve over time as we inhabit new circumstances, new roles, new opportunities are afforded, and new interests, needs or constraints emerge.

**“IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA AGE THERE ARE SO MANY MORE PLATFORMS AND ‘CHANNELS’ FOR SHARING SELF-EXPRESSION/ CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION THAN OUR PARENTS HAD.”**

Perhaps the mediums we use to express ourselves evolve in parallel to our “selves” and the technological changes in the world around us.

I haven’t read the article but it looks relevant to your question – is thought a medium? “Thinking in words: language as an embodied medium of thought.” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24943737>

**Johanna Payton** Q4: Simply put, words and pictures. I’m a writer by trade and I love words, so my notes, essays, features, scribbles, etc, all allow me to self-express. I use many platforms – from a physical notebook to social media – and I really enjoy experimenting with technology, even though, when I first encounter it, I’m as intimidated by it as the next Gen X-er. I believe creative self-expression pushes me through those reservations. Because I write about fashion and lifestyle, images are just as important. My Instagram channel is a real outlet for my creative self-expression, and I’m very keen on video, too.

Q5: I’ve been blogging since 2003 and every year – every month – has brought new challenges and new ideas. Keeping up with digital change is exciting, inspirational and it gives me a constant (if demanding) creative challenge. Blogging in particular became important because it was my ‘channel’ to the world. I was a blogger before I

was a journalist; it transformed my creative life.

Q6: Absolutely. Every digital platform I have used – from Blogger to Teams (in the last few weeks, like many HE colleagues) demand fresh learning. I’ve developed so much knowledge about photography; how to operate a CMS, how to make words resonate across a digital platform. As a writer, I’m constantly learning new words and phrases to keep up with the digital audience. The constant change, the constant learning, is what makes it so creative, and so much fun.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Johanna Payton. I guess in the social media age there are so many more media platforms and ‘channels’ for sharing self-expression/creative self-expression than our parents had. Do you think this has encouraged more people to engage in creative self-expression as an integral part of popular culture? Perhaps equally importantly, has it encouraged people to share the products of creative self-expression with audiences of people they do not know? Has social media encouraged not only a culture of participation but a culture of gifting creative self-expressions?

**Johanna Payton** Norman Jackson, I think so, yes. For so many young people, Instagram and now TikTok have become the main channel for them to express themselves creatively – and the reach of those channels is world-wide. The caveat is that young people often judge each other and themselves by the comments and likes they get, which may hamper ‘freedom’ (so prominent on the creative self-expression word cloud from the previous thread). And because algorithms decide how visible you are on social media, and the platform rates and shapes what kind of content is most popular, creative freedom can be curtailed. That really worries me.

**Marta Davidovich** Johanna, it is refreshing to me to see your response! I consider myself a ‘word person’ and I have held a life-long fascination with writing, in addition to being an early adopter of social media as a vehicle for sharing inspiration and encouragement of personal artifacts of self-expression. My posts were crafted explicitly to invite conversations about personal views of creativity as well as sharing personally meaningful forms of creative self-expression. In this vein I enjoy creating safe spaces for sharing personal creativity with joy. I look forward to exploring your work further.

**Doug Cole** Johanna Payton and Marta Davidovich, that’s really interesting. I would say my creativity comes through much more in the spoken word, although models and frameworks have also become an area I am slightly obsessed with. I hope that this will shift more to a written form over the next few years. My ideas and thoughts I naturally express through my work, in daily interactions with colleagues and more widely the critical friends I have connected with over the years. I am always thinking about the future and what next, the art of the possible perhaps sums this personal frame of reference best. I enjoy testing and socialising these ideas with others and have used the fairly frequent keynotes I have given as a space to share my thinking with others, a way of sense checking for myself, whether the creativity behind these ideas could then be translated through into practice and in my work. It’s really interesting to reflect on where this creativity resides in our lives. I guess this again has a fluidity about it, but if I was to pin it down, this is where I would best place it for now. With language around employability being another personal obsession I have, I certainly hope to move more into your natural spaces in the future.

**Jennifer Willis** I have been reflecting on a very sensitive example of ‘creativity’ which I hope will not cause offense. It does, for me, raise some uncomfortable questions about creativity, especially in the realm of ideology.

To commemorate the liberation of the concentration camps 75 years-ago, ITV last night aired a programme, ‘Return to Belsen’, in which Jonathan Dimbleby retraced his father’s footsteps. His father, Richard, was an outstanding, renowned journalist, who audio-recorded his experience of accompanying the British troops during their liberation of Belsen. In the programme, he interviewed many survivors of the Holocaust, most now in their late-80s and 90s.

Richard’ Dimbleby’s original commentary is a masterpiece of moving prose, born of the horrific evidence he was confronting in the camp. His son’s commemoration is similarly impressive as we hear the stories of these amazing survivors. This work is, itself, a reminder of the paradox of beauty arising from suffering, the Phoenix rising from the flames, if you like. The power of the human mind to make something beautiful out of even the most appalling material. This is one dimension of my thought.

Another, though, was that Hitler undoubtedly created something, an ideology, which was enacted using the most cruel of means. My question is, does this still count as something creative? I realise we are brought back to matters of values. Can we step outside the detail of what this ideology comprised, and judge impartially whether



we can term his ideals 'creative'? Are there some media (here human life) that are just not acceptable platforms for experimentation/creativity? <https://www.itv.com/hub/return-to-belsen/10a0080a0001>

**Johanna Payton** Jennifer Willis, such an interesting point and I would say yes – it was creative. There's a general perception that all creativity is positive, but that absolutely can't be the case.

**Marta Davidovich** This is a big conversation in the literature. It is often referred to as 'the dark side of creativity'. The humanistic perspective as framed by Carl Rogers "makes no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' creativity (1961, p. 350). He cites the example of one person discovering a way to cure pain, and another person using it to develop a way to torture prisoners. The old adage is 'a hammer can be used as a tool or a weapon.' This applies to Einstein, Galileo and Copernicus as well. My perspective is: Creativity does not cause evil.

**Norman Jackson** There is quite a lot of literature exploring the idea of 'malevolent creativity' – production of innovative and novel solutions with the express intent of harming others. Malevolent creativity is everywhere – crime, terrorism, fraud, general deceit and dishonesty. Perhaps the question for us is "do we ever stray into this territory?" [https://www.academia.edu/4236122/Understanding\\_Malevolent\\_Creativity](https://www.academia.edu/4236122/Understanding_Malevolent_Creativity)

**Paul Kleiman** Jennifer Willis, when I did my PhD one of my colleagues was the Head of Education for the Prison Service. I remember her saying that some the most brilliant, talented and creative people she knew were serving long and life sentences in Category A prisons!

**Jennifer Willis** I suspect that if I could go back in time and view the children who ended up in 'sin bins' at school, I might find many of them were the same. Confirmation of brilliance being anarchic?

**Johanna Payton** Paul Kleiman, this immediately conjures up a vision of Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor, "the greatest criminal mind of our time".

**Lisa Ma** Your musings took me back to my MA in Cultural Studies, Jennifer Willis. One of the questions we discussed was "Can there be any art after Auschwitz?"

**Jennifer Willis** I was inspired when I read psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's book *Search for Meaning*. For those who don't know Frankl, he was a doctor and, as a Jew, he was incarcerated in several camps during the Holocaust. How he managed to survive and still find meaning in life is truly amazing. It is a reminder to us all not to give up – make the most of our lives and we can conquer the evil we have experienced. This quotation gives a flavour of his philosophy:

"Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible."

– Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

**Lisa Ma** Wonderful. It's one of my favourite books. I keep it by my bed and his message is regularly in my consciousness. Imagine going to Frankl for therapy – to discuss problems with work, though. "OK, I'll get my coat now!"

**Marta Davidovich** I have always been fascinated by words. I was a voracious reader (autobiographies and inspiring nonfiction) and writer of stories and personal reflections from a young age. I treasured my dictionary and kept a notebook nearby at all times. It was natural for me to choose a 'fossil record' means of collecting my dissertation data. Using heuristic self-search inquiry, I filled 24, 200-page research journals (4,800 pages of data) sharing details and expressive artifacts of my unfolding lived experience of creativity in real time. In these journals I share many different forms of self-expression and expressive creativity. These included flow writing, collages, poems, sketches and mandalas. All were spontaneous expressions that evolved in the moment. I shared my intuitions, fears, joys and personal 'knowings' related to creativity from the perspective of my lifelong learning. The key finding of this immersion follows.

**Marta Davidovich** This word cloud shares my new definition of explicitly human (person-centered) creativity. It is surrounded by words from the 500 word Lexicon of words associated with the lived experience of creativity I also developed. This definition relates to personal creativity. It is foundational and applies across the lifespan. It also differentiates human creativity from nonhuman creativity. The words in and around this graphic have a second objective of increasing self-identification with creativity. It is the first dynamic, descriptive, precise, and actionable definition of creativity explicitly developed to inspire and encourage personal engagement in creativity in 2020 and beyond. After sharing it with peers, I received an email from Marci Segal. She worked for seven years to get World Creativity and Innovation Day officially designated a day (April 15) and week included in the United Nations calendar of international events. She asked me for permission to use this new definition and I was honoured to grant it.

**Marta Davidovich** The last paragraph of my dissertation is titled: An Invitation. It reads: "No definition of creativity is the be all, end all. It is one perspective Use it. Challenge it. Adapt it. Play with it. Try it on for size. Improve it. I would love to hear the definitions that inspire you to take creative action or invite you to step into the process of creating with joy. The world needs more creativity encouragers, awakers, and influencers. Who you ARE is creative. What is the future your are imagining? I invite you to join this conversation."





**Jennifer Willis** What an achievement, Marta Davidovich! You must be very proud, and are now having a global reach. Your word cloud is reminiscent of many of the words that have recurred in the current conversation.

**Marta Davidovich** Thank you, Jennifer! I am proud to have this definition out in the world and starting new conversations. I also noticed many connections with the current conversation as well. If anyone is interested in a copy of the entire lexicon or my full dissertation – I am happy to share.

**Jennifer Willis** That is very generous, thank you, Marta Davidovich. I would love to read more, as I am sure would others.

**Simon Rae** Q4: Mostly paper and pencils, biros, pens, and more lately an iPad using the Bamboo Paper app. But I was lucky, although I disliked school intensely it had a well-endowed art room in which I spent far too long. I was able to try (along with usual paper and pencil) oxyacetylene welding, ceramics – throwing and slabbing pots, and kiln building, life drawing, and relief printing using a fabulous old press. And writing this I realise how privileged I was, because this great start didn't stop. I went to Art College where in the first year we tried wood working, printing, ceramics, metal work, photography and film. Unfortunately, I wasn't especially good at any one of these mediums. OK, competent, but not so good as to make me think to finish anything. I spent more time doing light shows with another student for bands than perfecting my skills. Same

story while I worked in Educational Technology for 40 years with access to computers. I did some computer art, but not enough to specialise. So these days it's paper and pencil!

**Q5:** I guess it's down to paper and pencil – that medium has been with me now for 60+ years and I can't think of life without being able to scribble a quick doodle/sketch/idea. I was in Bart's hospital once for six months after a RTA and complications and one of the first things I asked for when I woke up was a sketch book and pencil!

**Q6:** After 60 years of practice I can scribble pretty well. My pencil control is fairly awesome, at least for the type of drawing I have grown to love doing. And I have an insatiable interest in other artist's work, especially their drawing.

**Norman Jackson** Hi Simon Rae, a wonderful entanglement of all manner of mediums, media and tools. I am sure you have put the 10,000hrs in over and over again to hone your imagination and skills.

I marvel at the simplicity of the core skills and technologies that seem to persist at the core of many people's creative self-expression – language/words-writing (paper-pen although the media have expanded), thinking visually, drawing (paper-pencil although the media have expanded).

**Simon Rae** I forgot to mention a couple of helpers/muses that I seem to have attracted in the greenhouse recently. There were a few bits that I pruned off a bush in the garden that just refused to lie down, and then a sharp knife later they had all developed a life and personality of their own. There's one, a footballer s/he tells me, that has perfected a 'stop/turn/flick' movement that would leave Johan Cruyff on the floor (although s/he is prone to self-aggrandisement, the others have her/I'm a yellow cross garter stocking). Another has not only a well stuffed Rastafarian hat but a matching colours body stocking and glitter toenail polish, much to the envy of the third one who doesn't say or do a lot but is always underfoot looking at whatever you're doing. S/he has got a lovely set of matching socks though, mind you, having said that, I'm not sure what they're matching? I'll maybe get them to write their life stories up sometime.



**Holly Warren** Q4: Paper and recyclable material especially plastic. Paper is alive and belongs to the present but has its roots in human history. Plastic is a fossil it belongs to our past but discovered in our present.

**Q5:** I have always been surrounded by paper and now recycled materials are embedded in our lives. I try to bring these together as I do with other aspects of my life.

**Q6:** I explore these materials and see how they behave when exposed to my thinking. When I learn more about myself I know more about the materials I use. Researching like-minded artists is a must.



**Paul Kleiman** Q4: The more I think about this the more complex it gets. Some of the answers are obvious, eg, playing the piano, particularly when I am improvising. But then I think my garden is possibly an expression of my creativity, even when I put together a PowerPoint presentation (visual images, animations, etc) that is an expression of my creativity. I know my daughter finds her creative self-expression in the wonderful cakes she makes but also when, as a teacher, she's putting together lesson plans and then enacting them with a class.

**Norman Jackson** Exactly, Paul Kleiman. There is potential for creative self-expression in so many places. I am sure we take many of them for granted as they become subsumed in just 'doing stuff'. Perhaps this raises the question of dispositions – do you think that some people have an attitude that leads them to suffuse everything they do with a creative spirit while others are more content to follow well-trodden paths?

## The Lifewide Dimension of Creative Self-Expression

Creative self-expression is something an individual does for themselves. It may involve others and be in the service of others, and the results may be shared with others, but the significant subject is 'self'. The focus for today's inquiry is, where in our life do we express ourselves creatively? You might simply say 'everywhere' but that would not really advance our understanding. We will use the lifewide learning framework to map out the places and spaces in our life in which we feel we are able to express ourselves creatively.

Lifewide learning recognises that no matter what our age or circumstances, we simultaneously inhabit a number of different spaces – like work or education, running a home, being a member of a family and or caring for others, being involved in a club or society, playing sport, pursuing an interest or hobby, travelling and taking holidays and looking after our own wellbeing mentally, physically and spiritually. Using this framework as a guide:

**Q7** In which parts of your everyday life do you regularly engage in creative self-expression, and why are these spaces important for this activity?

**Q8** Are there particular characteristics about these life-spaces that encourage and facilitate creative self-expression?

**Q9** Do you have a daily or other regular routine through which you express yourself creatively and/or are your experiences more episodic, spontaneous and opportunistic?

To find out more about lifewide learning and education please visit <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/>

**Andrew Penaluna** The framework is helpful, and also reminds me of Dan Pink's work on motivation.

**Q7:** I deliberately question something different every day and make a point of challenging it through alternative perspectives in my own mind at least.

**Q8:** Using 'what if' argumentation / scenarios, is my usual 'context'.

**Q9:** I keep a diary (as did all my students) on the memory type that initiated the thought, so for example was it associative, episodic, semantic or whatever?

I developed the technique during the early 2000s as part on my PhD, where I challenged the Oxford Dictionary of Art's perspectives on the invention of the airbrush, which I proved was wrong by about 20 years.

My student's diaries and the supportive feedback encouraged me to research brain development, which is itself a fascinating fast developing science.

You've me reflecting on the roots of this, and I am sure it evolved through being an airbrush artist where I was emerged in the craft and had plenty of time to think!

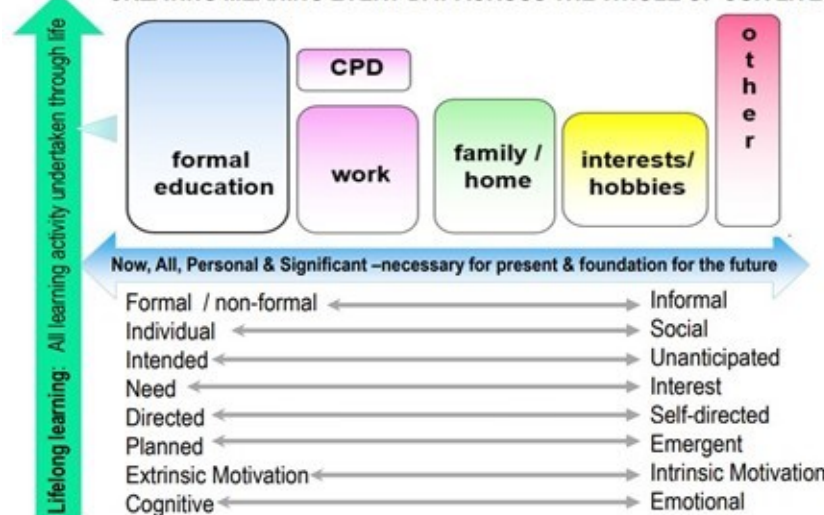
**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Andrew Penaluna. You raise an interesting question on the relationship between motivation and creativity. Do you think that opportunities for being creative in one part of your life enthruse you or build confidence to be creative in other parts of your life?

**Marta Davidovich** I love that you proved the Oxford Dictionary wrong, Andrew. I would love to hear about that process.

**Andrew Penaluna** It is a very long story Marta, but starts with the premise that history is usually written by the winners. I have a good understanding of intellectual property law (one of my jobs is advising the UK Intellectual

### LIFEWIDE LEARNING - PARTICIPATING IN A WORLD IN FORMATION

CREATING MEANING EVERY DAY ACROSS THE WHOLE OF OUR LIVES





Property Office) so I started with that because every new invention should acknowledge prior patents, and the patent is effectively only granted for the new creative connection. This way you can constantly step backwards to find prior creative connections that informed new discoveries.

I also had some luck as I challenged a specialist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Margaret Holben Ellis, who also happens to run NYU's Conservation Centre. She said, 'if you can prove I am wrong to my students, I will support your study'. I did and she did, so suddenly I had access to resources that I never thought possible.

I also took a brave step of offering my expertise to Kodak Museum (George Eastman House), as they trained conservators of photographs, many of which were retouched by airbrush. Suffice to say that also opened many doors – as they had believed the history books until I came along.

When Norman talks about confidence in different scenarios, I guess this may illustrate a little of my own journeys?

**Marta Davidovich** Andrew Penaluna, having confidence makes a huge difference. Thank you for sharing all the connections that help you along the way. I am wondering if you ever felt your intuition played a role in leading you to these connections, or does 'random' luck feel more accurate?

**Jennifer Willis Q7:** My creativity these days is conditioned by the fact that I am retired, yet still like to keep engaged with academia.

My computer is central to my life. It is here that I interact with others such as this community, exchanging and developing views. Until latterly, I edited CAM and Lifewide Magazines, which entailed many hours of work. As I wrote a few days ago, this enables me to bring together intellectual and creative skills such as design.

My computer plays a large part in teaching, too. I have the absolute joy and privilege of teaching motivated children of all ages in a private tutorial setting. These children motivate me to create for them and I hope, in turn, that they are motivated to create more as a result. It is a constant, 2-way process. I produce materials for them and they apply their creativity in response.



A third dimension of my computer-life is in the work I do with my husband. Formally, this is evidenced in the workshops and presentations we co-create: he is very imaginative, producing wonderful ideas, whereas my role is more applied – I translate these ideas into slides and papers.

Inevitably, creativity seeps into many less formal dimensions of my life. Today, for instance, I have been working in my garden, striving to make it more orderly and attractive. When I make salads, I let my creativity respond to the ingredients at hand (a bit like Christopher Tomlinson's porridge art). No two dishes are ever the same. I want them to look enticing as well as taste good.

In this period of self-isolation, my creativity is also being challenged by how to keep my nearly 94 year-old father when I live over 100 miles away from him. He lives alone and is just recovering from a stay in hospital and convalescence. One form of creativity lies in my ability to create albums and carry out further family research for him. More prosaically, though, creativity lies in the space afforded by a daily 1-hour telephone conversation.

**Q8:** Most of these activities occur either in my head (wherever I may be) or in my study, where I have surrounded myself with books, photos and memorabilia from our overseas travels. I am very tidy and organised, so I prefer my study to be neat, but I have the capacity to shut off my ears and other senses and become totally engaged with my activity even if there is chaos around me.

Obviously, at a practical level, I need the resources and equipment necessary to achieve my aims. Technology has been an important boon for me.

**Q9:** Generally, my acts of creativity are more sporadic, though I do spend hours each day at my computer. I don't like being 'forced' to create. At the moment, I am keeping a daily record of events and my feelings during the pandemic. I must admit, I find this a chore. The creative bit will come later, when I can look back and analyse this.

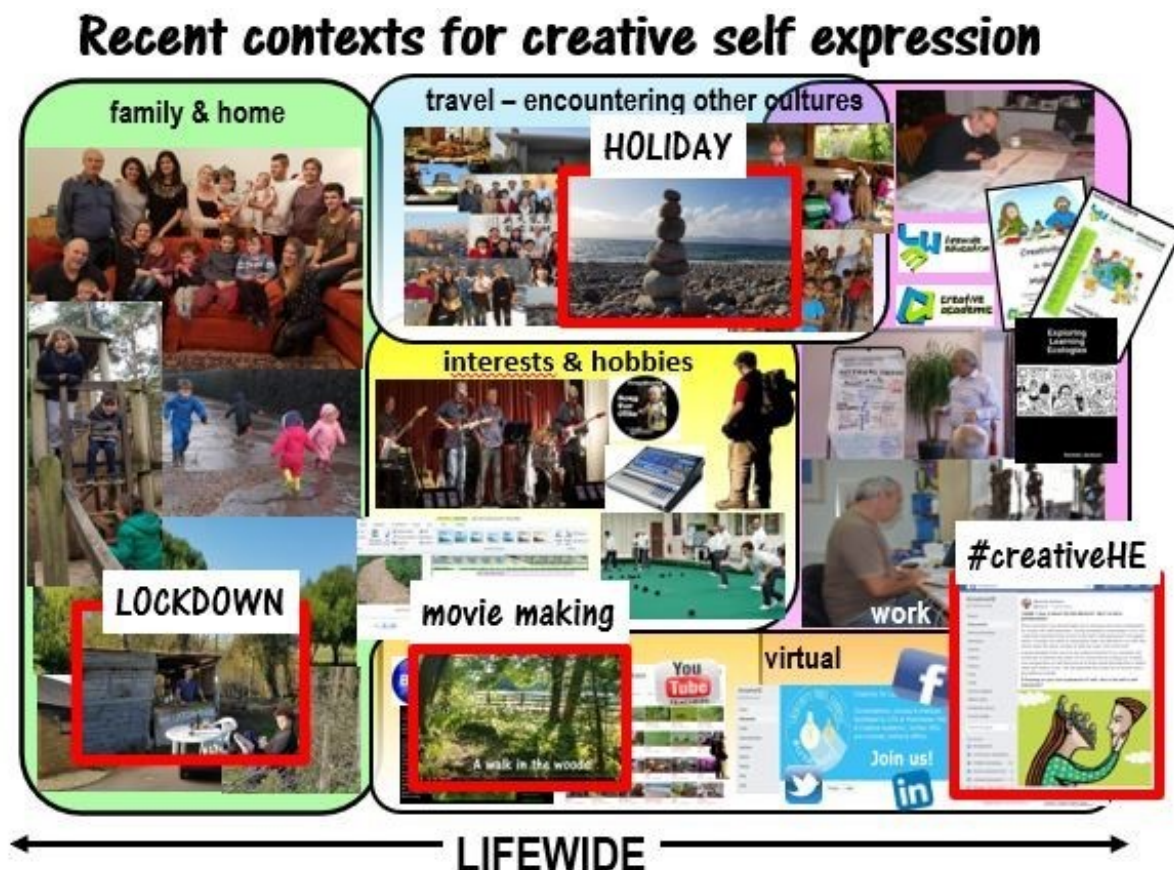
Fortunately, though, I am self-motivated in the selfish way we talked of last week. It is the intrinsic pleasure derived from the process of creating that drives me, perhaps more than the product created.

The exception to this would be the daily interaction I have with my father. For practical reasons, it is better to do this by the clock.

In sum, my creativity these days is very much of the mini and small variety. I have always been a workaholic, so work and hobbies have always been inseparable.

Looking at Norman's 8 spectrum themes, I could easily locate myself. I wonder if it would be an idea to convert this into a 5-point (or whatever other number) table and ask everyone to locate themselves for each theme? I will happily collate responses. What do you think, Norman Jackson?

**Norman Jackson Q7:** Building on Jenny's contribution which reveals her lifewide commitment to creative self-expression I provide a map of the main spaces and places in my everyday life. Like Jenny, I am retired but I spend a significant amount of time working for my two enterprises 'Lifewide Education' and 'Creative Academic' both provide me with plenty of opportunity to write, present, facilitate workshops and on-line conversations such as this one. I consider myself to be a writer and writing is my most important medium for creative self-expression. I also enjoy creating diagrams and illustrations to complement my writing. I edit two illustrated magazines and these provide me with excellent mediums for exploring and communicating ideas. The other spaces in my map are family and home, travel – some of it for work, some for pleasure – playing in a band, recording music and making short movies. All of these spaces provide me with ample opportunity for creative self-expression most of which is only meaningful to me but some of it – relating to scholarship and research – contributes to the domain of learning and education, and has meaning for people working in the field.



In the last few weeks I have engaged in what I would call creative self-expression in three parts of my life. In early March my wife and I went on a tour of western Scotland. During the trip I felt inspired to leave my mark on the landscape and made some stone towers. After photographing them I made a movie of the six towers I had made and posted it on YouTube. For the last two weeks, like everyone else in the UK, the family have been on lockdown. To entertain ourselves I suggested that we make a pub in the garden, we adapted a shed that was falling down and, thanks to the warm spring weather, it quickly became a focal point for family meetings. We all agreed it was a useful asset! The third way I have indulged in creative self-expression is through the making of short movie about the spring flowers in the woods adjacent to my garden. It's part of an ongoing project making movies of the life in my garden. I will write in more detail about these projects in the coming weeks.

**Q8:** In all these spaces I had the autonomy and freedom to do what I did in the way I did it and I had the time, and technological tools (like mobile camera, laptop and software) to produce the photographs, videos and movies.

**Q9:** My small-c, creative self-expressions are often not planned but are opportunistic and sporadic. I have never had daily routines, rather I try spot affordances (opportunities for action) as they emerge.

**Jennifer Willis** Further to yesterday's post, I have tried to envisage my own everyday creativity using the 8 spectrum dimensions Norman Jackson proposed in his post of Week 2, Day 4. I invite you all to score your own profiles, which I will collate to see if any significant patterns emerge. To make it easier for you to reply, if you just list numbers 1-8, and write your position (1-5) against each one, I will convert them. Hope to hear from you.

Everyday creativity: Jenny's profile

	1	2	3	4	5
Formal/non formal					Informal
Individual					Social
Intended					Unanticipated
Need					Interest
Directed					Self-directed
Planned					Emergent
Extrinsic motivation					Intrinsic motivation
Cognitive					Emotional



# TOWERS IN THE SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE



**Norman Jackson** Following Jenny's invitation I tried to make a map of the characteristics of a recent example of creative self-expression. During a 6 day holiday in Scotland I built six small stone towers, photographed and filmed them and then made a movie out of the materials I had collected and posted it on Youtube. I also provide my own subjective evaluation of the level of creativity involved at each stage of the project based on my own norms.

**Jennifer Willis** Thank you, Norman Jackson. This works much better — as I said earlier to Andrew Penaluna, I found it difficult to generalise. It makes much more sense to view each project individually.

I have recently designed an on-line album for my husband. As some will know, we attended the 150th anniversary of his medical school, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in February. He was one of the alumni who spoke at the conference, and many more of his batch mates attended from around the globe. During the conference, we took photos and I decided, on returning home, to make a special album for him. We had some photos of him and his batch mates taken during their student days, so I have put together an album which juxtaposes then and now. Normally I do this manually, but for this occasion I have used an on-line publisher.

I attach my analysis of this creative project. I am struck by how different my profile is from Norman Jackson's. It is also noticeably different from my generic one posted earlier today.

**Johanna Payton** Sorry I'm late to this one — some brief thoughts below in case helpful.

**Q7:** At the moment it's when planning creative activities for my students, writing features, and creating my Instagram posts, which promote vintage/sustainable fashion and feature different outfits every day. The Instagram account is a deliberate daily outlet to allow my creative self expression to flow. Collaboration is the other

Estimate of the mix of approaches to learning and doing				
1	2	3	4	5
Formal				Informal
Individual				Collaborative
Intended				Unanticipated
Need				Interest
Directed				Self-Directed
Planned				Emergent
Extrinsic motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Cognitive				Emotional
Existing idea				Your idea
Subjective self-evaluation of the level of creativity judged against my own norms				
1	2	3	4	5
The idea				
Locating & making the towers				
Photography & videography				
Movie making & artifact				
The whole process & artefact				
My reflective story				

regular 'space' in my life where I can express myself creativity. My partner is an artist and musician and my son is an actor. They always have projects on the go and we collaborate on them — for example my husband has created a virtual band in lockdown and is covering classic songs and creating videos to raise money for the NHS. As a family we've collaborated on concepts for the videos and even performed in them. Collaboration is a particularly important space for me, as I find it really rewarding to share my ideas with people I trust.

**Q8:** Instagram fuels connections with strangers which builds confidence and opens my mind to new possibilities; collaboration fuels friendships, trust, risk and love.

**Q9:** Both. Instagram, which replaced the blog I wrote for years, I use deliberately on a pretty much daily basis to express myself creatively using fashion. I relish the challenge of creating a new story using my wardrobe every day. But I am always open to, and act upon, more spontaneous opportunities — they tend to emerge through collaboration.

**Norman Jackson** Thanks, Johanna Payton. Yyou have introduced the idea of collaboration and the way creative self-expression works in a collaborative relationship is worthy of a discussion in its own right. In a very real sense I believe this forum is such a space where people, many of whom do not know each other, willingly express themselves and their expressions spark interest and inspire others to express themselves.



Creating a surprise album  
Jenny Willis  
April 2020

1	2	3	4	5
Formal/non formal				Informal
Individual				Social
Intended				Unanticipated
Need				Interest
Directed				Self-directed
Planned				Emergent
Extrinsic motivation				Intrinsic motivation
Cognitive				Emotional
Evaluation				
Concept				
Selection of material				
Design				
Computer skills				

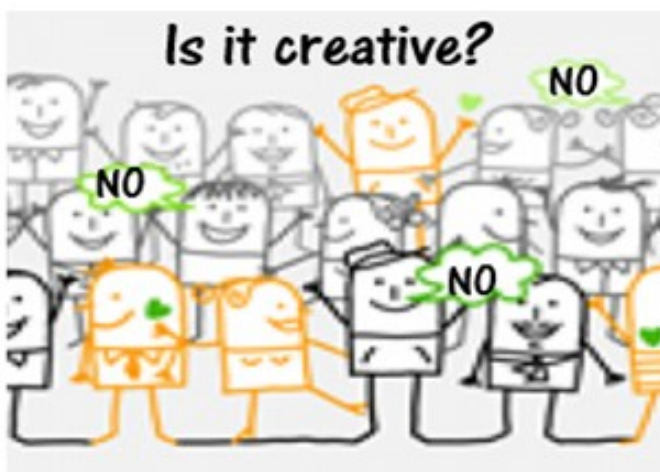


## Who Evaluates Creative Self-Expression?

For today's inquiry I offer two perspectives on creative self-expression and invite your views.

1. Lev Vygotsky proposed that "Any human act that gives rise to something new is referred to as a creative act, regardless of whether what is created is a physical object or some mental or emotional construct that lives within the person who created it and is known only to him [or her]." In other words, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, if a person believes that an idea, action or outcome is new and meaningful to them it is creative. This is especially the case when someone does something just for themselves. When it comes to creative self-expression the individual is both the creator and evaluator of both the process and the outcome.
2. On the other hand, social-cultural or systems views of creativity (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi) require an idea, act or outcome to be evaluated and judged by members of the social cultural domain in terms of whether it is novel/original and appropriate/useful/effective at the level of the social-cultural domain. It is the social-cultural group (or experts in the group) that decides whether an individual's creative self-expression is of value to the domain.
3. What happens between these two clearly defined positions? Is there overlap where the creative self-expression of individuals for themselves is shared with others who are able to make their own judgements as to whether something is creative or not?

It's the best thing  
I've ever painted



**Holly Warren** Creative is an action of the self that is new to us, possibly not new in our context but makes a difference to some extent. This is then shared and once let loose can make a world of a difference.

**Andrew Penaluna** Agreed, and if we go back to the very basics of divergent and convergent thinking in an individual's mind, all too often (as has been pointed out here), it is the divergent 'testing' of ideas that dominates.

**Paul Kleiman** This is the creative equivalent of the 'if the tree falls and there's no one hear it' problem. If I sit at my piano and start to improvise, purely for myself, and there's no one to hear it, am I being creative? Vygotsky would say yes. Csikszentmihalyi would say no.

**Norman Jackson** I would argue that we can hold both points of view, Paul Kleiman. Csikszentmihalyi focuses on creativity that impacts on culture and the domain whereas Vygotsky and Carl Rogers focus on creativity that impacts only on the creator.

**Marta Davidovich** Norman Jackson, thank you so much for these evocative questions. After responding, I want to suggest there may be gender issues involved. Maslow (1973) pointed out the typically male perspective of measuring and evaluating (whose is bigger or better) was/is dominant in the world. Whereas female/non-dominant perspectives value the process of giving birth over time. White male 'gatekeepers' were the dominant influencers in the early stages of this field of study. Might that be an aspect to explore in this conversation? I would also suggest a 5th question: Is there any appropriate reason to judge, label or make evaluative statements about another person's self-expressions or creativity?

Paul Kleiman, I believe it is important to understand all creativity begins with personal (individual) creativity. Research shows, from the earliest stages, it can be negatively impacted with external evaluation (evaluator projections). The key finding of Csikszentmihalyi's seminal study was actually his observation that the eminent creators in his study consistently reported they valued the process they engaged in. They reported doing what they loved was more important than social recognition. It seems to me encouraging rather than evaluating a person's personal creativity, practices and preferences over the lifespan, serves society much more than premature external evaluation. History teaches us human evolution depends on creators brave enough to bring new perspectives forward whether or not social influencers reject it.

Paul Kleiman – regarding your question: 'If I sit at my piano and start to improvise, purely for myself, and there's no one to hear it, am I being creative?' My answer is absolutely – yes. Improvisation is a beautiful example of emergent creativity. It is a process that you enjoy that involves taking embodied expressive action and making music that adds to expressing/actualising your potentialities.

One last note relating to current views of the value of social recognition. Runco's (2019) most recent work related to personal creativity notes: "social theories are useful...but they go too far and often conclude that without social recognition, there is no creativity." He notes: "there is creativity, even if the end result or product is not socially

recognized, and in fact, even if there is no manifest product!" (2019, p.182).

**Simon Rae** Hi, Marta Davidovich. I'd like to pick up on one thing you say, that 'all creativity begins with personal (individual) creativity.' Is this a view specific to our current, very individualistic culture? Or do other cultures (Chinese perhaps?) have different views? What about group or collective creativity, when two or more people work creatively together?

One could say, of course, that "well only one person will have the spark, the light-bulb creative moment that the others will work with". But, from my experience, being part of a collective, sharing group can generate creativity that no single member would come up with. Be it an encouraging word, or a critical comment, a shake of the head, the meeting of minds/personalities can be more creative than the individuals on their own.

Unfortunately, working in groups is not taught well in the UK although it appears to be a valued skill by employers. We revere Creative Individuals, but I'm not sure that we revere those who can work creatively in a group as much.

**Johanna Payton** Simon Rae, I really relate to this. As soon as an idea is well enough formed (self-evaluated?) to be expressed, I seek collaboration – it's not necessarily evaluation (or validation) I'm looking for, I just have a firm belief that my creativity is so much stronger with input from others, from simply expressing an idea and clocking the reaction of another, to working that idea through to fruition as a group. I can't even think of an example where I've worked creatively as an island beyond the very early, internal ideation stage (which I absolutely view as creative/ the foundation of the creative process, even if the idea never goes any further).

**Mair Bull** I thought you might appreciate this, created by Jonathan Paul (with his permission to share). He's a primary school teacher and he's taught himself how to use new creative digital tools so he made this picture as part of his skill development. I don't know him but when I saw it I thought it summed up exactly the process and expression that are being discussed on this group. Silver linings and all that!

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Mair Bull. Please thank Jonathan for sharing his creation.

I find myself wanting to know more about the symbolic meanings in the picture. It illustrates very well the theme of today's inquiry. Someone expresses themselves in a creative way for themselves and in that self-expression they embed certain meanings. The result has been shared with an audience and the product of self-expression creates an emotional response perhaps engendering feelings of admiration, pleasure, interest and curiosity. It may be recognised as having aesthetic value or perhaps it touches on some deeply held belief. It doesn't matter to the creator what the audience thinks because the value to him is in the act of self-expression and perhaps his gifting of the artefact to the world, so that others might share his pleasure.

Members of the audience can recognise it as a creative and skilful act of self-expression. We might even create our own meanings for the symbolism but we don't know what it means to the creator unless he shares this information. It's the third position of the three positions I offered in today's post.

**Stefania Romano** An invaluable beauty.

**Andrew Penaluna** This reminds me of a 2nd year project I used to do with my advertising students. I'd ask them to come up with a logo for 'The Creativity Academy' then leave the room on some fake premise for 30 minutes.

I'd come back to a room with 90 per cent lightbulb solutions coming together then say, "Sorry, I forgot to say that the Headmaster is Humphrey Davy", then leave again.

The scrambled research that resulted made them realise that this was a historical project and that the lightbulb hadn't been invented yet, so they had to reposition their thinking accordingly.

Other surprises came later too, but I should point out that by now they had experienced over a year of working with incomplete evidence in their projects, so the approach was well-established.

**Marta Davidovich** This image is so evocative! I would be very interested in the process used. I am also drawn to the symbolic elements.



# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

## Transcript: Week Three

### Theme 3: Examples of Creative Self-Expression

“When we do something, make something, say something, write something, create something that originates in the inner core of our being and is expressed unfiltered by social conventions” — Paul Kleiman

This week coincides with **World Creativity and Innovation Week (April 15-21)** and we invite you to share one or more examples of your own expressions of personal creativity together with a commentary on what it means to you. The hope is that by sharing stories we might come to understand creative self-expression in a more nuanced way. This invitation is open to anyone, so please invite friends and family to join in.

During the week, please share a story in which you have expressed yourself creatively and your perspectives on what creative self-expression means to you.

*Please use these prompts if they are helpful:*

*What were the circumstances for creative self-expression?*

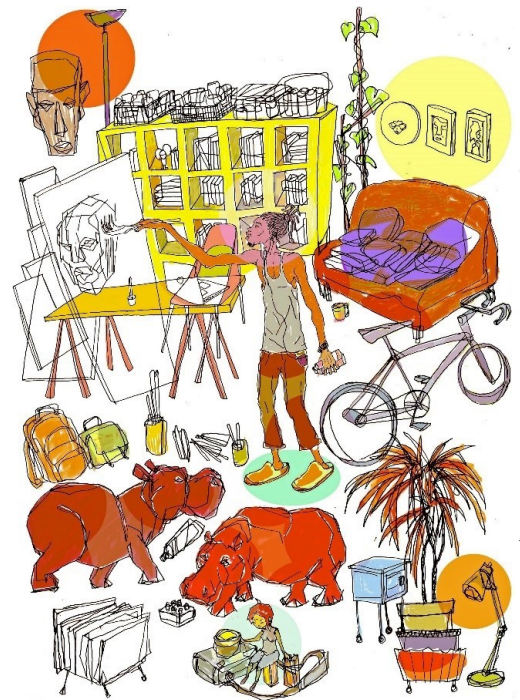
*What mediums and media did you use to express yourself?*

*What did you do and why? How was creativity involved?*

*What did you gain from the experience of expressing yourself?*

*Did you share the results of your creativity?*

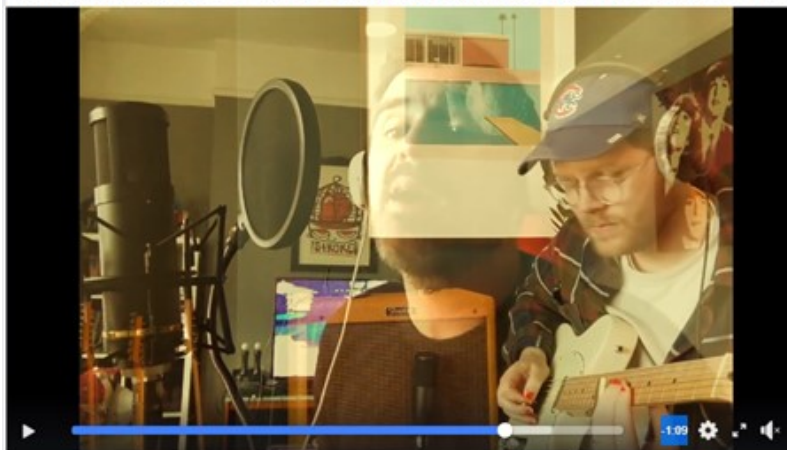
*What does creative self-expression mean to you?*



**Johanna Payton** I wanted to share a “live” example of a creative project I’m involved in as it includes my own creative self-expression which is, in turn, deeply embedded in the relationship I have with my immediate family — lockdown really turns the dial up in terms of illuminating our creative triumvirate.

For context, my partner is an artist and musician, out of work due to lockdown. When we met, 22 years ago, I was working in the music industry and our shared love of music was the foundation we built our relationship on. He is, without doubt, my creative partner in crime; he’s had creative input on every project I’ve ever been involved in, from test-reading my novel to providing illustrations for my final MA project. Similarly, I’m creatively engaged in his projects, from helping him to come up with ideas for commercial artwork to shooting video and photography for his band. Our son has brought his own creative energy and self-expression to the party, pretty much since he was born. He’s now an actor and hugely into film and comedy — and he is just as opinionated and engaged in creative processes as his parents. We’re a tight-knit unit, all channelling self-expression into our various projects, but also organically locked into this ever-evolving, three-way collaboration.

**The Quarantines** · Follow  
7 April at 17:04 · 🌐  
We're raising money for St George's Hospital. PLEASE LIKE AND SHARE Here's another belter o...



As soon as the lockdown was announced, my partner (Matthew) wanted an outlet so he could keep sane and produce something creative and worthwhile. He contacted a group of musicians he’s worked with in the past and they set about establishing a virtual band, each recording musical parts in a song and then fusing it together to create a recording to share on social media and raise money for our local NHS hospital. For the first song, they simply filmed themselves playing their instruments, but as soon as we realised how funny it was that you could see my son (Elliott) playing Fortnite in the background, we knew there was scope for more storytelling.

When they covered *Band on the Run*, my creative self-expression kicked in. As a long-suffering band wife, my brain was buzzing with the idea of Linda McCartney and that I could

somehow ‘pretend to play’ a keyboard in the background; Matthew kept getting a packet of frozen Linda McCartney’s sausages out of the freezer and pondering how they could play a starring role; Elliott had some random idea about a dog running across a field (we don’t have a dog, or a field).

Now, this is the part of the process we always hit, when three creative selves want to express and there’s a tension between their ideas. I’d love to tell you that we all meditated for a moment and reached a consensus, but in truth Elliott and I had mini artistic flounces and said we didn’t want to do it anymore; we all went off to sulk in separate rooms for ten minutes. During that time (usually a very rich and fruitful time, I find), Elliott had a creative epiphany and emerged with the idea of using video match-cutting to create the comedy effect of our



clothes swapping around to the timing of the handclaps in the first part of the song. Given I am obsessed with fashion, and was wearing a ridiculously bright jumpsuit at the time, I was inspired by the idea – and my storytelling intuition kicked in. We could still introduce the keyboard, but Elliott could pretend to play it rather than me – wearing my clothes. And then it struck me that it would be even funnier if the final clothes swap went slightly awry, so when Elliott is doing his finest Linda McCartney impression, he'd be in a, let's say 'compromised' position (as I've said, he's an actor – he may be 15, but he's game for anything comedic).

So ensued an afternoon of dressing up, carrying a vintage keyboard into the garden, marking the grass with tape – position is everything for match-cutting (I certainly learned something new) – and handclapping/pretending to play the keyboard along to the recording.

The result is pretty funny (I've shared a link below). We're expressing ourselves, our ideas and our humour, which is hugely satisfying. I loved performing with Elliott and reading the feedback from friends and family. We even played it to my mum during a video call so we could watch her reaction – this was soul food in the current situation. And we raised more money for the NHS – what a bonus.

As with many acts of creativity, the video led to further creation: I wrote a press release for a local publication that wanted to write about the project; one of our friends messaged us with an idea for a future video that is now being worked on; more musicians got in touch to offer their services on the next recordings; I heard the next track the band is recording and immediately had an idea for a collaborative lip synch that reflects family life – and love – during lockdown (and if anyone would like to contribute to that, please drop me a line – we are collecting vids this week and it's going to be beautiful!)

In this context, self-expression captures everything I care deeply about: music, family, creativity, connection, humour, fun, society, performance, love...and the Beatles.

Hope you enjoy the video (you'll see Elliott and I at the 1:20 mark): <https://www.facebook.com/OftheHomeAge/videos/598144004377221/UzpfSTEWOTY4MjU4NzM1MDQwMjoxMTc5MjMyMzY1MjYzMzc/>

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Johanna Payton. What a wonderful thing to do and what a fantastic tale of collaboration and the weaving together of many creative self-expressions. Your narrative really brings the process to life, something we would never appreciate if we only saw the end product. It explains how one idea sparks another and another, but also how the working and reworking of ideas when harnessed towards a common goal helps the product become fully-expressed and formed as the process unfolds. A great video which I enjoyed watching – I could appreciate the talented musicians, clever editing, great imagery including funny family cameo complete with Linda McCartney pose at the keyboard. A great gift for a wonderful cause that gives it special meaning. I feel inspired to try something with my own band – the unmeasurable effects of a generous creative gift.

**Jennifer Willis** Thank you Johanna Payton for this beautiful piece of work. Unlike so many of mine, yours is collaborative and demonstrates the power of working with others to create more than the sum of the parts. The fact that you have used your creation to raise fund for the NHS makes it even more worthwhile (especially as my husband works for the Trust in question!) I feel energised now to go and tackle pruning the ivy – I shall be replaying your work in my head as I do so!



### **Paul Kleiman Week 3: Self-expression 'Taking a note for a walk' (Isolation Improvisations)**

I have written before about how I often escape to my piano, sometimes when I am struggling with the problem, sometimes just for the hell of it. Stanislavsky, the great Russian director who devised what became known as 'Method Acting' wrote about the 'Circles of Attention'. We can choose how narrow or wide we want that circle of attention to be. For the actor, the circle can be drawn just around themselves, and they not aware of anything else (not good in an actor!). They can widen it to include the other performers, but not the audience. Or they can widen to include the audience.

For me, playing the piano is about me drawing that circle of attention close about me. It's about me and the piano. I am not aware of anything else. It is a way of shutting out the world, particularly in these difficult and distressing times.

But, and I think it's a big but, I also, sometimes, record these short 'Taking a note for a walk' improvisations and post them on social media. And I have to ask myself why? I suppose, in these stay-at-home, isolated days, it's a way of reaching out, connecting through music rather than words. It's also a way of expressing myself and capturing the ephemeral moment, other than my usual social media interactions these days which are usually about the coronavirus pandemic and the government's handling or mishandling of events.

**Norman Jackson** I have always admired your playing Paul Kleiman and yes sharing such private improvisations with others is a wonderful thing to do. I love the idea of 'circles of attention' and I get a nice metaphorical image



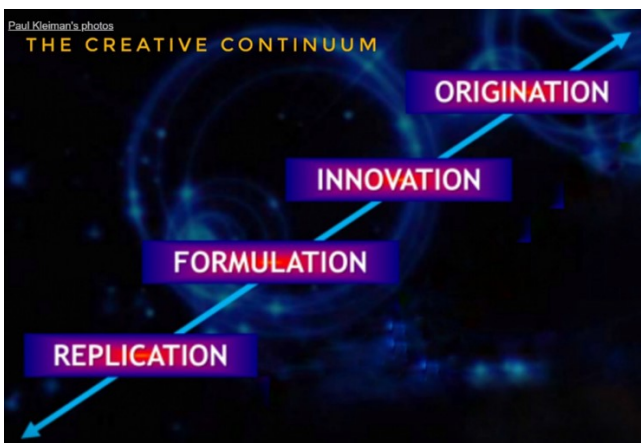
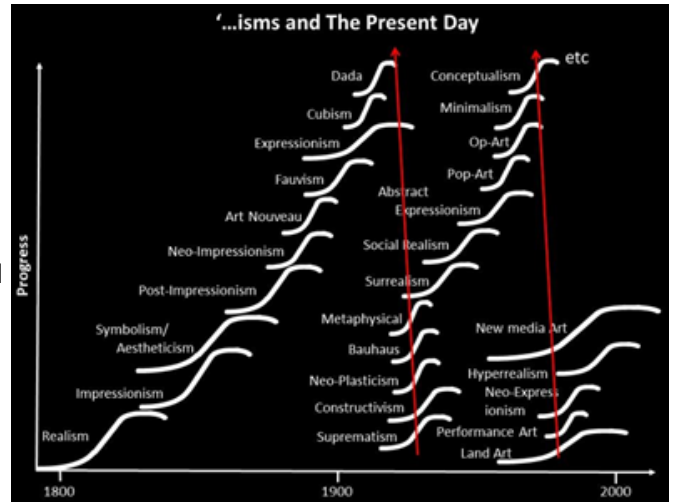
of ripples moving outwards from a point: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-HJcWAQs7E>. When you sit down to play what is happening inside you and through you into the world and back again that ultimately translates into the sounds of the piano and something that is connected into something we would all recognise as a tune?

**Paul Kleiman** Hello, Norman Jackson, in answer both to your question to me and to your comment to Kevin. In his book *Ways of the Hand*, David Sudnow, reflecting on his own attempts to learn how to improvise, illustrates in intense detail how it makes sense to describe the process as one in which the pianist's hands are learning, or the pianist is hearing with their hands. He describes, when improvising, that knowing or sensing what notes are coming next relates to ways of moving around on familiar paths through the keyboard. The philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, in his foreword to the book, writes "there is finally no longer an I that plans, not even a mind that plans ahead, but a jazz hand that knows at each moment how to reach for the music".

Many artists – whether visual, musical or other – tend to work within a particular style or genre i.e. 'familiar paths'. The really creative ones also then are able to explore/expand/move out from those familiar paths into new territory which, in turn, becomes familiar.

For me, I know, or my hands and fingers know, I am treading relatively familiar paths or patterns (at one point in that improvisation there is an unconscious echo of Bach) but in new, different ways. There is a starting point which always changes and an end point which always changes, and an infinite number of ways to travel between the two.

**Kevin Byron** Paul – you might find the attached slide (from the aforementioned lecture) of interest. Here I've plotted all the recent art movements in the West as Sigmoid curves (ie, slow beginning, rapid growth and maturation). This represents the cutting edge of new art ideas over time that are driven by creativity. Interestingly, many of these movements don't die out, for example, many artists still paint in the Impressionist style. Such artists may well be described as creative too. I would argue that a category error is being made in many cases and that it is talent that is being celebrated rather than creativity. Or maybe the creativity is much more nuanced in these cases and the particular 'ism' the artist is working in is not sufficient to define their creativity?



**Paul Kleiman** Thanks, Kevin Byron. There are several things going in there. One is that when I taught art history it became almost also a cliché to say that each art movement is having a conversation or argument with what has gone before. The other, in regard to styles continuing, relates (I think) to this. What may start out as original, ie, the 'shock of the new', heads over time towards replication. For example, those artists still painting in the impressionist style are clearly working at the formulation or replication stage. It may be highly-skilled, or talented, but not necessarily creative.

**Kevin Byron** Thanks, Paul. If the ideas on Derrida's 'Deconstruction' with words can be applied to art, it would suggest that there is no original originality. To quote from Rorty: "words have meaning only because of contrast-effects with other words...no word can acquire meaning in the way in which philosophers from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell have hoped it might – by being the unmediated expression of

something non-linguistic (e.g., an emotion, a sense-datum, a physical object, an idea, a Platonic Form)". This quote also informs one of the central problems with defining creativity. That is to say it's impossible to isolate any single term used to define creativity in an absolute (Platonic) sense. For example Thinking, Imagining, Feeling, Creating, using Intuition, etc, are words that are very unclear in any absolute sense, and they all relate and overlap with each other in a very imprecise way. Even neuro-science isn't able to help much here!

**Kevin Byron** As part of the research for a public lecture I presented recently on 'Geometry in Art'.

[Additional note by KB – I'm not an artist, but have had a long interest in art for many years. The lecture was presented to the New Monday Art Group in Lincoln: <http://www.newmondayartgrouplincoln.co.uk/> It was a topic that had engaged me for almost a year, and I did a lot of research to prepare it and this involved consulting a few artists]

I taught myself how to design Islamic geometrical patterns and Celtic Knotwork. Looking at the Islamic patterns through the lens of a scientist, I observed that they can be reduced to much simpler linear features. Then, through repeating the three mathematical transformations – rotate, translate (in space) and mirror, the whole design can be created. The attached video illustrates this. The process in arriving at this reminded me of the quote by Pablo Picasso: "Every act of creation is first an act of destruction."





**Holly Warren** I am working on a brain art piece, my passion recently. Paper strips and glue. It would like to convey the beauty, complexity and intricacy of the connections our minds make.

My mind wanders while I'm working, connecting what I have read to what I am making. A journey into my mind and my learning path. Every day I add a colour layer. It is still a work in progress.

**Johanna Payton** It's so pretty! My first impression is that if I were to create one I'd want to have strips of paper with psychedelic prints to reflect my fashion-related thoughts and projects. Thank you for sharing!

**Marta Davidovich** Holly Warren, I am so attracted to your 'brain art'. Can you share how the process begins? I would love to try a piece like this.

**Holly Warren** Absolutely. I start by selecting coloured card in the colours that reflect my "self" and that allows mind wandering, which is the concept I work on. The paper is cut up in strips and assembled by gently twisting the strips around each other. I use hot glue to piece the strips together. I have tried different methods to assemble the pieces. Let me know if it works for you.



### **Norman Jackson, *Scottish Holiday – opportunities for creative self-expression***



In early-March, I was on holiday with my wife in northwest Scotland where the landscapes and seascapes are absolutely stunning. Wandering through the wonderful unfolding vistas I felt an impulse to do something. I had my sketchpad and paints with me but I felt that I wanted to do something more visceral. I began to look at the landscape differently. Rather than 'just' taking in the spectacular vistas, I searched for ways in which I could make something. In the end I stopped the car by a beach and made a small tower out of the stones on the beach. I photographed and filmed them and the act made me feel good. I repeated this process on five other occasions over the next five days and then wove my images together in a short movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc1v8XbTVTE>

I have written an article to describe the process and my evaluation of it as an act of creative self-expression and you can find the story and the self-evaluation tool I used here: <http://www.norman.jackson.co.uk/creative-academic>

**Johanna Payton** I love how each of the towers reflects its environment, but also seems to have its own personality – the film also made me long for cold water swimming, which I'm really missing in lockdown. The idea of affordances in the classroom is very interesting. Your project also made me reflect on the way we can change or manipulate a learning environment physically and creatively; each time we

teach in a classroom we can create a different visual and experiential memory to attach to the session. This is something I strive to do – my students take part in a different activity at the end of sessions. The process, the experience and the results contribute to changing the classroom landscape, physically and in the way we perceive the session in our memory. I often look back on my own experience at university and whole modules boil down to one memory, with no sense of what we did or what we learned. I think that's a real shame and so it's something I've been desperate to avoid since I became a teacher.

**Norman Jackson** Johanna Payton, I love the way you have related the idea to learning in education. I am hoping that next week we will explore the educational implications of what we are learning and I hope you will pick up the idea again and run with it.

**Maria Kefalogianni** Hi all, how wonderful and inspiring to read your stories of creative self-expression. It took me by surprise that this lockdown has spontaneously led me to knitting. Knitting, weaving in the loom and threading is a strong tradition in my lineage. This expression for me is allowing me my meditative moments in the day. It has sort of become a morning ritual, with my morning cup of tea in my back garden when the sun is coming through. Also, at around six o'clock again, as the sun is setting. It connects me deeply with my spiritual self, it's a moment of "dropping" in the here and now, while my mind is quiet. All I can hear is the sound of birds and feel the sun shining. This way, I begin and end my day with deep gratitude. I have been exploring and experimenting by knitting with meditative mantras, and there is often companion of my own song being weaved into each stitch.

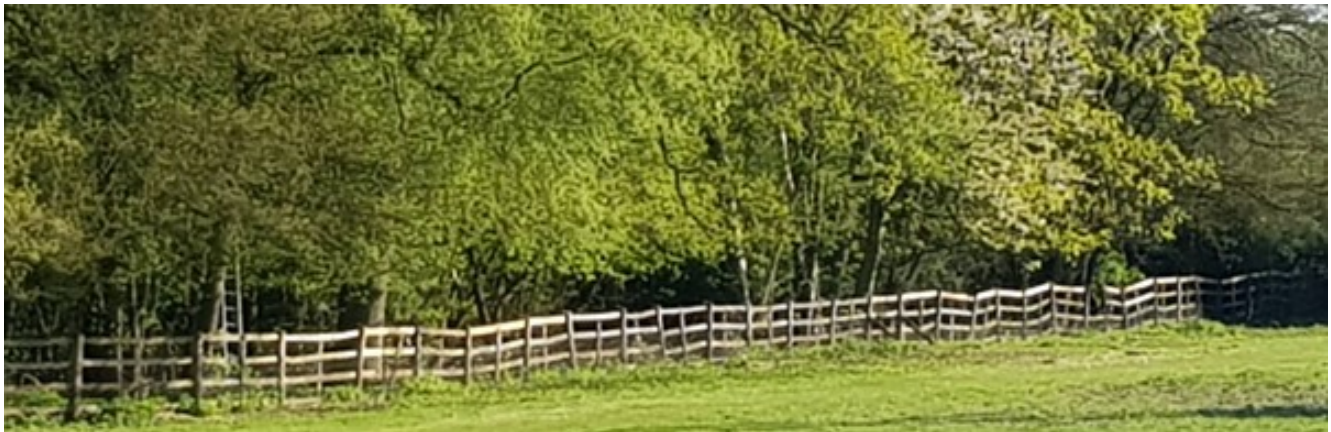
It was always something I felt "called" to do, but like many things it never translates into reality – until the moment is ripe. I ordered my wool thread after being inspired and connecting with the spirit of my grandmothers recently. Interestingly, the urge became stronger as I moved safely into the third trimester of my pregnancy. In December 2019 I went to a spiritualist, during which visit my grandmother came through and reassured me that I'll be having a baby in "September". (In spirit terms, time is not linear and this could have been any September). That's a whole other amazing story in itself! It "happens" that my due date is at the end of September.





I don't find it accidental that I'm into knitting these days. It's a deeply meaningful process. It's cathartic and healing. Remembering my grandmothers, "weaving them back into existence" and bringing/resurrecting/rebirthing the old family traditions through this vessel and my way of being. It is bringing back stories that came along with it. My grandmother was the first seamstress in my village in Crete, sewing clothes for the soldiers, the nomads, and women and children. A very successful, innovative woman, she kept these ways of self-expression until very late in her life. I always held tenderly, as you know Norman Jackson, the meaning of personal relevance to our stories. What I love about my first project is the missed loops/stitches – if you notice closely – it's so marvellously imperfect. It gives me comfort to know it will cover my new-born baby when he/she arrives. A little snapshot of part of my self-expression lately.

**Norman Jackson** What a great concept – '*marvellously imperfect*'. I look at stuff I do and think that's not good enough and carry on working with it or leave it in an unhappy state. But to marvel at its imperfections means we can walk away both satisfied and even inspired by its imperfection. I shall remember this way of thinking and apply it to my fence repairs. I had a long tumble-down fence that had become overgrown with brambles and was broken in several places, which I have been 'fixing' for the last few weeks. It's not tumble-down anymore, but it is marvellously imperfect with a character and a life all of its own.



#### **Doug Cole, *Expressing my creativity through work***

My story of where I have expressed creativity is very much work-related. Since 2009, I have continually tried to find ways to be more creative in how I articulate employability to colleagues and peers. Partly driven by the fact this is my job, but also driven from my personal belief that it is important. I have spent half my career working in industry prior to joining HE and I believe that we are not always exposing students to all the areas of learning that I (and many others) believe to be important. 10 years on and, having just completed my PhD on this subject matter, I have tried numerous ways of trying to explain this complex and elusive concept to others.

One of the first attempts to be more creative was in taking a conscious decision not to explicitly try and define employability as such. I have always believed this needed to happen in context, led by those stakeholders associated with particular programmes and subjects. So I have always been against overly-restrictive and one-size-fits-all, tight definitions. Instead we chose to talk about embedding employability, so focused more on the process, which is much more principle-based rather than content-driven. To my knowledge, all of this was slightly contrary to what others were doing in research and in practice across the sector in the UK and beyond. This early thinking culminated in the development and the publication of the Embedding Employability Framework written by myself and Maureen Tibby, which was published in 2013 by the HEA.

This framework was originally depicted as a simple 2D cyclical four-stage process, which put the ownership for determining what employability meant in the hands of programme teams, students, employers and other stakeholders. The creative part here was really the framework, the idea of which first came to me whilst attending a summit of experts in employability in HE. This was convened by the HEA at the time and was tasked with exploring current issues in the sector. I sat there listening to the conversations around me, including how to measure employability and the lightbulb moment was thinking how can we measure something when we can't even agree what it is? We will never all agree on a single definition and many have tried within the research and as good as many of these are, in practice not everyone will agree. So how to tackle employability at a strategic level, at-scale if we can't all agree what it is or how to do it?

This scenario, which still exists to this day, has shaped my thinking, my work, my research and my passion for trying to articulate how to develop more effective and consistent strategic approaches to employability, whilst still retaining a sense of fluidity and flexibility, empowering others to be creative in this whole defining and delivering process.

I believe my work has addressed these challenges and, having joined NTU 18 months ago, I was passionate about bringing this research, learning and experience and utilising this to help enhance the fantastic work already taking place here. Building on very solid foundations, but continuing to stretch both our thinking and practice to ultimately support students in being successful in whatever they decided to do after graduating.

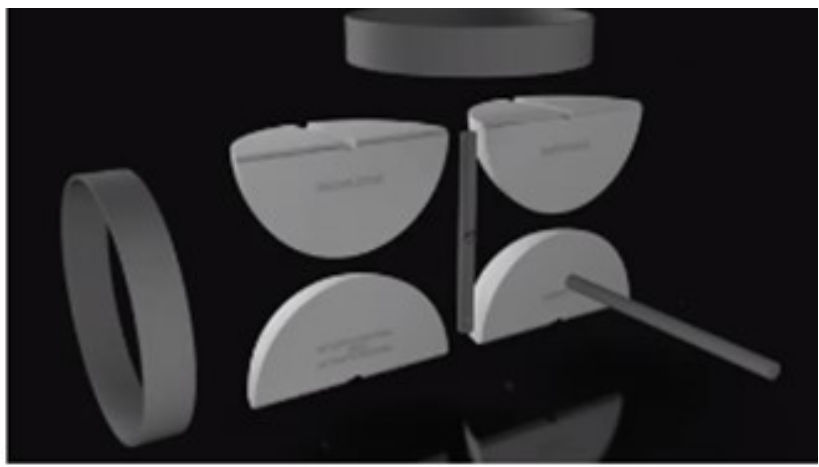
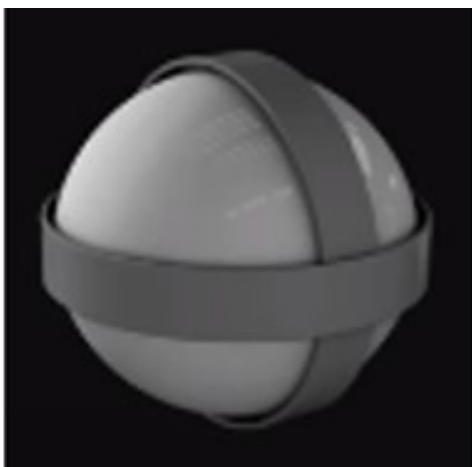
This aspiration resulted in hours and hours of discussion with my Director David Eade about how we might develop a new model for employability at NTU, to help guide and inform our future approach. Taking into account all the incredible work already happening across the team but continuing to stretch ourselves and evolve our institutional approach for the future.

These discussions led to lots of rough drawings and writing on a whiteboard. Trying to combine the different elements in our collective thinking, the research and that of the institution itself and visualise this in a clear and concise way. It was at the point where we were discussing the multiple layers to the concept of employability and

how critically it should be concerned with a combination of areas, all equally important, that our thinking evolved from 2D to 3D and from a static picture to an animated model! We wanted to convey these critical features to others, in a way that was potentially more understandable and hopefully which sought to challenge many of the myths and misconceptions that exist around employability and other areas, such as enterprise and entrepreneurship too.

This is where the Employability Redefined model was born. So we took these ideas and began working with a local design agency called Waste Studios. Following our first meeting with them, where we discussed the brief for the project, sharing a huge amount of information with them about what message we were trying to convey, what struck me was that they instantly got this. They understood what employability was about and, as individuals outside of the HE world, getting to grips with employability is no small challenge, so we knew we were on to something!!

What followed from here was some of my most enjoyable work in my career to date, visiting the Waste Studios and spending time developing the model in that kind of environment, think subtle lighting, funky decor and cool tunes playing in the background, working with some amazing people too (shout out to Norm here). This was a creative space like I have never personally experienced before. Honestly, I miss it. That whole process, bringing 10 years worth of thinking into a single animated piece, was incredible. I am immensely proud of the results we have created together and am really excited about the future and how collectively we can work to pilot, test, embed and document the use of this model in practice over the next two years. The model is learning-focused first and foremost and as such, it has potential value well beyond employability and we have already started discussions with others working in other areas about potentially piloting the use of the model in their contexts too. Learning from that process and all of us then sharing this insight to only further improve our future approach. I view all of this in some ways as a kind of creative ecosystem, to coin another phrase from Norman, and I for one can't wait to see what happens as this journey continues.



**Norman Jackson** I take from your post the idea that this unfolding act of creative self expression is being committed by your 'academic self' immersed in a lifelong project of exploring and making sense of a complex idea – employability. A project that is geared to the development of new conceptual understandings and practical ways of utilising these new understandings in institutional policies and practices. Clearly, creative self-expressions are at a professional (Pro-c) level and your doctoral research is a testament to this.

I find it particularly interesting and relevant to my own work and practice that you collaborated with other people to create an animated representation of the model you had developed. What I particularly liked was the way you painted a picture of the design studio environment that was particularly conducive to the thinking that was necessary to produce the animation. The experience clearly had a big impact on you – what was it about the space that facilitated creative self-expression?

When thinking about creativity as a phenomenon, I like to draw on Carl Rogers concept of a creative process: “the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other.”<sup>1</sup> You certainly produced a novel relational product and, by working in the design studio with skilful people who cared about what you were trying to do, you created an environment in which the product could grow.

1 Rogers, C. (1960) On Becoming a Person. London: Constable

**Berny Sansome** I admire creativity and feel I am not creative, but of course we all are. Creativity is an escape for me. It gives me time to re-energise my soul and provides an opportunity to give.

I've found myself hand sewing – all will be given as gifts. No theory other than I love mixing the colours and materials up. The process is therapeutic, and I get lost in the rhythm of sewing, then the end result makes me and others smile and I can pass on the end results to others.

**Norman Jackson** Thank you, Berny Sansome. Welcome to our community and what lovely toys you make. Working with materials to make something you love and others value is the core work of creativity and you have demonstrated it beautifully. And you are absolutely right – being creative creates new opportunities to give. See for example Christopher Tomlinson's daily porridge art creations.



**Maria Kefalogianni** Fantastic to have you here, Berny Sansome, and what beautiful creativity you express right there! Keep sewing. I'm into knitting lately for first time ever and loving it! Welcome and keep sharing your insights with us. Also, don't have many of our Salford folk on here so please feel free to keep inviting people to grow this amazing community. We used to be on google forum (perhaps over 1000, Norman Jackson? But it sadly had to close down, so we aspire to keep growing this platform anew and stronger.

**Sandra Sinfield** This week, all my creative self-expression is being channelled into a paper that I am writing collaboratively (with Sandra Abegglen and Thomas Burns) in response to this call for papers: Exploring visual representation of concepts in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

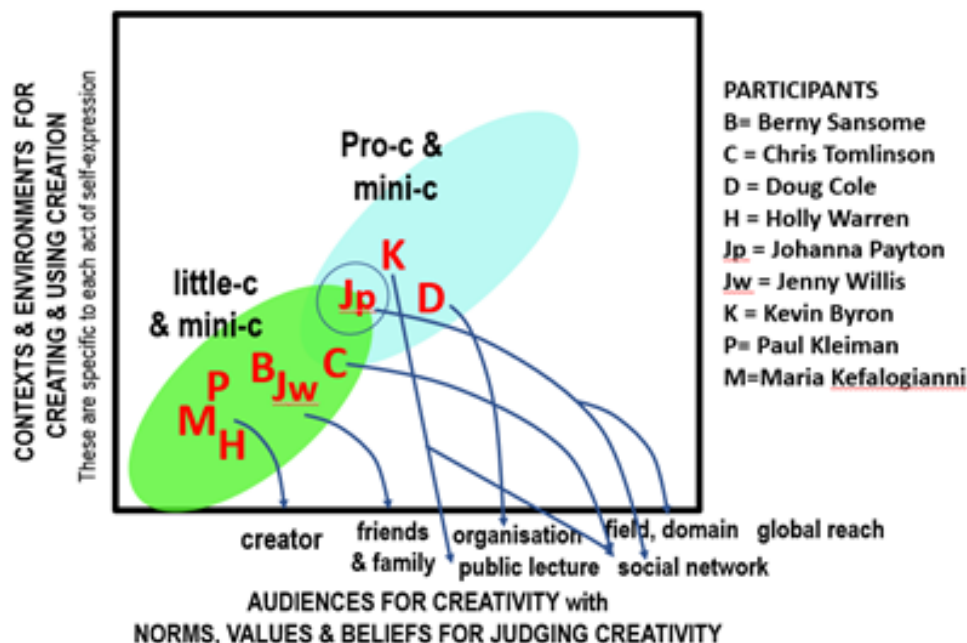
In our work, we often ask our under- and postgraduate students to engage in visual activities of different sorts to help them conceptualise or think through or even make apparent ideas to themselves and others. In response to this call, we decided to explore a series of activities over the first two sessions of our PG Cert module, where we ask our participants to make a 'self portrait', construct a 3D student and build a HE system. They do these in a variety of media from collage to junk sculpture. These are lively sessions that can de-centre participant expectations of the L&T they are going to experience in our course – as they explore and discuss their selves, their students and their HE systems. I am framing this writing as a form of creative self expression for all of us; for we write collaboratively as a way of exploring and researching our own work. When we conduct these activities as part of our teaching, we do not know what our students will do, how they will react to the activity, or how they themselves will reflect on and analyse the activity. When we start writing, we do not always know exactly what 'point' we are going to make – we allow ideas to emerge through the very writing process. We start writing before we know where we will end up.

We write mainly synchronously in a Google doc – but we can all enter our document at any time and in any place as the writing develops. This particular piece of writing is even more fun (or creative) because as well as the emergent and exploratory writing, we also have to choose which pictures to include in the piece and then we have to weave some more writing about and around those. I never ever thought when I was an undergraduate struggling with formal academic writing that I would ever see this sort of practice as creative process as self-expression. That I now do is quite astonishing and joyful.

#### **Norman Jackson, *Using the contexts & norms framework to make sense of our acts of creative self-expression***

The 4C model of creativity<sup>1</sup> seeks to develop a comprehensive and inclusive concept of creativity that can accommodate individual's creativity in the lifelong and lifewide dimensions of their life from the humblest to the most significant of scales and impacts. This model is widely cited in the creativity literature. If it is 'correct,' then all acts of creative self-expression must be accommodated by the model. I attach a short article to explain how the acts of creative self-expression described in this discussion might be related to the 4C model. I welcome your feedback on the idea.

1) Kaufman, J and Beghetto R (2009) Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity Review of General Psychology Vol. 13, No. 1, 1-12



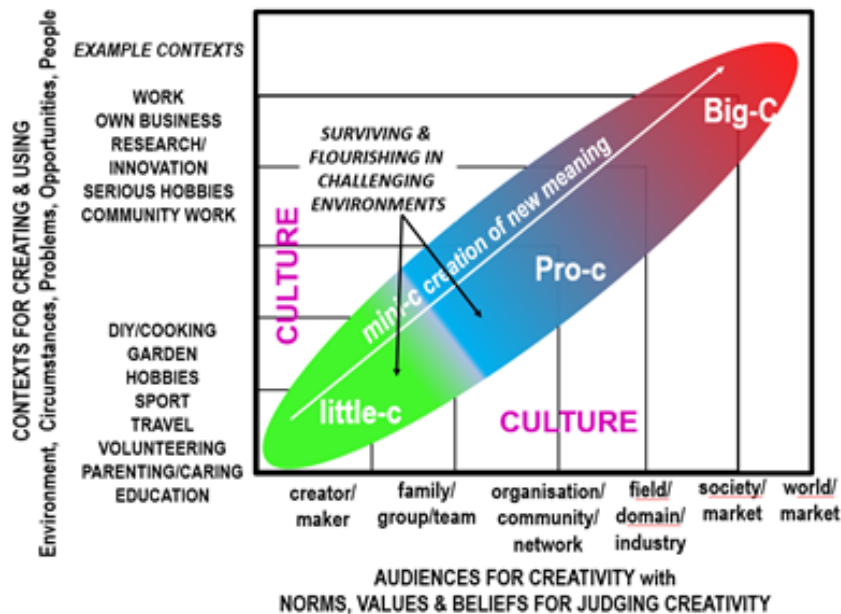
**Andrew Penaluna** Hi Norman, it would be interesting to expand this to other cultures I'd imagine. I had the good fortune to work on creativity and innovation for the 37 Empretec developing countries on behalf of the UN, and had some real surprises that challenged my assumptions. For example, I didn't know that you could repair a vehicle differential with welding techniques of the 1800s in the middle of an Arab highway at night and survive, and it wasn't quiet I can tell you.

Their abilities to mix and match and pull together unusual solutions was impressive, but those with a formal education didn't (at first) recognise their abilities at all!

**Norman Jackson** Andrew Penaluna, in the original article (CAM15) we stressed that culture underlies the whole



mapping concept so the framework itself is relevant to any cultural domain. I would say though that in identifying Pro-c as a primary domain in the 4C model it conveys the message that knowledge work in professional contexts is valued above other sorts of expertise. It should really be a domain where expert embodied knowledge and skill is used in solving problems and inventing solutions. In other words where expertise is required to survive, flourish and invent in challenging environments and situations. I also witnessed mechanical acts of ingenuity when working in the field as a geologist in Saudi Arabia.



**Andrew Penaluna** I take your point. I guess my observation was that major issues were creatively resolved, but that they were multiple little c perceived, so that no-one really appreciated, or perhaps more appropriately, promoted, such abilities.

**Paul Kleiman** Going back to the Creative Continuum, these are wonderful examples of genuine innovation, ie, taking existing methods, processes, materials, tools, etc, and adapting/applying them to a different or new situation. The question might be whereas, as the onlooker, it appears to be a creative solution, is it something they are used to doing? We see it as a creative solution, they see it as 'this is what we do'.

**Norman Jackson** Which is why, I guess, when "judging" the acts of experts we rely on other "experts" to give their opinions. Those of us who are not expert in a domain can only marvel at the inventiveness, adaptiveness and resourcefulness of others – and sometimes perhaps be inspired to try something for ourselves. Its also why I included in the self-evaluation the tool the prompt 'doing something for the first time' as a means of conveying to the onlooker that this is new to me.

**Simon Rae** I think that I agree here, Paul – the idea of 'this isn't creative, this is what I do.'

This last couple of weeks I've had time (and the weather) to use the bits of tree that I've saved from various fellings and prunings to make a garden bench. It's been something I've wanted to do for years, prompted mostly by memories of the seats that my Dad made in the 60s from prunings from the apple trees we had in the garden. He would eye up a space and sort out the wood, disappear for a few hours and come back with a made-to-measure seat. It would last a couple of years and then he would make another. The idea of going to a garden centre and buying a bench for £50 or a £100 would not have entered his head (did they even have garden centres in the 60s?). Similarly, with crazy paving. He would eye up a space, eye up what bricks, slabs, sand and cement he had and lay a great patio (did we call them patios in the 60s?). But no-one ever called my Dad creative. But, as I was doing my bench and saying that it wasn't too stable and blaming the lack of a good band-saw to get proper 90° angle cuts, I realised that I don't think my Dad had even an electric drill in those days. But it was just 'what he did'.

I remember showing him an article about a new school for thatching that was being set up as there was a shortage of good thatchers (probably for people's second home/cottage in Chipping Norton) and he expressed a bit of disbelief. 'But it's a skilled craft' I said. 'No', he said, 'I used to have to thatch the hayricks after harvest – nothing in it really.' (That would have been in the 30s.)

A lot of what we're discussing on this forum, I think, is historically and socially positioned. If Dad was making his chairs now he could sell them for probably three figures in an up-market Garden Centre and folk would comment on the creativity and craftyness of them. But in his time people didn't think about those things (I don't think – when did 'creative' in the way we





are using it become common parlance?)

The Make Do & Mend attitude that, in part, gave rise to the chairs in the 60s has largely disappeared, not helped by an educational system that doesn't teach such concepts. Although, the current lockdown does seem to be bringing it out more. Every cloud has a silver lining as they say.

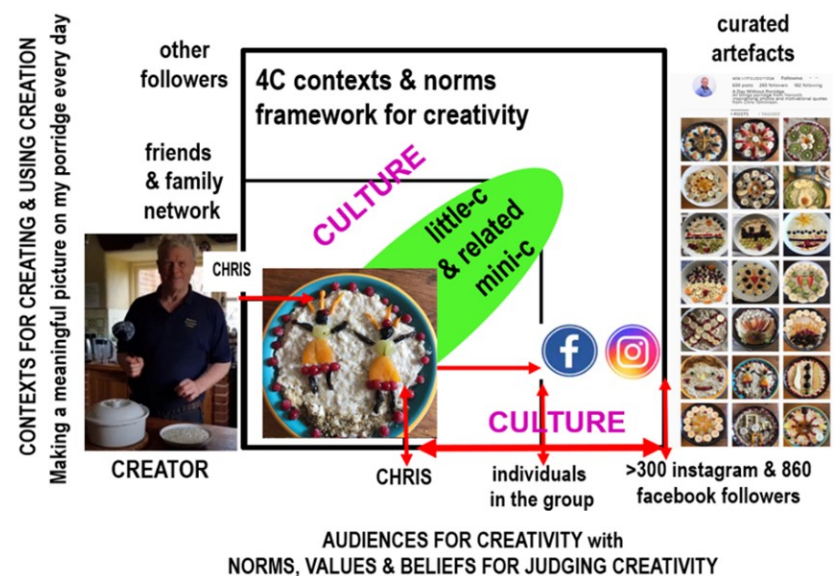
Where would my Dad's 'it's what I do' figure on your diagram, Norman Jackson? I'm guessing his initial would appear somewhere near the P, B, M and H in the lower green blob.

**Norman Jackson** Good morning, Simon Rae. What a provocative set of thoughts to wake up to. I completely agree with you about our parent's generation. As a generalisation based on the people I knew as a child they were far more 'resourceful' and 'skilled' at fixing things. To some extent, this was because many of them used their hands in their work. My father-in-law would 'tinker'. He had a shed (that special place where men 'play' and listen to the radio) and he would disappear for hours with something, like a clock that had

stopped working, and with the endless bits and bobs in his well-stocked draws he would fix it.

That was what our parents did. They invested their time in doing practical things that gave them pleasure and fulfilled a useful purpose – they did not indulge themselves so much in doing things with aesthetic value. I never heard my mum say my dad was creative (or any of us kids for that matter) but she did sometimes say 'your dad's a clever man' recognising his ingenuity in solving a problem. But I wouldn't be surprised if our parents went through similar processes and felt similar things to what we would ascribe to being creative.

An ecological view of creativity sees the world as 'resource full' and I like the idea that creativity is about seeing affordance (opportunity to act) amongst an abundance of resources. Creativity is about being resourceful as you were in making your garden furniture. It requires perception to recognise the opportunities and imagination to perceive possibilities. I get inspired when I see people making amazing things with little more than their bare hands: things that I can't even begin to imagine. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT0EmAgP-\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT0EmAgP-_k)



Simon, I agree concepts of what creativity means are historically and culturally situated as well as being embedded in our own lives and the environment that has meaning to us.

What we might call 'guided participation'<sup>1</sup>, Baker illustrated the idea with a story about learning to fish:

*"For me, learning to fish with my father and brother is a metaphor for a theory of guided participation and for a theory of ecological learning.... I learned a new skill through the expert guidance of a more accomplished practitioner... not by interrupting his fishing but allowing us to join it ...We were "instructed" in fishing not by lectures on the shore [through] long expositions on Dad's theory of fish, bait and equipment -... but rather through participatory trial and error, emulation, and occasional advice and assistance."*



Perhaps it's through such experiences that we learn what it means to be creative (resourceful, ingenious, adaptive or whatever term you want to use).

**Norman Jackson, Porridge with meaning** I would like to say a big thank you to Christopher Tomlinson for sharing his daily porridge creations. A few years ago, I filmed Chris making his porridge and wrote an article about it. I have updated the article (attached) and used the contexts and audiences framework to show how social media can be used to enable individuals to share their acts of creative self-expression more widely – indeed to build communities of interest around the enterprise.

**Jennifer Willis** A question that has been haunting me is why we get so much enjoyment from watching other people's creative self-expression. I admit to being a big fan of BBC's *Masterchef*, but there is a plethora of other programmes where we see individuals creating – from *The Great British Sewing Bee*, to *The Great British Menu* and so on. Is it the element of competitiveness that keeps us





watching such programmes, or is it some form of pleasure derived from joining the creators in their process of creating?

**Doug Cole** I like this show too, I actually fast forward it sometimes when I don't have much time, to the point where they present their plates to the judges. Who wins is irrelevant to me, I just really enjoy seeing their creativity on the plate!

**Norman Jackson** I enjoy these programmes too, although some are better than others at revealing the process of making. It's great to see the end product but I get more from seeing the process. I particularly like when things go wrong and the contestants have to think on their feet. I also think it's interesting the way we are, by the fact we have witnessed the process and the result, invited to judge the creations. What do I know about fine dining, but I still seem to have a view? Competition and the constraints imposed on competitors does seem to motivate them. Perhaps this is a theme for next week's discussion on the educational implications of creative self-expression.

**Stefania Romano** It might depend on historical cultural factors.

**Berny Sansome** I wonder if sometimes we imagine ourselves in the competitors shoes – maybe a desire to have the confidence, skill and imagination to produce such amazing dishes. A form of escapism. But for me, as a teacher, I also love to see the development of these dimensions.

**Jenny Willis** I'm am sure you are right.

**Simon Rae** Two things: firstly although I do like this type of program, be it cooking, clothes-making or pottery, the formula annoys me after a time. The programs are so edited to increase the tension, the 'last 30 seconds to finish your dish|dress|pot' or 'Oh dear, Justin has dropped his dessert|stitch|teapot' and the way the presenters pause when they are saying "and this week's master chef|tailor|potter is" and the person's name. I mean, do they go to the School for Presenters to learn how to drag it out?

And secondly, I read a book years ago about an American chancer who put an ad in the paper for a million Americans to send him \$1 so that he could behave as THEIR millionaire. He promised that he would party and live it up and document the whole thing so that, for their \$1, everybody could feel like a millionaire (and of course they did, and he did, and then he wished he hadn't, etc). But my point is, do we watch these programs and imagine that we are those contestants? That they are doing it for us, so that we are vicariously doing it through them? Going through the process of cooking|sewing|throwing without getting our hands dirty, the absolute in post-post-modern creative activities!

**Norman Jackson** I guess even programme editors can be creative within their medium, Simon Rae, but I know what you mean. You pose an interesting question are we outsourcing our creativity to the contestants? I'd rather think positively about these programmes that I am being gifted an opportunity to see a little of what lies behind someone's skill and expertise and how they deal with a situation. I would love to know more about how they make these programmes, but then this might take away some of their appeal.

**Simon Rae** Yes, creativity is OK, but I sometimes feel that it's 'fake news' in a sense. The producers are making up a fake event and creating their own reality based on a selected set of real participants who, at least according to one of the bake-off cooks, are not reported or depicted as they really are. And I too would love to see the creative process, but there seems to be less of this shown in later series and more of the 'dramatic – good television' bits.

Jan (my wife) and I put it down to our expecting too much of such programs in that we know more than a bit about cooking (at least Jan does), sewing (again Jan does), pottery (me ) anyway and, as such, aren't really representative of their target demographic. The sort of program I'd really like to see would probably bore that demographic off to another channel!

**Norman Jackson** Well I think you have hit on something there, Simon Rae. Perhaps we need to curate the very best examples of documentary films that reveal creativity in practice.

**Jenny Willis** I, too, get irritated by the over-dramatisation and formulaic nature of some of these programmes. I do believe there is some vicarious element in the pleasure we derive from watching.

Last night's final of Masterchef definitely says something about the value of creativity: arguable the most creative and the most artistic finalists were beaten by the most traditional and least creative (in my opinion!). I haven't had time to replay the programme and transcribe the biographical bits at the start of the programme, but they struck me by their references to creativity, growth and identity. The very themes we have been associating with each other.



# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

## Transcript: Week Four

### Theme 4: Creativity in education

Our fourth theme explores the idea of creative self-expression in education. I enjoyed listening to this song, hope you do too.

Trevor Strong - Creativity in Education: A Step Toward Conceptual Clarity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fUGnB8mLZE&fbclid=IwAR2-2DdsfRe4GXkhVwif8yAv86LKUSTUiHp4ZRRLU6ZsBqgwrEEaJzu7Dss>



Doug Cole Love it!

Jennifer Willis Me too! He has said in a much clearer way what I was trying to express in my post of earlier today!

Trevor Strong Thanks for having me! I recorded the song last year and I'm just wrapping up my research now. Found lots of stuff I find fascinating, even if the people I'm talking to start to glaze over.

Marta Davidovich This is absolutely great! May I share it? I also focused my PhD on bringing more clarity to what creativity means. It was published last year. My focus was on bringing forward a descriptive, dynamic and actionable definition of human (person-centered) creativity. I feel inspired to create my own song now!

Trevor Strong Yes, please share! And let me know how your song goes.

Norman Jackson This is a good blog post with link to Durham Report. Thanks for sharing Mair Bull



***Creativity is back on the map. But how do we navigate from here?***

— Kerry Chappell, University of Exeter 6 Feb 2020

The Durham Commission (2019) has thankfully put creativity firmly back on the English educational map, reopening debate about its value and how we facilitate it. This is timely given the decline of creativity around 2010-2011, following something of an upsurge since 1999. In that earlier period, there was lively debate and engaged practice promoting creativity as a key life capability, necessary for a vibrant economy, the promotion of wellbeing and, when practised ethically, the development of a more cohesive society.

The Durham Commission has picked up on this thread of 2000-2010 practice and research, drawing in more recent learning and activity. It also recognises existing creative educational practice that is thriving despite an uncondusive climate. The commission's final report sets a clear and ambitious agenda for: creativity to be taught in every school in all subjects and beyond; a growing network of accredited collaborating schools; Ofsted recognition of creativity; involvement in the PISA 2021 creativity test; higher education (HE) involvement in researching creativity; and recognition of creativity within digital and the arts.

Alongside and aware of the commission's work, the research community has also continued to investigate reduced but nonetheless ongoing creative education practice – none more so than BERA's own Creativities in Education special interest group (SIG). As current co-lead, and working with previous co-lead Teresa Cremin, we identified a need to articulate what we know about creative pedagogies, and to do this in a way which complemented the commission's own global review of the broad area.

Our work (Cremin & Chappell, 2019) therefore entailed a critical systematic literature review of international, English-language empirical research of creative pedagogies from 1990 to 2018 in formal schooling. It asked what we know about creative pedagogies and their impact on student creativity. Across 35 articles that made the final cut, the findings revealed seven interrelated creative pedagogy features: generating and exploring ideas, encouraging autonomy and agency, playfulness, problem-solving, risk-taking, co-constructing and collaborating, and teacher creativity. The review also, perhaps disappointingly, showed only six articles addressing impact on student creativity. For those researching in the field, these findings are not a major surprise; but the emerging critical nuances provide useful insights for future research and practice.

Methodologically, most of the studies are qualitative (26), employing multiple methods, reflecting researchers' views of creativity and its pedagogies as multidimensional. This is a notable contrast to a wider push in creativity research per se from within psychology, emphasising quantitative testing. Reflecting the review's findings in schools, the Durham Commission notes teachers' reticence in positioning creativity as assessable through tests, with a preference for assessment of planning. Together, these findings indicate a need to carefully consider research and assessment methods to take advantage of the affordances of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. In research this might mean more mixed methods study and in classrooms more portfolio-style approaches.

With teachers' own creativity another review characteristic, looking to the future, we also need to consider how to respect teachers' professional wisdom and cultural understanding to allow them to develop their own philosophy on creativity and its pedagogy. As Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010) so clearly elucidated, there are many different disciplinary perspectives on creativity, including defining it: through play; little c creativity; and social, political, democratic and cognitive perspectives. In contrast, our review showed that researchers were not always clear when defining terms. We therefore all need to more carefully interrogate what we think creativity is. But we also need to be wary of a homogenised definition which could lead us towards a national checklist mentality. Space for diversity of definition and pedagogical/research approaches is key.

'Looking to the future, we also need to consider how to respect teachers' professional wisdom and cultural understanding to allow them to develop their own philosophy on creativity and its pedagogy.'

Going forward, we are aware that the review offers a particular systematic perspective. We need to bring this into conversation with grey literature, seminal reports such as the Durham Commission, and ongoing creative practice of all kinds. For those of you interested to pick up on these conversations, please save the date - Thursday 11 June- for the event 'Creativity in 21st Century Education: Where, how and what next?', to be held at the University of Exeter and supported by the BERA Creativities SIG and the University of Exeter's Creativity and Emergent Educational-futures Network (CEEN). With momentum building again around creativity in education, we will be looking ahead to exciting future collaborations between educational practitioners, researchers, children and young people to better embed creativity back into our educational worlds.

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Durham Commission Team. (2019). *Final report*. The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education, Arts Council/Durham University. Retrieved from <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/creativitycommission/DurhamReport.pdf>

#### ***Developing and Using Creativity through Lifewide Education: Ashcombe Comprehensive School Surrey November 26<sup>th</sup> 2010***

**Norman Jackson** I am not aware of studies that have tried to map the creativity of 16-17 year old adolescents across their lives. These are graphics from an unpublished report of an interactive workshop I did with 6th form students exploring the idea of creativity across their lives.

## What does being creative mean?

The words that were entered onto the diagram are shown in Appendix 1. They were put into a wordle word cloud (<http://www.wordle.net/>) which creates a pattern in which the size of the lettering reflects the frequency of the words used. It can be seen that for this group of students **IMAGINATION** was by far the most prominent expression of creativity. Other strong associations include difference, [self-]expression and expressing [self], newness, thinking. There was a very strong emphasis on artistic expressions - music, painting, drawing, photography, art, dance and writing.



### Unfamiliar contexts and challenges where creativity was required

In the second task participants were invited to think about being in a context that was unfamiliar to them when the problems and challenges were also unfamiliar in which they had to use their creativity. A number of contexts were described but the most challenging environments appear to have been Duke of Edinburgh cited 8 times and student exchanges to Spain/Madrid cited 4 times. Other situations that took people outside their comfort zone and presented them with unfamiliar challenging situations requiring them to be creative included: - raising money to go to Tanzania, organising an event, being interviewed, starting a job, moving house, starting A levels, having to debate in public, the birth of a brother or sister, losing weight and taking a holiday in a foreign country.



The sorts of ways in which creativity is utilised in such situations include:

- thinking on your feet
  - thinking on the spot
  - combining different pieces of knowledge together to solve a problem
  - applying reason and rationality to a situation
  - listening to different peoples perspectives
  - considering different ways of solving the problem
  - cheering everyone up when the going gets hard
  - being resourceful
  - being efficient
  - being aware
  - asking for help from people who are better experienced and have more knowledge
  - having to adapt
  - having the confidence to try something new
  - doing your best
  - communicating with others
  - asking for help
  - staying positive
  - trying not to panic



## ***Beliefs about being creativity***

Participants were invited to give answers to these questions using a 5 point scale. There were 120 responses. 1 Strongly agree 2 Agree 3 Don't know 4 Disagree 5 Strongly disagree

### **Q1 Being creative is an essential part of my identity**

72% Agree or strongly agree 14% Disagree or strongly disagree

### **Q2 Creativity is a rare gift which only a few people have**

61% Disagree or Strongly disagree 20% Agree or Strongly Agree

### **Q3 Most people can develop their creativity if they are given the opportunity to do so**

86% % Agree or Strongly Agree 14% Disagree or Strongly disagree

### **Q4 I am at my most creative in the things I do at school**

18% Agree or Strongly Agree 60% Disagree or Strongly disagree

### **Q5 I am at my most creative in things I do outside school**

64% Agree or Strongly Agree 11% Disagree or Strongly disagree

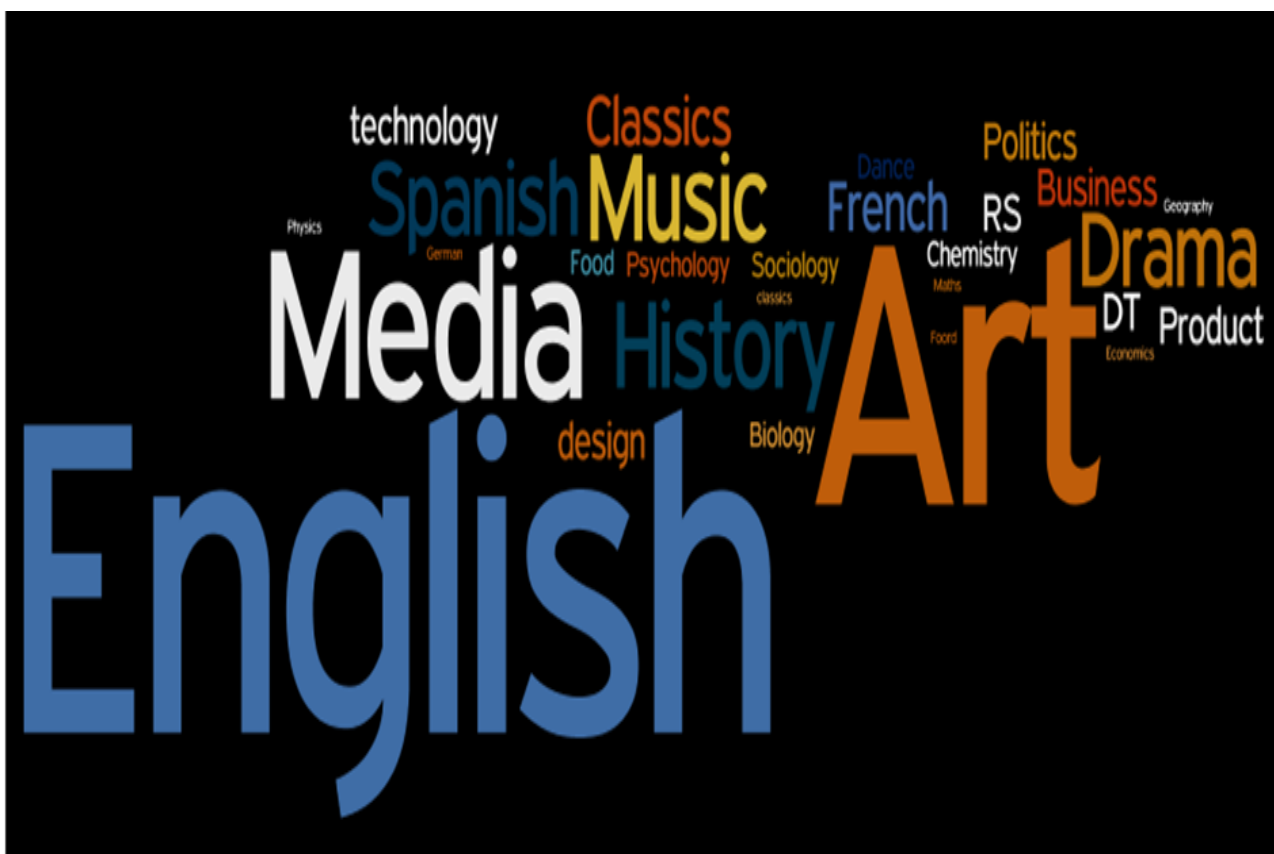
### **Q6 I am capable of being creative in any aspect of my life**

51% Agree or Strongly Agree 11% Disagree or Strongly disagree

## ***Spaces in life for creativity***

Participants were invited to indicate where they felt creative in their everyday life. A wide range of contexts were indicated:

Students find opportunities to be creative in most subjects but some subjects appear to have more opportunity than others:



**Extra-curricular activities within the School through which students felt they were creative:**



**Non sporting activities outside school through which students could express their creativity:**



**Sporting activities through which students believed they could express their creativity:**



**Marta Davidovich** These word clouds are a great way to measure data. I am impressed with all the creativity/ expression programming and opportunities in your part of the world. I have seen very little of this in America. Things are offered outside of school - but nothing her woven into the curriculum.

**Michael Wilson** This report is illuminating. It seems to fuse the realms of play, imagination, creativity and innovation together, as is probably the case in most aspects of our lives. The phenomena of accident and the unknown seem to be fertile ground for improvisational action. I hope similar studies are implemented in different contexts to provide rich data upon which to make broader conclusions.

# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

## Transcript: Week Five

### Theme 5: How does creativity support health and wellbeing?

This part of inquiry is focused on the relationship between creativity health and wellbeing. By coincidence it coincided with an online event in another facebook forum that asked the question

**Fri 15 May, 10.00am to 3.30pm on-line event 'How often do we need to be creative in order to be healthy?'**

5-a-day? 3 times a week? What should our creative prescription be to achieve health and wellbeing throughout our lifetime? Leading academics will debate this impossible question and whether the message that creativity is good for you needs a public health campaign.

**Jennifer Willis** Whilst I am fully behind being proactive in sustaining our personal wellbeing, and find the 5 Ways to Wellbeing model useful, the implication of some formulaic approach to creativity really grates with me! Am I alone? Do we lose qualitatively when creativity is wheeled out on demand?

**Marta Davidovich** Yes! I'm with you Jennifer Willis. Creativity, for me, is emergent and tied to personal preferences or what the creator finds most meaningful. It does not unfold on a timeline. The words 'formulaic approach' make me shudder!

**Trevor Strong** If creativity was truly beneficial to health and mind, then artists, musicians, and writers would be the epitome of wellness. But there's a difference between the creativity behind the desire to change the world (or even be noticed by the world) and the creativity of being part of an ongoing creation (in whatever metaphysical sense works for you). I find this difference when I'm trying to write a song that will prove popular with an audience—an experience that can range from exhilarating to frustrating—to playing songs with others in a song circle, which, for me, puts me at ease and in place. I think that most people would consider the first situation to be more "creative" but I've come to see them as simply creative in different ways. And I think it is this second sense—a creativity of connection as opposed to invention—that can help with health.

**Norman Jackson** I really like this idea Trevor Strong creativity of connection and I would expand a little to relatedness.. because in those idea lie the powerful emotions of caring, love, passion, empathy and compassion. And these are the emotions that are likely to bring out the best in us and motivate us to squeeze out every bit of creative juice we have.

**Johanna Payton** So interesting. I link creativity to change... transformation. Not everyone responds well to change...we're seeing that now in the huge range of responses to the Covid situation. Some of my hugely 'creative' friends are struggling, others are thriving. For some, creative outlets are a lifeline, others are feeling depressed and despondent in spite of creating daily. But is this because the act itself is powerless to change their mood, or because the way it is perceived (taken for granted?) is unhelpful? Perhaps the link to health and wellbeing is more about the way we need to value and nurture creativity as a society, and less about individual prescriptions for healthy outcomes.



**Norman Jackson** I agree Johanna Payton transformation goes hand in hand with relationships. To transform something we have to form deep relationships with the thing.

This time last year we had an extended discussion around the idea of a manifesto for creativity in higher education and the value of personal manifestos for teachers aimed at setting out how they could and would help create the conditions for students' creative development and self-expression. During the discussion I argued that the creative challenge of the higher education teacher with their specialist knowledge and pedagogical expertise, is to enable learners to transform themselves an important dimension of which is to develop their creative potential. I also argued that 'Transformation' NOT 'Originality' is the core concept for a definition of creativity that education can appropriate for itself and form new practices around. Such a shift would move creativity to the heart of the educational process. After watching a TEDx talk by Greg Bennick I adapted the definition he used and offered it as a starting point for discussion about a personalised definition of creativity.

"creativity is the process through which we take elements of [ourselves and] the world around us and transform them into something new that







**Jennifer Willis** So there is an ongoing spiral Norman Jackson. Your wellbeing was enhanced by your feeling valued, which in turn led you to further endeavours?

**Norman Jackson** That is the way it happens if I am lucky Jennifer Willis I think it often leads to new relationships and thence to new opportunities and experiences through which new things grow. So for example the relationship I developed with Sita Magnuson led to her offering to support the work of Creative Academic by illustrating the last issue of the magazine.

Paul Kleiman That sounds a lot like Peter Knight's description.

**Jennifer Willis** Last night I watched a BBC programme in which Antony Gormley visits cave art around the world. He is exploring the question of why we appear to need to create, and discovers some incredible evidence. This perhaps relates to our current discussion of the relationship between our creativity and wellbeing.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0c1ngds>

**Johanna Payton** As we've been talking about health, happiness and creativity, our latest lockdown music video project was an absolute joy and brought us so much happiness. It also involved painting a huge green screen on my living room wall, but sacrifices must be made for art... I directed & styled this one, and my son stars as Peter Gabriel (!) <https://www.facebook.com/109682587350402/videos/605057780354762>

**Norman Jackson** - wonderful video Johanna Payton I loved that song. I just came across a definition of wellbeing and I wondered how you would relate your creative project to it.

The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project Report defined wellbeing as a 'dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society'. (1 p10) The ability to fulfil one's individual and social potential, is a defining feature of wellbeing.

1). The Government Office for Science. (2008). Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project: Final project report. (Foresight). London: The Government Office for Science

**Johanna Payton** - I think this project lends itself particularly well to this situation/project. "The ability to fulfil one's individual and social potential" - on a practical level, the project keeps us busy, making and doing: in my family of three, we're all expressing our individual talents, which brings personal fulfilment. Then we are sharing the videos on social media and with friends, family, local groups, etc. From cheering up grandparents to making friends laugh, there's joy in seeing people's reactions and that certainly brings a sense of purpose to it...raising money for a good cause is another practical benefit that widens the social net in terms of purpose. The community aspect of everything from making the music/videos to sharing them and then chatting about them makes us feel connected at a time when more physical means of connection are just not possible.

And we value greatly your contributions to this forum and the way you have shared your family projects Johanna Payton

PS the definitions seems to work well for your experience

# The 5 Ways to Wellbeing



**Jennifer Willis** - Another fantastic creation Johanna Payton. What a family! I can't help looking forward a few decades and picturing you rolling out these wonderful pieces. Beats the old family picture album!



# Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

## Transcript: Week Six

### Theme 6: Creativity and the pandemic

Our final theme for discussion is focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on us and our creativity.

#### *Gillian Judson Are calls to “be imaginative” an added stress in an uncertain time:*

Hi everyone! The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us all to re-imagine our personal and professional lives. This post is for anyone who finds this [call to “be imaginative” an added stress in an uncertain time](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us all to re-imagine our personal and professional lives. This post is for anyone who finds this call to “be imaginative” an added stress in an uncertain time. Calls For Imagination Anyone familiar with imaginED will know that I’m a huge advocate for imagination. I believe it is one of humankind’s greatest capacities and lies at the heart of all learning. I believe that nurturing imagination in all of our students should be one of our central aims as educators. Sometimes I’ve found it hard to round up support for imagination in a world that is skeptical about its value for “real work” and “serious learning”. When the COVID19 pandemic hit things seemed to change. Imagination started to be identified for its potential and calls for imagination could be heard in multiple domains (e.g. *We Need Imagination Now, More Than Ever or Want to beat COVID? Start With Using Your Imagination*). On one hand, I am pleased to see imagination getting some long-overdue credit. On the other, I fear this call to “be imaginative” may result in people feeling additional stress and adopting unachievable expectations of others.



Some of that stress about “being imaginative” is fuelled by uncertainty about what imagination is—it’s clear that we do not all use the word to mean the same things. I want to point to the ways in which imagination constantly works in our daily lives and is already helping everyday people survive this plague. I also want to share why, if you are experiencing undue stress, now may not be a time you can fully unleash your imagination. It’s easy to judge ourselves harshly—categorizing our daily practices as unimaginative and being overly critical if we are less productive than usual or can’t come up with new, ground-breaking ideas. I want to address misunderstandings of imagination that may be causing people unnecessary self-critique right now.

#### *Your daily acts of imagination*

In 2019, I did a small study that looked at features of Imaginative Workplaces\*. I surveyed an environmental scientist, a music teacher, a computer science student, a doctoral candidate, an elementary teacher, a high school teacher, an animator and an interior designer. I first asked my study participants what “imagination” meant to them.

Their ideas about imagination reveal its human dimensions. Imagination is not only the work of the greatest minds—it is the work of all minds as we problem-solve or make, play, or write. Kieran Egan’s Imaginative Education philosophy reveals how a central vehicle of the imagination is the story-form and how cognitive tools represent the many ways in which we are engaged by stories in our lives and through which we, as storytelling animals, create our own.

As you figure out your new story in this time—as you make emotional sense of your new reality—you are engaging your imagination in that storytelling process. As you figure out new ways to work or play or relax or celebrate in your life, you are engaging the imagination: the ability to surpass the actual and conceive of what is possible. I’ve seen

#### My participants said imagination:

- is exploration
- is thinking through possibilities
- brings creativity
- is an idea
- is problem-solving
- is engaged through playing, reading, writing, creating
- is envisioning the possible
- is dreaming
- is creating, producing, designing
- “is the ability to view the world as it might be, not as it is”



lots of imagination at work in my community, in my kitchen, on the internet: Sidewalk art. New recipes. Bread-baking. A guy playing UNO with a chicken. An art gallery for a gerbil. Teachers reading stories aloud for their students. When we understand how imagination is much more central to our activities as humans, we can ease some of the pressure off ourselves. We may acknowledge that, yes, we are imaginative and, yes, day-by-day we are re-imagining our situations.

### ***Why it can be hard to be imaginative***

Back to my 2019 study... I wanted to better understand what enables and disables “imagination” in a variety of contexts. The people I surveyed said that imagination is disabled in the workplace when we are:

- stressed
- overloaded
- lacking in time
- lacking in resources
- uncomfortable (e.g. feeling unsupported or “alone” in our ideas)
- exhausted (physically/mentally)
- surrounded by low morale
- restricted by too many rules

Many of you will be working from home right now. Your home is your workplace. I would be willing to bet that some of you are experiencing some of the factors on this list. Have you been asked to re-imagine your role at work? Have you asked others to reimagine theirs? No easy task. All learning is embodied—tied to our emotions, physical and psychological needs. Right now, in uncertain times when we may be experiencing physical and emotional distress, it can be challenging to fully re-imagine who we are and what we do. As author Robert MacFarlane notes in this post, the imagination doesn’t thrive when our basic physiological, safety, and belonging needs are not met. So if you are feeling overwhelmed, don’t expect to be able to fully unleash your imagination.

If our workplaces are causing us stress—if we lack time, resources, or support—the same may be true for our students. While some of our students have ample resources, love, and support to weather this storm, many do not. Even if our students have basic resources to learn online, they may be facing anxiety or other mental health challenges brought about by the current situation, likely exacerbated by separation from friends and family. In light of the message to “stay at home,” I worry for the children who face unsafe home environments. I’m not alone in my concern about how this pandemic may negatively impact children around the world or how it will increase educational inequities unless we can find a way to support all children’s education.

So, if you are finding it hard to function—let alone fully unleash your imagination—know that you are not alone. I’m right there with you. Over the past few weeks I’ve experienced a range of “inspiration”—from none (pure and simple writer’s block) to moments of progress (a week ago I managed to write a solid two pages that, upon revision, I did not completely revise).

### ***Good news***

The good news is that imagination is always at work, in at least small ways in our lives. More good news: imagination is resilient, ready to be unleashed when the time is right. MacFarlane suggests, “imagination is squeezed out in the first instance by not having to worry about bureaucracy, and food, shelter, warmth, and the other basics”. And good news: If we can get to a place where we are comfortably bored (e.g. our basic needs are met), then we might actually create space for more imagination and creativity. Yes, boredom can spark creativity. As we continue with social distancing and home-based lives, we can enjoy more family time, bluer-skies, a slower-pace to life, a chance to dedicate time to hobbies. I hope you, too, find that “silver-lining” in these otherwise unsettling times.

I have no doubt that imagination will get us through this plague—from the “big fix” of finding a vaccine to the daily pleasures of developing a new skill or hobby. My hope is that more people can acknowledge how the imagination is at work in their daily re-inventions: in stories and humour, baking breads and reorganizing the kitchen, in relationships, play, and work. Remember that imagination is not only reflected in the greatest inventions or scientific discoveries—it is enacted in the stories you share with your families, in the humour you find in difficult times, in the noticing of patterns on the sidewalk, and in the games you enjoy. Imagination is frequently at work in small and big ways that bring vibrancy and diversity to our lives.

### ***Action***

- Be kind to yourself if you are feeling exhausted at the prospect of coming up with innovative or unusual ideas for the moment.
- Be kind to your students (or employees or colleagues) if their work is not what you had hoped for—many people are struggling to meet their basic needs.

- Appreciate when an imaginative idea strikes you!
- Take care of your body—take care of your heart—and try to enjoy your own explorations of the possible.
- Stay home.

\*I'd like to thank Wenke Wang for her help as the Research Assistant in this study

## Comments

**Norman Jackson** Great little article Gillian thank you for sharing it with us. I do empathise with mums home schooling young children who find it difficult to study at home, while having to respond to unsympathetic employers who want their pound of flesh and demand your imagination to solve their problems. My daughter, a single mum, is in this position!. Imagination can help but the constraints are so challenging and there is so little head space when all you are doing is trying to get through the day. But I saw her garden for the first time in three weeks and she has, in spite of all these severe constraints, somehow managed to transform it.. Such is the human spirit to imagine a better world and make it happen. I am so proud of her.

Jenny Willis I am looking at the other end of the age spectrum and can see that same spirit of determination and optimism even in the 90s. My father has been isolated throughout the lockdown, with none of the 3 children able to visit him. I live over 100 miles away, so can't even drop off items for him. I have finally managed to get him on the register of vulnerable people, which means we can arrange food deliveries. Since he was widowed 16 years ago, he has been making his list of shopping, checking the references for each item on Asda website, then reading his list out to me over the phone for me to complete on-line. He has had to learn how to use a tablet, which is not easy when you have physical difficulties in using your hands. We are now back in this routine, though not without a great deal of frustration!

Being alone and defiantly refusing to accept any social support, he has used his creativity to envisage his summer garden, research the plants he needs, then relayed them to me over the phone so that I can place an on-line order for him. As they arrive, he is spending time daily feed/watering his plants. It is interesting to see how important gardening appears to be during this period of suspension - the human spirit is somehow able to find sources of wellbeing in this humble pastime. In my father's case, it demands the ability to look ahead, be patient and imagine, for deferred realisation of his efforts.

**Marta Davidovich** Thank you for sharing this wonderful article Gillian Judson. I am also a huge advocate of nurturing and encouraging imagination and creativity across the lifespan. In my work I have found self-critique and expectation of external evaluation hugely limiting factors in the classroom and in the world.

**Norman Jackson** Its time we explicitly put imagination on the 5C map of creativity

**Gillian Judson** YESSSS!!!!

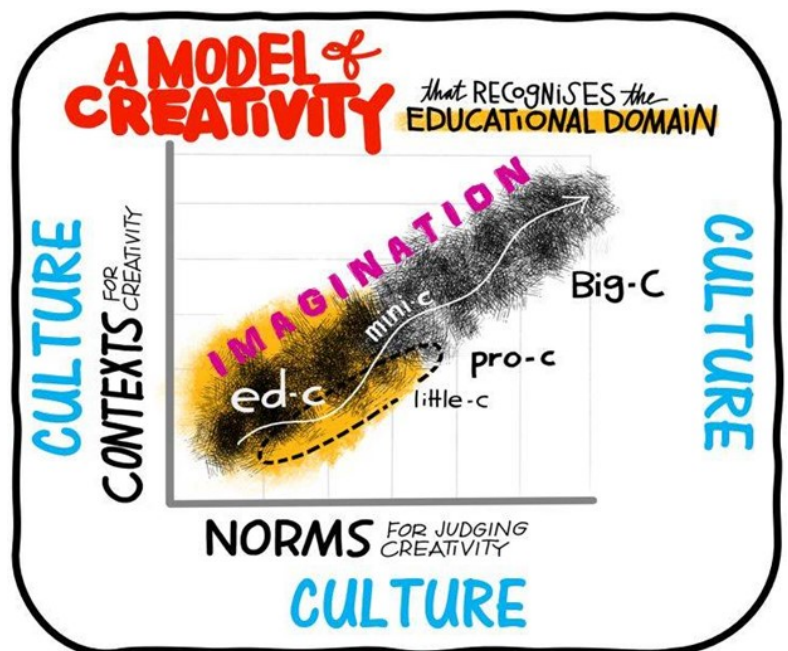
**Norman Jackson, Lockdown Arms**

As I was reading the Sunday paper the first week into the lockdown I came across an amusing article about a man who, because he could no longer frequent his local pub, turned his shed into a pub. There was a little cartoon picture which really struck a chord and I shared it with my friends who were also amused, particularly as the guy in the cartoon looked a bit like one of us.

There is no doubt in my mind that this little cartoon provided the visual inspiration for what followed. I have a tumbled down shed full of rubbish and I had been toying with the idea of pulling it down. But, after reading the article, I looked at the tumble down shed differently and floated the idea with my family that we might use it to create our own garden pub. A little to my surprise, my suggestion received a favourable response, so my son and I set about a makeover which comprised painting a sign on a broken door and propping it in front of the shed opening to form a crude bar. We then popped a couple of tables in front of it, added some bottles to the bar and had our first pint of beer. So we were the first customers of our garden pub.

The next day was warm and sunny and the suggestion came from within the family that we go to the pub and have lunch. The idea was well received so we loaded our plates and took them to the pub, together with the mandatory can of beer. While eating our lunch we talked some more about the idea and what this new and invaluable asset might mean. Out of our conversations (at our home pub) emerged the idea of a late summer event (in the post covid-19 world) when our pub would be the centre piece for the event.

After lunch one of my daughters made some bunting and then went back as the sun went down to drink a glass of cider and have a chat with her sister. In the space of 24 hours we had used the venue three times in three different family contexts and it has now become a fairly regular feature in our everyday life and family culture (well at least when the weather is good!).



I don't think this little- (family) creative act was triggered by boredom. Rather it was about entertaining and amusing ourselves when we had a fair amount of time on our hands. It wasn't an original idea we just adapted an existing idea for our own context and made it happen. Having made the venue and given it meaning we made good use out of it. It was about finding new use for something that had been abandoned.

**Jennifer Willis** Wonderful! And look at the contribution this little creative activity has made to your and your family's wellbeing. I saw a related initiative on the news - two neighbouring families had removed a panel in their shared fence and inserted a long table at each end of which they could sit and have a drink together. Both examples remind us of the need for social contact, something which has been so evident over the last few weeks. It is in this domain that we have seen so many creative acts.

**Josefina Ramirez** Again creativity in action to solve a basic need (social belonging), and enhancing the way you could spend time together !!! In our home I can see when our son, daughter and partners get together we all end up creating ways of enhancing areas to enjoy outdoor at home together !!! A deck, a new sitting area or a place for a bonfire develops from the need to be together and share.

For me it shows your family appreciates and treasures the space to share socially!! Creativity at its best for family wellbeing !!

**Marta Davidovich** What a great idea ! Creativity in action and it was also infectious in the very best way - from your son to your daughter and sharing your story with all of us will likely spark similar creative initiatives around the world since we are an international group! I already spotted a place in my backyard that already has a 6 foot long table what offers built-in 'social distancing.' My next step: run out for beer to christen my new 'Creative Connections Pub' on Cinco de Mayo!

**Maria Kefalogianni** fabulous idea Norman it brings to mind the importance of bringing the silly and humour into our lives as a way to maintain wellbeing, laughter and making the "impossible possible" feels liberating and a breaking through point- we are at the minute engaging in making a tree house for my boy- and secretly bringing to life a childhood dream of mine!- and with so much wood we might well make a pub too!!

**Kevin Byron, Lock Downside Up!**

Lockdown for many people has been filled with creative anticipation that has simply not come to fruition. The intention was there for many folk in the first week, but as the weeks passed, the necessary action to breathe life into creative ideas was as muffled as a protective virus mask!

I don't have any publishable evidence on this (in terms of sample size), but I have been asking a variety of my friends how they have been reacting to lockdown over time. There was an interesting correspondence between our responses, and week on week we each seemed to be tracking along a similar roller coaster of background emotional responses.

One or two people I asked began enthusiastically creating new artworks or writing in the first week but then stopped, and I found the same happened to me with a list of potentially creative ideas I wished to pursue. The return to these unfinished projects has been spasmodic, and other more routine tasks took precedence. These other tasks included the exercise of familiar skills such as cookery, repair work in the home, gardening, singing in a Zoom choir etc. Whilst these skills may be categorised to some people as creative, in effect they are low on creativity relative to the original aspirations.

The challenge in these unusual Lockdown circumstances is in finding motivation, and the right kind of motivation as we know is one of the three essential requirements for creative behaviour identified by Teresa Amabile. (ie Domain-specific Knowledge, Cognitive/Creative Skills, and Intrinsic Task Motivation (Passion and Drive coming from within))

If one or more of these elements is absent then we default to a low level of creativity, which is not problematic in itself, because a great deal of our daily life by necessity operates at this level. Motivation is in my view never entirely from within because a great deal of our 'within' comes from 'without'. That is to say we are not islands, and much of our motivation is a result of interaction with friends, family, colleagues, and the environment. That motivation is also influenced by the informal evaluation we receive from other people at the beginning middle and end of a creative project. Simply relying on a sense of 'what feels right to ourselves' is an inadequate description of evaluation, because those feelings have come from a personal history of real evaluation with others. Again we are not social islands, neither are we creative islands. We may need to withdraw from time to time to gain full





## Double Take!

December 2020



It's my partner - She's been Socially Distant recently!

March 2020



It's my partner - She's not been Socially Distant recently!

access to our imagination, but for most people that needs to be balanced with as much time on the mainland of ordinary life.

A great deal of this social and environmental interaction has been taken away by the requirements of Lockdown, and this may well explain the drop in creativity that I have observed both in myself and in others I've been in touch with.

Now it could be argued that we are still interacting with people in Lockdown with technology - with the phone, live videos, and social media, but these forms of communication are not reality, they lack the full bandwidth of the elusive human 'presence'. The full bandwidth of human sensual experience is clearly attenuated in virtual forms of communication (eg micro-body language, movement, the ambience of the environment etc). However the qualitative differences between talking with someone on a live video, and talking with them in the same room are not well understood.

It may then be this difference in bandwidth, and the accompanying absence of informal evaluation that explains the aforementioned drop in higher level creativity at least with the people I have spoken with. Of course many people are living with others, so they are not as deprived of 'presence' as someone on their own. However extended periods with the same people can bring other challenges of familiarity, and creative behaviour thrives on variety.

So Lockdown on the face of it looks like a great opportunity for us to be more creative than usual because many of the pressures that allegedly militate against this behaviour, have been removed. But given this has not been the case for some people, maybe in fact these pressures make us more 'at the ready' for creativity? It would appear then that Lockdown has led to some contradictions with expectations.

In that spirit, and in celebration of low level creativity, I attach a tongue-in-cheek image of another Lockdown contradiction!

**Heather Somewhat** Interesting. I have been thinking along the same lines recently. But for me, I think it's not so much direct interaction that has been lacking, but an awareness that the 'world outside' has crumbled or shifted in some way, so that the abstract structure I was working within (or rebelling against, or defining myself through, or simply imagining when I write fiction) no longer exists. So, I'm no longer motivated to continue with my pre-existing projects in quite the same way. They no longer feel in context, or the conditions in which they arose have changed. However, I have recently found inspiration again by 'tweaking' my projects to accommodate something of the current situation. For example, I have been working on a long memoir about writer's block, which I have now started blogging as short pieces. And I've made a character in my time travel novel come from a future in which there is a pandemic. These are only minor tweaks to the original concept, but it has been enough to make them relevant again, and 'of the moment'. I'd be interested to know if this resonates with anyone else. I'm delivering a workshop in 'creativity in lockdown' next week and would love to hear from others in the same situation.

**Norman Jackson** Kevin and Heather the perspectives you offer are making me think. I don't know how reliable anecdotes are but amongst some of my friends I have noticed a lethargy and unwillingness to engage in anything substantial that might provide opportunity for creativity. While others, who before lockdown were engaged in projects of their own making, are still very much involved in making and creating. Others, notably mums involved in work and home schooling are run off their feet and are just trying to survive. So there is probably as much variation now as there was before lockdown. The difference for me has been having three of my children back home because of covid and we have done things as a family that we would not have done by ourselves. For me personally, I've also been heavily involved in this discussion and stuff around it so I'm thinking I have a purpose on which to focus myself and my creative energy. I hope others will share their experiences and anecdotes.

**Heather Somewhat** I loved the Lockdown Bar idea! Yes, creativity is springing up in unexpected and often concrete and practical ways at the moment. And I feel for those mums with jobs and children, I don't know how they manage. As in Maslow's pyramid, creativity flourishes best when the practical needs are already met.

**Norman Jackson** Following on from the above Kevin and Heather I'm wondering, as I look at the things I have been doing that have engaged me creatively and given me real pleasure and satisfaction have all been about relationships and meaning in those relationships. The urge to engage creatively has come from two sources. The first the relational need to express feelings I have for very special relationships and to show other members of my family how I feel. The second to work collaboratively with my family to create something that has meaning to us. The third relationship is the one I have with this community and my need to show I care about and value the contributions being made.

**Kevin Byron Norman** - I don't think your situation is typical if you have your family around you especially if they are not always there. There are of course many variables to account for here. For the friends I referred to some are alone, and others are in their family situation, but with no new visitors. One of these people who lives with her son is an accomplished artist, and another one is a well published fiction writer living with his partner, and we have had exactly the same experience.

**Norman Jackson** Hi Kevin I appreciate that my situation may not be typical. I was just highlighting how my situation was different to what I normally encounter and because of that we have done things that I don't normally do. I am not making an assumption that lockdown is one big opportunity for being creative. Everyone's situation is different and unique to them and everyone's responses will be different and that is the same as outside lockdown. But the pandemic is unusual in the emotional environment it has created, full of uncertainty and fear and for many the sense of isolation and loneliness and that in itself may create unique responses..

I was very moved by the item on BBC news last night on the soundabout inclusive choir and how they can't meet because of lockdown <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIEJp2FwWTM>

**Kevin Byron** Norman I don't think social science researchers would turn their nose up at the opportunity to seek common trends in people in lockdown. In spite of the uniqueness of personality, we are all undergoing much the same deprivation of social integration. It's a bit like saying creative skills can't be generalised because we all have different knowledge! The problem I believe is with the terminology of creativity! Personal creativity is common to everyone and much of it is mimicry of other people's ideas. For example . The fact that say a yoga teacher is using Zoom, in my view is not at all creative. Yet activities like this have been described in the media as creative. Everyone does creative stuff at this low level, and I wonder if we are over-emphasising it here?

**Jennifer Willis** I am inclined to agree with Kevin about there being a certain lethargy during Coronavirus. In my case, I have found that, although we now have 'all the time in the world' I have become reluctant to do tasks that I would normally have had to fit in to my weekly routine. Dusting the house is the most obvious - I just can't find the motivation to do it. Maybe I do need the pressure of time when balancing all my 'normal' activities. Or is there a more profound, if unconscious, ontological reason for no longer seeing the purpose?

In terms of relationships Norman, the conversation of the last few weeks has been a very welcome opportunity for me to engage more socially than I usually would. It has also given me the opportunity to reflect and interact on the issues we have considered. I am conscious of having been very motivated to spend time on this, which I have prioritised over the mundane tasks such as housework.

**Simon Rae** Hi Kevin, I'm so glad that someone has said this... since the lockdown I've not picked up my sketch book or pencils at all - which is unusual. I mean, I don't normally draw every day but not drawing for six weeks is, looking back at it, very odd. It's not that I haven't done things, I have been able to finish a couple of projects that I had been working on - I just got a coat of varnish on a garden bench that I've made out of some logs that I've had lying around after cutting a dead leylandi tree down, and my little chatter of stick characters are looking good with a coat of varnish, but otherwise - nothing.

It's a bit like the story of the person who can't get to sleep because they're waiting for the boot of the guy in the flat above to hit the floor, I'm waiting for the next set of figures, the next bad news item, the next ambulance siren driving past on the way to the care home down the road, the next helicopter (we're on the flight path to the major testing unit in Milton Keynes) ... my attention is elsewhere.

Maybe Maslow was right as you say Heather, creativity can't function because layers lower down in his triangle have been kicked away? Mind you, I'm a bit wary of Maslow's triangle ... I was taught it in a Business Leadership course that I did but on looking into it discovered a surprising lack of actual research to back it up ... it's one of those self evident nuggets that just seems right, and it's got that killer of a graphic image that fits so well. But when I think of those fabulous cave paintings in caves in France, Africa and Australia done by people living on the edge of safety and survival, barely above the base of the triangle then I think ... No, creativity is at the base of anyone's existence and Maslow's not right.

### **Norman Jackson, *Ups and downs of lockdown***

Kevin Byron started a really interesting discussion yesterday which Simon Rae

reinforced, around the idea that for some people (perhaps lots of people) the circumstance of their lockdown has created the conditions and physical/psychological environment that are not conducive to their creativity. Kevin summed it up like this.

*"The challenge in these unusual Lockdown circumstances is in finding motivation", to which I would connect "opportunities" and "purposes" that engage us at a deep enough level to want to do something beyond familiar everyday routines. For some people lockdown seems to have created environments that are poor in stimulation and affordance, whereas for others it has resulted in environments that have stimulated creative responses.*

**This is a very significant point for our discussion and I hope that today you will share your perspectives.**

### **My own perspective**

I know that I have been fortunate with lockdown in the sense that my environment has been enriched by the presence of all three of our grown up children two of whom who are not normally with us. All three are working two from home and one working in a care home who is self-isolating (in the converted garage) and observing social distancing by eating in the utility room while we sit in the kitchen! Discussions are always lively and we have done a few things that we don't normally do. The LockDown Arms pub was one example I described in a previous post. Another project we have just embarked on we are calling TEDx family.

We were having Sunday lunch a few weeks ago sitting in the garden so as to observe social distancing, when it was mentioned by a senior member of the family, that a family we know are giving talks to each other, the implication being that it was a jolly good thing to do. A little to my surprise our kids latched on to the idea and thought it would be great to copy them, but they would go one better and share their talks with other members of the family. We agreed that talks could be about anything but we agreed to adopt the 20min TED format so that it was not too onerous a task for presenters and audience. We have called it "TEDx family" with the strapline *"sharing ideas within the family"*. We all agreed to do a talk, two talks every Sunday after lunch. There are initially six of us

(including daughter's boyfriend). Once we are established we will encourage other family members to join in.

We did the first talks last Sunday on "ice cream" (sadly without the chance to eat any) and "Persian carpets". We enjoyed them and I recorded them on my phone and posted them on a web page for other members of the family to watch with an invitation to join in via zoom. It is possible that this might have happened without lockdown but I suspect not. It was the fact that we were together and the emerged naturally from the conversation and we all felt we had been part of the idea forming process.



**Johanna Payton** I was really interested in something Kevin Byron said about extended periods of time with the same people, and the idea that familiarity can deprive us of variety. It made me reflect on the creative shenanigans we've been up to in my house: this has been a hugely fertile creative period for us. I think it's for a couple of reasons - the "ups" of our lockdown, if you will. Usually my husband is off being a musician and commercial artist; I'm busy writing, styling and teaching; and my son is schooling, acting and gaming (don't worry, he's still doing plenty of the latter). We're really close emotionally as a family, but the time we actually spent together pre-lockdown was very limited, and when we are all available at the same time, there's always a pressure to "do something" - go out to eat, visit the theatre or cinema etc. We're big consumers of food and culture - peak capitalism and all that. So now we can't consume in the same way and we have more time than usual in the same place. So we started creating our own culture, and doing it in a way that brings together all our experience, in making music, art, storytelling and performance - and it's something we've never had really the opportunity to explore before. We've helped each other out loads on projects, but this is much more collaborative - it's not just about "helping". That makes it novel for us and affords us the "variety" that might otherwise be missing. What also helps is that we have a home big enough to be able to get space away from each other. We can still go all day without really seeing each other, so when we come together to work on something, it feels fresh and exciting. I think that physical space is crucial for us and we're very lucky. All this said, we still have the "downs" of lockdown to contend with...I'm fully engaged in the creative project until I realise the housework is being neglected and I still have piles of marking to get through. Not sure those situations are conducive to our creative spirit!

P.S. we might have to steal the TED talk idea Norman Jackson ...we are already fond of saying "profound" things over dinner followed by "thank you for attending my TED talk" - it gets a laugh every time 🤪

**Heather Somewhat** With a tiny 'c' I'm being more creative in my daily walks with the dog. We are confined to a small area because we no longer take the car out. But I've discovered footpaths I've never noticed before, and made 'better' use of them - sitting down by streams, taking a flask and picnic, stopping just to play with the ball - instead of steaming ahead like it's something to 'get done'. I'm more flexible, playful, I notice more, I've slowed down, sometimes I let the dog decide the way. All these are conducive to creativity, I think. Now my freedom is constrained, it has made me look more closely and make more creative use of the area I have.

**Kevin Byron** Just to add my personal situation. I live alone in Lincoln and my partner Teresa lives in Cambridge - about two hours away by car. We usually meet at weekends, but have not been able to do that since Lockdown started. Neither of us have a problem with the solitary life, but we have both found a dip in recent weeks with our usual 'self-directed' creative work. It hasn't been a result of anxiety or depression, and in some ways the absence of social and workplace pressures has been quite enjoyable (though we are both working from home). Indeed I would say the well-being is above the usual level, but this has not led to more motivation for creative work. In a 'tongue -in-cheek' posting I wrote for my Facebook page I wrote that as a result of Lockdown I'd "accidentally stumbled across lower consciousness" I think the only way my creativity has been operating on a relatively higher level, is in its capacity to find excuses for not doing creative things!

**Norman Jackson** thanks for sharing Kevin Byron I suspect I might feel the same in your situation..I find the old maxim that the busier you are the more your do is true.. I know that I am okay in social isolation if I can absorb myself in something. In the past it has been work, for example as a geologist I would spend weeks tramping around the wilderness more or less by myself and be quite content and absorbed.. but I am not so content when I do not have something to get stuck into and self-motivation is likely to dwindle away.

**Jennifer Willis** An example from me. Yoga and I live alone. He is very sociable and by pure chance, several of the school friends he grew up with in Colombo live nearby. They have known each other since they were 6 (nearly 60 years!). They are Tamil, and part of the global diaspora following ethnic troubles in Sri Lanka. They meet up regularly for bridge, a meal, a drink and so on. He has a second set of friends, his medical school batch mates, who are both Tamil and Sinallese. These two groups are always in contact with each respective friends on the phone, but a new development came with lockdown. Thanks to Zoom, they meet virtually every Saturday (despite the time zone problems of being as far apart as Vancouver and Australia).

Out of one of these discussions we learnt of the real difficulties Colombo University students are experiencing since they, too, went into lockdown and had to return to their villages. There, they are faced with cultural issues such as the perception of their families that they are wasting time if working on a computer. There are practical issues too - how to earn an income, what the future holds etc.

The VC of the university happens to be one of Yoga's batch mates and, by pure coincidence, she arranged for us to give a lecture on radicalisation when we were in Colombo in February for another event. This was in the context of the Easter suicide bombing of a church last year, which was conducted by one of their students.



This lengthy background is to set out the emergent opportunity that came about for us to use our creativity. Mine lies mainly in analytical domains, whilst Yoga's professional skills as a psychiatrist, and his experience as a victim of ethnic violence, enable him to empathise with the situation the students and university find themselves in. I was simultaneously working on the wellbeing survey for #creativeHE. It was obvious to me that we could use our joint capabilities to design a survey, identify students needs, then follow this up with an action plan of support.

We put the proposal to the VC, who readily accepted it. She immediately appointed a group of senior colleagues from across the university to work with us. This will be a collective initiative, bringing together staff and students in an initiative which will, hopefully, have a positive impact. Is it creativity? It is certainly a response to an emergent opportunity, it is novel, it draws on our respective 'talents', it doesn't aim to create something tangible, though. But does creativity have to be tangible?

**Maria Kefalogianni** I love the ideas shared in this thread! Family TED talk !!fabulous !!i might steal that idea too.... we been engaging in more gardening and music and feel liberated by the lack of pressure on having a structure, Like Joanna i too get distracted and house gets neglected , for good reasons! haha. we have engaged in family charades and quiz nights when we can, and that s lots of fun, however it also brings me a sense of sadness as the lack of physical connection is coming to the front and being exposed...

**Holly Warren** Imagination is always at work. At times we might need to polish it, make it shine through the fog that wraps our busy days during challenging times. It could be stopping and seeing the beauty of small things that when looked at and then observed sparkle for their simplicity and imaginative drive. Let's drive our attention to mind wandering. Taking a break and dipping into our imaginative realms.

**Gillian Judson** What a gift it is to know you all I know I'm in the right Professional Learning Community when I see your responses and the brilliant stuff in all these chats

**Berny Sansome** I enjoyed this article Gillian. For a long time I never recognised myself as imaginative. More recently I am more than surprised by by creativity and my interpretation on patterns for craft projects. I have also seen my hubby begin to paint (watercolours), my Father-in-law engage in model ship building, and my son's photography skills are superb. There is so much creativity within each and everyone of us. This lockdown has its challenges - different for everyone, but for some it has gifted them space and time to allow their imagination to blossom. What an absolute blessing. I trust we can keep hold of these new creative adventures going



### ***Challenge crisis with creativity***

Creative expression heals, and sharing it with others connects. Ashley Riddett, an art history and visual studies graduate student at UVic, wants to help you do both. In collaboration with the Gage Gallery Artists Collective, Ashley has launched the new Challenge Crisis with Creativity project. She invites you to draw, paint, doodle, sculpt or write a poem at home about what you're experiencing these days. Email an image of your work, along with your name and a short description to [Ashley](mailto:ashley.riddett@uvic.ca), and it might get posted on the [Gage Gallery site](http://www.gagegallery.com)!

<https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/thegreatindoors/2020/04/28/challenge-crisis-with-creativity/>



## Exploring & Celebrating Creative Self-Expression

### *Transcript: So what have we learnt?*

We have covered a lot of ground over the last six weeks while the world has been in lockdown and this unique circumstance has featured in our discussion. I'm sure that everyone of us will have taken something useful from the conversation but this question so today and tomorrow please do share what you have learnt.



#### *How is what we learnt through this process, relevant and useful to education?*

The important realisation for me is that there is a widely held belief (championed by Ken Robinson) that our educational systems kill creativity - what he means is that beyond the earliest years of education there is little scope for creative self-expression. I think we need to take a broader and more nuanced view of creativity.

Carly Lässig's threefold categorisation of creativity (1) in secondary school environments is the key to unlocking a more comprehensive perception of the ways in which students engage in creativity, namely:

- 1 Creative Personal Expression** - expressing aspects of self - personality, emotions and ideas in novel ways
- 2 Creative Task Achievement** - using creativity to achieve a particular task or external demand
- 3 Creative Boundary Pushing** - extending typical and expected knowledge in order to pursue new understandings and outcomes.

I think that this scheme is relevant to the education system as a whole and that different emphasises are placed on different categories at different levels and in different disciplines and pedagogical contexts. From a creativity perspective, I believe like Carly we should view our education systems as a special domain - we called it ed-c (2) in which the members of society learn to work with creativity in the three modes that Carly identifies. In this way our education systems provide the platform for adult creativity in domains where knowledge and expertise are required.

Having thought about these things in my own practices I can see that even when I am immersed in tasks and projects that provide opportunity for creativity in a disciplined way, there is also scope for me to express myself.

These are some of the most important things I have learnt that I believe are relevant for education.

#### Sources

1 Lässig, C. J. (2012) Perceiving and pursuing novelty : a grounded theory of adolescent creativity. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology. Available at: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/50661/>  
 2 Jackson N.J. & Lässig, C. (2020) Exploring and Extending the 4C Model of Creativity: Recognising the value of an ed-c contextual- cultural domain Creative Academic Magazine #15 Available at: <https://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html>

**Doug Cole** It's been great to join in these discussions, where I could over the last few weeks. It's been a nice departure from the day to day, to sit, think, reflect and engage in this really important area of work. These discussions have broadened my thinking in some ways, where before I was perhaps judging what was creative for others, I now see that the individual themselves, in the context of their own lives and times is really where creativity matters, to us all as individuals, rather than it necessarily being for others.

I am still struck by the need to explore / unpack / describe the features of creativity in education and with our students though. Not in a restrictive and narrowly defining way, but in a way that makes critical features explicit from the outset, creating a better opportunity for students to recognise and be able to articulate the true depth and value and of these experiences to them as individuals. This process of exploring the term is identical to the approach I have been advocating with employability for many years now.

Whilst I think I have broadened my understanding to some extent and that I now recognise that creativity exists at many levels and is expressed in many forms. However, I personally don't believe there is enough in education across all levels. Its there in pockets for sure and some children / students / learners will be aware of this, but for many others, they will not. Partly for me this is because of how it is spoken about, or not, by those of us working in education. So language is key in this regard, again exactly the same with employability. I think that we can gain a lot in education simply by speaking differently, making the implicit, explicit and helping learners recognise the real value of their learning across multiples spaces and times in a much deeper way and looking well below the surface.

In closing, I will certainly try to do more to champion the importance of creativity moving forwards as a core feature of the dimensions for learning that I recently wrote about as part of my PhD.

I look forward to joining in future conversations with you all too ▯

**Paul Kleiman** These have been great, thought-provoking discussions and conversations, and I regret not having joined in more than I have. It's clear that, in education, there a lot of creativity going on, in various ways, in various guises. In that respect Ken Robinson is mistaken: creativity is not so much driven out but, in many cases, is driven 'underground', so that creativity happens despite not because of the Institutional and regulatory systems and frameworks within which we are operating.

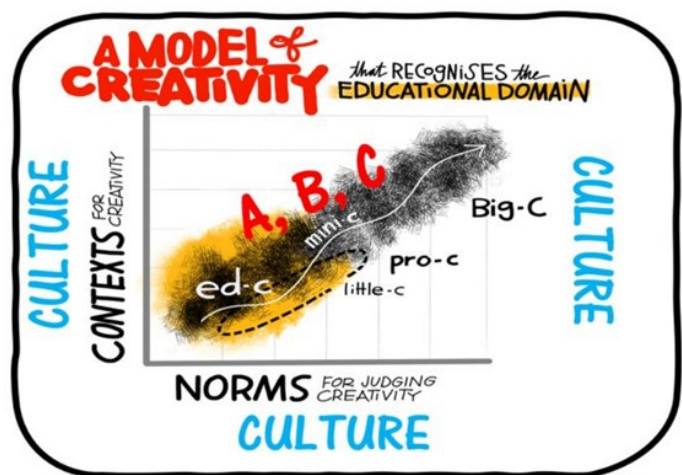
The Covid crisis has provided, out of necessity, a 'creativity boost' for education, as everyone has had to quickly improvise, come up with 'creative solutions' to moving online. Naturally some have adapted better than others no matter what the discipline. Whether that creativity continues to exist when, finally, we reach a 'new normal' remains to be seen.

**Josefina Ramirez** It has been extremely refreshing to read and share thoughts and reflections in a time like this!!! So first, thank you all!

I think that this situation has given schools (and preschools in my case and universities in another role), to create new ways of proposing learning environments. Regarding teaching at higher education , I see that using technology and ways to communicate ( chats and videos ) , which are "natural" for the young generation at universities, has allowed "touching" them and interesting them in ways that result in deeper learning. Using closer and familiar means for them, has result on higher motivation and sustained attention. Being all "seating" in the front seat of the classroom has given them a protagonism needed to participate and engage

If we have captured their interest like described, and we have been able to reduce content ( In my case I have reduced it substantially ), we could trigger "pushing boundaries" by throwing interesting questions and collaborative activities to use that content and achieve creativity. I find that the more content you try to "cover " the smaller the space to play around with the content and therefore make it their own by reorganizing it in creative ways. I find that my undergraduate students have developed this term (with distant learning) , higher and deeper comprehension of content, and better abilities to use it. This may also be the result of my own boundaries being pushed to create new ways of putting things together.

The process of education has resulted in longer hours of preparing and involvement for me and my students, but paradoxically, I feel less tired and more satisfied with what happens in "the classroom". Time flies and it is used with higher involvement of students and teachers. The "classroom " is no longer a common space, but a common subject and mindset. Off course there are always students that do not "connect" with this learning creative



- A** Creative Personal Expression - expressing aspects of self – personality, emotions and ideas in novel ways
- B** Creative Task Achievement - using creativity to achieve a particular task or external demand
- C** Creative Boundary Pushing - extending typical and expected knowledge in order to pursue new understandings and outcomes.



atmosphere, but they seem to be less than when we were using traditional teaching schemes. The need to create for me, has come from being pushed to do what I have done for 30 years, in a completely unknown context, in which I thought anything could happen. The lack of fixed and prejudged expectations of my course and my students' achievements in it, pushed my boundaries to create better experiences for learning.

In the early years setting, it has been very different....It has only been the same in the sense that it has "pushed the boundaries", but in this case, to work with parents together, losing "control" of what happens in whatever learning experience you have proposed/ set, for your children. I feel we are still far of developing interesting experiences for three or four year olds, in this context, but it is taking the shape of working with parents, ( in a way we haven't discovered or developed previously ), more than only with children, creating together, something that we still don't really know what it is. So my reflection tends to move in the direction that education may develop creativity ( in everyone involved in the process) when we use the means of communication our learner uses more confidently, and then propose to play with the content in collaboration with others ( students, colleagues, classmates, parents ).

**Marta Davidovich** I am so grateful to you for creating this platform for creativity conversations. And I offer my appreciation to all who brought their insights and perspectives to the table. I am not an advocate of 'labels', but I can embrace the person-centred A-B-C descriptions in the model you've shown here Norman. Thank you, also, for the hours and hours of work you invest in this facilitation.

**Jennifer Willis** I, too, would like to thank everyone for giving me the chance to engage in a meaningful discussion over the last 6 weeks. It has certainly made 'lockdown' pass pleasantly and, I hope, some seeds have been planted that will germinate.

I find it hard to answer Norman's question and identify at this stage what I have learnt. The conversation has been so rich that it will take time to review and reflect more. One thing, though, that has reverberated with me is Simon's model of the self (individual/relational/collective). Identity had been an unconscious thread in my research since my earliest days, something which I began to realise over time. Now I would like to explore further the cultural differences in self-expression.

May I also take this opportunity to thank those who completed the questionnaire. I have begun an analysis, but there is still time to participate if you wish. The results will be published in CAM16

Till next time!

**Simon Rae** Thanks Norman, it's been an interesting few weeks and it's certainly kept dark COVID-19 thoughts at bay - and it's been stimulating to read other people's thoughts on creativity.

Your final graphic is very succinct, and, I think, captures our discussions well with respect to individual creativity. However, can I be a bit obtuse and say that I would have liked more discussion about group creativity, ie, about individual creativity within a group situation, and, although we did touch upon the assessment of individual creativity, I would have liked more discussion about the assessment of group creativity.

How many of us do not work in a group culture? We may teach as individuals but isn't the course supported by a departmental structure, wasn't the course designed by a group? Isn't the ability to work as part of a group one of the skills asked for by employers? Only a few students will graduate into an 'individual role', most will go into group based work where they will have to cope with the vagaries of work assessments, rewards and advancements so different from our educational style of individual assessment.

Mair Bull in her post points at her first article in TES which suggests that education as we know it will change due to COVID-19 - which I for one look forward to. Hopefully our system of assessment will be one of the aspects of education that will change. I follow a US academic on twitter: Jesse Stommel (@Jessifer) who posted his assessment policy the other day. Essentially he said that, due to all the interruptions caused by COVID-19, he would not be grading individual assignments but would be encouraging his students to write to him about their work and telling him what grade they thought they deserved (and that, if this was anything other than the 'A' he encouraged them to give themselves, to message him). I like this idea, if students have the self-confidence to give themselves an A they will probably do well in life if not, well ...

And I think a similar arrangement could work for group work. Ask each student to grade the contributions of all the group's members and then do a subtle bit of averaging and smoothing and 'Poof', one has everyone's grade!

In terms of group creativity I do think that there is a lot to talk about. Can a group be creative? Are all members of a creative group creative? How do you put people/students together to form creative groups? How are creative groups managed? etc etc. (cf. my recent post referencing an article about Captain Beefheart.) And, I guess, how should your graphic be adapted to include group creativity, or the creativity of a group? Or indeed, does it need to be adapted? And if this the end... thanks everyone for a good couple of months of discussion.

**Norman Jackson** Hi Simon Rae yes I think you are right that the focus has certainly been on the individualistic aspects of creative self expression but we have certainly not excluded sharing the ways in which personal creativity intermingles with the creativity of others to produce collective forms of creative self expression Johanna Payton illustrated this really well in several of her posts. As far as the A, B, C model in the graphic I would not be at all surprised if it applies as much to social forms of creativity as it does to individual forms.

I do not for one moment wish to curtail conversation and I would be delighted if the conversation carries on exploring this idea. And I will keep contributing to such a discussion as long as it lasts. But the theme of social collectives as a context and environment for creativity is worthy of discussion in its own right. Thank you Simon Rae for all your thought provoking contributions

**Johanna Payton** Norman Jackson Simon Rae I'm hugely interested in group creativity - particularly in group work at uni as it's always such a sticky wicket. Simon your post also brings to mind a story I am fond of telling my students about the world's oldest known university (I'll dig out the reference) where you weren't allowed to use

what you'd learned for commercial gain, and could only graduate when you and the teacher agreed that you were ready to go out into the world. A collective decision and a truly holistic view of education, hundreds of years ago. Where did it all go wrong?

**Simon Rae** An interesting exploration of creativity, of the creativity of a group, of the role of control in creativity, of improvisation and of rehearsal. I was pointed at this article as being a (long) essay on the Creative Development of Trout Mask Replica, a late '60s double album by Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band, from a jazz perspective. Being as how this album is the one disc that I would insist on taking to my Desert Island I read it, and thought it worth passing on to the group.

I'm familiar with all the stories of how TMR was created, from being written in one day, and the Magic Band being taught how to play it by Don Van Vliet (Captain Beefheart) under conditions of an authoritarian cult membership, to the more reflective memories of surviving band members but I found this article to be an interesting exploration of creativity, of the creativity of a group, of the role of control in creativity, of improvisation and of rehearsal.

If you know Trout Mask Replica you'll be able to follow much of the article at a musical level as much of it refers to the words or sounds of individual tracks, if you have not heard the record it might be worth looking for it on YouTube (although that recommendation comes with a government health warning - listening to TMR for the first time is a bit like living your life in the Renaissance and Baroque rooms of the National Gallery and suddenly being dropped into a Jackson Pollock exhibition, or only listening to Chopin and then being taken to a Sex Pistols gig). I have been listening to TMR since it first came out and it took many years for me to grow accustomed to it.



ALLABOUTJAZZ.COM

**Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band: Trout Mask Replica album review @ All...**

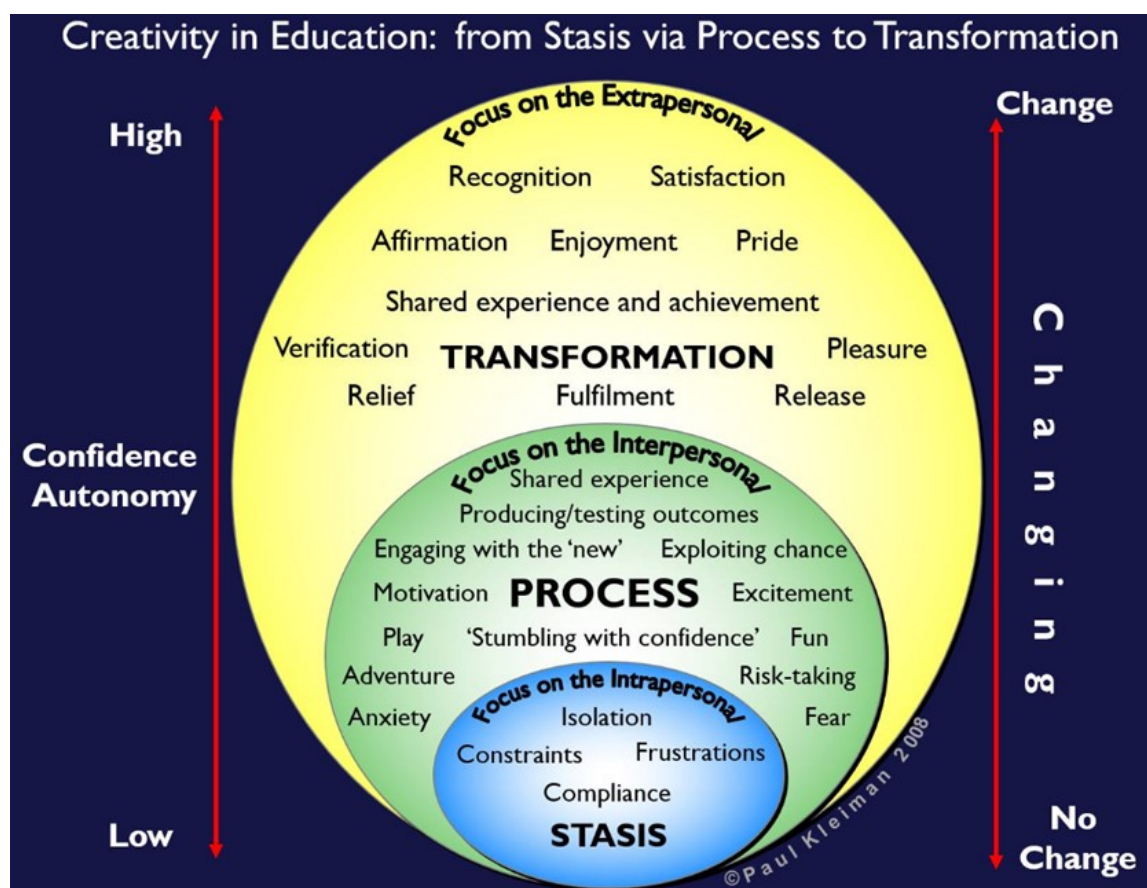
Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band: Trout Mask Replica album review by Eric Gudas, published on May 3, 2020. Find thousands jazz...

What I do think is that the article makes some interesting observations: about the creative process; about the creative process when more than one person are working together; about influences and about individualism that make sense even if you don't know or can't listen to TMR.

[https://www.allaboutjazz.com/trout-mask-replica\\_29404?fbclid=IwAR1gjX5tx-bkY4Uf8DesWyVnhKQy2Tdb-M\\_1w\\_C3CN1qb3bNz1vkEvk6KMA#.XrWB3fZZY\\_A.email](https://www.allaboutjazz.com/trout-mask-replica_29404?fbclid=IwAR1gjX5tx-bkY4Uf8DesWyVnhKQy2Tdb-M_1w_C3CN1qb3bNz1vkEvk6KMA#.XrWB3fZZY_A.email)

**Paul Kleiman** Jennifer Willis Simon Rae That individual/relational/collective model has resonances with this model, that I developed out my research which goes from a focus on the intrapersonal, through a focus on the interpersonal, to a focus on the extra-personal.

**Jennifer Willis** Thank you Paul Kleiman. I like your model but have one query with it: you describe the intrapersonal as stasis. Whilst this may appear so externally, is there not room for internal change without it impacting externally?





## TOWARDS A MANIFESTO FOR CREATIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**We believe** learning is an extraordinary, creative, imaginative, transformative, wonder-full, lifelong and lifewide adventure.

**We strive** to construct a truly creative and imaginative curriculum in and across all disciplines.

**We actively pursue** a creativity that constructs new meanings, new tools and new outcomes, new embodiments of knowledge, new relationships, rules, communities of practice and new connections, new social practices.

**We forge** the creative, imaginative path by thinking, making, doing, solving, dreaming.

**We acknowledge** and are willing to inhabit the discomfort zones of creativity.

**We embrace** the perilous leap, the getting lost, the anxious moment, the fragile courage, the stumbling with confidence, the learning at the edge of chaos, the glorious 'failure'.

**We do not turn away** from the creative challenge and we grasp the imaginative opportunity.

**We believe** criticality & questioning assumptions should dance with the capability of imagining possibilities.

**We expect** the unexpected and we intend the unintended. We unlearn, de-school, and we do not assume that the discourses, practices and tools of the past will serve us well in the future.

**We relish** the passionate inquiry, the inspirational design and the challenging experiment, and we experience it all with all our senses.

**We celebrate** the everyday acts of 'small c' creativity alongside the great leaps of imagination and we do not allow ourselves to become victims of the symbolic violence that blinds us to the value of our acts of creativity, however humble they may be.

**We illuminate** how to act with an eye to the long-term when we combine the power of imagination with the spirit of care, love, respect and justice.

**We acknowledge** the ecological nature of learning, creativity and practice.

**We have** enminded bodies/embodyed minds and we do not separate the heart & the head. We and our environment are indivisible.

**We live** in a wonder-full and story-full world and we harness imagination with social-cultural tools to equip us to tell stories powerful enough to change the world ...and ourselves.

**We pursue** the creative path in a way that allows individuals to have the confidence to do what they need to do when they need to do it with conviction & bravery.

**We rejoice** in our individual and co-operative acts of creativity and we enhance our personal and collective wellbeing through the exercise of our creativity.

**We hold** to the principle that through playful, ludic and thoughtful practices we flourish, blossom, find joy and discover that we are capable of so much more than we believe ourselves to be.

**We resist** the pressure to conform, to comply, to play safe, and we are not affronted by being challenged.

**We repudiate** the standardised blandishments of 'edu-speak' and we are not embarrassed to use and revel in words such as play, fun, spirit, passion, joy, adventure, excitement.

**We value** resilience and perseverance and we reject the 'failure' and seek to recognise and reward the learning not the 'failure'.

**We recognise** creativity as an innate human attribute, and we resist - through our imaginations and creative practices - pedagogies that seek to suppress and dismiss creativity and imagination.

**We accept** that nothing ventured, nothing gained, and that our own anxieties and our fears of breaking the rules are, often, the greatest barriers to our creativity.

**We understand** that some people work best under pressure, some people work best against constraints, some people work best alone, and some people work best in a group.

**We endeavour** to help you do your best work to become the person you want to be.

**We know** that pursuing the creative, imaginative path can be a very personal, emotional, indeed lonely journey, and we welcome the opportunity to share our creative adventures with others.

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**We will not define** creativity for you but we will help you to recognise, understand and express your own creativity so that you can make claims for it.

**We will liberate** the curriculum to fully realise all the contexts within which individuals seek to realise their potential and transform themselves into the person they want to be.

**We will create** the spaces where creativity and imagination can thrive and we will allow the time for it to flourish.

**We will ensure** that what we teach and how we teach, and what we assess and how we assess is fit for creative purpose.

**We will encourage** you to use and develop your imagination and creativity to enable you to sustain yourself through the challenges and opportunities you will encounter throughout your life.

**We will act and behave** ethically and with social responsibility and we will continue to develop our moral compass through the situations we encounter or create across our lives.

**We will encourage and enable** a willful, self-directed, self-regulated and self-aware practice to create our own ecologies for learning and achieving.

**We will recognise and value** our own transformations and the transformations we see in others.

**Standing on the edge of chaos and wonder  
we launch our creative challenge to  
the educational stars.**



Compiled by Paul Kelman  
April 2019

## GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONVERSATION

Dear community members

I hope you have stayed in good health during this lockdown period and that our seven week conversation about creative self-expression has helped you in some small way.

As the facilitator of this conversation it is my responsibility to close our discussion and to thank everybody who has contributed for sharing your ideas, beliefs and experiences. It is the process of sharing and the conversations that result from sharing that gives our community its meaning. Without sharing there is no meaning.

The conversation will be curated in Creative Academic Magazine CAM17 so that the perspectives and ideas that have been shared can be accessed by the wider community of people who are interested. The next issue of Creative Academic Magazine (CAM 16) will be published at the end of May. It will also be dedicated to the idea of Exploring Creative Self Expression and draw on some of the contributions to this discussion, including a feature article by Dr Marta Ockuly. As editor of the magazine I am looking for up to three more articles so if you would like to write a short 1000 word article about any aspect of our conversation please message me.

Norman Jackson  
Facilitator





## The Creative Academic Team

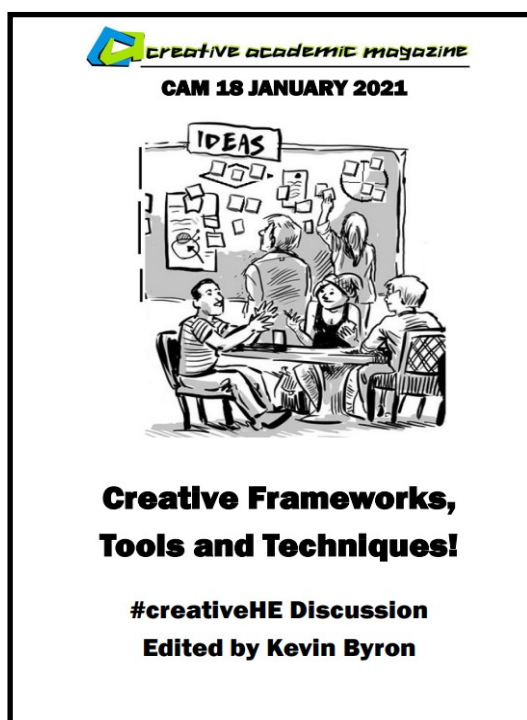


Top — Dr Chrissi Nerantzi (Co-Director), Kieran Matthews, Johanna Payton

Bottom— Professor Norman Jackson (Founder and Director), Professor Kevin Byron, Professor Paul Klieman,

## FORTHCOMING MAGAZINES

JANUARY 2021



APRIL 2021




We welcome contributions to this issue

## Creative Academic - Links & Resources

<http://www.creativeacademic.uk/>


HOME / RESOURCES / BLOG / MAGAZINE / CREATIVE PEDAGOGIES / MORE...





Creative Academic champions creativity in all its manifestations in higher education in the UK and the wider world. Our goal is to support a global network of people interested in creativity in higher education and committed to enabling students' creative development. Our aim is to encourage educational professionals to share practices that facilitate students' creative development in all disciplines and pedagogic contexts, and to connect researchers and their research to practitioners and their practice. Our ambition is to become a global HUB for the

## #creativeHE Forum


<https://www.facebook.com/groups/creativeHE>



 Norman



**#creativeHE**  
Public group · 407 members  [+ Invite](#)

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 What's on your mind, Norman?  
[Room](#) [Photo/Video](#) [Tag people](#)

**Announcements · 32** [See All](#)  
 Johanna Payton shared a link.  
Conversation starter · 18 August ·   
Morning all. We're turning our attention to issue 18 (Jan 2021) of Creative Academic - and in a topical twist, we're dedicating the edition to 'Creative Ed-ventures Online'.  
We'd love to hear your ideas for contributions in the form of articles

**About**  
The #creativeHE community aims to support pedagogical rebels and free-thinking innovators in experimenting with, developing, sharing and getting... See more  
**Public**  
Anyone can see who's in the group and what they post  
**Visible**  
Anyone can find this group.  
**General group**