

Chapter 8

Embracing Social Innovation in Creativity Research

ABSTRACT

Creativity has garnered the attention of researchers and practitioners developing solutions to address social challenges, thus marking a new presence within social innovation research. Social innovation is the generation and implementation of new ideas associated with organizing social interactions. Much of the literature is developed based on the foundational work developed by Mumford, M.D. Experimental designs, and case study approaches to research are most prominent, organized along the two main themes of involvement of creative cognition, and its related concepts in generating socially innovative solutions and this is followed by creative problem-solving in the development of social innovation. Habitat for Humanity, as a case study, offers good examples of the involvement of creative aspects in social innovation. This case study indicates key aspects including mental representation, problem-solving, goal-orientation, social mechanisms of emotion, the cognitive process of association, procedural creativity, experiential nature of persuasion, and the induction of active analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Creativity is a personal characteristic that is most clearly associated with innovation (Miron, Erez, and Naveh 2004). It may be considered as the most important aspect of generating new ideas (West & Farr, 1990). Amabile (1997) defines creativity as the generation of new ideas that are useful and appropriate to a given situation. Thus, creativity involves two dimensions - novelty and usefulness (Chang, Peng, Lin, and Liang 2015). Creativity is identified as an essential capacity of successful entrepreneurs (Peng and Liang 2019). There is now a growing trend amongst researchers to apply theoretical underpinnings of creativity and creative problem-solving to explaining social phenomena. New ideas about social systems and social interactions are rare but can have tremendous impacts on our lives and our world (Marcy and Mumford 2007) by optimizing social problem-solving (Santos 2012). Hence, creative problem-solving provides new and often better ways of addressing real-world problems, ranging from artistic expression through to science (e.g., particle structures) and business (e.g., micro-finances) problems (Mumford, Martin, Elliott, and McIntosh 2018).

The creativity literature recognizes social innovations as creative products and changes which bring value to society, addressing social needs (Jiang and Thagard 2014). Therefore, social innovation is “the generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals” (Mumford 2002, p. 253). Such efforts may create new kinds of social institutions, form new ideas about government, develop new social movements, create new processes and procedures for structuring collaborative work, introduce new social practices in a group, or develop new business practices (Hunter, Bedell-Avers, Hunsicker, Mumford, and Ligon 2008; Mumford 2002). However, creativity research is relatively an emerging field (Williams, Runco, and Berlow 2016). It will take some time before it fully embraces social inclusion and societal challenges (van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016). The creativity literature addressing social innovation, thus far, has largely focused on the application of creative thought (e.g. Hunter et al. 2008), creative cognition (e.g. Jiang and Thagard 2014) and associated concepts in the development of social innovation. The literature has embraced various elements of creative problem-solving associated with social innovation. Therefore, the objectives of this chapter are to identify trends and patterns of creativity research within

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