

Chapter 2

Creativity in the Emerging Adult

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ABSTRACT

Before one can reflect upon the presence of creativity in the Emerging Adult, it is necessary to better understand and explore what it means to be an Emerging Adult. Reviewing the developmental theories of Jeffery Arnett, Erik Erikson, James Marcia, Jean Piaget, and Sigmund Freud is necessary in order to better understand the Emerging Adult and how creativity can optimally be stimulated during this time frame of development. Emerging Adulthood integrates a variety of developmental milestones, including the development of identity and intimacy and the transition of an adolescent from parental dependence to independence in college, relationships and work. This chapter will cover and discuss creativity in the context of group identity, personal identity, family, relationships, cognition, college education, and the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Creativity affects all people at every stage of life. Six dimensions of creativity are fluency, openness, naming, elaboration, flexibility, and originality (Wu & Chiou, 2008). Before reflecting upon the presence of creativity in the emerging adult, it is important to conceptualize what it means to be an emerging adult. The developmental theories of Jeffery Arnett, Erik Erikson, James Marcia, Jean Piaget, and Sigmund Freud will best delineate the notion of emerging adulthood. Their theories provide a framework for understanding the Emerging Adult and thus, offer a critical lens through which to explore creativity at this dynamic, developmental time frame. Emerging Adulthood consists of a variety of developmental milestones including the development of identity and intimacy, the transition of an adolescent from parental dependence to the independence of college, to relationships and work. Therefore, this chapter will discuss creativity in the context of group identity, personal identity, family, relationships, cognition, college education, and the workplace.

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EMERGING ADULTHOOD AND CREATIVITY

Jeffery J. Arnett's Emerging Adulthood

Emerging Adulthood describes the period of time between ages 18 to 25. The notion of Emerging Adulthood is especially popular in Western cultures, since this period of development bridges the gap between dependent teenagers and independent adults (Arnett, 2006). College-aged students typically fall into this category since they are in the in-between state where they are endeavoring to become independent but are not fully financially independent nor fully settled in life. Western cultures and societies contend that it might be easier for individuals at this stage of life to slowly ease into assuming the role of adults, rather than springing immediately from childhood to adulthood, as they had done in the traditional past (Arnett, 2006).

This view of emerging adulthood primarily focuses on young adults in college (Arnett, 2006). Some college students move to different places and are fully separated from their parents, which forces them to accept adulthood and conduct daily chores independently. However, there are also a number of college students who may attend school but who do not live independently and are still reliant on their parents. An individual in this situation may feel stuck in between childhood and adulthood (Arnett, 2006).

Creativity in College Students

With an understanding of Emerging Adulthood, the next step towards a comprehensive look at creativity in this time frame considers how college can enhance the creative development of the emerging adult. College campuses are perfect hubs for creativity; students are more cognitively capable of being creative and professors have the potential to promote creativity in and outside of the classroom. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describes college students as having more focus and drive, which sets these individuals apart creatively. He states that to be a creative person, you need to have curiosity and drive, which can be described as openness to stimulation, playfulness, seriousness, and inner focus. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) argues that college professors have the potential to increase creativity in their students and to spark a fire in an individual's interest, about which they may have been totally unaware. He suggests that professors provide the proper intellectual challenges that are needed to stimulate creativity, and these challenges have the potential to lead to life-long careers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Aligned with Csikszentmihalyi's thoughts on creativity and college, Hulme, Thomas, and DeLaRosby (2014) agree that a college campus is the perfect place for creativity to bloom, and the researchers illustrate ways for educators to promote creativity. Hulme, Thomas, and DeLaRosby (2014) suggest that there are four salient characteristics of creative people: associative thinking, courage, curiosity, and creative self-efficacy. *Associative thinking*, which can help creativity flourish, describes the way in which individuals combine unrelated topics or questions in an innovative fashion. Associative thinking is often seen on college campuses because it is the intersection of various fields of study, people, and experiences. Educators can promote creativity through associative thinking by advising students to study abroad if they are financially capable of doing so, advising students to minor in an area of study that excites them, and encouraging students to join various college clubs, associations, or organizations outside their comfort zones (Hulme, Thomas, & DeLaRosby, 2014).

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