

CHAPTER ONE

GLOBAL CREATIVITY INITIATIVE (GCI) AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THIS BOOK

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Abstract

Chapter 1 describes an international creativity-focused organization, entitled *Global Creativity Initiative (GCI)* that serves the worldwide creativity communities. This chapter gives GCI the opportunity to broadcast its emerging existence and contribution for creativity researchers and practitioners around the world to have a vehicle for conversation, collaboration, possibly triggering new creativity research, etc. The chapter delineates the GCI reason for its creation, mission, proposed activities and goal of providing a venue for creativity researchers and practitioners globally. The GCI will allow trailblazers in creativity, innovation and/or motivation to communicate their ideas, and encourage translation of their ideas for the benefit of end users including teachers and corporate trainers.

What is GCI?

Our Global Creativity Initiative is an *emerging* international organization whose purpose is to seek, archive, celebrate, and share global examples of creativity and innovation and their motivations. We hope to amaze and stimulate people around the globe—and later, perhaps share some of their creations. Anyone can explore here—including people new to “creativity.” Archived materials will take many forms, written, visual, and more—including live interviews, presentations, events, curricula, proposals, new research and applications, and whatever else may intrigue, e.g., videos of creators creating! We foresee a broad audience of many ages and backgrounds across diverse countries, cultures, vocations and avocations, interests, including those who are just curious.

Why Do This?

We *all* can learn more deeply to understand that we, too, have an enormous potential to create and innovate - it is our human birthright, whether for day-

to-day concerns or in more official or specialized areas. We *all* can also find more to appreciate and embrace in the richly diverse activities of humanity across cultures. We can be inspired ourselves and can also come to know the visions of others and other cultures more deeply.

Explorations can spark ever more new insights, projects, and collaborations around the world. They can also change *us* where we, too, become the creators, more aware and engaged in a multicultural world. The GCI is, in fact, a “learning initiative” with exploration and change built in. We want to be open, adventurous and surprised. GCI hopes to find horizons yet unexplored and to inspire users’ own efforts in turn, along with their own openness, through the cross-cultural beauty and breadth of global activity.

May we also appreciate our complex globe and ways to enlarge our horizons *together through GCI*, a two-way street where you can stay in touch in varied ways. *Our deeper intentions include a world more actively and creatively engaged and its diverse people more engaged with each other.*

Is GCI Really Necessary?

We already have many journals and resources for international sharing; why do we need something more? New ideas may come from anywhere. They can benefit anyone—but, notably, only if people have access. Let us not count too fully on even the best books or journals! There is much out there we might never even encounter; the concern here is not just the academic world but people of all ages and involvements. We are talking, too, about our *universal creativity*, not just the arts or sciences (traditional creative areas) or people whose work has won social recognition or eminence (which some would-be creators believe is required for their creations to “count”).

Furthermore, not everything valuable is even recorded. Let us also look for actualizations, modifications, or other unusual, or lesser-known uses of wisdom or identify developments in promising preliminary stages, such as one might find in the GCI. Note, too, that motivation is a crucial addition to creativity and innovation—and is another realm to explore. Willingness to create, mindfully break with others and change a status quo, can involve certain risks, joys, and pleasures. Drivers include important internal and external forces, needs, intentions, and values. You, the readers, may add to this endeavor as well as read about it. You are invited to be in touch for various reasons, e.g., if you see the possibility of contributing personally or wish to gain access to the GCI archives currently under construction. Below one finds (a) a brief rationale and (b) the GCI Mission Statement, including further detail on its initial priorities.

Rationale

The GCI scope has greatly expanded around the nature and prevalence of what we call human creativity (e.g., Sawyer, 2009); so, too, has related research (Villanova & Pina E Cuna 2020). Product criteria (e.g., Richards, 2018, see Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Runco & Jaeger, 2012) favor new outcomes (at times, just to the creator) and are also meaningful, useful, or effective. Creativity is increasingly seen as a potential to be developed in every-

one, of potential use anywhere, and not just in traditional fields of study (Byock, 2021). Some, of course, have said this all along and have tried to help—while also showing us that IQ doesn't explain it and that creative thinking assessments can (remarkably) predict or diagnose creative strengths, motivation, and achievements that have an effect *decades* later (Cramond, Matthews-Morgan, Bandalos, & Zuo, 2005; Reisman, Keiser, & Otti, 2016; Torrance & Shaughnessy, 1998).

Yet too many people still say, "I am not creative!" They mean it, and they think creativity is for a special group they can never join. Yet creativity, when viewed as our *human birthright*, can help us discover what we are living *for*. Our creative focus can be anything—starting a business, counseling a friend, creating a campaign, cooking a gourmet meal, landscaping the yard, doing a science experiment, or writing that novel.

For some of us who have spent years as educators, either in creativity studies or in applying creative methods to diverse enterprises, we are *alarmed* by the number of people who either (a) do not realize they have this *universal* human potential or (b) do not know there are people and resources to help them develop this potential. This sad situation represents, to some of us, a major *disability*—a bit like being unable to read. The situation is similar in the area of innovation—this is not just for big and successful business enterprises or hugely talented entrepreneurs with startups.

Regarding motivation, at times, our inner drive to "take that risk" (either facing the outside *status quo* or our long-held beliefs) can be enriched by qualities such as mindful awareness, openness, non-defensiveness, empathy, and more (Bohart, Shapiro, & Byock, in press; Richards, 2018). It is vital, for example, in a cutting-edge business and with groups, to have administrative support for creative risk-taking and a safe and engaging environment (Morney, 2022). It also matters greatly what time, place, ethnicity, culture, and cultural expectations exist as a larger container (Henrich, 2020; Swigart, 2020). Our motivation to create can draw broadly from who we are and what we value. (Reisman, Keiser, Westphal, & Hammrich, in press).

Who Can Use The Archived GCI Material?

The GCI will serve a diversity of people. Preschool teachers, for example, may take on many creative challenges, while lacking access to the latest research. We can reach these teachers, but they can contribute to GCI as well. We can learn a lot from preschool teachers about children's social and emotional development—among other things. Another example is a group of seniors meeting to look at issues of aging (and COVID). The GCI can also be of value to people with serious mental health problems, all the worse in the many war-torn parts of the globe, who want new ways to connect, to trust again, to heal. Trauma is rampant, as are all the adjustments and difficulties of escape from danger, relocation, and immigration. The GCI is concerned not just with individuals but with larger trends that can help meet and change societal needs. A GCI major goal is to provide people and resources to enhance a more creative life.

Turning the Camera Around - Who is Creating and How?

As students of “creativity,” we are also concerned with the creators themselves, with the creative person, their creative process, and their (complex) interaction with the environment, which some call environmental press (see also Rhodes, 1961). The focus on creativity at the individual level has interestingly been a priority for the humanistic study of *self-actualizing people* and has also shown links to mind-body health (Richards, 2018). Could a creative path also be a road to global health? There is promise, but the outcome is not guaranteed. Creativity can also have a “dark side” (e.g., Cropley, Cropley, Kaufman, & Runco, 2010). Yet social and individual good are among the many *possibilities* we can creatively imagine and hope to realize (Glaveanu, 2021). All else being equal, we can see this GCI initiative for creativity and innovation—allied with prosocial values and motivations—as able to benefit individuals and society and, going beyond, to all beings, the health of our entire biosphere and our planet.

A More Expansive Holistic View

We are highly interdependent and live in systems we can’t always predict. We are all part of a vast interconnected and dynamic set of systems that can profoundly affect one another and help to determine who we are and what we will do tomorrow.

The result of overlooking a complex systems view can lead to problems—witness our climate catastrophe. The social sciences are now becoming more aware of the importance of chaos and complexity theories (or NDS, nonlinear dynamical systems theory) in our intimate lives as well as in the broader world with new insights for creativity as well, including the nature of the “Aha! Moment” (Guastello & Liebovitz, 2009; Schuldberg, Richards, Guisinger, 2022). Yet there are more intuitive ways to work with chaos and complexity conceptually and metaphorically, be it about our immune system, the stock market, weather, Internet, or our creative minds. No complex or technical skills are required. We can start to see the world differently and honor our part in a larger flow of life (Schuldberg, Richards, & Guisinger, 2022).

Creativity very much involves change and surprise. Do explore this book as a whole for a fuller picture of the many flavors of creativity and innovation and what people can do and are doing now. We do not, however, know exactly what the needs will be in 20 years. There will surely be “change and surprise,” however, in a creative cosmos that humans will be part of. What we, authors and the GCI advocates can do for now is to track and share what we discover. One indication of success may be our level of *surprise*. *Human creativity, by definition, results in something new*. We may further discover trends and forerunners of future events. The GCI does not try to force-fit any definition of creativity nor does it limit which aspects of daily life our creativity can affect. The GCI aim is to see what is happening across many countries and life domains and identify promising possibilities for others to use and for some, perhaps, to research as well—and not just at the masters or doctoral levels, but also by preschool, K-12 and post-secondary populations.

Archiving

The GCI archiving structure, emerging over time, will index multiple facets of GCI cross-cultural entries for the convenience of diverse potential users, be they academics, students, researchers, seniors, young people, or other cohorts from a more general public. It will also highlight topics relevance for special cohorts and age groups in media, such as, videos, audios, books, manuals for users, academic papers, innovative proposals, and resources. A further indexing of interest could involve universal, archetypal, or cross-cultural themes, for example with wellness resources or perspectives on illness, as below.

A colorful wellness example, “Forest Bathing,” is noted here to show the color, international flavor, and nontraditional aspects possible (see also Li, 2018; Williams, 2017). “Forest Bathing” was instituted by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in 1982, to promote health benefits of immersion in nature. GCI will share the five steps that Li (2018) advocated to help manage anxiety, reduce stress, and improve one's health. Its later international influences included a Finnish study (see Williams, 2017) built on the Japanese design, which broadened the audience, diversified the woodlands (adding urban parks), and which, while continuing some physiologic and other assessments, added restoration, vitality, and creativity (*re* having ideas). To further explore factors favoring wellness in aesthetic, calming, and expansive venues, GCI users can employ, adapt, or research such projects in their own ways.

Mission. The current GCI Mission Statement offers further detail on operationalization of the Global Creativity Initiative and various of its features, at this early stage.

Working Draft of GCI's Mission and Action Plan

The Global Creativity Initiative (GCI) Steering Committee identifies creativity as the root and future of humanity's quality of life.

GCI Mission. We strive to share across countries and cultures diverse innovations in creative plans and related actions and outcomes that can broaden our minds and invite new possibilities. This sharing also can create new collaboratives, novel research, and grounds for mutual understanding. We are developing a learning organization from which we can all learn.

GCI's Goal. The GCI goals are to i) design a shared hub of diverse representations of creativity as practiced worldwide and ii) to help spark creative activity in a range of ways—individual, community, national and international—in both new initiatives and ongoing projects

A Shared Resource. The GCI will strive to make its resources available at little or no cost. Thus, individuals, organizations, education institutions, programs, centers for teens and seniors, corporations, non-profits, and more across diverse nations can benefit from accessing a resource center to which some users may also later contribute. For contributors, resources can be donated in a non-exclusive way—no contributor need to give up any rights. A recent example is the script/libretto for an excellent musical play (funny as well as heartbreaking) about a serious health issue and the healing power of community. Among other things, this resource could be used by

medical schools or counseling programs to enhance their learners' curricular experience.

First Global Activity: A Virtual Archive. GCI development will begin with designing a virtual archive of short films of “giants and trailblazers” in the field of creativity, as identified by “*Celebrating giants and trailblazers: A to Z of who's who in creativity research and related fields*” (Reisman, 2021), that year's annual Knowledge, Innovation, Enterprise (KIE) conference publication. The 2021 volume highlighted major figures in creativity and innovation. GCI wants to ensure that an interested public has access to many of these experts on their own work, passions, and visions of where creativity could be in 20 years. This and other parts of the GCI collection will be virtually archived at Drexel University by the Freddie Reisman Center for Translational Research in Creativity and Motivation (FRC)—a nonexclusive resource. The FRC is a research center dedicated to addressing the disconnect between teachers and other educators (e.g., principals, superintendents, college faculty, corporate trainers, business leaders, and parents) regarding knowledge of creativity and motivation, and to working to ensure that the latest findings nourish rather than stifle creative students, citizens, innovators and employees.

Over time, this activity will result in a diverse and international GCI archive at the cutting edge. Each year, key contributions and highlights can be featured at events such as the Southern Oregon University (SOU) International Creativity Conference (ICC), the Knowledge Innovation Enterprise (KIE) Conference, and others described below. Additional archive materials may include listings of journals and publications, project reports, proceedings, curricula, and selected conference offerings in diverse fields of education, management, psychology, profit- and non-profit organizations, and government to build resources globally to inform locally.

How will the GCI provide a hub for this spinning wheel of global creativity to engage the many countries and individuals “growing” the area of creativity and invention internationally? For 2022-23 we plan:

- 1. Showcasing.** Highlighting current knowledge-sharing initiatives including events such as the Annual Southern Oregon University International Creativity Conference, which has drawn attendees broadly from international sources (onsite and online) and may include a GCI event in 2023 with “Video Shorts” from creative global innovation leaders or “trailblazers.” Videos will be followed by live interviews with the honorees. Subsequent years might have very different themes. We have also discussed sharing through global conferences, such as the KIE Annual Meeting, and the Torrance International Roundtable presentations that could highlight different countries. KIE events also have a connection with the United Nations World Education Fellowship.
- 2. Conferences.** There are also national and international conferences, such as the American Psychological Association (the USA and Canada joined by other countries) plus activities at universities around the world, including the new Radical Creativity Program at Aalto University, Finland; and Global Communications Through Creativity Publications and Networks (Runco, 2012) where GCI introductions and con-

tacts can be made. Other forms of dissemination will include open-source publications, distribution of annotated lists of valuable resources, such as books and articles, and ways one might involve the innovators themselves.

- 3. New Affiliate Input.** We are expanding the GCI affiliates at several levels and in a “rolling process.” With new archive contributors, we may decide jointly, on an official (but not overly time-intensive) involvement for some willing persons to join the initiative as affiliates. We will look to them with requests for further ideas, recommendations, and resources in their countries and areas of activity--professional, cultural, and popular--to fulfill certain goals. GCI will publicize its work and appreciate self-referrals, for names of potential global community members, for mailing lists, and more. Among persons who ask for archive access, we will see who, at that point, might be willing to fill out an initial questionnaire, and who might be willing to stay involved for a longer period to dialogue or even ZOOM in a group on selected issues.

Suggestions Welcome. By initiating this enterprise, we are seeking—to begin with—an exciting organization, encouraging links with other organizations and furthering our joint progress toward a better future. Questions and comments may be sent to the book editor at freddie@drexel.edu.

Our sincere thanks: to many, and especially to the following three creativity and innovation professionals, Mark Runco (Southern Oregon University, USA), Bonnie Cramond (Emerita Professor, University of Georgia, USA), and Elisabeth Morney (Aalto University, Finland), who helped in different ways with the initial founding of GCI. All have international connections and interests and have been involved at one time or another at the Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development at the University of Georgia. Both Drs. Cramond and Runco each served as Director of the Torrance Center. Elisabeth Morney served as a visiting scholar at the Center and was mentored by Dr. Cramond.

Each planted a seed for GCI through their international interests. Dr. Cramond’s contribution includes sharing an outline of such a program during the University of Georgia’s 2014 international conference, *Creativity and Innovation in an Interdisciplinary and Multicultural World*. Dr. Runco later founded the Southern Oregon University Annual Creativity Conference, which has included renowned creativity researchers and other global participants interested in Creativity. Elisabeth Morney, who herself has presented and has been a public television creator/director for years, initiated and organized the 2021 creativity conference in Vaasa, Finland for Aalto University. Her two keynoters were Dr. Cramond, and Dr. Ruth Richards, Emerita Professor from Saybrook University (the latter suggested by Mark Runco). Dr. Richards suggested an international collaboration to Elisabeth Morney, after seeing, in a very real sense, that it already existed.

GCI Inaugural Steering Committee:

Gayle Byock (formerly University of California, Los Angeles, USA), Bonnie Cramond (University of Georgia, USA), Larry Keiser (Drexel University,

USA), Riikka Mäkikoskela and Elisabeth Morney (Aalto University, Finland), Fredricka Reisman (Drexel University, USA), Ruth Richards (Saybrook University, USA), Mark Runco (Southern Oregon University, USA), Rob Swigart (novelist and formerly San Jose University, USA).

Inaugural Associate Members:

Dee Fretwell (Southern Oregon University, USA), Kirsi Reinola (Aalto University, Finland).

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