CREATIVITY IN LATER LIFE: POSSIBILITIES FOR PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Marvin Formosa
European Centre for Gerontology,
University of Malta
Elderly people
PRESENTATION

I - Relations between creativity and later life

II - Benefits of creative pursuits for older persons.

III - Personal empowerment,

IV - Methodological implications

V - The reminiscence project

VI – VIII - Creativity & personal empowerment
the ability to innovate, to change the environment rather than merely adjust to it in a more passive sense.

So, we create scientific theories, compose artistic masterpieces, and construct imaginative utopias.

(Simonton, 1994 : 320)
CREATIVITY AND LATER LIFE

Age and Achievement (Lehman, 1953)

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Creative productivity between ages of 20 and 80 years (Dennis, 1966)

found evidence of a decline of creativity with age
CRITICISM

- Works measured creative output and not creative capacity.

- Life-span studies on creativity do not show a bell curve peaking in the middle years but three diverse patterns - namely,
Consistent creativity

Rising creativity

up-and-down
BENEFITS OF CREATIVITY IN LATER LIFE

Psychosocial benefits: problem-solving ability, self-esteem, coping skills, anxiety, life satisfaction, and depressive symptoms.

Physiological benefits: When the brain engages in creative work, it alerts the parasympathetic nervous system; heart rate and breathing slow, blood pressure decreases, blood circulation to the intestines increases, and the body shifts into relaxation.
Empowerment is not the same as benefits as the former are only the outcomes of the latter.

Empowerment generally refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for coping with problems and stress, the ability to gain greater control over one’s life, the ability to comprehend social and political realities, or the cultivation of resources and strategies that help to achieve goals.
Empowerment can occur at the individual level (personal empowerment) and the collective level (collective empowerment).

Personal empowerment refers “to the occurrence of changes of the individual in personal qualities, which include outlook on life, personal ability, emotional control, and knowledge about society, all of which are conducive to more effective decision making and handling of problems”.
SAYING IT AS IT IS

UNFOLDING THE PAST
During the process of reminiscing, older adults also may come up with different ways of remembering their past by reframing life events. As a result of reminiscence, past conflicts can be transformed into more stable and creative products. Reminiscing may serve as a stimulus for new ways of thinking and doing things, as older adults rethink past events where they (or others) used different strategies to cope with situations.
If I close my eyes I can see myself in my stuffy classroom, where I spent some three years of my life. My best mate was [name], her sister was also in our class, despite being two years older than us, her mum wanted them to keep an eye on each other. That shows how much our parents valued girls’ education in our times! Our teachers were not much better though. They believed that they were wasting their time with girls who would drop off school as soon they were 14 which was the legal school limit at that time.
I do not agree with Charles that Malta’s independence was entirely positive. Many worked with the British government and lost their job as Malta achieved independence. Many left for Australia and Canada in search of work and never returned to Malta. I was in favour of Malta’s independence but the transition was too abrupt. We were not prepared to be in charge of our own economy overnight. (John)
REMINISCENCE AS A MEANS TO PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

identity preservation
problem-solving
bonding
intimacy maintenance
teaching/informing
INTRAPERSONAL EMPOWERMENT
For many years, I struggled to come to terms with my arthritis. I always focused on what my illness prevented me from doing. I never focused on what I could still do. It is true that my illness prevents me from doing things that many persons in my age-bracket engage in. But looking back at the past ten years or so, I now realise that I still engaged in a lot of activities. The future is that bad, after all. (Gloria)
Becoming old is confusing. You think that you are young, strong, and independent when you are not! My mistake is that I approach life with an unrealistic sense of affairs. I do not ask for help when I need it. I ask help for things which I can do in my own. These sessions helped me to take on a more realistic take on my life situation. I feel better now, more in control of my life. (Peter)
These sessions helped me in looking at my life from different ways. I am aware that my disappointments in life are strongly overshadowed by my achievements. If I have to list my achievements, these would be raising a happy family, working two jobs for more than two decades, and also helping my daughter to raise our two grandsons. I now realise that success in life is not measured by one’s bank account (Rosette)
LIFE SATISFACTION
INTERPERSONAL EMPOWERMENT
There is no *history* but only *histories*. If one political decision is beneficial to some it does not mean that it may not hurt some other people. I have always been a proud Socialist in life but, of course, I will be the first to admit that Malta’s Socialist period was not always a bed of roses. There is no doubt that some people, such as Gloria, suffered from our heavy handedness (Matthew - emphasis in original)
We have met only a few times, but it has been enough to make me aware that during our lives we spend too much time fighting and bickering amongst each other rather than building a better future. Wars are the curse of humanity. If I stop and think about all the wars in my life time, the number of people killed, shattered lives, and amount of money spent, I despair. (Charles)
GEROTRANSCENDENCE
CONCLUSION