# A life story perspective on the nexus of creativity and wisdom

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**Author Note**

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**Abstract**

This handbook unites the constructs of creativity and wisdom, introducing the term *transformational creativity*. The goal is to understand how creativity can best be used to serve the common good. That is, as humans race to address the major issues of our time, what matters most is not simply creativity but whether creativity is used *wisely.* In line with classic lifespan developmental theory, we argue that reflecting on one's personal past in relation to considering future time left to live may spur manifestation of transformational creativity. Taking a life story approach, we view individuals' evolving life story as the nexus of their lived experience of creativity and wisdom. Doing so results in three major considerations: (i) the extent to which wisdom and creativity should be combined in the construct of transformational creativity, (ii) how individuals in the second half of life reflect on life when having lived a life of transactional or transformational creativity, and (iii) how young adults shaping their future life trajectory may manifest transformational creativity in the face of normative developmental pressures.

**Key words:** wisdom, life story, adult development, time perspective, mortality

Sternberg (2021) has identified several types of creativity, including transactional and transformational. *Fully transactional creativity* involves cases in which the individual acts creatively largely because they are employed or otherwise expected to do so. In contrast, in *fully transformational creativity*, the individual seeks to exert their creative capacities to positively, meaningfully contribute to the common good. The issues facing nations and indeed the planet at this time, and possibly throughout history, may require increased manifestation of transformational creativity. In this chapter we take a life story approach (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2001), viewing individuals' unfolding life story as the nexus of their lived experience of creativity and wisdom. Doing so results in three major issues to be considered: (i) the extent to which wisdom and creativity should be combined in the construct of transformational creativity, (ii) how individuals in the second half of life might reflect on their life story when having lived a life of transactional versus transformational creativity, and (iii) how young adults shaping their future life story may manifest transformational creativity in the face of normative developmental pressures.

**Transformational creativity: a marriage of wisdom and creativity**

Sternberg's (2021) definition of transformational creativity connotes that it is creativity employed wisely. Wisdom is invoked in his definition because in transformational creativity, one's creativity is applied in the world in ways that aid the *common good*. As such, Sternberg's (this volume) use of the wisdom construct in defining transformational creativity is fitting and useful. Wisdom researchers have defined wisdom as multifaceted but with general agreement that it centrally includes concern for the common good (e.g., Westrate et al., 2019). That said, if transformational creativity is truly to be a marriage of creativity and wisdom, it is important to consider not only the common-good element of wisdom. In this section, we critically examine

whether there are additional aspects of wisdom that might be used to further conceptually hone the construct of transformational creativity. Several models of wisdom exist (e.g., Three-Dimensional Wisdom Model; Ardelt, 2003; Berlin Wisdom Paradigm, Baltes & Smith, 2008) that propose unique facets of wisdom but also share a common core of elements essential to the construct (Bluck & Glück, 2005).

For current purposes in considering wisdom's relation to creativity in transformational creativity, we use the MORE life experience model (Glück & Bluck, 2013). The MORE Wisdom model is grounded in a life story perspective (McAdams, 2001), emphasizing how wisdom is developed through lived experience and *autobiographical reasoning* (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) about one's own life. This process includes experiencing life events, positively coping with them at the time of occurrence, and later reflecting on them to coherently integrate them into one's life story. Those with MORE wisdom are adept at extracting lessons from life and using their past to direct their future. In the MORE model, wisdom is grounded by four attributes: mastery, openness, reflection, and emotion-regulation/empathy. Each attribute is defined here and then critically considered as important for, or not particularly relevant to, the view of transformational creativity as a marriage of creativity and wisdom.

Mastery involves having necessary expertise and confidence in tackling life challenges and adapting to life situations. Mastery may be important to transactional creativity: having expertise can promote generation of creative ideas within a given area (Baer, 2015). Greater mastery will not necessarily, however, foster greater engagement in transformational creativity pursuits that aim to make the world a better place. That is, while mastery and creativity may be generally related, this attribute of wisdom is not critical to transformational creativity.

The second attribute, openness, involves willingness to acknowledge multiple perspectives combined with an inclination to learn from new experiences. Individuals high in openness possess heightened interest in understanding goals and values different from their own. Past research suggests that high openness (Costa & McCrae, 2002) is associated with both Little-c and Pro-c accomplishments (Carson et al., 2005; Silvia et al., 2014). Beyond that, in relation to transformational creativity, openness is a broad-minded approach that may encourage considering one's creative efforts in relation to myriad viewpoints and doing so in the context of the larger world. As an example, Martin Luther King, Jr. was open to and drew from Gandhian philosophy, including principles of non-violence, when developing creative strategies for mobilizing American civil rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s. He was able to speak well to large audiences, and remained open to how others might perceive his goals and ideas. His visionary ideas resonated strongly with audiences, catalyzing many to become committed to peaceful protest to achieve meaningful social change. In sum, the openness attribute from the MORE Wisdom model seems relevant to add to the conceptualization of transformational creativity.

Being reflective is another attribute of wisdom in the MORE Wisdom Model. This entails willingness to examine complex life issues and strive for deep, nuanced understandings of one's experiences and one's life. Reflective thinking has been noted as relevant to creativity in general (Akpur, 2020): reflective skills are often needed to spur individuals to establish novel connections among ideas. Beyond that, being reflective about one's experiences and one's life may be another aspect of wisdom to include in the construct of transformational creativity. A reflective attitude involves willingness to think about the complexity of issues for the sake of deeper understanding and not just reassurance of one's own views (Glück et al., 2019). Being

highly reflective about life and world issues can lead to considering how one's own creative pursuits might relate to larger societal concerns. Highly reflective individuals remember and reason about past experiences, often doing that to guide future trajectories of thought and action, including how the world might prosper once they are gone (e.g., legacy; Hunter & Rowles, 2005). Consider Yvon Chouinard, who made the unprecedented move in 2022 to transfer ownership of his $3 billion outdoor clothing retail company, Patagonia, to a nonprofit aimed at combatting world climate change (Gelles, 2022). Reflective thinkers like Chouinard deeply consider how their own creative actions might contribute to the greater good. The slogan on the Patagonia website, https://www.patagonia.com currently reads: "For our 50th year, we're looking forward, not back, to life on Earth. Together, we can prioritize purpose over profit and protect this wondrous planet, our only home."

The final attribute of wisdom in the MORE model is emotion regulation, with a particular focus on empathy. Emotion regulation is not generally related to creativity. Empathy, however, may be a necessary motivator of transformational creative pursuits. The classic conception of empathy is as an affective process involving experientially sharing the emotional experience of others (Hume, 1777/1966). Empathy involves feeling into other's worlds, having concern for the welfare of others. Empathy may be felt for known others but, important for transformational creativity, it may also extend beyond one's close friends or family to those one has not met. Individuals with heightened empathy may be more likely to work creatively to enact change in the world because they are more personally sensitive to human suffering. Empathy thus should also be considered as an element of wisdom useful in further conceptualizing transformational creativity.

In sum, transformational creativity (Sternberg, 2021) is a bold new construct of use for examining how humans can move forward to shape positive change that benefits the common good. Taking a life story approach to wisdom, using the MORE Wisdom Model (Glück & Bluck 2013), we suggest that a full marriage of creativity and wisdom may involve not only the common good aspect of wisdom but fuller inclusion of wisdom attributes: openness to experience, reflectivity, and empathy.

Moving on from these conceptual issues regarding the nature of transformational creativity, the life story approach is also useful for understanding how transformational creativity may be experienced as part of one's life. The next section addresses how individuals in the second half of life may reflect on their life story when having lived a life of transactional versus transformational creativity.

**Reflecting on one's life story: remembering transactional vs. transformational creativity**

In the second half of life, there is a general tendency for individuals to gain a sense of awareness that amount of time passed in their life may be greater than the time left (Neugarten, 1973). The understanding that human life is finite, but more poignantly that one's own life will have an ending, may come into greater focus (Bluck & Mroz, 2018). This may not be true for every individual but is a trend in the second half of life. The recognition of the finitude of life, the awareness of limited time left (Carstensen et al., 1999), prompts people to face the late life developmental task of life evaluation. They must now review, with the hope of being able to accept, how they have chosen to live (Butler, 1963). As part of this evaluation, individuals increasingly reflect on issues of personal generativity. Generativity is the concern for and commitment to the well-being of future generations that often first arises in midlife (McAdams

& Logan, 2004). Clearly, looking back in later life, one's creative endeavors across a lifetime form part of this consideration of the extent of one's past generativity and prosocial behavior.

Engagement in life reflection is not only a process but is suggested to have outcomes (Erikson, 1959): it may result in either a felt sense of positive integrity about the life lived or, in contrast, despair that one may have squandered one's time on earth and there is little or no time left to remedy that situation. One contributor to feeling a sense of satisfaction or integrity regarding the life lived may be the extent to which one's transformational creativity has been expressed. One's generative actions for the common good, indeed for generations who will live on when one is gone, can then be considered one's personal legacy (Hunter & Rowles, 2005). Many personal and societal factors come into play, however, that lead individuals to a life in which, if creativity is manifest to any extent at all, it is manifest as transactional creativity.

**Reflecting on one's life story: transactional creativity as legacy**

Developmental tasks across adult life phases involve adapting to life through creating a place for oneself in society (Arnett et al., 2020; Erikson, 1959). That includes striving to develop an adult identity, finding a romantic partner, potentially raising children, and training for and thriving in an occupational niche (Baltes et al, 1999). Most individuals thus reasonably focus on becoming adjusted to life, as it unfolds across decades, with the hope of meeting normative societal standards for success in prescribed roles (e.g., family and work life). Adequate normative adjustment is, in fact, seen as a prerequisite for further growth-oriented pursuits (Reitz & Staudinger, 2017). This focus on adjustment to normative roles, sometimes in the face of personal or economic challenges, may influence individuals to live lives in which they largely manifest transactional creativity so as to be, and be considered, successful adults.

Fulfilling such norms for adjustment in one's given society, of course, depends on a particular culture's definition of success. Though conceptualized in many ways (Bauer, 2021), a successful life, or good life, is often defined as "a life of luxury, pleasure and material comfort" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). That is, though a variety of ways of considering progress through life exist, success is often considered hedonically (Oishi et al., 2020) in our current sociohistorical context, including being wealthy or famous or both.

Taken together, normative developmental pressures in tandem with current societal views of success may shape how individuals exhibit creativity in their lives. Current definitions of success in American society (Bluck et al., 2022) may encourage individuals, if manifesting creativity at all, to manifest transactional creativity. Such creativity is rewarded: one receives compensation (e.g., money) or recognition (e.g., fame). Indeed, individuals who show Big-C transactional creativity in societally valued industries are often highly paid and well-known across the country or the globe. This includes movie actors and actresses, popular music icons, famous novelists, and some top-performing business entrepreneurs. Most individuals do not hold such positions in life but do demonstrate some level of creativity. Those demonstrating Little-c or Pro-c creativity may not be famous but are likely rewarded for their contributions to a corporation or institution through raises, bonuses, or job security as well as status within their organization or profession.

How might this focus on transactional creativity play out when one reviews life, as its end comes into focus? If review of one's life also follows normative societal lines, then being wealthy and/or famous based on one's transactional creativity is a positive legacy to leave. Indeed, in our society, individuals who display neither transactional nor transformational creativity still become rich and or famous and that is their legacy. Such a legacy is not generative

per se, however, beyond leaving financial resources that pass on to one's heirs. This legacy does not likely include having benefited the common good with one's actions (though some individuals leave money to charity on death). Individuals may be completely satisfied, when reviewing their life, to leave such an individualized, family legacy. Indeed, a life of transactional creativity may result in a more satisfying review of one's life story than a life without creativity at all – which some do live. Some individuals simply may not be particularly creative. Others may live in a context in which their creativity cannot manifest, is suppressed, or is not fostered (*unidentified creativity*, Sternberg, 2021).

The life of transactional creativity and its resultant legacy does not, however, align with the notion of being generative in later life: using one's own creative resources to affect the common good beyond one's own family. It thereby leaves open the door for an uneasy concern, at the end of one's life (Erikson, 1959), that one would have liked to have done more for the next generation, been more active in pursuit of the common good, and that now it is too late.

**Reflecting on one's life story: transformational creativity as legacy**

Despite pressures to adjust to adult life phases through taking on normative social and occupational roles, some individuals still develop truly unique life pathways that demonstrate transformational creativity. For those who have wisely guided their life's trajectory, their legacy is directly apparent as they look back on their life. They can review a life in which generative actions or products have manifest and they know they will leave a broad, positive, personal legacy once they are gone (Newton & Jones, 2015). Many factors may influence one's life review and whether it ends in the classic outcomes of integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1959). That said, having lived a life high in generativity through manifesting transformational creativity helps pave the way for a positive life review that ends in feelings of integrity. Those who have

exhibited transformational creativity, sometimes over decades of life, may feel that their life has greater purpose (King & Hicks, 2021).

Given the societal forces valuing transactional creativity, however, what might guide people to live lives in which they have exhibited transformational creativity in some domain? Concern with legacy often arises later in life, in the face of growing awareness of life's finitude (Hunter & Rowles, 2005). As such, individuals at any point in adulthood who have a brush with death, awakening their sense of personal mortality, may become more focused on others' needs and concerns. The experience of a moment when one believed they were going to die evokes anxiety, even when it is remembered years later. Feelings of intimacy or communion with others, however, can soften this concern (Liao & Bluck, 2019). As such, personal experience with death, or more generally with trauma (Frazier et al., 2013), can focus individuals on creative expression that serves the common good. In line with this, when asked how they want to be remembered when they die (i.e., compared to simply describing the present self), individuals more often mention virtues (Bluck et al., 2022). In particular, individuals across adult life phases reported wanting to be remembered as showing virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) such as humanity (i.e., tend and befriend others more than what is expected) and courage and justice (i.e., act correctly, even when one has much to lose; show prosocial civil goals and the will to accomplish).

Some research more directly addresses how creativity is valued culturally. It shows that when individuals believe that creativity is culturally valued in society, they are more likely to stave off personal mortality concerns through being open to novel personal and social exploration, akin to creativity (Routledge & Arndt, 2009). A real-world example of an individual prompted by illness to consider their mortality is the well-known American actor, Michael J.

Fox. In an interview with Variety, Fox states that he regards his 1991 Parkinson's Disease diagnosis as a gift that sparked compassion in him for others, leading to the establishment of the Michael J. Fox Foundation (Saval, 2018). Fox's diagnosis catalyzed his creative energy into activism: facilitating research aimed at curing Parkinson's and helping maintain quality of life for those living with the disease.

Life experiences beyond a personal brush with death may also play a role. Those who experience serious health issues in, or loss of, close others may be prompted to engage in life review, regardless of their age (Butler, 1963). For those who are open and reflective, this may be a turning point in the life story (Cappeliez et al., 2008): a time at which priorities change and they re-set their course in life towards activities that show greater concern for others (e.g., Lehman et al., 1993). Individuals who are less reflective may focus on coping with difficult events at the time they occur but not strive to learning lessons or find personal growth through later reflection on those events, or integration of such challenges into their larger life story (Bluck & Mroz, 2018; Glück & Bluck, 2013). One example of taking a reflective stance is Candace Lightner, whose daughter Cari was killed by a drunk driver in California. Reeling from grief, Candace turned her focus in life not only to memorializing her daughter in a creative way, but one that served the common good. She founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving in 1980, with the mission: To aid the victims of crimes performed by individuals driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to aid the families of such victims and to increase public awareness of the problem of drinking and drugged driving (MADD, n.d.). The organization still exists today, more than forty years later.

A common thread for those who engage in, and can then look back on, a life of transformational creativity may be the development of a sense of purpose in life. Purpose

sometimes develops due to early life background factors and other times emerges later in life through experiencing loss or challenge (Sharma & Bluck, 2022). A sense of purpose is defined as having "goals, intentions, and a sense of direction" in life (Ryff, 1989, *p.* 1071). It not only provides intentionality in one's behavior across time but involves pursuit of goals aimed at fulfilling a greater good (Damon et al., 2003). Purpose may be at work in individuals engaged in *artivism*: social activism to transform the world through creative arts (Shapiro, 2020).

In sum, looking back on a life of transformational creativity in alignment with one's purpose to serve a common good is likely to result in a relatively satisfying life review. Research on older adults' sense of purpose suggests it acts as a protective factor in resilience and that those with higher purpose have greater well-being (Windsor et al., 2015). Some researchers have shown that when retrospectively viewing one's life with purpose, even considering it from the point of view of a classic hero's journey, older adults show improved sense that their life was meaningful (Rogers et al., 2023).

**Charting the life story ahead: transformational creativity in young adulthood**

In this final section, the life story approach is used to consider how young adults shaping their future life story trajectory may manifest transformational creativity in the face of normative developmental pressures. While the life story has more past than future chapters in later life, the life-time horizon for young adults reflects their relatively early place in the lifespan. That is, young adults have a much larger, more open future time perspective (Carstensen et al., 1999; Demiray & Bluck, 2014) and are focused on setting future goals and plans that will guide their life trajectory (Baltes, 1987; Ebner et al., 2006).

Normative pressures in this life phase are to take on an adult identity (Arnett et al., 2020) by developing an occupational pursuit as well as creating a romantic partnership. That is, there

are not, in the classic developmental literature (e.g., Erikson, 1959; Neugarten, 1973), obvious developmental tasks guiding young adults to strive for a life of creativity or wisdom or both. Of course, there are certain individuals who show transformative creativity from early in adulthood. More commonly though, serving the common good through transformational creativity is at least partially sublimated in favor of forging an independent identity and setting oneself up for a normatively successful life story.

Youth across historical time, not only the current generation of young people (i.e., Generation Z) wrestle with whether and how they will lead lives of creative transformation. We review research here that focuses on young adults in the current historical moment. That said, young adulthood is a time of exploration for each new cohort of younger people (Arnett et al, 2020) though how that exploration manifests may be shaped by the larger values in the world in which they are coming of age (Braedon et al., 2021; Erikson, 1959).

For example, despite the normative pressures of emerging and young adulthood, some recent research suggests the current cohort of young adults may be implicitly aware of a new master narrative (McLean & Syed, 2016) that focuses not only on finding an occupation but on finding meaningful work or a purpose in life. Braedon et al. (2021) employed a Q-sort analysis to categorize young adults' responses to 42 statements about their ideal workplace (e.g., importance of working in a company with high ethical standards). The researchers identified three subgroups that they named chill worker bees, social investors, and go-getters. Despite these intragenerational groupings, all three groups highly valued working for companies with high moral and ethical standards. Though the study did not control for social desirability effects, creating moral and ethical codes in organizations may help individuals fulfill goals to express their transformational creativity as part of their workplace experience.

The study also shows that the social investors group shows a desire for their work to have a societal impact and go-getters focus on creating positive societal impacts while also seeing the workplace as a place for personal development. Both orientations fit well with a drive toward transformational creativity as part of one's occupational life. This is encouraging, though must be tempered with realism given that past cohorts have also started adulthood with strong, hopeful ideals that were not fully manifest. Indeed, the Baby Boom generation (born 1946 – 1964), known as a group for their engagement in social change-related movements in their youth, have gone on to have relatively low life satisfaction across adulthood (compared to other age cohorts) and relatively negative views of America's future (Cohn & Taylor, 2010).

If we are to encourage young adults to pursue transformational creativity focused toward the common good, and to continue that work across adulthood, structural barriers to doing so will need to be reduced. This is an age-old issue faced by previous cohorts of young adults who may have started life with a mission to improve the world but been side-tracked by pragmatic concerns. In the current cohort of young people, there is some evidence that they are motivated to pursue work that serves a meaningful purpose (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). Particularly, they report an inclination to working with and helping others. They also note, however, that low salaries have been a barrier to truly engaging in this type of work given the rising costs of living. To foster transformational creativity at any time in history, including for future generations, existing social structures must be reformed in ways that enable individuals to contribute to the common good while simultaneously meeting basic living needs.

Despite the challenges of taking on a life of transformational creativity, some young adults have done so, and taken the world stage in recent times. Two leaders have gained an international following, both of whom were partially motivated to become social change leaders

due to implicit or explicit threats of mortality. This includes now famous Greta Thunberg of Sweden who acted on her feelings that the planet is dying through conducting a hunger strike and ended up leading a worldwide multimillion person movement against climate change (Sengupta, 2019). The second very well-known example is Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, who was shot and severely injured on her way home from a school exam. Yousafzai's story, later published as a book, *I am Malala* (Lamb & Yousafzai, 2013), captivated the world. She received the Nobel Peace Prize for championing the right of all children to education (Nobel Prize, 2014). Young people are engaging in creative transformation, however, aside from the rather famous cases of Greta and Malala. Though of course not all, many of these individuals were also spurred to action through events that increased their awareness of human mortality. We provide here three such examples of creative social activism occurring outside and within a work context.

After the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Highschool fatal shooting of 17 students in Parkland, Florida (*History.com* Editors, 2023), a group of students used their creative resources to call for tighter gun control, coordinate a walkout, and organize nationwide protests. Their organization, March for Our Lives, is still active (March for Our Lives, n.d.). In a 2022 tweet, representative David Hogg wrote: I am so proud of my generation. Seeing the explosion of Gen Z activism over the past couple years has been such a cool thing to see. We aren't letting our future die in front of us (Hogg, 2022). His statement represents the passion and drive often held by the youth segment of a given society, across history, to be part of forging a better future for all.

As a second example, Apolonia Rockwell, a young American woman, was deeply affected by the tragic passing of a classmate's father in an industrial accident. This prompted her to establish True Safety Services, a minority- and woman-owned company committed to

providing essential resources for the safety and protection of construction, oil, and gas workers (Forbes, 2022). Finally, Bethany Hamilton, a young American professional surfer, encountered a devastating setback when she had a near-death encounter with a 14-foot tiger shark. Bethany lost an arm in the attack but returned to the waves. She now serves as a powerful inspiration through her work as an author and motivational speaker, spreading a message of resilience, courage, and hope (Mackey, 2022). This includes reaching out to teen amputees through her foundation, Friends of Bethany. Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and many other young adults such as these are essential models who illustrate real world ways in which youth can exhibit transformational creativity.

While our focus in this section has been on the youth of today, older individuals who focused on transformational creativity when in their youth may have stayed the course across adulthood or been side-tracked by other priorities, lack of systemic support, or personal life events. One example of an individual who began a life of transformational creativity in his youth and maintained it across his life, is Bob Hunter, Canadian journalist and co-founder of Greenpeace (Greenpeace, n.d). Though founding this organization was a communal effort, Bob Hunter stands out as central. In 1970, at age 29, emboldened by the threat of nuclear weapons, and their testing, on human populations and the earth, he envisioned the Don't Make a Wave Committee. The sole objective was to take action to stop nuclear weapons testing in the Aleutian Islands. That committee, by 1972, was configured into what is now the long-standing non-profit environmental organization, Greenpeace. On their site, remembering Bob Hunter, the text reads: "Combining creativity with strategic thinking and a hard-nosed journalistic sense for a good story, he helped to shape – perhaps like no other founding member – what would come be known, around the world, as a *Greenpeace action*" (Greenpeace, n.d., Bob Hunter section).

Greenpeace is now an international organization operating in over fifty countries. Their mission is to help forge the way towards a greener, more peaceful world, and to confront systems that threaten the earth's environment. Bob remained an environmental activist throughout his life through his journalistic endeavors (Parks Canada, 2022).

As reviewed earlier, in the second half of life or when nearing its end, individuals may feel the need to engage in transformational creativity as a generative act, to leave a personal legacy. In youth however, the environmental press to leave a legacy is not writ large because the future feels open-ended. Many youth do not engage in the innovative social justice activities, or other forms of transformational creativity that leaders like Thunberg and Yousafzai have done in today's younger generation, or Bob Hunter did as a young man in the 1970s. One possibility, common across our examples, is that the recognition of life's finitude and fragility (due to environmental threats or witnessing personal-political violence) partially prompted their engagement.

Following that line, for other youth, who do not have first-hand experience of life's fragility, initiatives may be useful that help them grasp that their lifespan is finite, that the future is not limitless but they are in control, as agent and author, of their own future life story (McAdams, 2013). In that regard, death education and awareness initiatives (e.g., Before I Die Walls, Chang, n.d.; Death over Dinner; Mroz et al., 2020) may be a way to further foster young adults' tendency toward engaging in the world in meaningful ways. For example, Before I Die walls, https://beforeidieproject.com/ are a global art project that invite individuals to reflect on their mortality and consider the things that matter most in life. Death over Dinner, https://deathoverdinner.org/ is an interactive process that entails talking about death with others as a route to engagement, insight and empowerment.

Initiatives are being developed to teach wisdom (Bruya & Ardlet, 2018) and creativity in schools and universities. Our analysis of transformational creativity suggests that particular aspects of wisdom, such as openness, reflection, and empathy, may be of particular importance in fostering transformational creativity. Initiatives to encourage transformational creativity may include learning inside or outside the classroom (i.e., service learning). That might include the death education initiatives above as well as intergenerational volunteer programs that bring younger people intimately into contact with older adults, including those reaching life's end (i.e., in hospice or palliative care). Such initiatives may provide didactically to the young the knowledge that older adults have gained through their own life experience: that every story, every life, has an ending. This may help young adults, who are just beginning to develop a life story (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) set future life strivings that go beyond normative self-focused (i.e., transactional) concerns in the hope of themselves reaching life's ending with a sense that they are leaving a legacy. Though complex to achieve in the face of normative structural barriers, such initiatives may help in some small way to set young adults up, from the start of life, to value and embrace transformational creativity pursuits.

## Conclusion

Transformational creativity is a marriage of creativity and wisdom: it involves seeking to exert one's creative capacities to positively, meaningfully contribute to the common good (Sternberg, 2021). Our analysis suggests that transformational creativity may include other attributes of wisdom, beyond a focus on the common good, including openness, reflectivity, and empathy. In addition, the life story approach (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2004) was used to examine how individuals in the second half of life, and those just beginning adulthood, may be confined by developmental tasks and societal pressures, or encouraged by a strong sense

of purpose in life, to engage in transformational creativity. Doing so, one life at a time, may begin to turn the tide on a variety of pressing problems facing our shared world and our common planet.

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