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## ORIGINAL PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

### Towards a critical understanding of creativity and dementia: new directions for practice change

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#### Abstract

*Background and aims:* The past decade has seen important advances in research on creativity, which have provided a more inclusive view of the everyday and ordinary creativity of ‘normal’ citizens, including those living with dementia. However, these developments are limited by a lack of engagement with theoretical and empirical scholarship on embodiment, relationality and citizenship. This article addresses these limitations by introducing and explicating a relational model of citizenship that offers a critical rethinking of creativity and the imperative that this be supported in long-term dementia care.

*Methods:* The article draws on transcribed video-recorded interactions between elder-clowns and residents living with dementia in one long-term care home in central Canada. These are analysed with reference to key theoretical tenets of the relational model of citizenship.

*Results:* Embodied selfhood, specifically the primordial and sociocultural dispositions of the body that are fundamental sources of self-expression and relationality, are identified as key to the creativity of persons living with dementia. Further, it is demonstrated that creativity is not an individual cognitive trait but rather emerges from the complex intersection of enabling environments and the embodied intentionality of all involved.

*Conclusion:* The analysis offered here not only adds a new dimension to the understanding of creativity, but in a more profound sense sets an important ethical standard for cultivating relational environments to support creativity in everyday life.

*Implications for practice:* The implication of this analysis is that creativity must be supported in the context of everyday life through organisational practices and sociopolitical institutions, including opportunities for practice development and broader structural changes that more fully support the relational, interpersonal and affective dimensions of care.

**Keywords:** Relational citizenship, embodiment, video recording, elder-clowning, music, dance

#### Introduction

Henry Dryer lives in a nursing home and mostly sits slumped over the tray attached to his wheelchair with his arms folded. He lives with dementia. At first, Henry is seen sitting in a wheelchair, seemingly introverted and disconnected, eyes closed, head lowered. He is alone in a barren, impersonal and

sanitised setting. A care provider states that he rarely speaks and rarely moves. Henry represents what many fear most about growing old with dementia: ‘the hollowed-out person in a state of “living death”’ (Latimer, 2018, p 837). But then the care provider puts headphones attached to an iPod on Henry and he begins to shuffle his feet, his folded arms rocking back and forth. His face assumes expression, his eyes open wide and he is totally animated by the music he hears. His animation does not cease when the headphones are removed. Henry is quite voluble; when asked what his favourite music was when he was young he responds ‘Cab Calloway’ and breaks into Calloway-style scat talking. This is followed by a soulful rendition of what he later says is his favourite Calloway song, *I’ll Be Home for Christmas*.

This account of Henry features in a documentary film, *Alive Inside* (Rossato-Bennett/Projector Media, 2012). The film follows social worker Dan Cohen, who creates personalised iPod playlists for people living in long-term care homes with various conditions, especially dementia. Cohen’s purpose with this project is to ‘reconnect’ these residents with the music they love and to thereby improve their quality of life. *Alive Inside* has been seen by audiences across the globe. Henry’s performance, which is publicly available on YouTube, has accumulated more than 10 million views since it was posted in 2012 (Goodman, 2014). His musicality has captivated the world. As others have commented, this response stems from the juxtaposition of Henry’s inert state at the beginning of the film – which seems to reinforce the dominant narrative of existential loss in dementia (Davis, 2004; Behuniak, 2011) – with how he is refigured as the film unfolds. Yet Henry’s musicality is not an anomaly – examples of musicality and other types of creativity in the context of life with dementia abound (Basting, 2009; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018a; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2019).

As Camic et al. (2018, p 1) note, ‘creativity’ and ‘dementias’ are not words that often find themselves linked in popular, academic or empirical narratives. In part, this is a result of the assumption that creativity is a cognitive ‘trait’ associated with the activities and expressions of gifted individuals (Shi et al., 2017; Camic et al., 2018; Kontos et al., 2018a; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2019). For example, understandings of musicality and dementia hinge on the cortical sparing theory, wherein the neural mechanisms related to such creativity are thought to be less impaired, or even spared, by neurodegeneration (Cuddy and Duffin, 2005; Hsieh et al., 2011). Even with dance, which is a highly embodied form of creative expression, there is a reliance on cognitive science and cognitive and neural processes as an explanatory framework (Batson et al., 2012; Payne et al., 2016; Müller et al., 2017).

This idea of creativity as a trait of the gifted – termed ‘Big-C’ creativity (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009; Bellas et al., 2019) – results in an intense focus on creativity as original, genius and a significant contribution to public life in the sciences, industry and art. There is a growing interest in the development of a broader view of creativity to account for the everyday and ordinary creativity of ‘regular’ citizens, including persons living with dementia (Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018b; Kontos et al., 2018a; Bellas et al., 2019). For example, Bellas et al. (2019, p 3) have called for more attention to ‘little-c’ creativity, described as ‘situated’ and ‘mundane’ expressions of creativity of persons living with dementia ‘that take place in familiar everyday situations and spaces’ (such as creative choices about clothing and accessories). The importance of broadening conventional narratives of creativity in this way is that doing so provides a more inclusive view of creative practices that are ‘unlikely to have an enduring legacy’, but are ‘nonetheless meaningful in the context of everyday lives’ (Bellas et al., 2019, p 7). Henry’s musicality as captured in *Alive Inside* would not be regarded as creativity using the narrow ‘Big-C’ construction, yet the significance of this is far more than theoretical. As well as enhancing narratives of creativity, in a more profound sense ‘little-c’ sets an important ethical standard for supporting and nurturing creativity in persons living with dementia in everyday life. The ethical implications of acknowledging creative agency in this way will be taken up in the discussion and implications for practice sections below.

Building on the discourse of ‘little-c’ creativity and participatory arts more broadly (de Medeiros and Basting, 2013; Dupuis et al., 2016), scholars have advanced the notion of ‘co-creativity’ (Sennett, 2012;

Schmoelz, 2017; Zeilig et al., 2018) to signal its relational nature and to highlight how the 'diverse capacities of all those involved are woven into a cohesive creative process' (Zeilig et al., 2018, p 141). The increasing attention to 'little-c' creativity and co-creativity has seen a deliberate turn away from conceptualising creativity solely in cognitive terms, to considering it as embodied and relational (Zeilig et al., 2018; Bellass et al., 2019).

Broadening understanding of creativity by considering its embodied and relational nature is a productive move given important developments in critical gerontology's subfield of embodiment and dementia. This scholarship, which collectively takes its theoretical bearings from the social sciences, humanities, and cultural studies, has provided insight by placing the body and embodied practices at the centre of explorations of how dementia is represented and/or experienced (Kontos and Martin, 2013). However, this article argues that scholars who are advocating an embodied and relational approach to creativity are not fully engaging with this theoretical and empirical scholarship, either in terms of understanding how the body is a site for the inscription of discourse and the making of particular subjectivities, or in terms of how capacities, senses and experiences of bodies are central to the exercise of human agency and citizenship. This has concerning implications not only for academic understandings of creativity, but also for supporting it in the context of dementia care. Given that creativity has already been recognised as enabling persons living with dementia to reclaim or 'animate' citizenship (Dupuis et al., 2016; Kontos et al., 2017a, 2018a; Basting, 2018), more effort needs to be made in this regard. Thus, there is a pressing need for cross-disciplinary engagement between research on creativity, embodiment and dementia, and citizenship. The aim of this article is to initiate this engagement by drawing more intentionally on these intellectual and narrative resources, specifically the relational model of citizenship and its foundationalist human rights ontology (Kontos et al., 2016a, 2017b; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018b, 2018c) in order to contribute to the theoretical and empirical rethinking of creativity in the context of dementia.

#### **Arts-based programming in dementia care and understandings of creative engagement**

The management of neuropsychiatric symptoms in residential long-term care settings commonly involves extensive use of high levels of antipsychotics, which have deleterious effects including increased risk of death (Maust et al., 2015). In response, arts-based programmes have been adopted in dementia care primarily as a non-pharmacological means to improve 'behaviour', cognition and emotional states (Hannemann, 2006; Petrovsky et al., 2015). While such improvements are the outcomes most commonly reported when assessing the impact of arts engagement on persons living with dementia, other benefits have been identified, including empowerment, communication, meaningful self-expression and sociability (de Medeiros and Basting, 2013; Guzmán et al., 2016). However, these are typically considered side-benefits and not the primary reason for implementing arts programmes (de Medeiros and Basting, 2013; DeNora and Ansdell, 2014). The instrumental use of the arts to generate social and behavioural changes (Sylvester, 1996; Hannemann, 2006) has now become a cornerstone of dementia care.

Dominant approaches to understanding creative engagement, particularly in music and dance in the context of life with dementia have focused on cortical structures and neural substrates as the generative mechanism of such creativity (Hsieh et al., 2011; Batson et al., 2012; Cuddy et al., 2015). The implicit assumption is that creativity is based on cognitive abilities and processes including object recognition and working memory (Jung et al., 2010; Shi et al., 2017). Understanding of music and dance implicit in these accounts derive from a presumed dichotomy between mind and body, and an inherent inferiority of bodily constituted knowledge (Bowman, 2004). There has been some engagement with embodiment discourse by music and dance scholars, specifically with reference to embodied cognition, which ascribes a physically constitutive role to the body (Sedlmeier et al., 2011; Batson et al., 2012; Perlovsky, 2015). Embodied cognition moves beyond conceptualising the mind as directing the body in a top-down structure, towards understanding mental processes as being distributed throughout the body in an elaborate network of interconnections (Rosch et al., 1991; Iyer,

2002; Schiavio et al., 2014). A key tenet of this theory is that mental processes are stimulated with movement (Rosch et al., 1991; Batson et al., 2012) or with other creative expression (Hannemann, 2006; Chakravarty, 2011; Sedlmeier et al., 2011). While embodied cognition grants a dynamism to the body, that dynamism is conceptualised solely in relation to cognitive processes (Iyer, 2002; Schiavio et al., 2014). Thus, the body as a source of agency has largely been neglected in accounts of music and dance, and creativity more generally.

It is argued here that understanding creativity in persons living with dementia requires engagement with critical gerontology's subfield of embodiment and dementia (Kontos and Martin, 2013; Twigg and Buse, 2013; Käll 2017). It is further argued that to ensure creativity is supported beyond therapeutics requires engagement with the fields of citizenship and human rights as these focus on social entitlements and state responsibility to support and acknowledge citizens' participation in their own everyday existence (Turner, 2006; Somers and Roberts, 2008). Insights from all these respective fields have been integrated in a model of relational citizenship (Kontos et al., 2016a; Miller and Kontos, 2016; Kontos et al., 2017b), explicated below.

### **Relational model of citizenship**

Person-centred and relationship-centred paradigms of care have undoubtedly been influential developments in the dementia field since the 1990s (Downs, 1997; Kitwood, 1997; Ryan et al., 2008). While these paradigms of care importantly underscore the intrinsic value of persons living with dementia, and the interdependent and reciprocal nature of caring relationships, there has been a recent turn to citizenship discourse to account more for issues of power differentials within the triadic care relationship and with the state (Bartlett and O'Connor, 2010; Kontos et al., 2017a). Citizenship is a legal status based on nationality that is conferred by a state at birth, or through naturalisation. It entails specific rights and duties (Turner, 2003; Kelly and Innes, 2013) including civil (for example, rights of association, to sell one's labour on a free market and to justice), political (rights to vote, elect representatives), and social rights (consumer rights of the modern welfare state). Citizenship is a 'status bestowed on those who are full members of a community' (Marshall quoted in Bartlett and O'Connor, 2007, p 111), and thus discussion of citizenship introduces political discourse since participation or inclusion in society is inevitably shaped by power dynamics. As proponents of citizenship discourse have argued, a citizenship perspective critically draws attention to power, and in particular the lack of power afforded to some citizens in relation to others (Bartlett and O'Connor, 2010). The importance of such a focus for the dementia field is that power has not been sufficiently treated in person-centred and relationship-centred care paradigms.

There have been important developments in the sociological field that have effectively broadened what counts as citizenship, such as the passive model of citizenship (Lanoix, 2009) and the shift in focus from participation to relationality (Sevenhuijsen, 2000). Yet, there is a concerning absence in these developments of attention to the body as a source of agency and body-world relations. Without consideration of embodied intentionality, which in the context of severe and persisting cognitive impairment is the primary means of engagement, such approaches to citizenship fall short of being inclusive and truly relational. This suggests the need for citizenship discourse to engage with critical insights of scholarship on dementia and embodiment (Beasley and Bacchi, 2000; Kontos and Martin, 2013; Kontos et al., 2017b).

Building on 'embodied selfhood' (Kontos, 2012a, 2012b), the relational model of citizenship (Kontos et al., 2016a; Miller and Kontos, 2016; Kontos et al., 2017b) underscores that primordial and sociocultural dispositions of the body are sources of self-expression and relationality. This broadens the citizenship and dementia discourse by bringing greater attention to how pre-reflective intentionality is central to body-self/body-world relations (Kontos et al., 2017b; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018a, 2018b; Kontos et al., 2018a). Further, the model is novel in that it furnishes citizenship with a human rights ontology that recognises embodied intentionality as fundamental to the human condition that must be supported

through a matrix of human rights (rights to privacy, freedom of expression, liberty, health, human dignity and so on). To this end, the model of relational citizenship is particularly pertinent for supporting the rights of persons living with dementia because in the face of significant cognitive impairment, embodied self-expression becomes the primary means of engaging with the world. Such expressions are not typically valorised within traditional (instrumental) models of citizenship that prioritise self-sovereignty and public forms of engagement, and are consequently not publicly supported through institutional policies, structures or practices (Lanoix, 2009; Bartlett and O'Connor, 2010). Thus, the relational model of citizenship more comprehensively recognises the human rights of persons living with dementia.

To illustrate the relevance of relational citizenship for understanding and supporting creativity of persons living with dementia, we turn to elder-clowning, the most recent innovation in arts-based dementia care (Kontos et al., 2017b). Since the late 1990s, elder-clowns have specifically adapted clown practice to the dementia population. These are trained artists who use clowning to empower persons living with dementia through opportunities for emotional expression, social interaction and personal control. Elder-clowns keep their faces natural with minimal make-up and wear clothing that evokes an earlier era, such as 1950s swing dresses (Kontos et al., 2017a). They don a red nose and practice physical and verbal humour, fantasy, surprise, dramatic movement and storytelling (van Troostwijk, 2007). They use body language ranging from subtle muscular movements of the face to more obvious gestural movements of the hands. Expressive tools such as song, musical instruments and dance are also central to the improvisation and empathy that are signature traits of their engagement with persons living with dementia in long-term care homes (Kontos et al., 2017b).

### **The setting and participants**

The context for the study was the dementia care unit of a nursing home in urban central Canada, and the design was a mixed-methods evaluation of a 12-week elder-clown programme. Four elder-clowns were hired for the study; they had been professionally trained at recognised Canadian clown organisations. A total of 23 residents participated (the mean age was 87.8 years; 16 were female). Over the course of the study, 66 hours of video-recorded clown-resident interactions were collected. A full account of the methodological details of the study have been written up elsewhere (Kontos et al., 2016b; Miller and Kontos, 2016; Kontos et al., 2017a, 2017b).

Relational citizenship discourse did not inform the original study. However, post-evaluation analysis of all of the qualitative data (interviews and video-recorded interactions) was conducted using a modified thematic-analysis approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), in which code development is guided by sensitising concepts (Bowen, 2006) – in this case, relational citizenship (Kontos et al., 2017b). This involved analytic expansion of the data in order to investigate relational citizenship. This approach is appropriate where secondary research questions can be traced back to the original data. Our interest here was to examine how the core tenets of relational citizenship (embodied selfhood and relationality) might be supported at the micro level of care practice. The original study and all analyses were approved by the research ethics boards of the participating facility and our research institute.

The focus here is on two video-recorded interactions involving three elder-clowns and two resident participants, each of which highlights the situated, embodied and relational nature of creativity in the context of advanced dementia. Both interactions were transcribed as non-participant observer field notes. Field notes detail clown techniques, residents' nonverbal social and affective expressions, verbal exchanges and emotive responses. When required, interactions were repeatedly reviewed in slow motion in order to focus on non-verbal micro features of the interactions. Pseudonyms have been assigned to resident participants (Brigid and Frank) and the elder-clowns (Zazzie, Mitsy and Cherry). Brigid was 84 years of age at the time of the study and had a diagnosis of mixed Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. She was born in Ireland and would express great pride about her Irish heritage.

She was a homemaker who loved to entertain and always liked the glamour of Hollywood and the movies, which she would emulate in her own style of dress and make-up. Frank was 91 at the time of the study and had a diagnosis of Alzheimer's. He was born in Poland and worked as a delicatessen owner his whole working life. He was highly sociable. He particularly enjoyed singing along to music and would dance at every opportunity.

## Findings

### ***'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling'***

Zazzie and Mitsy knock on the door of Brigid's room. Zazzie is wearing a nautically inspired outfit – a blue fitted top that flares out at the waist and buttons down the front paired with a matching blue pencil skirt. Both top and bottom have white trim. She is wearing a pearl necklace, a thin red belt, a red-and-black polka dot hat, and is carrying a red ukulele. Mitsy is wearing a red gingham, 1950s-style swing dress with crinoline, and her hair is in pigtails tied with matching red gingham ribbon. Both are wearing their red sponge nose. 'Come in' is heard from the room in response, yet when they enter they see no one in the room. Zazzie and Mitsy look around the room, calling out in a sing-song voice 'Oh, hello...Brigid?' At that moment, Brigid walks out of the ensuite washroom accompanied by her private carer who is holding her hand. Brigid looks at the elder-clowns, and with great surprise and delight with her attention, the elder-clowns wildly wave their arms, giggle with excitement and exclaim 'Oh!' As if taken aback by their excitement, Brigid clutches her chest and grins widely. Then, in a soft but deliberate gesture, Brigid extends her right hand out in front of her body and her arm follows in a sweeping movement out to her right side as if presenting herself to the elder-clowns. With this gesture, Brigid commences a rendition of the song *When Irish Eyes are smiling*. The elder-clowns sway their bodies to her song and join in singing. Brigid is very expressive as she sings, using an imaginary baton, lifting her shoulders and extending her arms, closing her eyes and using musical dynamics like crescendos and diminuendos. The elder-clowns' singing is perfectly matched to Brigid's tempo, as are their bodily gestures of musicality. As Brigid finishes the song, she smiles and nervously adjusts the bottom of her shirt. The elder-clowns erupt in enthusiastic applause and cry 'Bravo!' Brigid smiles shyly as she looks at the elder-clowns and with reserved pride joins their applause, softly clapping her hands.

### ***Partner dance***

Zazzie and Cherry knock on the door to Frank's room. Zazzie is wearing the same blue, nautically inspired outfit, while Cherry is in a light pink, floral-patterned, 1950s-style swing dress with crinoline. Cherry has on a thin white belt and a large beaded necklace, and her hair is pulled back with a matching pink ribbon tied in a bow. Both are wearing their red sponge nose. Straight away they hear: 'Come in.' Both Zazzie and Cherry say 'ooh!' startled by Frank's quick response, and eagerly enter the room. Frank, who is seated in an armchair with his four-wheeled walker in front of him, is leaning forward in anticipation of their arrival. He lifts his arms up in the air as the elder-clowns approach him with an excited 'Hello!' Frank extends his arms towards the elder-clowns and when they reciprocate the gesture, he uses the arms of the chair to stand. Once he is standing he again extends his hands out towards the elder-clowns. Zazzie, who is standing in front of Frank to his right, grasps his right hand with her left hand. And Cherry, who is standing in front of Frank to his left, grasps his left hand with her right hand and says: 'Hello, hello.' Frank responds: 'Hi, hi.' Still holding the elder-clowns' hands, Frank starts bouncing their clasped hands up and down, which the elder-clowns interpret as a desire to dance. Zazzie immediately starts humming a made-up tune, and Cherry and Frank both join in the humming. With a huge smile on his face, Frank continues to hold the elder-clowns' hands and begins to swing them from side to side. He also shifts his weight from left to right, slightly bending his knees as he bounces along to the a cappella music. The elder-clowns follow Frank's lead, dancing from side to side. Frank then lifts their clasped hands high above his head and holds them there, which signals to Zazzie and Cherry to do a 'ladies underarm turn', which they do simultaneously, each under one of his arms. As they do so they both exclaim 'Wooo!' Still smiling, Frank lifts his arms to signal another underarm turn, which they do with an even more exaggerated 'wooo!' With their hands still clasped with Frank's, and doing step-touches in unison, Cherry says to Frank: 'You are an excellent dancer, sir!' Frank proudly agrees, saying 'yeah', with a full smile as they continue to dance.

## Discussion

The relational model of citizenship broadens understanding of creativity by foregrounding how capacities and senses of the body are central to creativity in everyday life for persons living with dementia. It specifically holds that embodied intentionality – which is itself inherently pre-reflective and relational – is a generative and creative capacity to perceive and engage with the world (Kontos, 2012a, 2012b; Kontos and Martin, 2013). This pre-reflective nature refers to existential or practical competence that does not require reflective understanding. To illustrate that embodied intentionality is key to understanding creativity in the context of dementia, this section will draw on the key theoretical tenets of the relational model of citizenship: embodied selfhood (specifically the primordial and sociocultural dispositions of the body that are sources of self-expression) and relationality.

First, attention will be paid to the sociocultural style or content of Frank's and Brigid's creativity, given how embodiment and sociocultural factors are co-implicated. Take, for example, how Frank seamlessly led the elder-clowns into ladies underarm turns, which are typical of the European style of social partner dancing. Thinking of this dance in terms of Myerhoff's analysis of ritual practice is instructive as it helps us to see how 'the past returns with the ritual movements, gestures and recapitulations' (2000, p 435), all evoked through the senses, linking the individual to associations and feelings of earlier times. For Frank, partner dancing is the active presence of his past, what Bourdieu would describe as 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history' (1990, p 56). The presence of the elder-clowns, their formal and party dress attire, the touch of their clasped hands and the sounds of humming were all aspects of an interaction that exercised the pertinent incitement of Frank's socio-cultural dispositions, which are a fundamental source of his embodied intentionality and hence his creativity. Similarly, Brigid's spontaneous musical rendition of *When Irish Eyes are Smiling* shows that the presence of the elder-clowns and their attire incited the sociocultural dispositions associated with her Irish heritage, and her enthusiasm for socialising and entertaining guests. Her chosen song is a culturally distinct style of music often formally or spontaneously performed without musical accompaniment, and thus is consistent with her own previous social experiences. As with Frank, Brigid's socially and culturally distinct dimensions of musicality are manifest despite her impaired cognition because sociocultural dispositions are regulated not by conscious obedience to external rules but by the pre-reflective nature of embodied intentionality (Kontos, 2004, 2006).

Yet, the sociocultural dispositions evident in Frank's and Brigid's expressions of creativity are but half the picture since the primordial structure of the body not only facilitates the embodiment of sociocultural dispositions, but also sustains them on an ongoing basis (Kontos, 2006). In this sense, while Frank's and Brigid's creativity is shaped by their specific sociocultural history, it is also sustained by the primordial structure of bodies themselves, which supports the initial internalisation of the structural principles of the social world that underlie such dispositions, as well as all their subsequent manifestations (Kontos, 2012a, 2012b; Kontos and Martin, 2013). The primordial refers to a fundamental attunement of the body to the world, which is a kind of knowing that derives from the body's natural investment with perceptual significance, a bodily knowhow or practical sense (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). In this rethinking of perception, gestures and actions are not related to intention by way of being a representation of them that is externally linked, but rather intention is immanent in the gestures and actions themselves, impelling and sustaining them at every moment (Kontos, 2006). In this sense, creativity is tantamount to the existential expressiveness of the body that emerges from our active and responsive propensity towards the world.

Because dominant narratives of creativity are premised on cognition, there is a seeming contradiction between Frank's and Brigid's creativity and the fact of their cognitive impairment. Yet, as has been argued, the relational model of citizenship introduces a pre-reflective account of embodied intentionality that offers a compelling alternative to dominant understandings of creativity in the context of dementia. Frank's and Brigid's performances were not an intellectual effort of meditation and contemplation, nor did they derive from rules, principles, calculations or a premeditated goal,

which would in any case be excluded by the improvisational nature of their performances. And in both cases, reflective thought and calculation would be further excluded by the fact of their advanced dementia. Neither could their movements be mistaken for pure imitation, particularly given that both led aspects of their interactions with the elder-clowns.

That Frank and Brigid took a lead position is not to diminish the importance of all that the elder-clowns brought to these interactions. Common strategies used in their interactions with residents included: authentic presence; sensitivity and susceptibility to becoming affected by the expressions and sentiments of residents; and the improvisation technique of 'yes, and' which entails accepting an offer, adding something to it and giving it back (Kontos et al., 2017a). With these strategies, the elder-clowns fostered a 'corporeal-ethical space' (Macpherson, 2016, p 132) that supported Frank's and Brigid's spontaneous and creative engagement within the context of their everyday life in long-term care. The resulting creativity can only be understood with reference to the complex intersection of enabling environments and the embodied intentionality of all involved. In this way, this article's analysis importantly offers a theoretical articulation of co-creativity (Zeilig et al., 2018), which has been used to only descriptively capture the embodied and relational nature of creativity.

### **Implications for practice**

The implication of this analysis is that the body as a source of agency is not only fundamental to creativity, but must also be recognised as fundamental to the human condition. As such, it is imperative that all forms of creativity ('Big-C' and 'little-c') be supported through a matrix of human rights, such as freedom of expression and human dignity (Kontos et al., 2016a; Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018a, 2018c), and that it be supported through organisational practices and sociopolitical institutions. This entails the mobilisation of structures and resources to nurture and facilitate the creativity of persons living with dementia in their everyday life. By way of example, instituting arts-based programmes for life enrichment has proven crucial for providing opportunities for creative self-expression in long-term care homes. However, for the most part, such programmes are implemented as a form of 'maintenance entertainment' with the aim to 'keep people happy' (Basting, 2009, p 105) and offering little creative challenge (Basting, 2009; de Medeiros and Basting, 2013). For example, although people living with dementia can engage in unstructured painting and develop new skills (Miller and Johansson, 2016), painting is often restricted to 'paint by number' (Hattori et al., 2011). As we have argued elsewhere, this fails to fully support the creativity of persons living with dementia (Kontos et al., 2016a; Miller and Kontos, 2016; Kontos et al., 2017b; Grigorovich and Kontos, 2018).

Elder-clowns are particularly well positioned to support and nurture creativity. While structured arts-based programmes are often delivered by non-artists, elder-clowns are professional artists who have a distinct cultural/aesthetic competence. More specifically, they recognise and nurture the embodied intentionality of persons living with dementia so that creativity can synchronously emerge from organic, spontaneous co-constructions (Miller and Kontos, 2016; Kontos et al., 2017a, 2017b). There are other examples of arts-based programmes for life enrichment, including group storytelling programmes such as [TimeSlips](#) that demonstrate that persons living with dementia can construct rich and imaginative stories (Basting, 2009; Fritsch et al., 2009). There are also innovative dance programmes such as Movement to Music, which is offered by teachers from Canada's National Ballet School and developed in partnership with Baycrest Health Sciences (Skinner et al., 2018).

Yet, the contention here is that creativity should not be confined to arts-based programmes but rather should be nurtured in all aspects of everyday life. To do so will require shifting the culture of dementia care by fostering the relational skills and creative practices of all care providers so that creativity becomes part of the moral fabric of everyday life in long-term residential care settings (Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018a, 2018c; Grigorovich et al., 2019). Introducing educational initiatives for providers to raise their awareness about the nature and extent of creativity in dementia, and to provide opportunities for them to engage creatively in practice development will be crucial to achieve



this (Titchen, 2018). The arts have enormous interactive, educational and emancipatory potential, and are thus advocated as part of a new landscape for practice development (Kontos and Poland, 2009; Titchen, 2018). This has most commonly included participatory arts (Al-Jawad and Frost, 2014; De Vecchi et al., 2018; Titchen, 2018), however, research-based drama is increasingly advocated for education that aims to promote personal and social transformation (Kontos and Poland, 2009; Dupuis et al., 2015; Kontos et al., 2018b). Finally, practice development of this nature needs to happen in tandem with broader structural changes that more fully support the relational, interpersonal, and affective dimensions of care. These include, but are not limited to, reducing providers' workload and increasing provider-to-resident ratios, and increasing their decision-making autonomy to allow them to support residents' needs, capacities and desires more fully (Grigorovich et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

With the relational model of citizenship, this article argues that in the context of dementia, rather than being seen as a cognitive trait, creativity should be understood as emerging from the complex intersection of enabling environments and the embodied intentionality of all involved. This not only adds a new dimension to understanding creativity, but in a more profound sense sets an important ethical standard for cultivating relational environments to support creativity in everyday life. It is hoped that the relational model of citizenship will offer vital stimuli for critical investigation and practice development to ensure that persons living with dementia are given equal opportunities to be creative to the fullest extent possible.

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