

Preface to *The Cultural Creatives*
By Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson
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Paul's background as a macrosociologist concerned with the evolution of culture was not an obvious fit with Sherry's perspective as a psychologist focusing on the qualities of inner experience. But the story we wanted to tell seemed to need both the big picture and the intimate details of people's lives, as well as a blending of other opposites: masculine and feminine, science and spirituality, consciousness and social action. Each time we thought in terms of these opposites, we found ourselves ridiculously hemmed in. To write this book, we had to meet outside the old categories, beyond the walls that divide and restrict new ways of thinking. The convergence of social movements and consciousness, the odd and creative mixtures of business and personal growth, sustainable development and feminism and health—these and many more new solutions to old problems demanded that we, too, be open to wholly new possibilities.

Amid all this openness, there was one foundation we could count on: the thirteen years of research on values and lifestyles that Paul had been doing with his company, American LIVES Inc. Over that time, surveys and focus groups showed, month after month, year after year, that an important new subculture was emerging. In the early 1990s, after years of surveys by American LIVES, Paul named this new group the Cultural Creatives because they are literally creating a new culture in America. We have been able to draw upon reliable research findings from what were cumulatively more than 100,000 responses to questionnaires and hundreds of focus groups. We also have been able to rely on the results of two big baseline studies of the role of values in American life. In January of 1995, Paul designed and analyzed a national survey on the role of transformational values in American life, sponsored by the Fetzer Institute and the Institute of Noetic Sciences. In January of 1999, Paul helped to design and analyze a study of the role of values and concerns for ecological sustainability in American life, sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and the President's Council on Sustainable Development.

Once the big surveys and focus group data were in, the picture of an emerging subculture was clear. But who were the people? Where did they come from, and where are they likely to go? Sherry came in at this point, bringing her experience in the personal dimension and the feminine perspective. Her book with Patricia Hopkins on women's spiritual development, [*The Feminine Face of God*], provided the groundwork for our interest in the Cultural Creatives' stories in this book. We agreed to use in-depth interviews for the intimate wisdom they can reveal about values and meaning in people's lives. Together we interviewed about sixty people—artists, activists, elders, businesspeople, teachers—anyone we thought was part of the robust group we wanted to describe. And, like many of the people we interviewed, we read hundreds of books that helped us to map the new territory the Cultural Creatives are traversing.

We didn't anticipate how much the Cultural Creatives' story would begin to take shape once the personal stories were added to the large-scale studies and focus group results. That is where the fun (and a few wrestling matches, too) began. Our hope is that what we have begun, with the generosity and great patience of the people we interviewed, will awaken Cultural Creatives' interest in themselves. We imagine them meeting and talking together, laughing and arguing, and very likely disagreeing with some or much of what we've said about them. We believe that their

self-awareness as a culture will help us all, help our civilization to develop the fresh solutions that we need so urgently now.

In this book, we're able to offer strong empirical evidence for the major change in our culture predicted by hundreds of writers over the past fifty years. The evidence is even more surprising than the futurists imagined. Furthermore, in the last few years, other researchers have been finding results very much like the ones we report in this volume. Their studies start independently from different places and data and yet arrive at very similar conclusions. The conclusions correspond to one another precisely because all of us are looking at values and culture.

Interested readers may want to compare our depiction of the personal values of Cultural Creatives to Don Edward Beck and Christopher C. Cowan's insightful book connecting values changes with stages of cultural and personality development, [Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change] (1996), and to Brian P. Hall's skillful analysis of values in stages of personal and organizational development, [Values Shift: A Guide to Personal and Organizational Transformation] (1995). Our picture of the role of values in environmental issues is closely matched by the data presented by Willett Kempton, James S. Boster, and Jennifer A. Hartley in [Environmental Values in American Culture] (1997). The sense we have of a major change of world views and values is shown by Ronald Inglehart to be happening to some degree all around the planet in [Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society] (1990) and [Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies] (1997), and by Paul R. Abramson and Ronald Inglehart in [Value Change in Global Perspective] (1995). Our sense of the immense importance that new social movements have had in shaping the emerging values of the emerging global era is strongly paralleled by the evidence and theories presented by Alberto Melucci in [Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age](1996) and Manuel Castells in The Power of Identity, volume 2 of [The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture] (1997).

Each of this book's three parts does a different kind of work. Part One describes the Cultural Creatives and contrasts them to the other two major subcultures in Western life. It shows both their "big picture," from thirteen years of surveys and focus groups, and their intimate personal stories, from our in-depth interviews. We show both how individuals changed their personal lives and how Cultural Creatives emerged in American history. This phenomenon can only be understood as part of a huge change in Western culture, on the time scale of centuries.

Part Two is an origins story. Cultural Creatives are the common constituency of the social and consciousness movements. There has been a great convergence of all the movements' constituencies into a common worldview. They were both creators and products of a massive cultural education process that led most Westerners to adopt a new worldview. Crucial was the "reframing" of dozens of areas of social life by all the new social movements and consciousness trends that have been quietly growing since the Sixties. Much of the more recent growth has been invisible to the national media. We retell and reframe that movement history, with more personal stories, because few know the many facets of it. The movements were far more successful in changing our culture and worldviews than in changing our politics, however.

Part Three gives the implications for our emerging future. It tells a news story for our times, at both personal and societal levels, giving new maps to help grasp the gigantic transformational change process in which we find ourselves. This new story is more challenging-and vastly more hopeful than most of us would have guessed. A whole new culture is emerging, with a greater promise than most of us have dared to dream. For those readers who are in a hurry, the key arguments are in Chapters One to Four, Seven, and Eleven. To focus on the solid evidence, be sure to read the pages accompanying the charts and boxes. If you are interested in personal stories, you'll find Chapters Two, Six, Nine, and Ten valuable.

We hope that the evidence and the stories presented here will support the Cultural Creatives to grow into the promise they carry, not just for themselves but for the sake of all of us, and for the seventh generation.

PAUL H. RAY AND SHERRY RUTH ANDERSON
San Rafael, CA
www.culturalcreatives.org