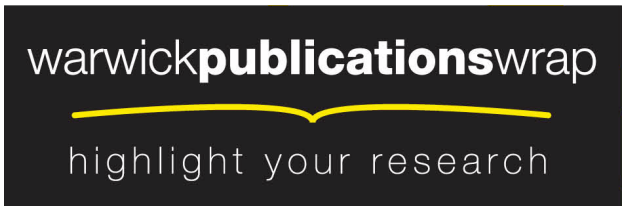

Uncreativity: the shadow side of creativity

In the contemporary cultural policy rhetoric of creative industries and creative economy, creativity is seen as the key to unlocking social and economic progress. As Schlesinger (2007) notes, 'creativity' is seen in almost universally positive terms by policy makers as much as by mainstream managers. At the same time, 'creativity' has been poorly defined and poorly understood (Pratt and Jeffcutt 2002; Neelands and Choe 2010). For example, the UK government's influential 1998 definition of the 'creative industries' tends to equate creativity with novelty and to focus on the generation of novel ideas rather than their value and application (DCMS 1988). Artistic 'creativity' has also blurred into models of industrial 'Innovation', advocated by management gurus as a response to 'turbulence' and discontinuous change in contemporary markets (Peters 1988).

This tendency to equate creativity with novelty results in a partial, one-sided definition of creativity which normatively excludes more adaptive, incremental approaches to change and development. In particular, the pursuit of novelty is often at the expense of value. The influential concept of 'brainstorming' developed in advertising agencies in the 1950s argued that in order to unblock the flow of novel ideas managers needed to switch off filters and value judgements (Osborn 1957). As Weisberg has noted, brainstorming (according to Osborn's model) can certainly result in more ideas, even more unexpected ideas, but not necessarily better ideas (Weisberg 1993, 62 - 67).

Popular and managerial approaches to creative thinking, dating from the introduction of creativity testing and creative thinking exercises in the 1960s (Torrance 1988), have highlighted the need to 'unblock' creative thinking (Adams 2001). As with Osborn's model this means switching off mental filters, removing scepticism and doubt, in order to let novel ideas flow freely. Indeed self-doubt, resistance to change, value judgements and inhibitions are thereby considered to be inherently 'uncreative'. The accusation of 'uncreativity' extends to those individuals, institutions or procedures outside the process of idea generation, including intermediaries, administrators and 'bureaucracy', resulting in a division between a creative minority and an uncreative mass.

This paper argue that our tendency to equate creativity with novelty, and to exclude 'uncreative' elements which apparently 'block' creative thinking is not only a distraction but also potentially destructive, resulting in a tendency to discard projects and people before they achieve their potential. The paper highlights some of the assumptions which frame understandings of creativity in both the management literature and creativity research, indicating how these concepts influence organisations and individuals, and finally suggesting some implications for cultural policy and management.

The paper will argue that 'uncreativity', defined here as 'resistance to new ideas' is an intrinsic part of the creative process, in particular to the shift from what Boden calls 'mere novelty' to 'valuable innovation'. The purportedly uncreative traits of scepticism, doubt and resistance to change are essential to the creative process; and interventions by administrators and intermediaries can add value to the raw, novel product of individual creativity. Resistance to novelty can encourage individuals and organisations to recognise the value of continuity over change, of laborious, painstaking effort beyond the momentary flash of inspiration and insight, and to reconfigure and

refine existing ideas rather than inventing new ones. 'Uncreativity' provides a necessary ballast, shoring up individuals and organisations against the destabilising pursuit of novelty and change for their own sakes. In particular, emphasising 'uncreativity' against 'creativity' can help us focus on questions of value and fitness for purpose rather than the pursuit of novelty.

Academic definitions of creativity have always encompassed both *novelty* and *value* or *fitness for purpose* (Boden 1994; Weisberg 1993) and highlighted the complex interactions and collective systems which lie behind individual creativity (Sawyer 2006; Becker 1982; Csikzsentimhalyi 1988. This broader definition of creativity as novelty plus value extends across a broader spectrum of creative activity, running along the value chain from origination to consumption, no longer confined to one end of the chain. Intermediaries (marketers, managers, distributors, technologists, even consumers) can all add value to the creative idea beyond its point of initiation (Bilton and Cummings 2010, 63-86). Not only is the emphasis on individual idea generation empirically misleading, it places a disproportionate burden on a few individuals and distorts the priorities of organisations seeking to develop creative products and services.

Creative organisations?

In organisational settings, 'creativity' is frequently elided with 'innovation'. Innovation refers to the application of a creative idea, typically towards new products, new business models or management processes. As with 'creativity' the tendency to focus on the novelty of innovation rather than its value can have destabilising effects on the organisation.

Clayton Christensen's *The Innovator's Dilemma* offers both a justification and a critique of the pursuit of novelty and change in organisations (Christensen 1997). Basing his study on computer hard-drive manufacturers, Christenson discovered that successful manufacturers became locked into certain technologies and customer-bases, particularly in fast-moving markets. When new technologies emerged, the leading manufacturers found it difficult to adapt. They were heavily invested in the old technology, and their existing customers were reluctant to try something new. Consequently these manufacturers were overtaken by start-up companies with fewer resources and no real presence in the market, and hence with nothing to lose by investing whole-heartedly in the new technology. These new firms would themselves fall into the same dilemma in turn as they found themselves locked into technologies and customer expectations of their own, and threatened by the next generation of technologies and new entrants.

The innovator's dilemma is similar to the challenge identified by Charles Handy in *The Empty Raincoat* (Handy 2005, 49 - 64); how can an organisation justify investing in new products and services when these are likely to be seen as a distraction from their core business? According to Handy, by the time change is inevitable, it is too late (Handy 2005, 56- 57). Organisations hold on to their successful present instead of investing in an uncertain future, and when it becomes clear that the core business is in decline, they no longer have the resources to launch the new venture.

Handy and Christenson encapsulate a view of innovation in business based on new product development and new technology leading to continual change. Both Handy and Christenson implicitly argue that businesses need to be more agile and more ready to take risks by investing in new products which lie outside their existing expertise, and as Christenson acknowledges, which risk

alienating their existing customers. This is the essential message of Handy's famous 'sigmoid curve' or 'second curve thinking': change your business while it's still on the upward trajectory, if you wait until your business performance starts to dip you will almost certainly be too late. On the other hand, Christenson's prognosis is more bleak: even if the business does successfully adapt to technological change, they are faced with the same innovator's dilemma a few years down the line, condemned to a perpetual cycle of painful adjustment as they jump from one crisis to the next (Greiner 1972). Faced with such an uncertain future, the argument for continually trying to innovate, continually staying ahead of the curve, starts to sound less compelling.

Whilst much of the literature on organisational change acknowledges these difficulties (Churchill and Lewis 1995), there is an underlying assumption that change and novelty (especially new products and markets) are generally not only inevitable but desirable. To merely survive, to continue at a consistent level and scale, is regarded as relative failure, as in Storey's description of low-growth firms as 'trundlers' (Storey 1994, 117). There is an obvious connection here with the normative assumption that innovation and creativity are uniformly positive values. Yet whilst new ideas generate new products and stimulate organisational development, entrepreneurial innovation is also a destructive process (Schumpeter 1939). In order to open up new markets and create new products, it is also necessary to destroy some of the existing relationships between producers and consumers. As Christenson observes, this destructive effect can also rebound onto the instigator of change. Innovation, particularly if framed as 'mere novelty' rather than 'novelty plus value', can set an organisation backwards as well as leading it forward.

SMEs in the creative industries are especially vulnerable to the destructive aspects of organisational change. Small creative firms depend on a dense network of individual relationships and personalities. These networks apply both to the 'horizontal' relationships between collaborators at the point of idea generation, and the 'vertical' value chain relationships needed to connect products to markets (Bilton 2007, 46 - 47). Adding new ideas and people to this mix is potentially disruptive to the internal process of creation, and to the connections between partners, suppliers and distributors up and down the value chain. Organisational change, as Christenson notes, also disrupts relationships with customers. Creative firms are typically project-based, engaged in short run prototype production rather than a predictable or unchanging set of products and services. A stable organisational identity provides a necessary reassurance of continuity to customers in this scenario; so 'Stephen Spielberg' or 'Disney' represent familiar brand names even when their respective products are unfamiliar or disappointing. Smaller creative firms are unwilling to disrupt customer loyalties by replacing familiar faces or reinventing the organisation's identity. Film directors, choreographers and musicians use networks of regular collaborators, stylistic conventions and recurring themes to provide continuity and reassurance for customers and to underwrite new variations and experiments. Christensen identified the risks of innovation and change in the hi-tech industry. For firms in the creative industries, the stakes are arguably even higher.

The risk of overinvesting in new products recurs at the level of individual product development, as in the games industry where overcomplication of gameplay and 'feature creep' risk alienating customers (Petrillo et al., 2009). It is also underwritten by a 'heroic' model of leadership eager to impress a new strategic vision on the organisation (Bilton 2010). This search for new products and markets can blind an organisation to its own strengths and purposes. A more dispersed, collective

approach to organisational change is likely to produce relatively subtle, incremental changes rather than radical novelty, yet may still be transformative. This may be less eye-catching than major relaunches and rebrands, but may also be more sustainable.

In 2003 the Royal Shakespeare Company decided to restructure its organisation around the principles of 'ensemble'. This was an old idea, rooted in the company's past (Hewison et al. 2010); indeed, one of the company's directors later admitted that they were able to appear radical precisely by avoiding the kind of radical, all-encompassing change which had characterised previous regimes (Heywood, Bilton and Cummings and Heywood 2014). The approach was less obviously innovative than a more radical reinvention, working within existing resources and capabilities rather than seeking to transcend them. By focusing on value rather than novelty, the strategy of ensemble succeeded in transforming a moribund and divisive organisation and in delivering significant artistic and financial success over the next ten years.

The restless pursuit of novelty in organisations can produce a scattergun proliferation of initiatives, projects and plans which bear little relation to the real needs, capabilities and purposes of the organisation. In the RSC's experience, such an approach to organisational change had already proved to be divisive and destructive, pitting a creative, visionary minority against an uncreative, reactionary majority and overinvesting in projects and plans which ignored the constraints (and the potential) of existing resources, markets and objectives (Levitt 2002). The uncreative solution, adapting old ideas to new contexts and working within constraints rather than thinking outside them, resulted in *valuable* innovation (novelty plus value) rather than mere novelty as an end in itself.

Creative people?

For the individual too, the pursuit of novelty can be destructive. A key problem here is the absence of any objective measure of value in creative work. This is reinforced by the policy rhetoric in the creative industries, as noted at the start of this paper, which tends to disconnect novel ideas from the cultural contexts which accord them value, meaning and purpose. All of this feeds the insecurity of the creative individual. The precariousness of creative labour is well documented and results in part from the structural imbalances in the creative economy. Without discounting the political and economic structures which impose risk and insecurity onto individuals (Oakley 2014), this paper argues that precariousness stems in part from an internalised emphasis on novelty over value in definitions of creativity. The fetishisation of novelty reflects a reluctance to acknowledge doubt or failure in the novel idea. This in turn leaves the creative worker vulnerable to narcissistic, self-defeating commitments and to exploitation.

Whilst creativity researchers agree that 'value' or 'fitness for purpose' should form an integral part of any definition of creativity, measuring value is problematic. This applies especially in the arts and creative industries, where a pervasive cultural relativism has undermined any consensus on aesthetic quality (Carey 2005). In other professions and industries, it is easier to identify objective measures of success and failure. Tasks may or may not be completed on time and on budget, mistakes and achievements can be identified and accounted for, and rewards or blame can be duly apportioned. Even if the system is occasionally unfair, it at least aspires to a degree of objectivity, and is underwritten by a structure of employment which through hierarchy, promotion and

demotion aims to reward success, experience and hard work. Outside a handful of bankable individual performers, no such framework exists for the art world.

One possible surrogate for objective measures of creative value is peer assessment (Boden 1994). In the art world, the esteem of informed critics and fellow artists constructs a 'reputation economy' to bolster the self-esteem of the individual artist (Becker 1982). In the creative industries, industry awards – the D&AD awards for creative advertising, the Pulitzer Prize, the Booker Prize – offer an alternative framework of value to commercial success and a surrogate 'governance' structure in precarious creative labour markets (Pratt 2006). Whilst material rewards offer an objective and material measure of achievement, awards affirm more subjective values, legitimising reputation and credibility. These awards have an advantage over purely commercial achievements from the creative worker's perspective; belief in their legitimacy is selective, and alternative measures are always available. For example, when industry awards become too closely aligned with commercial rewards and industry lobbying (for example the Oscars, the Booker), or with institutionalised cultural capital (for example the Turner Prize, Eurovision), the non-recipient can always look away or look elsewhere. An alternative explanation or an alternative forum for self-affirmation will usually be available.

In the end, without any reliable external framework of judgement, artists fall back on their inner self-belief. Teresa Amabile has written extensively of the connection between individual creativity and intrinsic motivation (Amabile 1997; Hennessy and Amabile 1988; Amabile 1990; Amabile 1993). For Amabile, a belief in ourselves as inherently creative begins when we are young; during our formative years, the right kind of encouragement or discouragement can be crucial (Amabile 1998). This is also one of the last times in our life when an authority figure (a teacher or parent) can definitively tell us whether or not we are creative. In the future, such judgements will come thick and fast, but we will learn to ignore them, relying instead on our inner reserves of self-belief. Bandura concurs that 'self-efficacy' is shaped through childhood experiences (Bandura 1997) and will provide a necessary resource when confronted with rejections and setbacks in the future. Simply in order to survive and strive in a creative career, every creative worker is required to believe in his or her own manifest destiny to succeed against the odds; at the very least, they must trick themselves into believing this for long enough to achieve their own goals.

Amabile's research indicates that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation (Amabile 1988, 134 – 137). Deliberately ignoring external reference points (reviews or sales figures) may thus be a necessary survival strategy for the striving creative artist. On the other hand where intrinsic motivation is already strong, extrinsic rewards can sometimes have a positive, reinforcing influence – particularly in the more laborious, later stages of the creative process (Amabile 1988, 145 – 146). Selective belief in peer esteem and awards offers such a flexible strategy for legitimising self-belief. Whereas commercial success or failure (especially failure) is non-negotiable, acclaim or reputation can either be internalised as a reflection of the artist's own self-esteem, or rejected as an external judgement ignorant of the art world's internal conventions and values.

Self-belief is rooted in a notion of individual talent. 'Talent' is constructed as an innate quality, disconnected from the laborious acquisition of skill through practice, training and experience (Howe 1990; Gladwell 2008). The distinction between talent and skill reflects Banks' distinction between

the effortless flow of ‘art’ and the diligent application of ‘craft’ (Banks 2010). The emphasis on innate talent draws on trait-based theories of creativity (Feist and Runco 1993), reinforced through tests designed to identify gifted young people in schools in the 1960s (Torrance 1988) and still deployed today in personality tests used by employers. According to this narrative, innate ability is self-sufficient and self-affirming; working hard to acquire knowledge and experience or domain-specific expertise (Weisberg 1993, 2010) may even be seen to undermine individual talent rather than support it. Because talent is fixed at birth, there is little the individual can do to change the innate qualities which will in the end dictate their fate. Changing course and adapting to failure threatens the intrinsic motivation highlighted by Amabile. So rather than learning from failure, by adapting future behaviour based on past experience, an artist may be persuaded to trust their own ‘talent’ and so follow Beckett’s inexorable mantra – Fail again. Fail better.

Faith in individual talent results in a singular, uncompromising vision. Without any framework of value to work within, the creative individual will cling to the novelty or originality of his or her own insight or idea. The necessary self-reliance and isolation from external reality can lead to dysfunctional behaviour or even to forms of mental illness. Freud (1985) argued that the creative writer has refused to adapt to adult norms, clinging instead to childhood perceptions and impulses; this sounds close enough to Amabile’s emphasis on intrinsic motivation in creative work or to the kind of resolute self-belief preached in self-help books for those who would be creative. The relentless drive necessary to creative work is overtly irrational (Storr 1972) and can result in narcissistic, anti-social or self-destructive behaviours. It also, as noted above, encourages the artist to cling to initial ideas rather than developing or rejecting them as part of a creative process.

This narrative of faith in individual talent, whose moral is the pursuit of original insight regardless of value, judgement and skill, has been described at the start of this paper as a partial understanding of creativity. Amabile’s emphasis on intrinsic motivation provides a convincing explanation for one element in the creative process – the initiation of a new idea, often in the face of external criticism. However, the argument becomes less convincing when applied to other equally necessary aspects of the creative process and other phases in the creative industries value chain. Intrinsic motivation is more significant for emerging artists, struggling to launch themselves at the start of a career, than it is to mature artists with established reputations. It is perhaps also more applicable to the generation of novel ideas than the development, testing, application and adaptation of these ideas into viable products, whether by the creative individual or as part of a collective process or value chain. In terms of this paper’s separation of novelty and value, intrinsic motivation will instigate novelty, but may not guarantee value.

This paper is not claiming that all artists are driven by a delusional faith in their own abilities to the point of narcissism and self-destruction. However, when allied to the well-documented structural inequalities in the creative industries labour market (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2009, Ross 2009, Ursell 2000), these ideals and beliefs can reinforce a tendency towards self-exploitation, especially among younger workers seeking to establish themselves (McRobbie 2002). The myth of individual talent provides aspiring creative workers with a ‘script for self-identification’ (Chibici-Revneanu 2013) which bolsters confidence and self-esteem but at the same time leaves them vulnerable. According to this script, rewards and recognition are unnecessary and external to the self-reliant

creative individual's vision and destiny. Exploitation, rejection and arbitrary success and failure might even be said to reinforce the narrative.

In the absence of any objective framework against which to measure themselves and their abilities, it is easy for aspiring creatives fall back upon unrealistic expectations of the creative process itself. Deprived of a meaningful career, creative workers seek fulfilment within the creative process. Here too, self-belief can become self-destructive. The search for the novel idea or insight can draw artists to the extremities of experience, as if this were the only true source of creativity, resulting in familiar self-destructive behaviours (addiction, family breakdown, anti-social behaviour). The desire to prove oneself extraordinary distracts from the ordinary business of creativity, especially from the need to discard and edit initial ideas and drafts. Faith in talent undermines the possibilities of collaborative work and blocks the adaptation of one idea into another, both of which we know to be crucial to creative processes. A naïve refusal to acknowledge the judgements of others isolates the creative individual from peers and intermediaries, making it harder to build more complex projects and products and exacerbating dysfunctional divisions between 'creatives' and 'suits' in organisations.

In this section I have argued that a one-sided version of 'creativity' as novelty results in a combination of assumptions (faith in individual talent, intrinsic motivation, mistrust in external or 'objective' judgements, a relentless pursuit of novelty) which is destructive and distracting. Clearly most creative workers and artists know from experience that creative processes are more complex and multifaceted than the mythology of genius allows. But the mythology is perhaps especially alluring to the young and early career artists who aspire to an imagined version of a creative self. As Chibici-Revneanu (2011) notes, the myth of genius is also subtly 'gendered', with female writers and artists especially vulnerable to feeling that their own self-image does not measure up to the imagined ideal of the creative genius. The exploitation and self-exploitation of young aspirant creatives have been well documented; what has perhaps been overlooked is how their self-destruction and vulnerability conform to an internalised stereotype of creative genius.

'Uncreativity'

What is the alternative to the self-destructive pursuit of new ideas and new thinking for individuals and organisations? Previously I have argued that the search for novelty needs to be balanced by an awareness of value and context, the forgotten half of the creative equation. 'Uncreativity' provides a counter-balance against the sought after creativity – a kind of intellectual and moral ballast.

Balance and harmony are recognised components in many philosophical traditions, notably in Confucianism and Buddhism, but also in older Western traditions. Seventeenth century theories of the mind describe a mix of humours, which mirrored the natural world's mix of elements (earth, fire, air, water). To have an excess of one humour over the others or to 'be out of humour' was to have a mental imbalance – which taken to an extreme would be understood as a form of madness. The modern version of creativity as a singular, distinctive way of thinking was a relatively new invention (Negus and Pickering 2004), growing out of nineteenth century Romanticism. Yet even in the nineteenth century creativity was associated with mental instability by phrenologists like Lombroso or the eugenicist Francis Galton, while nineteenth century novelists like Dickens and Gissing satirised creative excess leading to self-destruction or mad obsession. The older philosophical traditions exhorted us to temper our airy elements with the solidity of earth, to cool fire with water.

In psychoanalysis too, artistic creativity has long been associated with psychological illness. Freud described creative self-expression as an effort to sublimate neurotic impulses and make sense out of depressive or dysfunctional situations. Yet this seems to be a crude caricature of how artistic expression operates. Successful artists do not simply pour out their impulses as a kind of therapeutic purging of their neurotic desires, they temper their expression with a deliberate crafting and framing of their ideas and feelings as works of art. In a recent lecture, the novelist Jonathan Franzen distinguished between writing through an emotion and writing around it; according to Franzen, the novelist tames his feelings of guilt, shame and depression by turning them into objects of pleasure and humour for readers (Franzen 2012). In psychoanalytic terms, Hanna Segal relates this emotional tempering to the artist's 'reality sense'. According to Segal the artist's ability to successfully reconcile feelings of terror, guilt or despair with present reality marks the distinction between art and therapeutic self-expression (Segal 1986). We may confuse creativity with dreaming, but this is only one part of the creative process; the artist is able to connect these dreams to reality. The reality sense constructs self-expression into works of art. Furthermore, according to Segal, our recognition of this successful resolution of neurosis and ugliness into artistic form lies at the heart of aesthetic experience. We find works of art beautiful because they also contain the possibilities of ugliness and banality and we recognise these negative elements behind the artist's successful struggle to overcome them. The audience's experience is cathartic. Our enjoyment of tragic drama springs from our recognition of extreme suffering and despair, but these feelings are ultimately resolved by giving them artistic form.

Neuroscientific research mapping the different areas of the brain activated during problem-solving provides another explanation for the relationship between frustration and insight. Mark Jung-Beeman (2004) has conducted a number of experiments exploring the way different regions of the brain are fired up during problem-solving and semantic processing[1]. He argues that the left and right hemispheres of the brain work asymmetrically in problem-solving – the right-hand hemisphere deals with 'coarse-grained' coding, identifying larger patterns while the left-had hemisphere is preoccupied with finer-grained, detailed analysis. When we have a moment of insight, one explanation is that the right-hand hemisphere has taken over, allowing the brain to discover a new combination or connection between ideas, where the left-hand brain is still picking through a seemingly vast range of possibilities. Yet this is not necessarily a case of one part of the brain 'switching on'. Both sides of the brain may have been active but the right-hand hemisphere thinking was occluded by our conscious concentration on activity in the left hemisphere. What feels like a sudden insight (often called the 'aha' moment in creativity research) may in fact be the product of a more incremental process, and what we routinely call 'right brain thinking' may be a product of left-brain and right-brain working simultaneously and our attention switching between them. This explanation is similar to Weisberg's argument that inspiration is often the product of incremental, rational thought processes including memory and domain-specific expertise rather than spontaneous intuition.

[1] Beeman's research was quoted by Jonah Lehrer in his 2012 exploration of the creative process, *Imagine: how creativity works* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), pp. 13 – 19. Lehrer's own research has subsequently been discredited due to fabrication of some interviews and quotes and his book has been withdrawn by the publishers.

Neuroscientific research still cannot quite explain why and how these switches between regions of the brain occur, even if it encephalograms can identify what is happening. This paper adopts a more subjective, humanistic perspective on the creative process. What do these switches in our synapses actually feel like? For many writers, as Franzen indicates, a feeling of impossibility, of wanting to give up, apparently stimulates the brain to consider another approach. What feels like a new idea results from one set of mental processes taking over at the moment we abandon another. The focus on 'fine-grained' thinking is finally surrendered and the 'coarse-grained thinking' which was proceeding in the background is abruptly revealed. The breakthrough is more the result of one part of the brain switching off rather than another suddenly switching on. Writer's block, frustration, despair – these are the unpromising starting points for breakthrough creativity – and even while we are experiencing these emotions our brain may be quietly working towards a solution. Perhaps without experiencing such feelings and mental states in the first place we would never activate the 'coarse-grained' thinking which eventually delivers the moment of insight.

Fundamental to the idea of 'uncreativity' advanced in this paper is that resistance is integral to the creative process. Segal's 'reality sense', writer's block, subjective feelings of despair and frustration are the opposite of the 'genius' model of creativity as an effortless stream of pure invention. These various manifestations of internalised mental resistance serve three functions. First, as in the description above, they temporarily occlude an underlying process, allowing this to gestate without conscious pressure until the point when we 'give up' – thereby giving the feeling of 'block' followed by 'breakthrough'. Secondly, resistance to novelty can trigger a switch from coarse-grained divergent thinking back to convergent 'fine-grained' thinking, triggering closure and completion and imposing order on an ongoing process of experimentation. Thirdly, a moment of doubt in the creative process can give us pause, forcing us to reflect on the value of the novel idea and spurring value-driven refinement rather than novelty-seeking exploration. In each case, by interrupting the creative flow, 'uncreative' thinking forces the mind to change direction, to switch between different ways of thinking and to connect value with novelty. As with the 'field-switching' described by Sawyer (2008, 64), these mental switches between creative and 'uncreative' selves play an important role in an overall creative process.

At an individual level, and in policies and management strategies, many attempts to stimulate creativity aspire to the heightened experience of creative flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). Yet we already know that first hand accounts of creativity are unreliable, tending to underestimate the painful, deliberate aspects of creative work. Coleridge's description of writing his poem 'Kublai Khan' is a prime example of this unreliable narration, suggesting that the poem came to him in a dream, and only the unfortunate arrival of a 'person from Porlock' at his door interrupted his dream-like flow of creativity. We know now that the 'fragment' went through several drafts before the moment of epiphany singled out by Coleridge, but the drudgery of rewriting is not included in his account. The left brain and the right brain both contributed to this process of composition, but the poet routinely excludes the left-brain thinking from his story. As for the 'person from Porlock' – might not this unimaginative outsider be the trigger for a switch in mental focus from experimentation to closure, the internal voice which tells Coleridge to rein in his imagination and frame an unsuccessful poem as a fragment from a dream rather than continuing to work it though yet more drafts? The person from Porlock is the personification of 'uncreativity'. Far from blocking the poet's creative

process, he is essential to it, unlocking the convergent thinking processes necessary to the poem's completion.

In reality of course, most creative individuals are aware of the dualism between 'divergent' and 'convergent' thinking in the creative process. Idea generation is only one stage in the development of a creative idea. Restraint and frustration provide a container within which experimental thoughts can ferment and mature at their own pace until they are revealed through the switching in mental processes described above. Negative emotions provide a necessary point of resistance, stimulating us to refine a creative idea rather than accepting a merely novel one. 'Brainstorming' may require a temporary suspension of judgement, but most contemporary models of creative thinking weave critical judgement into the ideation process (for example Edward de Bono's 'black hat thinking' in his 'Six Thinking Hats'). Self-censorship and criticism provide boundaries to the creative process, temporarily occluding underlying processes of experimentation, providing an impetus towards closure and completion, and allowing the refinement and recollection of novel ideas into ideas which are both novel and valuable.

Whilst the fundamental dualism of the creative process may be clear to most individual artists, the role of 'uncreative' resistance, criticism and negative thinking is unduly neglected at the level of management and policy. This neglect reflects an assumption that idea generation is the essence of creativity, when in fact this is only the first stage in a longer process. For example, many organisations have adopted a policy of 'fifteen per cent time' or 'twenty per cent time' whereby employees are freed from routine tasks to pursue creative work independently. These policies have, it is claimed, been successful in stimulating innovation in companies like 3M, Google or Pixar. Workers are encouraged to dress casually, to pretend their workplace is not an office but a multi-coloured playpen. In fact recent research on working environments fails to find any evidence that the removal of constraints in the working environment has a positive effect on creative output (Thanem and Varlander 2014). What is lacking here is a recognition that the real stimulus behind creative work might be the eighty or ninety per cent time spent in everyday office work; it's the everyday grey of normal office life which temporarily occludes then releases creative thinking, not the open space outside it.

Rather than lobbying for a world of unfettered freedom and imagination, cultural policy makers and managers of creative organisations may need to acknowledge the importance of privacy, containment, routine and predictability alongside release and freedom, allowing the mind to switch between 'convergent' and 'divergent' mental states and perspectives. A relentless insistence on the generation of new ideas throws the creative process out of balance and, for organisations as for individuals, becomes distorting, distracting and self-destructive. 'Uncreativity', by contrast, encapsulates a more incremental approach to organisational development, subjecting ideas and projects to self-doubt and criticism, resisting change for change's sake and connecting the generation of novel ideas with existing resources and capabilities.

Conclusion: implications for policy and management

At the level of cultural policy, uncreativity points to the importance of relationships and intermediaries extending along the value chain beyond the generation of new ideas and content. Such intermediaries are often labelled 'uncreative' because they extend the creative journey rather

than speeding it up, allowing novel ideas to interact with underlying values, competences and limitations. Yet this more gradual approach to change and innovation is more sustainable than the individual flash of inspiration.

Because of the historic relationship between cultural policy makers and loss-making subsidized arts organisations, creative industries policies continue to focus disproportionately on the generation of content and on individual talents, rather than on the systems and networks which allow these to develop and mature into viable products and businesses. It would be worthwhile for policy makers to investigate the contribution to the creative process made by 'uncreative' intermediaries and the connections that exist between external, 'uncreative' agencies and the obvious centres of cultural production.

A secondary implication of 'uncreativity' for policy stems from the need to reduce the pressure and expectation for speed and originality on creative individuals, especially the young. The pressure to do something different, to be unique, to be talented, provides a script for self-identification but does not in the end serve these emerging creative workers well. It would be better for policy makers (including managers, educators and funders) to provide opportunities for young creative workers to learn their craft, to experiment, to fail and to learn from failure. According to the neuroscientific research referred to above, creative thinking occurs behind a screen of frustration and routine which temporarily conceals the process, then reveals the outcome as a perceived breakthrough.

In training and education, policy makers might also reflect upon the importance of critical thinking in the creative process. As Franzen attests, the dialectic between invention and acute self-criticism is often painful, but it can also be productive. Talent is not just discovered or let loose, it has to be developed. Intelligent criticism, preferably from one's peers or a respected mentor, pitched somewhere between blanket approval and absolute rejection, provides an opportunity for young people to learn their craft as well as the art of self-criticism. For Franzen and for other novelists, reading well is the first step towards writing well; immersion in the craft and critical engagement with one's peers is a key part of any curriculum or training programme directed towards creativity, triggering self-doubt, second thoughts and revision.

Similarly with organisations, cultural organisations will often complain of the pressure to come up with new initiatives and new projects. This may reflect a shift from open-ended revenue funding towards project-based funding and one-off, temporary schemes, no doubt intended by funders to target strategic priorities. Yet many innovative ideas evolve from more incremental processes of experimentation and failure rather than from radical novelty. Managers of cultural organisations together with their stakeholders and funders, can perhaps try to provide a space for reflection, allowing artists and managers to rediscover and adapt existing products and processes, not just to invent new ones. Uncreativity points to the 'hidden' innovation processes in organisations, where the capacity and resources to capitalize upon and exploit existing ideas becomes as productive as the capacity to generate new ideas and initiatives. Indeed, new policy initiatives, often imposed from above, are more likely to disrupt and obstruct this slower process of organizational development and incremental change than to facilitate it

The dialectic between ‘creativity’ and ‘uncreativity’ is analogous to psychological theories of ‘divergent’ and ‘convergent’ thinking respectively (Weisberg 1993) or to the dynamics between innovators and adapters in creative teams (Kirton 1984). Specifically, ‘uncreative’ thinking provides a necessary point of resistance and critique in the creative process, allowing three kinds of intervention in the creative process. Firstly, uncreative thinking provides a screen or ‘black box’ which temporarily occludes underlying creative processes, allowing them to proceed at their own pace just below the level of conscious thought until they are ready to reveal themselves. Secondly, uncreative thinking interrupts or closes down creative experimentation and pushes an exploratory process towards closure and resolution. Thirdly, uncreative thinking introduces doubt and reflection on questions of value to challenge the initial excitement of novelty and change.

In this paper I have argued that we privilege one type of thinking, one version of creativity and one aspect of creative organisations over another. This has damaging effects on individuals and on creative businesses. Acknowledging the contribution of ‘uncreativity’ is not in the end an attack on creativity per se, but a critique of an outmoded view of creativity as ‘mere novelty’ (Boden 1994, 76). Creativity is not the preserve of a few talented individuals, and feelings of failure and doubt are integral to the occasional moments of insight and innovation. People and emotions we routinely label as ‘uncreative’ can contribute to the creative process, whether represented by business managers or prosaic outsiders who interrupt poetic inspiration. Delays, ‘blocks’ and failure are part of the process, not problems to be removed. In this context an excess of novelty, of intrinsic motivation and self-belief, of new ideas and initiatives has become more problematic than ‘uncreativity’. Cultural policy makers and managers might accordingly need to rebalance the relationship between creative inspiration and the mundane, drudgery of laborious ‘uncreative’ work. As individuals, as organisations and as policy makers, in order to be truly creative we may need to learn to be ‘uncreative’ first.

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