Profiling Creativity: An Exploration of the Creative Process Through the Practice of Freelance Print Journalism

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BComn (Hons)

A creative work thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication & Media, University of Newcastle.

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.
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### Part Two: Exegesis

#### An Exploration of the Creative Process Through the Practice of Freelance Print Journalism

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Abstract

This PhD research project comprises two parts: a creative project and an exegesis. The creative project component of the research consisted of writing a series of 20 character profiles titled *Profiling Creativity*, with each feature article based on a different creative practitioner and their experience of the creative process. The individuals profiled were drawn from a variety of practices, some traditionally associated with creativity and others not, in order to demonstrate the diversity of creativity as detailed in current literature on the subject. Similarly, each profile highlights a different concept or aspect within the scholarly literature, as demonstrated by that particular practitioner's experience.

Engaging in the practice of freelance print journalism in this way provided me with two sources for exploring creativity: the accounts of the 20 practitioners interviewed for the profiles and my own experience of the creative process in writing the series. This research was conducted using the methodology of practitioner based enquiry (PBE), and in keeping with this methodology I kept a research journal that documents the process of creating *Profiling Creativity* and provides evidence for my practice. In this way, I was able to compare my experience of creativity with that of the practitioners interviewed for the profiles and apply current literature on creativity to these findings. The details of this analysis are contained in the exegesis component of this project.

Most specifically, this research explores the nature of creativity through the theoretical framework of Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity. In contrast to popular conceptions of creativity that place the individual at the centre of the process, this model proposes that creativity instead emerges from the interplay of three components: the individual, the field (society) and the domain (culture). By applying this framework to my own experience and that of the 20 cultural producers interviewed for *Profiling Creativity* this research aims to illustrate and validate the underlying systemic nature of creativity, as it applies to all creative practice, and the necessity of accounting for all three components in explanations of the creative process.
Part One: Creative Project

Profiling Creativity

A series of feature articles about creativity and creative people.
Miles Green

The film ends, the credits begin, and as the names scroll by the audience has already brushed the popcorn off their laps and left the cinema.

Beyond the main titles audiences tend to give little consideration to the hundreds of people whose work produces a single film. In fact, the majority of the recognition is reserved for one individual, the director.

It is one of the primary ways films are grouped, into Hitchcock and Kubrick box sets, seeking out motifs and metaphors and imagining movies as mirrors that reflect the individual.

However, while dominant, this director-centric approach is not necessarily accurate. In fact it is a relatively new idea, emerging in the 1960s with the auteur theory of cinema, elevating certain directors to the level of author/genius and positioning their films as the embodiment of individual vision and personality.

Unfortunately, such a move distorts our understanding of the nature of creativity in that it de-values the contribution of the many other players in the process. It also means we miss out on exposure to the lesser-known but equally interesting elements of the making of a film – like visual effects.

Miles Green is the Effects Supervisor at Animal Logic, an Australian-based company that specialises in design, animation and visual effects for feature films, television and commercials.

Green has worked on the visual effects for films such as Happy Feet and The Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga’Hoole (Animal Logic), Australia, The Ruins and Speedracer (Rising Sun Pictures), and The Golden Compass with Framestore in London.

Green describes visual effects as “the sprinkle of extra magic to make things really hold together in the films.”

He said most people don’t really know what a visual effects artist does, and for
clarification it is often easier to explain what they don’t do.

Visual effects artists do not build animated characters or make them speak or move but they do add layers like sparks, explosions and rain as well as ice-cracking and wind on feathers.

Green said, “It really can be quite broad. One day we’ll be working on an ocean for a film and the next day it could be some mist from a helicopter. The next day it could be a magical creature on a Harry Potter film, a dragon turning into a candle or something.”

Green was born in England and trained in 3D computer animation at Bournemouth University’s National Centre for Computer Animation (NCCA).

He first came to Australia in 2004 to work on Happy Feet, which received the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2006. The Golden Compass, which he returned to London to work on, also received an Academy Award in 2008 for best visual effects.

Yet with current emphasis on the director as the film’s author, roles such as that of visual effects artists can be forgotten, despite the fact that no film would be the same without each individual contribution.

Sociologist Howard Becker proposed that all art is a collective activity. This division of labour can be clearly seen in a film but even seemingly solitary activity like writing poetry relies on the contribution of other people.

This could include the person who suggested the poet remove a comma from the second stanza, publishers and distributors, and even all those whose who have contributed to the broad poetical traditions the poet builds on.

There is an element of collaboration in all creative practice. For Green, this collaboration is built into his work processes.

“You've got to be able to pass around ideas and communicate well,” Green said.

“You never do a whole shot yourself. There are a lot of processes to go through. Every day there is either a brief from an art director, a review with a producer or talking and working together through problems with the animators and lighting artists.”
Another important part of this collaboration is sharing ideas within the visual effects team and constant evaluation of their creative output.

Every morning, during the final stages of the shot work, the visual effects team gathers for a screening in which the art director reviews each effect.

The art director then gives notes on how each effect should look or be positioned and offers reference material for the artists who then make changes for the next day’s review.

Green also does a pre-evaluation of each artist’s work before it makes it to this screening, discussing whether or not the artist has reached his or her targets and suggesting ideas.

In addition to this formal review process Green said there is also constant informal discussion and idea sharing that influences the development of the artists’ work.

“Often as you hear the artists milling out of the theatre talking...They’ll often be suggesting on the way back to the desk, ‘Have you thought about this? I’ve seen this done before,’” he said.

“It’s one of those things that occurs quite naturally in our sort of environment. We’ve got a lot of open plan desks and people saying, ‘Hey look at this. This is similar to what you need to do, isn’t it? Try this.’"

The environment at Animal Logic seems exactly as you’d imagine an animation studio might be. The visual effects artists do not have to meet with external clients and so there is no restriction on what they must wear – thongs and shorts are perfectly fine in summer – or what they can have on their desks.

“A lot of the crew will have toys all over their desks. It has been common to come across Lego Star Wars on someone’s desk, and the next one a load of, god knows, Harry Potter goblins or something,” Green said.

“They have a strange knack of finding weird stuff on the net, parts from old sets and
stuff, old posters from *The Matrix*. We once had *Superman* filmed not far and they sold off a lot of the casting and props in a warehouse nearby…and everyone was just taking all the things and buying all these strange things from the *Superman* props. So there are all sorts of things around our office. It’s quite funky.”

The hours are also flexible. Green said everyone is happy as long as the work gets done, although there is a tendency for visual effects artists to work long days.

Green said it’s quite easy to find yourself doing a ten or twelve hour day without going outside, think something you’ve worked on is great, and arrive the next morning to realise it is actually terrible.

For this reason, one of Green’s rules for his own creative practice is to make sure he takes regular breaks from his work to prevent himself becoming too engrossed. He said he has seen other artists use tricks such as holding a mirror to the screen to give themselves a new perspective on their work.

Similarly, if a visual effects artist is having trouble with a particular task they will be encouraged to find something else to work on. When they eventually come back from their break Green said they usually have new ideas about how to approach the task and are far more productive.

Although Green’s work environment is flexible in many ways, the work process remains highly structured. Contrary to romantic ideas about the necessity of freedom to creativity, structure of this type actually enables creativity to occur.

Particularly in film, where so many elements must be coordinated to reach one specific goal, it is vital that structures are put in place to ensure everything that needs to happen does, within time and on budget.

Green said at the beginning of a project they create enormous spreadsheets detailing how long each shot should take, how many artists are needed and how much money they have. It is also important for artists to set themselves individual deadlines to ensure they meet their targets.

Although he believes there are some exceptions to the rule, Green said the visual
effects artists who achieve the best results are usually those who work the hardest. An important part of this is engaging with the work of the other people in your industry.

“Some people that we have who are really creative, they're absolute film fanatics,” Green said.

“They've watched every single film and they've probably studied some of the effects hundreds of times. Pause, watch, rewound it.”

In this way the collective nature of creativity can be seen to extend beyond your own project to the direct influence of the other people in your industry.

In visual effects it is particularly important to keep up to date with the industry and industry trends as there are new developments in technology almost monthly. This amounts to a lot of change across the life of a single project.

From the first briefing to the time the effects are finalised the visual effects work for a film can take anything from a year and a half to two years.

Before the shots are created a lot of preparation work must be done in terms of understanding characters and the various emotions in the film.

The artists must also determine what technology is needed and exactly what each sequence requires, for example how rough the waves in an ocean should be or how stormy it should look.

Green said gathering reference material is a key part of achieving realism in their effects.

“You'd be amazed how much slow motion, ultra slow motion, video footage we have to watch to see how things are actually shaping or forming over time – slow motion fire, slow motion drips. We've got slow motion rain,” he said.

“Most of our work is usually trying to make things look as realistic as possible.”

After this has been achieved and approved, and the film finally gets to the screen,
Green said seeing your name in the credits is a good reward for the hard work, particularly if the film wins an industry award.

Green also values the recognition of his peers, such as having colleagues overseas say they liked the way a particular effect looked. This kind of praise is particularly gratifying as it comes from someone who appreciates exactly how much work is involved in creating that effect.

Yet Green also said, “You can’t take it all for yourself either because there are usually five hundred people, six hundred people working on these films. You’re just a part of it, a small part of the team.”

However, it is each of these small parts working together that allows creativity to occur, and in this way, in all those names scrolling by during the credits, film is a perfect illustration of the collaborative nature of this process.
Jon Borwein

Mathematics isn’t creative, it’s just about numbers, and no ordinary person can appreciate it unless they know how to do it.

According to mathematician Jonathan Borwein, and despite a common sense understanding maths, not one of those statements is true.

Borwein is Laureate Professor of mathematics at the University of Newcastle where he is also director of the Centre for Computer Assisted Research Mathematics and its Applications (CARMA).

His primary research interests are pure mathematics (analysis), computational mathematics (numerical and computational analysis) and applied mathematics (optimisation) but unless you are directly involved in the industry the difference between these terms probably means little.

Apart from basic every day application, mathematics, or complex mathematics, is an area of practice that seems completely inaccessible to most people.

Borwein, however, sees this attitude as a major flaw in the general understanding of mathematics. He questions the need to be able to replicate something in order to appreciate it, pointing out that we do not apply the same criteria to other areas of practice.

“There’s this amazing misconstruction. I hope that most students in English classes don’t think the measure of appreciating a sonnet is whether they could write, ‘Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day.’ I hope they see the difference between being able to write and appreciate,” he said.

“That’s where a lot of the trouble with teaching math or having people understand math comes in, because of this unreasonable expectation. It would be just as unreasonable if you had to think of the Mona Lisa to appreciate the Mona Lisa.”

There is a tendency to conflate the word “artistic” with the word “creative”, yet mathematics, science, engineering and many similar industries are just as creative as
the arts, even if they are not readily associated with the term.

In relatively simple terms, each of these forms of practice has the capacity for individuals to use their knowledge to produce novel variations that can be accepted as valuable contributions to their industry and therefore alter it in some way. This is what Borwein has done in the domain of mathematics.

Similarly, the way we conceptualise different types of domains of knowledge extends not only to the practice itself but to the individuals involved in them.

Borwein once hosted the opening of a computer network for a large group of officials where a technological meltdown meant he was left to entertain the audience while it was fixed.

Borwein said one of the women in the group, a minister for education, announced that she was surprised to meet a mathematician with such a good sense of humour, to which he responded, “Well I’m the sociable kind. I look at the other person’s feet.”

Borwein is talkative. He likes to tell jokes – “there are three kinds of mathematicians. There’s one who can count and one who can’t” – and his answers to questions often run into anecdotes about his life.

Borwein describes himself as a social person but also, in contradiction to the stereotype of the anti-social mathematician, said collaboration is an important part of a mathematician’s practice.

In fact, maths is a profession that is particularly open to collaboration in that there are people all over the world who have similar sets of knowledge that can be shared.

Borwein said connecting with other people in the community is the best way of accessing and combining other people’s knowledge and that the more important or creative work being done in mathematics is coming from an increasingly multidisciplinary approach.

“No mathematician alive today knows more than 10% of mathematics and those people would have brains the size you see on Doctor Who. So because of that I don’t think
there’s any alternative,” he said.

“I think the big things that are going to have an impact on the evolving shape of the profession tend to be collaborative.”

Similarly, Borwein said there is no value in keeping his own work to himself. He believes creativity is not simply a quality of individuals but something that occurs within a community.

This is because, in order to be recognised as creative, the members of the profession who make decisions about these things, for example peer reviewers and funding bodies, must identify your work as such.

Qualifications, titles and awards let others know that your work should be taken seriously and that what you say has value.

This is true both within your own industry, for example when applying for new positions or seeking collaborators, but also for the general community who might not have the same level of understanding of the profession.

Over the course of his career Borwein has been awarded fellowships with the Royal Society of Canada, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and also the Australian Academy of Science.

He is a former president of the Canadian Mathematical Society and in 1993 was awarded the Chauvenet Prize by the Mathematical Association of America, which he received along with his brother Peter and long-time collaborator David H. Bailey for methods of computing one billion digits of Pi.

Borwein describes these types of recognition as “calling cards.” He said when he was first made a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and interviewed on radio – a planned five-minute interview that turned into a 20-minute interview – the host said he would like to have him on the program again.

Borwein said, “I could have walked in any day and said, ‘listen I've got some great stories to tell’ and I do, but the fellowship was the calling card.”
These qualifications are particularly important within academia, where papers must all be peer reviewed and theories checked and validated. In this way, the opinion of other people, the field, has a practical effect on creative individuals' work and directly affects their creativity.

“You know what? These things matter. In academia credentials are a fungible asset passed about. They’re how we benchmark each other,” Borwein said.

“When I go back to speak to the Deputy Vice Chancellor he’s even more certain now, maybe more than he should be, that I’m suggesting something sensible because I’ve got one extra level of accreditation.”

As well as indicating that you know what you’re talking about, recognition of your work also gives you the motivation to continue.

Borwein said this kind of internal support, for example, being made a laureate professor, is particularly important in a University environment where you are constantly competing for grants, most of which you will not get.

It’s an environment he has been exposed to for longer than most people. Borwein started university at age 15 as he was accelerated a number of times throughout his schooling.

Borwein’s father is a mathematician, as is his brother, and his mother is a biologist. Borwein received his PhD the same year his mother was awarded hers.

Yet while it may appear that these things have come easily for him, Borwein said he has learned that creativity does not come from complacency. In fact, he can recall a specific incident during his end of his school exams that permanently instilled the value of hard work.

“I decided that I would be in the swimming pool at our apartment block two hours after each exam started, which was just cocky and stupid, and I was literally on the diving board about two and half hours after the last math exam when I realised I hadn’t answered the last section,” he said.
“If you got 80% on those exams you got what’s called the Ontario Scholarship…I didn’t get one. I missed it by 3%, which was about the number of marks I hadn’t done.

“So I went to University that fall knowing that it didn’t matter whether I thought I was or actually was smarter than everyone else there, there came a level where you actually just had to do the work. It was the best thing that ever happened to me…Even the prodigies run out of steam if they don’t do enough extra training.”

With mathematics, or at least the sciences, being the family business it would seem that Borwein was always going to study maths. However, right up until the actual university enrolment day Borwein planned to study history.

Borwein had all of the appropriate subject cards in his hand ready to drop in the enrolment box when he said he realised that if he stopped studying maths in five years’ time he would have forgotten most of those skills, whereas in ten years’ time he would still be able to read about historical figures. He then swapped all of his cards over.

The decision seems to have been the right one. Borwein has an obvious passion for the discipline and describes it as “the most sophisticated language in all the senses that humanity’s ever invented.”

He praises its ability to reflect nuance and to be applied for practical use at the same time as creating things that are “just beautiful” like poetry.

For the many whose maths studies don’t go beyond high school it is difficult to understand how numbers could do all these things. Yet Borwein said one of the biggest misconceptions about mathematics is that it is just about numbers, and he does his best to demonstrate this whenever he can.

Borwein said even family friends ask if he has found any new numbers yet, so whenever he is given the opportunity to give talks about maths he will do the entire presentation without using any formulas, just videos, words and pictures.

Borwein puts a lot of the misconceptions we have about mathematics down to the way it is taught in schools. He said even though it is one of the more important subjects it is often taught badly, which he believes is a major problem.
“In a sense it’s more necessary to be well-taught than subjects like English. If you’ve got a bad English teacher chances are your mum or dad can fix most of that when you’re going to school. If you have a bad maths teacher chances are they can’t.”

Borwein said he is also annoyed that even when the practical use of maths is right in front of us it is often ignored or doesn’t get the credit it deserves. For example, he said Google is just as much about maths as it is computer science and mobile phones are just as much about mathematics as engineering, yet this is rarely acknowledged.

Borwein said, “I’m interested in a sense in trying to remediate how people perceive mathematics and realise how fundamental it is to their lives.”

These misconceptions could also explain why many people do not view maths as creative. Most people do not understand the nature of mathematics, how it can be used, or many of the things it is used for, nor do they believe they have the ability to appreciate these things.

However, in challenging these misconceptions Borwein encourages people to broaden their understanding of the nature of creativity and the professions that fall under that banner, including mathematics.
An artist named Mikala Dwyer once said artists have to follow millions of rules.

This seems strange in light of a romantic obsession with artistic freedom and the romanticism of renegades and rule breakers, yet ultimately these rules provide enormous scope for variation and creativity. Creators follow them, play with them, choose to stretch some and break others.

These rules can be formal, institutional guidelines, social expectations for liaising with important people, or unwritten rules of trends and style. These structures provide a framework for practice and for contextualising art works and understanding them.

For the most part, artists and their audiences do not consciously identify these as “rules” or are even aware they are following them. Yet when someone breaks an important rule we recognise it immediately and don’t always like it as much as we might expect.

Last year artist Sam Leach found himself at the centre of a controversy he says he never meant to create. He was accused of plagiarism, deliberate deceit, of not being “a real artist.”

The Art Gallery of NSW awarded Leach the 2010 Archibald Prize for his portrait of comedian Tim Minchin as well as the Wynne Prize for an Australian landscape. This decision placed him in company with Brett Whiteley and William Dobell, the only other two artists to have won both prizes in the same year.

However, in Leach’s own words, his Wynne entry Proposal For a Landscaped Cosmos “quoted” a painting by 17th Century Dutch artist Adam Pynacker called Boatmen Moored on the Shore of a Lake and for many the similarity between the two paintings was too much.

Leach himself said he was genuinely shocked by the intensity of the response to his painting. He had anticipated debate over the fact his landscape was not technically Australian but had not foreseen any issues relating to his use of Pynacker’s work.
Leach said, “I put the painting in knowing obviously that it wasn’t an Australian landscape in the literal sense and to me that was sort of the point of the painting.

“To say here’s this particular type of landscape and to put that into a competition saying ‘let’s think about this as a proposal for an Australian landscape,’ I thought that was kind of an interesting thing to do and I thought that might generate some discussion...But I never, I never, never suspected that people would get angry about a plagiarism angle, so that came as a total surprise to me.”

Debate raged across major newspapers and blogs, and even Germaine Greer weighed in. Everybody seemed to have an opinion.

Was it an embarrassment for the gallery, a “Wynne-lose” as news website Crikey.com suggested? Would it have been fine if only Leach had credited Pynacker more obviously by name? Or was there no excuse at all and did Leach deserve to be stripped of the award?

Ultimately the trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW decided he should keep the prize, yet the ordeal was obviously than pleasant for Leach.

“I got a handful of emails from artists who were very angry at me and were saying I wasn’t a genuine artist and I was a disgrace to the idea of being an artist,” he said.

“And of course it’s very upsetting to read front pages accusing you of being a cheat and a liar and producing somehow a fake painting...Yeah it was horrible.”

Whatever your opinion of Leach’s painting, arguably at the heart of this controversy is the question of originality. Does something have to be “completely original” to be creative? Does it depend on how you define the word? And how do you begin to define such a thing?

The requirement of originality underpins most common-sense definitions of creativity. Often, creativity is defined entirely as the ability to produce a completely new, never seen before idea or product.
However, every time someone creates something, be it a song, a painting or a scientific theory, they are building on all the contributions others have made to that particular type of practice.

Indeed, even the choice to depart from tradition can only be made in the knowledge of what has already been done.

Leach himself has an expansive knowledge of the art world. When asked to talk about his influences he easily rattles off a list of individual artists, art movements and schools including, of course, 17th century Dutch art.

He said, “I think if you look at the whole history of Western art then the history is based on building on ideas over time and sometimes there’s a departure, but you know even usually if you analyse…it can actually come from an interesting development of pre-existing ideas.

“So to me, yeah, it’s interesting that the people have this idea that artists need to do something original and by original they mean a work that’s I guess sprung somehow fully formed from the artist’s mind.”

But if everything is based on what has come before at what point does a creative work become sufficiently “original”? Is creativity then the ability to hide your influences?

The requirement for “novelty” or “novel variation” is included as part of many current academic definitions of creativity, rather than a nonsensical requirement for complete originality, thereby allowing for the putting together of existing ideas in new ways.

Leach, however, says he gives little thought to such questions – perhaps the reason he failed to anticipate the reaction to his Wynne entry. He says his primary interest and enjoyment in being an artist comes from the activity of creating the work.

Leach has worked full-time as an artist for over five years. In the 14 years prior to this he held the somewhat surprising job of a tax officer.

He had always been interested in art, doing life-drawing and painting courses part time
while studying economics and working at the tax office. However, when the tax office refused to pay for him to do a Masters of Business, Leach made the decision to study art full-time.

Leach studied a diploma of fine art at TAFE at RMIT, and completed a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) and later a Masters of Art also at RMIT.

Leach said he gained separate sets of knowledge from each course: technical skill from the TAFE course and conceptual knowledge during the degree course.

The turning point in Leach’s career came in 2006 when he was awarded the Metro5 Art Award Judges’ prize. The $40,000 prize allowed him to finally make art his full time career.

“I spent that year just painting about 60 hours a week in the studio and doing really little else,” he said.

“I progressed far more in that single year than I had in any year previously and that really set the foundation for me to be able to continue to work professionally. That year allowed me to develop enough to establish an ongoing practice.”

In the time between winning the Metro prize and the 2010 Wynne and Archibald Leach was awarded prizes such as the Siemens Fine Art Award and was a finalist for a range of others, including the Archibald in 2007, 2008 (with a controversial portrait of himself dressed as Hitler) and 2009.

A discussion with Sam Leach about the details of his practice reveals an artist who is keenly aware of his own process and holds no romantic illusions about the origins of his creativity.

He jokes, “So it’s not just being visited by a kind of Greek goddess? I always assumed it was just a muse flew down.”

Leach is able to break his process into distinct stages and give a detailed explanation of each. His work, particularly in the beginning stages, relies on drawing connections, often bringing together disparate visual and conceptual triggers.
His influences are as diverse as physics, biology and philosophy and he says he often listens to audio books and science podcasts as he works.

Leach says, “I see a visual trigger and there’s a conceptual element, and the two of them come together and that’s the work that I want to produce. So I’m really unconcerned about making a painting based on a pre-existing painting and quite often I base paintings on photographs that I’ve bought from royalty free websites and things like that.

“It doesn’t particularly interest me to think about producing a work which is just a new way of depicting the world. What interests me is the kind of images and the confluence of images and ideas.”

Once Leach has selected the image and ideas he wants to explore in a particular work, he begins by doing some rough sketches and then digitally manipulates the photograph into something like the painting he wants to create.

Leach then transfers the image onto canvas or wood, drawing with this photo as a guide, and then begins to build upon this with layers of paint.

On average the process of painting takes about 40 hours over two or three weeks. Then, once it is more or less finished, Leach will let the painting sit in the studio for an extra couple of weeks, giving himself space to make any final changes.

Once Leach decides the painting is done he coats the smaller works in resin, meaning they cannot be worked on anymore and thereby finalising the process.

As the ease with which Leach identifies the stages in his practice might suggest, he sees creativity as “an incremental process.”

This idea can be explored at a number of levels. Bringing the concept out wide it applies to the development of skills that comes with long-term dedication to any creative practice.

Over time, actions that may have initially been difficult to perform require little or even
no thought, part of what French sociologist Bourdieu calls “habitus”.

As Leach says, “There’s a lot of stuff I can do now without really thinking too much about it that I found really laborious five years ago – stupid things like being able to paint a decent straight line or being able to get a really fine piece of detail into the right place, or adjusting the pressure on a brush to change the way that a colour reads on the canvas.”

For Leach personally, the nature of creativity as a process also applies to the way he makes the connections he bases his work on. He says ideas emerge out of aspects of previous paintings he has created, each work therefore leading to another, in combination with an ever-growing knowledge of other artists’ paintings and interesting triggers from elsewhere in the world.

“Germs of ideas don’t just come from my own paintings. They can come from other paintings that I see or indeed just any aspect of the world that I happen to notice that I think looks interesting...but then another thing needs to happen for that to actually become the spark of a new work,” he said.

“I need to be able to connect that thing that I’ve seen with some idea or other concept that’s a little bit further away from it. So for me it’s somehow being able to draw a connection between a visual cue and a conceptual trigger.”

Finally, bringing it down to its smallest level, the nature of creativity as an incremental process is also evident in the sheer number of choices an artist has to make during creation of one painting.

Leach said, “There are thousands of decisions that need to be made about exactly where to place a colour, or how to make the brush mark, or moving an object a little bit to the left or a little bit to the right, adjusting hue and tone, all of that sort of stuff comes into it and it is all really part of the creative process.”

It is this process, the labour of painting, that motivates Sam Leach. Rewarded by the sheer amount of hours spent in the studio and the resulting ability to become so immersed in the activity he loses time.
Leach says he sees hard work as essential to creativity and despite the implications of laziness in accusations of plagiarism there is no doubt that Sam Leach works hard.

In fact, part of the way he ultimately defines an artist is as someone who is committed to his or her practice.

Regardless of your opinion of the 2010 Wynne result, you cannot accuse Sam Leach of being anything other than dedicated to his art. A conversation with Leach reveals a self-aware artist who understands the development of his own practice and the context in which it sits.

Leach takes his work seriously but also receives an obvious joy from his involvement in the creative process.

He may have broken a rule that many think should not have been broken but of the millions of rules artists navigate every day perhaps that is the one rule that deserves to be reconsidered.
Lally Katz

There are rumours that Vladimir Nabokov used to do all his writing standing up. Truman Capote on the other hand claimed to only write while lying down.

Ben Franklin preferred to write in the bath, Victor Hugo wrote in the nude and William Wordsworth is said to have recited all his poems to his dog, revising them if the dog barked.

The eccentricities and habits of these creative greats can be fascinatingly bizarre and are often taken as evidence of their creative nature. Yet what lies underneath these stories is an equally interesting truth.

No matter how unusual or even mundane someone’s working methods may appear, the underlying process is always the same.

Underneath seeming chaos there are processes and stages that are common to all creative practice, no matter what domain someone is working in or what type of work they are producing.

For playwright Lally Katz, “it’s like mathematics meets magic”.

Lally Katz is a joy.

Even in conversation she has a unique way with words. She answers questions in quirky metaphors with a voice that has a charming breathy squeak and an American accent punctuated by distinctly Australian no’s and so’s.

She said her plays are creatures with rearrangeable body parts, writing is an adventure into outer space and performances are hot air balloons filled up by audiences.

To see one of Katz’s plays is to be invited into her world. It’s a world that seems familiar at first but then refuses to operate the way you expect it to.

“They’re sort of the world in my language or through my experience and my language. Kind of a translation or double or mirror of this world, or kind of like a dream of this
world," Katz said.

This idea of different realities or representations of the world is a recurring theme in both Katz’s work and her descriptions of the process of creating it.

It is a theme that has continued since she first became involved in drama at high school as a way of making sense of the world as a lost 16 year old.

“I found that writing kind of helped me understand reality a bit better,” Katz said.

“Sort of making my own world reality, but which was connected to this world or came from this world or was part of it, helped me find my own way through this world a lot better.”

31 year old Katz was born in the USA in Trenton, New Jersey and lived in Miami until her family moved to Canberra when she was “eight-and-three-quarters.”

Since then Katz has written over 20 plays, including *Eisteddfod, The Black Swan of Trespass, Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd* and *The Fag from Zagreb*, for which she has gained both national and international acclaim.

In 2011 four of Katz’s plays were produced in Melbourne and Sydney, including *The Golem Story* (Malthouse Theatre), *Smashed* (Griffin Theatre), *Return to Earth* (Melbourne Theatre Company) and *Neighbourhood Watch* (Belvoir Street Theatre).

*Neighbourhood Watch* is a play based on three years of conversations between Katz and her Hungarian neighbour and Katz said it is about their movement in and out of each other’s memories and imaginations.

Yet while plays like this, and even Katz herself, might appear to exist in some alternate reality the process of creating these works is very much grounded in this one.

She lists influences such as music and overheard conversations as well as images like bats at sunset and her own and other people’s heartbreaks.
Katz said, “It seems like it’s coming from nowhere but actually it’s coming from who you are, and the conversations you’ve had, and the people you’ve met, and the places you’ve lived in, and the dreams that you’ve had.”

For Katz the creation of a play begins long before any actual writing starts. She said her subconscious is constantly seeking out and collecting “clues in the world” even when she is actively focused on something else.

It is the accumulation of these ideas or clues that eventually forms the basis of her plays.

Katz keeps a folder for each different project, which she uses to record all of her ideas. Then, usually two days before the draft of a play is due, she prints everything out, reads it, and puts in an order that seems to make sense.

Katz then begins the task of actually writing the play using this document as a guide to complete her first draft.

She said, “Usually when there’s about 24 to 12 hours before the play is due I probably won’t sleep for a couple of days.

“I’ll have worked myself up into a trance by listening to the same song over and over on repeat and then I’ll follow that document through and I’ll rewrite everything but I’ll start the play from the beginning and use that document as a handrail or like a map to get me through to the end of the play, the first draft, and I’ll just stay awake by drinking tea constantly.

“I wish it were a bit more, I don’t know. I guess that’s just the way it is.”

Staying awake for days surrounded by paper, writing, drinking tea and obsessively listening to a single song might seem an erratic “usual working day” but within this apparent chaos, and indeed in all creative practice, there are common identifiable stages.

There are many theories that seek to explain creativity in this way, yet Graham
Wallas’s is perhaps the most enduring. The four stages he identifies are preparation, incubation, illumination and verification.

Preparation is this clue-gathering period Katz describes. It includes the active research for a particular task as well as all the previous knowledge and experience that allows someone to complete that task.

This information then feeds into the next stage called incubation.

Incubation is the period when an individual is not directly focused on a particular creative activity but the brain continues putting together the pieces of the puzzle using the information gathered during preparation.

As Katz said, “Your subconscious is the smart one.”

This incubation is then followed by illumination, which is the switching on of the metaphorical light bulb.

This stage on its own is often mistaken for creativity itself, yet it is precisely because the brain has been busy working everything out during the incubation period that the “aha!” of illumination can seem so spectacular.

For Katz illumination can include the appearance of ideas for scenes or characters as well as the emergence of a play’s form out of the pages of information she has collected.

Once this illumination has occurred the next step, and the final of Wallas’s stages, is to decide whether or not the idea is useful. To verify it.

The verification of an illumination can happen almost simultaneously, as an idea is instantly accepted or discarded. Yet as well as this ongoing decision making the verification stage can also be applied to the extended process of drafting and redrafting an entire work.

Katz does an average of four drafts of each play and with typical optimism said she finds the process exciting.
Katz likens drafting to assembling a living creature, ensuring all its body parts are in the right places and ultimately giving it movement and life.

She said, “The first draft will have all the life in it but will have legs up where the arms should be, and it'll be the wrong shape, it can’t walk or move, so the second draft I’ll take it all apart and put it into the right shape, put the legs where they’re meant to be.”

“But when I’ve done that and I’ve cut it open and moved it all the life has often gone out of it, and it’s the right form but it’s lifeless, and so then the third draft will be putting the life back into the form that works, and the fourth draft will be fix-ups or little things.”

When applying theories such as Wallas’s to creative practice it is important to remember that the order of these stages is by no means linear. As can be seen if applied to Katz’s, work they often overlap and can be applied broadly to the creation of an entire work or shrunk right down to something as small as the decision to keep or remove a comma.

The main function of these stage theories is to provide some explanation of the seemingly mysterious process of creativity and to highlight the fact that even if your practice is ostensibly different to someone else’s, the same essential processes are at work.

It is also useful to recognise that this process doesn’t occur inside a person’s head without outside influence but that there are many other people that affect this process and ultimately make judgements about the creativity of a work.

In fact recognition by others, whether in the form of awards or an encouraging comment from a teacher or a friend, is a vital part of creativity. It’s how you know not to give up, that there is a point to what you’re doing and that you are in fact creative.

At 19 Katz won the St Martin’s Young Playwright’s Award and since then has received Green Room Awards, awards from both the New York and Melbourne International Fringe Festivals, as well as the 2009 Louis Esson Prize for Drama at the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards.
Katz is refreshingly excited by the attention she has received and the reassurance it brings.

She said, “I really like getting awards! Because you have so much doubt, like I guess everybody in life does, but half the time you’re going ‘should I be doing this?’”

“You’re always kind of doubting whether what you do is good, or worthwhile, so it’s quite nice when you get an award and you can kind of feel like it’s a sign that you’re on the right path.”

Similarly, particularly in a live medium like theatre, audiences play a crucial role in determining the success of a creative work.

Katz said the whole purpose of theatre is for an audience to see it and points out that the willingness of an audience to engage with a play actually changes the nature of the performance as it is occurring.

“You’ve created the world and you then ask the audience to dream into this world and if the audience go into this world it’s like a hot air balloon. It gives the balloon all this extra heat and light and speed and if the audience doesn’t go in the balloon deflates.”

Katz’s particular hot air balloons only seem to be rising, fuelled by her dedication to a craft she describes as “vital.”

So often Katz’s work seems to start in this world and end in another. It is therefore fitting that she ultimately thinks of her writing process as being like space travel.

“I always think of it sort of like going in to outer space,” she said.

“Leaving the atmosphere’s really hard but then once you’re in space it’s kind of easier. You’ve got more time and space around you.

“Sometimes there’s comets or monsters or you’ve got to navigate into a different planet or something but I think a lot of it is discipline…It actually comes time to write and you don’t actually really want to do it and you kind of don’t think you really can do it.
“It’s sort of like, it's almost kind of just tying yourself to the mast or something or forcing yourself out of the world and then once you’re there it's great. Once I’m in there there’s nowhere I’d rather be anywhere.”
David McAllister

Although Mozart is said to have composed music from age four he did not create his first masterwork until 21. The Beatles were rejected by multiple record labels before finally signing with Parlophone, and Charles Darwin is said to have attributed his success to “unbounded patience in long reflecting over any subject”.

Even for the most well-known creative figures all evidence points to the fact that creativity is a whole lot of hard work.

Much of the discussion about what motivates creative people to do this work focuses on whether the drive comes from an impulse within or can be derived from external forces.

In explaining the origins of his own creative practice artistic director of the Australian Ballet David McAllister describes himself as “a bit of a genetic mutant.”

McAllister said neither of his parents were involved with or very interested in the arts yet all he ever wanted to do was dance.

As a child he would take the transistor radio to the back verandah of his Perth home and spend hours dancing to classical music. Even his very first recollections are of watching his own reflection as he danced.

“I used to dance in front of the TV when it was turned off – back in those days TV was this huge piece of furniture that you could see yourself in – and so that was sort of my earliest memory,” McAllister said.

“I just had this very strong fantasy world and dance was the expressive form, and I guess if I hadn’t seen ballet it could have been through ballroom dancing or some other form of dance but it was always going to be a dance related art form.”

McAllister has since turned this childhood love into a career that has lasted almost three decades.

McAllister joined the Australian Ballet in 1983 and became the Principal Artist in 1989.
He danced as principal for the company in shows such as *Onegin*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, *The Sentimental Bloke*, *Coppélia*, *Manon* and his personal favourite *Romeo and Juliet*.

McAllister also danced internationally for the Bolshoi Ballet, the Kirov Ballet, the Georgian State Ballet, The National Ballet of Canada, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Singapore Dance Theatre.

In March 2001 he danced his final show for the Australian Ballet, *Giselle*, and assumed the position of Artistic Director of the company in July of the same year.

A decade on, McAllister is still the artistic director and just as passionate about the industry.

“Look, I love dance. I love being involved in dance. I wake up every morning and look forward to going to work. It’s not something that I have to talk myself into,” he said.

The concept of motivation is a recurring theme in research about creativity – asking where people like McAllister get the drive to produce the work they do.

One theory is that, among other factors, creative people are motivated by the love of a craft for its own sake, as McAllister clearly is. In academic literature this is called intrinsic motivation or participating in creative activity for the enjoyment of the task itself.

In this way, intrinsic motivation undoubtedly makes it easier to dedicate the time and effort needed to achieve success in your chosen creative practice, particularly one as demanding as ballet.

McAllister says behind the illusion of effortlessness and grace we see on the stage there are years of training and hours of sweat in the rehearsal room.

“It’s like taking a lump of rock and turning it into a beautiful piece of jewellery,” he said.

“It’s the non-glamorous, non-magical part of the job where you actually just grunt and grind until you find how to do something and then you perfect it to the level that it looks
as if it’s innate and something that you’ve done your whole life.”

Natural talent certainly helps in achieving to this level but it can only get someone so far and McAllister is clearly passionate about ensuring his dancers make full use of the potential available to them.

“The only way you ever get to the end of your career and have really maximised your ability is by working every day as hard as you can,” he said.

This kind of dedication would be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain if a creative person did not love what he or she did. In fact, creative activity often feels less like hard work during the time a creative individual is being most productive.

Creative practitioners often talk about losing time while working. Hours can pass unnoticed, immersed in a state of heightened concentration where actions are carried out effortlessly, almost automatically. When they stop, they wonder how they could have achieved so much without realising it was happening.

With accounts like this it is easy to understand how stories of channelling inner genius or being inspired by a divine muse may seem plausible. It can feel as if some other force has temporarily taken control. However, there is another explanation.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to this state of total concentration and ease as autotelic experience or flow.

Among other characteristics such as freedom from distractions and having clear goals, flow occurs when someone’s ability to do a task meets the level of the challenge, therefore allowing them to escape both boredom and anxiety.

Flow and intrinsic motivation are intertwined. They feed into one another.

An initial love (intrinsic motivation) for a particular form of practice helps you do the work necessary for that activity; that hard work and preparation ultimately leads to improvement in your ability; increasing your ability to match the level of challenge of that activity leads to flow; and the more you experience flow the greater your intrinsic motivation for engaging in that creative practice will be.
McAllister recognises the joy that can come from such growth, not only in his current role of helping other dancers reach their potential but also in his own career as a performer.

He said, “I was cast in roles that I thought, ‘I can’t do that. I’m not able to portray that character or to actually physically do that move’, and then with help and coaching and technical and artistic feedback you actually do it.”

This outside help from others is an example of the type of motivation usually set up in opposition to intrinsic motivation, that is, external motivating factors such as time, money and recognition.

This is referred to as extrinsic motivation and some have argued that this type of motivation is detrimental to creativity, that people are less creative when motivated by external reward.

However, external motivating forces can be just as important in facilitating creativity as participation for its own sake.

Although it is the ultimate goal, it is highly unlikely a creative practitioner will be able to maintain a continuous state of flow.

Creative people need external pressures and incentives, such as deadlines or the knowledge that their work will be evaluated, to get the job done on time and done well.

“Time is always something that there’s never enough of,” McAllister said; yet he views deadlines as a necessary part of the creative process propelling him towards an end product.

“The curtain has to go up and it’s a great motivator to get the job done, and I think sometimes you could live in an endless world of creativity that doesn’t have an outcome if you didn’t actually have those time constraints.

“So while there’s never enough time I think time constraints can also focus your creativity,” he said.
“I think even if you were a sole artist making paintings you have to give yourself time-lines and time-frames because otherwise you can get lost in the world of creativity that has no outcomes, and I think outcomes are really, really important in every form of art, just as it is in business or life.”

The anticipated reaction of other people can also be a motivating factor, particularly in an activity like a ballet, which is created in the knowledge that you are producing a show people will be paying to see. In this way the influence of the audience even extends to the actual performance itself.

McAllister said a dancer can feel if an audience is tired, or if there is a buzz about a production, and a responsive audience actually affects the quality of a show as it is being performed.

McAllister said dancers are more likely to push themselves, to take risks and to give a better performance, in response to an audience who is enjoying the ballet. In this way a dancer is motivated by the external reward of maintaining the audience’s appreciation.

External influences always play a role, particularly in the creation of something as large and with as many elements as a ballet.

In Art Worlds, sociologist Howard Becker proposed that all art is a collective activity and encouraged consideration of all the people who make creative activity possible.

In this same way McAllister is quick to acknowledge that in the creation of a performance it is not just the dancers doing all the work.

McAllister said, “No dancer can be on stage without all the other dancers around them – obviously unless they’re doing their solo – but even within that there’s the collaboration with the music and the choreographer, so it is one of the most highly collaborative art forms because of the fact that performance doesn’t just happen in isolation.”

As Artistic Director, McAllister likens his role to the conductor of an orchestra. It is his job to ensure that everybody involved – dancers, costumes makers, set and lighting
designers, backstage crew – are all working together to achieve the same goal. Essentially, it is McAllister’s job to motivate others.

In 2004 McAllister’s creative contribution, both as a dancer and in this role as facilitator, was recognised when he became a Member of the Order of Australia.

He described it as “an incredible honour” but one he didn’t feel entirely comfortable receiving. McAllister’s love for dance has always been enough.

He said, “I’ve actually managed to have a career doing something that I love and so to be rewarded for it sometimes feels, I feel a bit embarrassed about it.”

Rather than setting intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in opposition to one another it seems more useful to view them as related influences, both with the ability to promote creativity and usually in conjunction with each other.

McAllister loves dance, that is clear, but he also aware of the hard work involved and the value of utilising extrinsic motivating factors to his own and his dancers’ advantage.

“I love that idea of expressing yourself through movement…Finding the right word or a physical expression like painting or music never really gave me the same sense of being able to express those ideas and thoughts,” McAllister said.

“I had the great joy of being involved in an organisation which I’m passionate about, performing in an art form which is totally something that I love doing.

“I just think that was the best thing I could do.”
Heath Killen

Of all the answers to the question “what is creativity?” one of the most popular is that creativity is producing something that didn’t exist before.

It is a common answer, a seemingly simple answer, but a problematic one.

Say someone is writing a book. Other books have existed before, so have the words they’re using, probably also the narrative structure and possibly some of the themes.

The particular combination may be new but the fact remains they are building that book from elements that already exist. The same principle applies to any creative product.

Creativity is a process, an evolution. We build things from the parts of the world, ideas, experiences and knowledge we are exposed to. The interesting part is the way individuals choose to select and combine these elements to produce extraordinary things.

On his blog designer Heath Killen has created an artwork featuring a quote from physicist Carl Sagan. It says, “If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, first you must create the universe.”

Taken in the context of creativity it is an acknowledgment of the fact that everything we create is connected to a much larger tradition and as we produce our own variations we are contributing to the evolution of those traditions.

Even those whose creative practice seems solitary must acknowledge they are part of a wider system of influences and examining an individual’s creativity in these terms helps us understand why they become part of certain domains and produce the products they do.

Heath Killen is a freelance graphic designer and illustrator. He is based in Newcastle and has clients all over Australia. He designs posters, logos, brochures, web graphics and album covers, and even dabbles in animation, creating bold experimentations in illustration, collage, and typography.
Killen has designed material for the Sydney Festival, the Powerhouse Museum, FBi Radio, the Dungog Film Festival, PACT, New Weird Australia, Tantrum Theatre, This is Not Art Festival, University Of Newcastle, Lost At E Minor and Kidsafe, and works in partnership with Sydney-based digital agency The Nest.

In 2010 Killen was signed to illustration agency The Jacky Winter Group which includes some of Australia's most talented established and emerging illustrators and his work has featured in publications both in Australia and internationally such as the *Semi-Permanent 2009* book, *Design Week* (UK) and IdN.

Despite all this Killen didn’t always know he wanted to be a graphic designer, not even when he first began studying as one.

After finishing high school he enrolled in a Graphic Design degree at the University of Canberra but felt unsure of why he was there and dropped out after a year.

“I didn’t really understand the concept of a graphic designer. It was presented to me as an option by my parents and it sounded good, it was in Canberra, I jumped on it. I dropped out a year later. I didn’t really know what I was doing there. It didn’t really click,” he said.

It wasn’t until he enrolled in the Sydney College of the Arts in 2001, armed with a handful of zines, that he says he began to understand exactly what a graphic designer does.

“I’d always wanted to design record covers but for some reason I didn’t think that was something I would be able to do. I thought it was something someone else does somewhere else and I didn’t really put it together. So I guess it was during art school that it just kind of switched on.”

After a couple of elementary Photoshop lessons he decided to launch himself as a freelancer, an idea he describes as “ridiculous”, and committed to teaching himself as much as he could about design and its tools in addition to his art school training.

Although most of Killen’s knowledge of design was gained during this period of conscious commitment, his trajectory to this point can be traced back further than just
the five or six years since he decided to launch his freelance career.

Killen’s emergence as a graphic designer and the particular style he has adopted is essentially the result of a lifetime of training.

During childhood Killen was surrounded by influences that had the potential to produce a young graphic designer.

His father is an architect and when Killen was young his office was in their house meaning Killen had an early exposure to the processes of drafting and illustration. Killen says he always loved the stationary and was fascinated by architectural models and tools like rotring and drafting pens.

Killen’s father also liked to paint and draw, a hobby Killen shared and continued throughout both primary and high school. He also had a nanny for many years who had an obvious and lasting influence on his creative practice.

“We used to cut up my Mum’s Woman’s Day magazines and all that kind of stuff and paste them into old ledgers and journals that my Dad used to have,” he said.

“It’s kind of like I’ve been doing the sort of illustration work I do now for 30 years because I used to do it with her.”

Tracing the journey of how and why individuals become involved in particular creative areas can be difficult but interesting. Sometimes it is obvious, sometimes not.

A practitioner does not have to have been immersed in a domain since childhood to be creative in it but there are always influences that lead them to participate in specific areas in particular ways.

Think of all the things that make a person who they are: of learned and seemingly inherent inclinations, of a “well done” from a teacher, a book they’ve read, a hobby abandoned but skills retained. People are selecting and absorbing knowledge and information from all over, all the time.

Personal background, engagement with particular domains and encounters with people
connected to those domains not only determines what practice someone chooses but also what that involvement looks like.

Killen credits a range of influences not only for the type of design he does but also for the way it looks.

“I think that everyone’s particular history informs them in different ways,” he said.

“I was really into psychedelia and ‘70s and all that kind of stuff when I was a teenager and when I started uni. I was really into Beat poetry and experimental film and I think that those interests informed the direction of my work.

“Someone else might be into something completely different, a completely different set of interests and experiences. That’s what makes us working in the same industry produce visually different work.”

Killen cites inspiration from design, other forms of media and the world in general.

Julian House and Adrian Shaughnessy are the individual designers he most admires but he is also inspired by Norwegian design, European design in general and Australian design.

Killen says one of his biggest influences is Australia itself, its landscapes, colours, folklore and music, evident in projects such as Beyond The Southern Sea and Terra Australis.

“I’ve always just enjoyed imagery I think,” he said.

“I enjoy looking at these things. I enjoy the work of other designers. I enjoy all the other inter-disciplinary things like film and music and all this kind of stuff which share a lot of the same principles. I get an emotional response from them. They make me think and I want to give that to other people as well.”

Killen has his own blog where he shares the details of his own practice as well as links to the music, art, film and design he is interested in.
He says it is common in the design community to share other designers’ work you admire on your blog or social media platforms such as Twitter.

He said, “I think there’s an element of saying, ‘I like this, this is the kind of designer I am’. Cultivating your own little world of what you think is good as well. It’s like curating a virtual gallery of stuff that you’re into, which I think is sort of interesting.”

Killen says he is not finished learning. He is ambitious. He says he has a long way to go and a lot he wants to achieve, with a range of ideas just waiting for the right time, ability or money.

Occasionally his desire to extend himself as a designer causes conflict with clients, particularly if they ask him to repeat something he has already done.

However, Killen enjoys the negotiation, building relationships and balancing the need to fulfil a brief with the desire to experiment and create something he is proud of.

He says despite all the things he has learnt and the ease with which he can perform certain tasks, each new project presents a different challenge and coming up with a concept for a design is rarely easy.

“Sometimes I’ll just bang out a poster like it’s nothing, other times it’s torturous and it goes on for a long time and it’s full of self-loathing and drunken nights and agony,” he said.

Ultimately it all comes back to the brief. If Killen is having a problem coming up with a design it is the first place he turns.

He says the purpose of design is to communicate a message and that it must be done within and utilising the designated parameters including paper size, ink type and print specifications.

“If you don’t understand the limitations you can’t do the work. Straight up,” he said.

“Design is about communication, design is about message, and that doesn’t necessarily mean it needs to be clear in some ways. You have design that is crazy,
chaotic and dark and mysterious and obtuse and all this kind of stuff but you need to be able to communicate a message."

Ultimately Killen’s aim is to produce work he can be proud of, to make something of quality. His ability to do that, and to judge whether or not what he does is good, can in some ways be seen as the result of a lifetime of work and influences.

And in the end, that apple pie can still be delicious even if the baker doesn’t make the universe from scratch.
Peter Andrews

Farming may not be readily associated with creativity but it is important to remember the word “creative” must not be confused with “artistic.” Just as the development of any valued product, invention, or theory in other areas is considered creative, so too is what Peter Andrews has done in farming.

Farmer Peter Andrews has devoted over 30 years to developing and raising awareness of a landscape restoration technique called Natural Sequence Farming.

Natural Sequence Farming is a ground-breaking departure from previous agricultural practice and many see it as a potential solution to the serious problems of salinity and erosion that affect so much of the Australian landscape.

Natural Sequence Farming is designed to rehabilitate degraded agricultural land using methods such as diversion of water and use of vegetation – weeds in particular – to stabilise soil and bring land back to health.

Andrews creates chains of ponds by putting obstructions in creeks, planting vegetation to stabilise banks, slowing down water-flow and movement of sediment across the land.

The theory is that the soil will eventually be healthy enough for native vegetation to thrive on its own and the introduced plants will no longer be needed.

Andrews developed the method on his own property “Tarwyn Park” near Bylong in the NSW Upper Hunter Valley and has since implemented his techniques in a range of other areas, most notably at Harvey Norman CEO Gerry Harvey’s property “Baramul” in the Widden Valley.

Although he now has the support of other high profile figures such as former Governor-General Major General Michael Jeffery, a fiercely loyal public support base, and was awarded the order of Australia medal in 2011, Andrews’ methods remain divisive.

People on surrounding properties were understandably apprehensive about their neighbour tampering with the precious water supply, particularly as pooling water on
salinised land is traditionally expected to raise the water table and make the problem worse.

Some have also raised questions about the suitability of his method for all soil types.

The most controversial element of Andrews’s theory is the deliberate planting of introduced species, which is illegal. His use of willows causes particular outrage.

Andrews, however, believes that distinguishing between native and non-native vegetation is pointless in light of our current use of the Australian landscape and ultimately creates a barrier to addressing the problems it faces.

“There’s this unbelievably stupid, completely non-scientific thing that it [vegetation] is native or non-native, when almost everything we use in this country is non-native…So why if we’ve brought out all these foreign animals and practices and installations such as water interference and roads and all that, wouldn’t we need a whole new range of plants to support the natives?” he said.

“Not that the natives won’t be the most capable plants once we get back to a state of equilibrium but in the meantime we have to repair it. It’s a hell of a mess right now.”

It’s a radical approach to a huge problem. But for any doubt others might have about his techniques, Andrews is insistently passionate that his is the best way to solve the nation’s problems and that it is critical we do so immediately.

Andrews is so focused on the necessity of sharing his work that when interviewed he brings each question back to that topic, no matter how unrelated.

It is a demonstration of his belief in the urgency with which we need to address these problems and the fact he is certain he has the solution.

In terms of attention, it would be fair to say Natural Sequence Farming takes up the vast majority of Andrews’ focus and has done for over 30 years now, even through the loss of the family property, breakup of his marriage and death of his daughter.

Andrews is not a trained scientist but his experience as a farmer and subsequent
knowledge of the Australian agricultural landscape gave him the understanding needed to develop, test, and modify his theories and practice, using his property as an active laboratory.

To Andrews his theory is patently logical, even obvious. He is adamant it's all about simplicity.

Andrews developed Natural Sequence Farming by researching and emulating existing environmental processes, carefully studying the workings of the landscape and breaking this knowledge down into its smallest elements in order to replicate them.

“It’s a process of understanding the most elementary things and being able to build them to an ultimate conclusion," he said.

“It’s keeping to the simplicity and saying there’s got to be a way that this can happen...There is the efficiency, there is the real essence of what nature's about. It's got highly complex processes but there is a fundamental simplicity within it and I always try to get to that simplicity...Once you do that then it’s not as complex as a lot of people think and there is a really simple pattern there that we can use with absolute confidence."

Andrews experimented with the replication of these simple processes, building variations of patterns, searching for links and refusing to move forward until he had confirmation of these connections and their strength.

The accumulation of this knowledge into the overall philosophy of Natural Sequence Farming is a process in itself that can be found in all forms of creative practice.

Just as books are created from words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters, and paintings formed by individual brush stokes, so too are complex environmental systems formed out of the operation of smaller interlinked processes.

Indeed, the whole process of creativity may be described as the product of a system, strongly paralleled by Andrew’s experience and the theory of Natural Sequence Farming itself.
Psychologist and creativity theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi argues that creativity is the result of a system made up of three components: the individual, the domain, and the field, all of which can be identified in the ongoing process used by Andrews to develop his theory.

The individual in Csikszentmihalyi’s system is the person who produces the creative work or idea, requiring commitment and hard work on their part. In this case the individual is, obviously, Peter Andrews and it would be difficult to doubt his dedication to the process.

However, successfully replicating environmental processes and forming a coherent theory requires a deep understanding of the workings of the Australian landscape and the problems it faces, as well as current agricultural practice. This knowledge comes from what Csikszentmihalyi calls the domain.

The domain includes all of the works that have been done in a particular area of creative practice as well as all the rules, structures and information that was used to create them. Essentially, the domain is where you gain the knowledge needed to do whatever it is that you do.

In Andrews’ case his domain knowledge has been acquired growing up and working on the land his entire life, fostered by a passion for discovering how this environment works and a desire to test and perfect his theories.

“I’ve always been sort of an inventor. When I was about six I think I was going to invent a flying car,” he said.

“I build variations of things…I start off with one design and I build another one and then it might occur to me suddenly the simplest thing was there in front of my face all the time and I didn’t see it.”

The knowledge of your chosen domain gives you the understanding needed to create your product or idea. However, in order for it to be recognised as creative it needs the support of key people or groups.

These people are called the field and comprise the third component in
Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model.

While Natural Sequence Farming has the support of many groups in the field of agriculture and land management, for example well-known property owners such as Gerry Harvey, Andrews has struggled to gain acceptance from the field at large and to instigate the policy change needed to launch his techniques.

Indeed, trying to get the attention of the field takes up most of Andrews’ time. The Natural Sequence Farming website says, “Peter is busier than a rock star when it comes to visiting places right across our nation.”

While he has quite a prominent public profile, has published two books, and was the subject of four separate episodes of ABC’s Australian Story in 2005 and 2009, Andrews remains frustrated with the reluctance of many to listen to and take-up his ideas.

Andrews appears critical of human nature in general. He says the biggest obstacle to the proliferation of Natural Sequence Farming Techniques has been human ignorance and ego.

“My mother used to say you can deal with everything but ignorance and I find that terribly true. The ignorance that we’ve got as a society – because we’ve been able to go to the moon and stuff like that – about how landscapes work, because it’s there every day, is just horrifying,” he said.

“One person has only got a very limited capacity to do things.”

In terms of Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model in which all parts – the individual, the field and the domain – are equally important, Andrews’ story is illustrative of the importance of the field and the limitation of the success of your creative product when one component of this system is lacking.

In an industry as highly regulated as agriculture and the environment, the field has enormous power over the practices that are accepted and the changes that can be made, for obvious reasons.
Yet it is hard not to be taken in by Andrews’ gruff passion for his work and the urgency he feels in the need for people to adopt his techniques.

Andrews is certain he has the solution to some of the most serious problems facing the Australian landscape and will do his utmost to ensure his voice is heard.

“It’s essential that we get an understanding, we just throw away our arrogance and look at or realise that we can all do this stuff, and in fact it’s absolutely critical,” he said.

Andrews has given the process his full attention and isn’t going to stop until he has ours.
Paul Bolton

The idea of a genius instantly spewing forth fully formed masterpieces is a myth. The simple truth is that creativity is complex – and hard work.

Despite a love affair with the moment of illumination, to attribute any significant creative work to a single instant of insight is to do a disservice to the individual that created it.

Creating an idea or product is hard work. It must novel in that it must be different in some way from what has come before and it must also be appropriate, that is, deemed suitable for the purpose or context for which it is produced.

Fulfilling both is a matter of more than having one blinding illumination.

Achieving novelty requires an understanding of everything that has come before in order to compare the work in context. Ensuring a work is appropriate requires evaluation of the work with this knowledge and allowing others the chance to do the same.

The necessity of this process takes on greater significance when your creative practice directly affects entire populations as it does with Paul Bolton.

Bolton is an associate scientist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and as a member of a team of three he has pioneered a scientific, targeted and novel approach to mental health interventions in developing nations.

This team is responsible for addressing complex issues that affect large populations in serious ways and therefore the development of the interventions requires an approach that recognises the particular needs of the communities they are created for.

Bolton said his aim has been to place international mental health intervention on a scientific footing, ensuring the selection of particular methods is firmly based in evidence and that the effects of the programs are closely monitored and evaluated.

To achieve this, Bolton has changed the way these interventions are conducted, developing an appropriate and novel four part process to be incorporated into every
program.

“When I first started doing this work we would talk about monitoring and evaluation as separate and we would say basically you have a program, the program’s running, and you come in and monitor and evaluate it.

“You can do that, but the thing is if you don’t build in the plans to do the monitoring and evaluation in the original design then you’re going to come up with a whole bunch of problems where you’re having to retrofit the program, use new resources, change the way you do things in order to do the monitoring and evaluation.

“It makes the whole process much more time intensive, much more expensive, and the results are not so great,” he said.

“So I came up with this idea that we would stop talking about monitoring and evaluation and start talking about design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation or D.I.M.E…We do training, we do program development, we do capacity building all around D.I.M.E and it’s a lot cheaper and it’s a lot faster and I think the results are a lot better.”

This approach is integral to the effectiveness of the entire process, allowing the programs to be altered as necessary during the intervention rather than afterward and informing actions taken upon its completion, including the implementation of further programs.

In many ways Bolton’s model for mental health intervention could be compared to the theories that divide creativity into stages (for example, Graham Wallas’s stages of preparation incubation, illumination and verification), and may even be directly applied in the same way.

Specifically, Bolton’s emphasis on the final two stages of monitoring and evaluation reflect the often ignored fact that the activity that occurs around the initial illumination of a novel idea is equally integral to creativity.

Creative products are shaped by the ideas that are kept and discarded, just as Bolton’s programs are modified as a result of their constant monitoring and evaluation.
Similarly, all subsequent creative work is informed by the evaluation of the success of your previous works.

Bolton believes the only way to truly know whether any idea is good or bad, or that a strategy will be effective, is to put it into practice.

“Every idea that I’ve ever had has been neither good nor bad until it’s been tested,” he said.

“Some ideas that I had that we tried turned out to be total crap and we discarded them, and frankly I didn’t know they were total crap until we tested them. And then there are other things, ideas that you test, and you might even test half-heartedly, thinking, ‘well, you know, I can’t see any reason why it won’t work but frankly I think it’s going to suck.’

“Then you try it and it turns out to be brilliant and you end up going around for weeks afterwards patting yourself on the back at how clever you are – ‘that was brilliant’ – when really you should be saying, ‘I was all but ready to trash that. Just as well I didn’t.’”

Bolton’s team is the only one to use the particular D.I.M.E process and one of very few to take such a dedicated approach to cross-cultural mental health research.

He jokes, “One of the easy ways to be really good at what you do or to be the best in the world at what you do is to be the only person doing it.”

Bolton and his team are responsible for a number of significant firsts, implementing the first scientific trials for mental health interventions in Africa and Iraq.

Currently they are conducting a trial for people affected by trauma crossing the Burmese/Thai border, as well as an examination of the mental health problems of people in Columbia and an investigation of the mental health and function of girls in servitude in Ethiopia.

They have also just completed a trial of interventions for the effects of torture and imprisonment in Northern Iraq and are about to begin a similar project in Southern Iraq.
These interventions are delivered in partnership with various organisations like the United States government and foreign government agencies as well as NGOs such as World Vision, CARE and the International Rescue Committee.

Yet while they are now offered more work than they can possibly accept, Bolton said there hasn’t always been such interest in their work.

Although attitudes are changing, previous approaches to mental health interventions in developing nations have been far from as detailed as Bolton’s.

The prevailing approach of the past has been to apply strategies used in Western, developed nations. Bolton said part of the reason his team are recognised as being ahead in their industry is that they take the time to ensure the programs they design are appropriate for the populations they are meant to assist.

“A lot of people working in mental health across cultures don’t realise that there’s a need for this kind of thing, so they just like to assume that things that work in developed countries will work in other countries…We’ve been down that road as of about ten years ago and figured out that it didn’t work,” he said.

“Now I think there’s much more appreciation that you need to move more carefully, you need to collect data, you need to do more careful program design, you need to try to avoid the unintended negative effects of programs, and to do that requires care and information,” he said.

The appreciation of the feasibility and value of Bolton’s work is crucial to his ability to continue it. His team’s work often involves partnerships with four or five different organisations and also relies on grants from funding bodies, so it is vital that they maintain a good reputation so their research can be put into practice.

Bolton said putting their interventions in place is the most important part of their work. However, he also said maintaining a conversation with colleagues through publications, presentations and meetings is also crucial.

Not only does this increase awareness of their work, it also allows the team to
understand what others are doing and to place themselves in the context of this. In this way, Bolton said they can ensure they don’t waste time developing solutions to problems that have already been solved.

Bolton’s advice contains one of the most simple and significant truths underlying the very complex process of creativity: that despite romantic protestations of the importance of being free from the influence of others, it is vital to understand what has come before you in order to determine what needs to come next.

The more information someone has to draw from, the more he or she is able to ensure the creative contribution is a valuable one and the less the work will look like someone else’s.

The understanding Bolton and his team have of the populations their interventions are designed for and their growing knowledge of what does and does not work is arguably the foundation of their creativity.

Similarly, within the parameters of this information, Bolton said he approaches all of his work with one overarching rule: to never make assumptions. Bolton actively examines the framing of every single problem he is presented with and said the answer often lies in re-working the question itself.

“The more that you can identify something as being an assumption and question it, the more likely you are to come up with a solution that’s creative,” he said.

“If you get a hundred people working on a problem and everyone accepts the way a problem’s framed and you realise that ten years ago everyone was looking at the problem in the same way and didn’t come up with a solution ten years ago, what are the chances are that you’re going to come up with a solution now?

“But if you look at the problem and say ‘well maybe those assumptions and maybe the way the problem’s framed are not correct’, if I can attack some of those assumptions, demolish them and reframe the questions, maybe I can come up with a solution.”

For example, Bolton had a contract with the US military to design a method of identifying all the infectious diseases a soldier might face when dropped in an
environment that nothing was known about. As would be expected, immediate
discussion turned to designing an epidemiological study.

However, after some debate and research along those lines, Bolton said he began to
ask, “Why epidemiological? Why study?” and as a result, they instead developed a
method of surveying local people about the symptoms of known illnesses and
comparing that to a database of diseases.

Bolton said it “turned out to be a much more helpful approach and something we could
do in a matter of days no matter where we were. So then I got a grant and I went out
and tested it in Thailand and actually it ended up working quite well.”

Although Bolton speaks with regret about the many issues he cannot help address, he
said his overwhelming motivation for continuing his work is the enjoyment of it.

He likes the challenge, the element of problem solving, and although it requires
significant amount of his time and attention, he refuses to think of it as hard work.

“‘We have 6000 girls enslaved in basically effective slavery. What can we do to
improve their mental health and function?’ I mean that’s a problem, but it’s also frankly
a fun thing to think about in a perverse sort of way,” he said.

“At the end of the day I would rather do something that’s fun that helps people, but
honestly if I had to say to myself, ‘What’s motivating me more, helping people or having
fun?’ It’s honestly the fun.

“I don’t think they’re separable. If I didn’t find this fun I wouldn’t be any good at it and I
wouldn’t do it. I don’t feel guilty or bad about it. It’s just the way it is.”

Fun or not, Bolton’s creative practice directly affects the lives of entire populations, and
within this context, brings new significance to the definition of creativity by the inclusion
of novelty and appropriateness.

The foundation of Bolton’s creativity is that he arms himself with the information
needed to achieve both these things.
He takes care to ensure the interventions he creates are appropriate for the populations they are designed for, while the D.I.M.E approach he has developed allows him to identify the effects of the interventions and alter the strategies in accordingly novel ways.
Maggie Beer

It is naive to believe that what other people think of you has no place or effect on your creativity when in reality other people’s opinions are pivotal to allowing you to continue it.

Reputation is not a word readily associated with creativity, yet the two concepts have a direct and important relationship.

If you develop a reputation for being good at what you do and can maintain this reputation then doors will be opened for you and will continue to open. The reverse is also true.

Whether in the form of funding, publication, exhibition, ticket sales or job opportunities, the resources you need to be recognised as creative rely on someone else believing what you do is valuable.

Turning your creativity into a lifelong career is therefore largely a matter of maintaining this reputation.

For almost 40 years celebrity cook Maggie Beer has done just this.

There is an image of motherly efficiency and warmth that surrounds both Maggie Beer the person and the products that bear her name.

Beer is as known for her pâté and ice creams as she is for hugging Masterchef contestants and acting as the cook to Simon Bryant’s chef.

Her food is associated with words such as hearty and home-cooked and has a longstanding reputation for quality.

Arguably it is the construction and maintenance of this reputation that has allowed Maggie Beer such longevity in the food industry, a longevity that is surprising for someone without formal training.

Instead Beer has almost a lifetime of practical experience and although she says she
became a cook “quite by chance,” tracing her history it is difficult to imagine she could have become anything else.

Beer grew up in the Western Suburbs of Sydney and inherited a love of food from her parents.

“My father was passionate about food and mum became a great cook because of this and I grew up enjoying fantastic meals in the home. It was a part of our life. Later in their careers Mum and Dad started their own catering company when their business failed, when I was only 14,” Beer said.

“They were really so ahead of their times. They catered at a golf club first, then RSL and leagues clubs with aged beef in cryovac, even in those days, the early sixties!”

Beer’s own career began when she and her husband Colin moved to the Barossa Valley in South Australia in 1973 and established the Pheasant Farm selling pheasants and quail to restaurants and domestic cooks.

However, they soon found that while they received consistent business from the restaurants, confusion about how to prepare and cook game meant domestic customers were unlikely to return.

Beer then began Farmshop to demonstrate preparation and cooking techniques for customers but her food was so popular that people began coming just to eat rather than to buy the birds.

Beer said, “It was such hard work and we were making a pittance so took the plunge, audacious as it was without any training, and opened the restaurant. The rest, as they say, is history.”

This history includes forays into all corners of the food industry.

The Pheasant Farm Restaurant was open from 1978 to 1993, winning the 1991 Australian Gourmet Traveller Restaurant of the Year.

After the restaurant closed Beer’s focus shifted to food production and exports,
including the signature Pheasant Farm pâté.

Beer considers this product the one she is most proud of and the growth of her export kitchen one of her greatest career achievements, growing from 4 employees in 1996 to 74 today.

Beer has also written seven books, was the “cook” half of the ABC television show *The Cook and the Chef*, has appeared multiple times as a guest on the very popular *Masterchef* television series, is the South Australian Ambassador for the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and in 2010 was named Senior Australian of the Year.

It’s an impressive resume, one that Beer has built carefully over the years by combining her love of cooking with an understanding of the practicalities of turning that passion into a lifelong career.

She says she believes cooking is an expression of creativity and takes a carefully considered approach to the development of each recipe and product in the Maggie Beer range.

After all, when a product bears your own name its reputation is your reputation and you want to be certain it reflects well on you.

For this reason, Beer says the first consideration when making a product is to ensure it is of a quality worthy of Maggie Beer Products.

She begins with a single concept, influenced by ingredients and dependent upon the season and available produce, and uses this as the starting point for developing a product that tastes as good as or better than she originally imagined.

“I start with a kernel of an idea, something that absolutely delights me,” Beer said.

“I make the product to taste exactly as I imagine it should, so that it meets or exceeds my beginning expectations, and then I look at costing the product to work out if it’s practicable to produce on a commercial scale.”
While Beer says she never begins with a costing, ensuring the products she makes are commercially viable is a crucial part of the creative process.

Her products must maintain a certain level of quality and flavour while also being delivered to the marketplace at a cost that makes sense for both the business to produce and for customers to buy.

She says, “I am…hugely reliant on my customers continuing to trust my brand. That is, to know that Maggie Beer Products is a guarantee of flavour, quality and integrity.”

Maintaining this reputation not only makes sense in terms of good business but is also important for creativity.

In terms of financial benefit, if people continue buying your product then that money allows you to buy the resources needed to continue producing it, to continue being creative.

Similarly, a good reputation can provide the opportunity to expand the amount and type of creative work you are doing and to collaborate with others who have heard good things about you.

Finally, the support and trust of others can provide motivating reassurance that you are, in fact, creative.

These principles can be applied to any creative domain. For example, an image of quality is crucial for scientists or mathematicians who want to have papers published, artists who want work exhibited or commissioned, actors who want people to come to their shows, and engineers who want to have their bridges built.

In current research on creativity, the people who make decisions about these things are referred to as the field and they are just as important as the individuals who produce the creative work.

Success in a creative pursuit requires at least some consideration of the requirements and potential reaction of the related field. In Beer’s case this includes the people who are paying for and eating her food.
Beer says, “I’ve learned to temper my creativity with a dash of pragmatism over time,” yet this pragmatism could be better considered an essential part of the creative process itself rather than a separate activity.

Balancing price with taste and quality determines which ingredients and how many of them Beer has to work with, therefore playing a huge role in the creative development and nature of the product.

“The first consideration is quality of the product, and beyond this, its commercial viability,” she said.

“Can we get the product to the marketplace in this quality and with this flavour, and have it make financial sense?”

Beer says she has developed some products that are too expensive to produce commercially but credits this with aiding her creativity by forcing her to take different approaches to the task.

Yet a preoccupation with developing quality doesn’t only stem from a concern with reputation but also from pride in your work.

As a cook Maggie Beer is motivated by the desire to do justice to the produce she has, to maximise the potential of her ingredients and most of all to produce something that tastes good.

“I only want to make products that are truly delicious. I am driven by this,” she said.

It is this drive that is also central to Maggie Beer’s success. She knows that turning a passion into a career takes more than a love for what you do. It requires a high level of commitment and willingness to pursue your goals.

“In order to make a creative pursuit a career you have to work very hard and be very committed to distinguish yourself from the many other creative souls who would like to do likewise,” Beer said.
“It takes determination, grit and resourcefulness.”

Indeed current research indicates that creativity has far more to do with hard work and dedication to your craft than any amount of natural talent.

A seemingly inherited ability or inclination for a particular creative activity will undoubtedly help but is not sufficient in carving out a career like the one Beer has established for herself.

Beer is confident that the food that is the result of her hard work is among the best in the world. She says while she doesn’t consider herself a follower of what other people are doing it is still important to be aware of where the benchmarks are in the industry.

Beer says she is constantly learning and never wants to stop. She says knowledge is crucial no matter what you are doing and experience is one of the most valuable ways of gathering this knowledge.

Beer is always sharing her experience with others. She speaks at functions and relishes the opportunity that platforms such as television shows provide for sharing her knowledge and love of cooking with others.

“Being able to take part in shows like Masterchef are very rewarding to me as I find it so heart-warming to help spur on these incredibly talented aspiring chefs,” she said.

“I hope that I can encourage people to be creative, to enjoy the industry as I have, and to work hard to make it their careers as I have mine.”
John Bilmon

In many ways everything we do is governed by architecture. The house you live in, your favourite restaurant, the little town where you spent that holiday; our memories are linked to and influenced by the buildings and landscapes we make them in.

We identify cities by their towers and bridges: living symbols of history and the societies they were built for. Architecture affects the way we feel about particular places, what we do within them and how we do it. It provides us with enormous, visible examples of creative ideas and products.

John Bilmon’s interest in architecture stemmed from a fascination with the water tanks near his childhood home in Penshurst. “They were massive big tanks built up on piers and the concrete in particular had columns with arches on the top," he said.

“It was sort of like growing up beside a big Roman thing or something like that. So I think that inspired me to take an interest in architecture. I genuinely believe that.”

Now, as a principal director at Australian firm PTW Architecture, Bilmon is responsible for overseeing one of the most distinctive, internationally recognised pieces of modern architecture: the Watercube.

The Watercube National Aquatic Centre was built for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and has won a range of awards including The Jorn Utzon Award for International Architecture, The Emirates Leaf Award for Sustainable Architecture and the Venice Biennale Award for Architecture, which it received before building was complete.

Even after the Olympics, the building attracts so many tourists that it is surrounded by a security fence and site-seers must pay to walk around it.

Bilmon says he is incredibly proud to be associated with the Watercube but is quick to emphasise the enormous collaborative effort involved, including input from architects, designers, engineers, manufacturers and suppliers.

“I think it’s a great example of Australian ingenuity and also the Australian approach, working with your mates,” Bilmon said.
“I believe it was that collaboration not only of skills but of people from different cultures and from different disciplines, and different levels of enthusiasm, which all came together most creatively to produce that building.”

With its distinctive blue bubbles and square shape the Watercube has become such a part of the landscape it is difficult to imagine another building could have stood in its place.

However, the design for Beijing’s National Aquatic Centre began with plans for an entirely different building.

The building as it stands is the result of a long process with a number of stages. It is the product of thousands of small decisions, mini-insights, changes in direction and narrowing of possibilities.

The majority of the process of designing the Watercube involved exploring different ways of meeting the requirements of a brief, which included ensuring the building fulfilled its purpose as an aquatic centre, was a meaningful representation of Chinese culture and design, considered its relationship to the surrounding buildings, and was sustainable.

Bilmon said as well as guiding the entire process this brief was the first place the team turned if there was a problem and also a tool for judging the quality of the designs.

He said, “You know it’s a good idea when you can assess it openly and freely and without bias against those criteria and it satisfies the assessment.”

While the brief for a building limits or contains the scope of a project, at the same time there are almost endless ways of fulfilling it. Rather than constraining creativity the structure of a brief actually facilitates it.

Bilmon said he encouraged the team to regularly return to the overall structure and aims of the project to avoid getting caught up in individual decisions and to ensure they were achieving what they needed to.
“As one works more deeply into a design you become more deeply involved in the detail,” he said.

“It’s very much a question of stopping and considering and reconsidering and making sure that we haven’t lost site of the big picture.”

Although a number of aspects of the criteria did change, such as the boundaries and dimensions of the site, the building’s purpose and the cultural context in which it is situated did not.

Bilmon and the team wanted the aquatic centre to reflect its role as an aquatic centre, therefore all of the proposed designs aimed to represent water in some form.

Consequently, most of the initial designs were fluid, like waves about to crash, shapes that curved and melted, and interlocking domes.

Until about a third of the way through the process these were the designs being explored in most detail and seemed the most likely direction for the project.

However, during a break scheduled to reassess the overall progress it became clear that the Chinese architects on the team were becoming increasingly dissatisfied.

The Olympics is not only an opportunity for countries to display the talents of their athletes but also for the host nation to demonstrate their prowess in other areas including architecture.

In this way the building had to represent the forefront of Chinese technology and design while at the same time reflecting the country’s rich tradition and symbolism – to be distinctly Chinese despite being designed by an Australian firm.

Bilmon said the designs the team had created, while exciting, were simply too international. “It was devastating to the other design ideas,” he said.

“It revealed that our Chinese team members had become disenfranchised from the rest of the team, that they thought the design ideas…hadn’t quite satisfied that criteria about the attachment to the Chinese design ideas – the tradition of Chinese
architecture being extended within the Olympics.”

The subsequent return to Chinese symbolism led to the exploration of simpler geometrical shapes and finally the idea of the square.

However, the decision to move forward with this idea was too radical for many, given the significant departure from previous approaches and the lateness of the decision.

“Some members of our team really just couldn’t support it and they decided to leave the team,” Bilmon said.

“But I made that decision, to stick with the square. Our Chinese colleagues were forever grateful for that decision and they decided to support us and to stay in there.”

As well as proving the most efficient way of arranging the building’s internal elements, the square is also highly symbolic.

In Chinese culture the square is the shape of the earth and its symbolic colour is blue. Water also belongs to the earth. Therefore, despite the temptation to use curved shapes, a blue cube is a far stronger representation of the building’s purpose and reflection of Chinese tradition and architecture.

This symbolism also extends to the building’s location. The aquatic centre stands as the gateway to the Olympic Green and as such the building had to have a certain grandeur, to be an iconic entrance to the complex.

At the same time, the architects also had to consider the building’s relationship to those surrounding it as well as its place within the wider layout of the city.

“It had to be a building which recognised its role as part of an ensemble of projects all together in the Beijing Olympic Green,” Bilmon said.

“We agreed as a criteria it had to be a good neighbour, it had to somehow reflect its adjacent structure and respond to it somehow.”

In its representation of Earth, the square design of the Watercube provides a symbolic
contrast to the neighbouring Olympic stadium, which is red and circular – the shape and colour belonging to heaven.

"We also started thinking afresh about the totality of the Olympics. The position of Beijing Olympic Green, physically in Beijing, is an extension of what’s referred to as the Imperial Axis," Bilmon said.

“The physical position of Beijing Olympic Green was actually literally a projection of the centre line through the Forbidden City, projecting straight up to the north and so the centre of Beijing Olympic Green was just a physical extension of that centre line."

The moat around the Watercube echoes the moat around the Forbidden City while also serving the practical purpose of protecting the most distinctive feature of the Watercube, its bubble walls.

Bilmon credits Tristram Carfrae from engineering, design and planning firm Arup for developing and researching the bubbles concept, which the team achieved by exploring a range of possibilities in collaboration with engineers and manufacturers.

Like the process of deciding which design to pursue, turning that design into a real building was not the result of a single decision. It was a process that required the exploration of multiple possibilities and changes in direction, particularly in terms of the technology used.

The material used to create the pillows of bubbles that cover the exterior of the building is ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE), a polymer similar to Teflon. ETFE is thinner than a human hair and can be easily punctured. Yet it is also very versatile.

Each individual bubble shape is created by clamping two sheets of ETFE together and pumping air between them.

Before each pillow is inflated, circles of aluminium-like material (nicknamed fritz) are arranged on the face of the sheets. This controls the amount of light shining through the bubbles between the gaps in the discs, both of which increase as the pillows are inflated.
Bilmon said they initially planned to control the light, and therefore heating and cooling of the building, by allowing the bubbles to inflate and deflate.

“What we thought we could do was have the inflation of these pillows varying over time, so that if it became cloudy outside and we needed more light in the building more air would be pumped into the pillows and they would expand inside and more natural light would come inside the building,” he said.

“That was a great idea, but then the computerisation process was costed into it, and all the pumps required to individually inflate or deflate the balloons was calculated and it was just too expensive, so then we simply took the same idea and evolved it.”

Instead of inflating and deflating the individual bubbles they studied the temperature and amount of light different parts of the building would be exposed to and varied the size and patterns of the fritz accordingly.

Therefore, areas that needed more shade were covered with larger circles and those that needed more light had smaller or no discs at all.

Another advantage of ETFE is that it is non-stick, meaning the Watercube is essentially self-cleaning. Dirt simply washes off the walls each time it rains, or if it doesn’t rain, they can just be hosed down.

Bilmon said the combination of this technology, the overall design idea and the cultural significance of the building means the Watercube is the type of building that will continue to win awards.

“It might get another award for the building which receives the most awards over time,” Bilmon joked.

The building that now stands as Beijing’s National Aquatic Centre is very different to the structure Bilmon and his team envisioned in their initial designs. The Watercube is the result of a process of development rather than of epiphany, of multiple changes in direction but always in response to the brief.

This brief provided the guide for the creative process. It was a framework within which
options could be explored and decisions made and re-made, incrementally narrowing the possibilities until producing the Watercube as we know it.

“It’s one big opportunity and you divide it into smaller opportunities, and it’s an amalgamation of the answers to the smaller opportunities which come together,” Bilmon said.

“When there's a frustration in a design process you don’t give up, you just find another way around it, you compromise, you find another solution, but you never lose sight of what you’re pursuing. You have to have a vision, idea, and pursue that vision.”

And how fitting that the vision for a building famous for its relationship with water can be traced to the ambitions of a small boy looking up at a set of water tanks.
Andrew Bagnall

Something cannot come from nothing.

When applied to our ordinary experience of the world this is a seemingly obvious statement. Yet when talking about creativity it is somehow easily forgotten.

Does creativity exist outside the parameters of this logic? Images of geniuses plucking ideas from the air with extraordinary capacities beyond earthly influence would suggest so. Yet, these notions are false.

Whether someone is a sculptor, a scientist, an actor or an engineer one fact remains the same: their work, their creative practice, is linked to the world around them. The influence of others, specific bodies of knowledge, and the ability to engage with these things is what allows them to be creative.

29-year-old Andrew Bagnall is manager of the building and energy group at the Newcastle office of GHD, a consultancy that includes engineers, architects and environmental scientists working at the cutting edge of their field.

Bagnall created a space for himself in environmentally sustainable development (ESD), a field of study and an industry that has grown rapidly over the last ten years.

"It was really a tiny part of our work five years ago but now we don’t submit a tender or a proposal without that all over it," Bagnall said.

“So it’s become the core of what we do. Sustainability is a third of our business, which is now with people all over the world, and I had a large part of that.”

In 2010 Engineers Australia named Bagnall Newcastle’s Young Engineer of the Year as well as one of Australia’s most inspiring engineers for his innovative work in advancing and integrating the practice of ESD.

Bagnall said, while he is obviously passionate about his work, his original motivation and interest in the area did not emerge from a deep concern for the environment but rather from the opportunities he saw in the market.
“It was a bit of a niche market because no one was doing it. So there were all these graduates starting to go straight into these jobs and there were not really the seniors, which I thought was pretty cool,” he said.

“The industry I’m in is probably a less lucrative one, definitely a less lucrative one, but for me it has been beneficial because it’s a bit more of a niche so I’ve been able to build a reasonably good career in a short space of time, which is probably something not a lot of people do.”

Bagnall was born in South Africa, grew up in Scotland and studied at Exeter University in England. He said he had seen the growth in the industry in the UK and when he moved to Australia six years ago saw the chance to make his mark here.

“It was probably about three or four years behind, but it was obvious that it would happen, so it was more of an interest to get involved in a very small industry, to know a bit about it by the time the need came,” he said.

“I guess it was just seeing an opportunity. I wouldn’t say it was a life-long ambition to do that, but I do find it interesting.”

Romantic myths link creativity to the concept of authenticity and imply that participating in an activity for any reason other than the love of the task itself is dishonest or “selling out,” that it is somehow less creative.

This is part of a preoccupation with the individual as the centre of the creative process and the notion that creativity somehow emerges without external influence as the manifestation of self-expression and genius.

In reality, while a love for and interest in what you do undoubtedly plays a huge role in your desire to pursue a certain creative practice, you cannot be immune to external influence or work other people have done, and participating in that practice for reasons other than intrinsic motivation does not preclude you from being creative.

As Bagnall said, while the widespread recognition of the importance of environmentally sustainable building marks a significant departure from previous attitudes and
practices, his work has been part of an overall shift in the industry, developing out of traditional engineering practices.

“We didn’t really do it when I started six years ago. There were maybe one or two other people who were in that sort of field," he said.

Whilst they were interested in occasionally doing that sort of work it wasn’t a full-time role, so it was pretty uncommon. So I tried to develop that a bit more and slowly over time we got a bit of a reputation for that work, but also the industry required a lot more of it.”

Just as Bagnall’s work is part of wider changes in the industry, what may appear to be enormous creative leaps in any domain are always connected to the previous traditions of that practice.

Even the greatest scientists’, inventors’ or writers’ skills and ideas are necessarily founded on the work others have done.

Even work that appears to break all of the rules still has an important relationship with tradition in its direct reaction to it. People can only recognise its significance in the knowledge of what has come before.

“Really the work we do is the normal engineering services but integrated better,” Bagnall said.

“I guess it’s putting a bit more thought into the environmental impact rather than just whatever you can design as quickly and as cheaply as possible, which really is the way the industry has gone in the last 50 years but is now starting to reverse.”

In a similar way, we must also engage with the rest of the world to gain the knowledge we need to be creative. Depending on the particular field this can come from formal or informal training. In many cases it comes from both.

Bagnall studied engineering at University and, as per the requirements of his field, could not have achieved what he has without the knowledge gained there. Indeed, he could not work as an engineer without that qualification.
Bagnall said, “Creativity doesn’t really happen without a bit of hard work. Not many people can be naturally gifted enough to just breeze along with no training or commitment or hard work.”

But in his experience, the results are worth the effort. “It’s nice to think every day the work that we do is something new and innovative,” he said.

“Especially when you’re working on buildings. It’s nice to be able to drive past them and say I was part of that one.”

The acquisition of the knowledge needed to be creative and innovative, to get those buildings built, also includes the skills that come from actually engaging in your practice. The value of this knowledge is such that many of the activities involved become so ingrained we often forget ever having learnt them.

For Bagnall, this includes mastering the technology used to create their building projects.

“There’s a hell of a lot of computer systems at GHD that when I first started would be mind boggling and you’d be fighting them all the time. After a while they become second nature and you can do them in your sleep,” he said.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would describe this as developing your habitus, a concept closely related to intuition. The knowledge of your practice becomes such a part of what you do you no longer have to think about it.

In this way it is easy to see how myths of being born knowing how to do something originate, particularly if you are exposed to the practice at an early age. Nevertheless, that interaction with the practice is essential in order to be creative.

It also important to sustain that engagement with your practice, particularly in an industry like engineering, to ensure your knowledge is up to date, to understand where you fit within your industry, and to ensure your work is of an appropriate standard.

For example, Bagnall maintains an understanding of developments in ESD and wider
engineering practices by reading journals and industry publications.

As well as affecting industries and creative practice at large the importance of understanding the traditions and evolution of your domain can be seen in the development of individual creative projects. This includes an awareness of the structures – those things that direct our actions – that affect your practice and an ability to work with and within these things.

Structures are usually seen as barriers to creativity, yet no activity operates free from boundaries. Indeed these parameters are what determine the shape of the outcome and allow it to occur.

Bagnall said each project he works on is affected by many factors, but the two most significant are cost and timing.

“It's something I struggled with when I first started out, I wanted to do huge and wonderful things on every project…I didn't have a very good appreciation of the additional costs that was invoking. Projects would come out to tender and come back at a $3000 budget and not happen,” he said.

“It's very, very common for projects of ours to have these really high goals and by the time it gets to the final design all that's gone out the window because the basic building shell's going to cost too much and all the extra smart bits have dropped off. That's unfortunately a very common scenario, which is frustrating for the work that we do.”

While this is disappointing, it does not make the work they are doing any less creative. Whether your budget is $5 or $5 million there will always be things you can and cannot do, yet it is these parameters that ultimately shape the creative product in determining the scope of the choices you can make.

“It's pretty important to have the understanding of where the boundaries are,” Bagnall said. “With unlimited cost and unlimited time I think we could do amazing things, but that's reality.”

In this way creativity is unavoidably affected by external factors. Even if you do have an unlimited budget there are many other structures that will influence the creative
For example, a musician is affected by the notes and chords available to them, a writer by the conventions of language and engineers by the laws of mathematics, yet these are what give their creative product its shape.

As individuals we are also affected by the things that surround us, particularly in influencing which creative practice we choose. While you might have a natural aptitude for or interest in a particular activity, at some point you must have been exposed to it or a related practice to discover that fact.

Often you can identify the moment someone encouraged you to pursue a particular path or a family member who influenced you through their own creative practice.

Bagnall credits his father as contributing to his choice of career. He said although his father was not an engineer, “he was always pulling things apart and he’s a very hands on sort of person.”

Now, as a practicing engineer, Bagnall still employs the knowledge of those around him, particularly if faced with a difficult problem.

“We’ve obviously got thousands of staff. There’s usually someone who knows the answer, so there’s a large part of using our internal network, then also our external network,” he said.

“We’ve got other people that we liaise with frequently, even some that are competitors, but we still ring each other after work and discuss things.”

Ultimately, creativity exists in and evolves out of our connections with the world.

Ideas and creative products do not emerge fully formed from an individual’s imagination but are the product of engagement with what others have done and are doing, as well as tradition and structure. These things form the basis of creativity; they shape it and allow it to occur.

“Very little of what I do is on my own. It sort of used to be more like that but now it’s
really all about collaboration," Bagnall said.

“It's one of the things that I enjoy".
None of the following statements are true: goldfish have three-second memories; Einstein failed high school; we only ever use 10% of our brains. But we often hear these pieces of information presented as facts and until someone tells us otherwise we believe them.

Myths like these are part of the every day. There are even some myths we don't realise we believe until they are questioned, and beyond facts about animals this also includes fundamental beliefs about the world we live in and words we use every day; for example, creativity.

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, the bright shirt-wearing science guru, spends a lot of his time busting scientific myths. “You should ask Dr Karl,” is a familiar response to anybody with a vaguely scientific question on anything from bodily functions to outer space, and Kruszelnicki is qualified to answer them all.

Kruszelnicki has degrees in mathematics, physics, and medicine. He has held jobs as diverse as a filmmaker, a taxi driver and a mechanic. However, he is most well known for making science fun and accessible, appearing all over the Australian media for the last 30 years on television shows such as Quantum and on ABC radio.

Kruszelnicki has written 31 books, received awards for journalism, was awarded the Ig Nobel prize for his research on belly button lint, appointed a Member of the Order of Australia and has been named Australian Father of the Year as well as Australian Skeptic of the Year.

Kruszelnicki's conversation radiates with his enthusiasm for everything science related. Even with a cold (“forgive me for sucking on my lolly”) he speaks animatedly about his latest discoveries. Seemingly every question he is asked is turned into an interesting anecdote or fact –

“...You know most of the universe is missing? 95% of it is missing…”

-- often before he has answered it.
“…Three quarters of that missing mass is dark energy – we’ve got no idea what it is so we just call it dark energy – and it pushes the universe apart and we don’t know why…”

Kruszelnicki loves science and loves his job. He likes that science has the answers to things. When he finds something interesting he assumes others will too and therefore wants to share that knowledge.

Above all he is motivated by the “sheer fun of it” and the fact that promoting science benefits the whole country is a secondary bonus.

“The fun is very important for me, and the other aspect is more practical but I don’t do it for that. It’s like Richard Feynman said, science is like sex. It might have practical results but that’s not why we do it. So the reason I do the science promotion is not because it’s good for Australia – but it is,” he said.

“Most of our Gross National Domestic Product comes from science and technology – agriculture, mining, manufacturing goods. And so by having a strong base we all become a wealthy country, and there’s nothing wrong with a wealthy country.”

Despite this enthusiasm for science, his awards, and his popular reputation for knowing something about almost everything, when I spoke to him Kruszelnicki said some surprising things about himself and the nature of his profession.

Firstly, that science is not hugely creative – or at least not as creative as other professions – and secondly, that he is not extraordinarily intelligent.

“…like gravity. You know how there’s the astronaut talking about space? There is no zero gravity. It reaches to the end of the Universe. They’re actually in free fall, which is totally different…”

What is more interesting though is to take both statements and examine them within the context of current research on creativity and to explore the influence of romantic myths that dominate general discussion of the topic.

Kruszelnicki’s claim that science is not as creative as other professions is based on the idea that scientists are simply building upon things that already exist.
“Science is not enormously creative because with science what you basically do is discover laws that nature has hidden under a rock,” he said.

“But the engineers are truly creative because they manufacture stuff that's never been made before. So for example, when you graduate from university engineering they don’t give you the big secret book of all the designs for iPhones for the next two years, you’ve got to create that. Everything like that's been created by human beings and that’s what I find really impressive.”

Kruszelnicki’s statement may be seen to reflect the prevailing notion that for something to be genuinely, authentically creative it must be completely original. However, this idea is problematic.

While such feats of engineering are undoubtedly impressive – as are great scientific discoveries – they do not appear from nowhere or out of nothing. Contrary to the idea that creativity is the act of producing something that never existed before, all creative products and ideas emerge from the resources of pre-existing knowledge and tradition. This applies whether you are an engineer, a scientist or even an artist.

An engineer may not leave university with the direct instructions for creating an iPhone, but they will be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of how such a thing is possible and how similar things have been achieved.

“…These guys in the 1950s who used to fly aeroplanes right into the bomb blast mushroom cloud – they had to be lifted out of the plane by a forklift truck because if they touched the outside of the plane they'd get an even higher radiation dose and because back then they didn't have remote drones that could fly reliably into the bomb blast…”

Therefore, the distinction Kruszelnicki makes between engineering and science and their capacity for creativity is perhaps not so clear after all. Kruszelnicki describes science and his own practice as being founded on facts but amounting to something much greater.

“Science is built on facts but it’s more than facts,” he said.
“Think about a house which is built from stones but it’s more than a pile of stones. So the facts are just where you start and you’ve got to take it to the next level. And then you sort of work your way up from data to knowledge to wisdom to enlightenment and hopefully guru hood.”

It is a scientist’s job to devise ways of discovering, verifying and interpreting these facts and turning them into meaningful theories. As a scientist and science educator it is Kruszelnicki’s particular job to gather and synthesise these theories and to present that information in a way that is engaging and easy to understand.

“…In some races, like the 2002 marathon, 13% of the people in the marathon drank so much water that they weighed more at the end than in the beginning…”

Kruszelnicki does this so well that people crash radio switchboards calling to ask him questions and there seems to be few subjects he doesn’t know something about. The fact that he can recall information so rapidly from such an extraordinarily large pool of knowledge also comes with the assumption that he must be a genius. However, Kruszelnicki is adamant this is not the case.

“Sometimes I bewail my lack of smartness,” he said. “I keep on saying my IQ is 110. Everybody I know is smarter than me.”

Instead, Kruszelnicki attributes his success to sheer hard work. He reads a remarkable $10 000 worth of literature each year. However, it is not enough to simply read the literature. He must also understand it and critically assess it in order to then communicate it.

“I’ve got to read it, understand it, make sure it’s accurate, and then turn it into a story,” he said.

“Because if you can’t explain it to your mythical Grandmother then you can’t explain it to the general public, but even worse, you don’t really understand it. So the whole point, when you’ve found something, is to explain it. And if you can’t explain it, then you don’t understand it.”
The sheer volume of Kruszelnicki’s media appearances, speaking engagements, and publications reflects this dedication. Kruszelnicki said hard work is not only essential for gathering information and formulating that necessary understanding but it also allows people to recognise and harness opportunities as they are arise.

It is tempting to attribute great creative achievements to a chance encounter or single moment of inspiration, for example, Isaac Newtown’s famous falling apple.

However, he – like all scientists – could never have recognised the significance of this event or interpreted it in the same way if he did not have a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of his practice developed through conscious work.

“…I've finally got an answer to something that's been bugging me for years, the female ejaculation thing. Did you know that woman can have cancer of the prostate?…”

As Kruszelnicki said, “Work hard, you get lucky. The harder you work, the luckier you get.”

The fact that Kruszelnicki’s extraordinary level of scientific knowledge and ability to present it in innovative and engaging ways originates primarily from hard work does not make his achievements any less impressive. In fact, it would be unreasonable to expect them to come from anywhere else.

Despite his own experience, Kruszelnicki said some people are “geniuses that just come up with stuff out of nowhere”. However, this is itself a myth.

The overwhelming conclusion of research on the subject indicates that creativity and the exceptional achievements that lead us to deem people geniuses are the result of conscious work and commitment.

A baby cannot be born knowing how to paint, play the cello or design a bridge. Being creative in any of these pursuits requires a specific set of skills and knowledge of a particular practice – all things that must be learnt.

Earning the title of genius requires an extraordinary level of dedication to this learning, so much so that when this knowledge is internalised it feels like something they have
always known.

Therefore, while Kruszelnicki’s admission that his achievements are all primarily due to working hard rather than a natural gift might be initially surprising, this is a truth common to all of those people we recognise as exceptionally creative.

Similarly, Kruszelnicki also believes that in order to do the work necessary for creativity you must have an environment that accommodates your preferred working habits.

He said, “It takes time to get your mind into the thinking, so what you need is an environment conducive to thinking. And music.”

Kruszelnicki has a particular passion for listening to classical music as he works, and he explains that the music I am hearing in the background as we talk is Beethoven’s sonata for cello and piano, First Movement in F, performed by Mstislav Rostropovich and Sviatoslav Richter.

“I just start playing it and suddenly I’m in a different place, I start writing,” he said.

“And I hear it over and over again and every time I hear it it’s different. It’s not the same thing. It’s a different piece of music every time I play it, all 75 times, because the music is deep and the performance is deep.”

While everybody likes to work differently – many people can’t concentrate at all while listening to music – it is important is to be aware of how you work best and to construct that environment for yourself in order to facilitate creativity.

Romantic myths about creativity influence the distinctions we make between different forms of practice, the way we characterise our own practice and the expectations we place on those we recognise as exceptionally creative.

Kruszelnicki may not view science as particularly creative; however, the underlying process of building upon knowledge is just the same as in any other form of creative practice. The expectation that something is only truly creative if it comes from nowhere is both unrealistic and illogical.
Kruszelnicki makes science accessible and interesting, sharing his delight in its ability to get “in touch with the awe and wonder of the Universe.” Even if he does not devise the theories, he gathers and interprets vast amounts of information and communicates it to the public in innovative ways.

“…Never have sex with anybody who’s got more problems than you do. Don’t speed through a speed camera. The toilets are normally near the elevators in public buildings. Don’t play cards with somebody called Doc. Don’t play cards for money with somebody called Doc…”

The fact that Kruszelnicki works hard to achieve this easy way with facts should not be surprising. Conscious work and commitment to your practice are the foundation of creativity and the notion of genius as someone who is simply born with a unique gift is a myth.

We should not let romantic conceptions of creativity and unrealistic expectations diminish the achievements of those we recognise as creative or underplay the possibilities for creativity in our own work, no matter what industry we are involved in.

Achieving great creative heights through sheer effort and dedication is a remarkable thing and understanding that this is the real nature of creativity can only facilitate the recognition of our own capacity to do the same.

“…You’ve got to work hard. You’ve just got to work hard…If I was smarter I wouldn’t have to work so hard, but I’m not so I do…”
Ian Luscombe

People divide the world into days and weeks, streets and cities, letters and numbers, and these frameworks provide the foundation on which people build and understand their lives.

But marking out time in weeks and days does not limit the richness and variety of a life. Explaining the world with such structures helps people to understand it. The same principle can be applied to phenomena they assume can’t be explained, including creativity.

Although there is a range of variations, one of the most well-known theories that divides creativity into stages comes from Graham Wallas.

Wallas broke the creative process into four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, verification. Just as living your life within the structure of times and dates does not lessen its value, Wallas’s framework allows for a diversity of creative products and helps us explain how they are produced.

Using frameworks as tools for understanding and operating in the world is particularly important to Redbank School Principal Ian Luscombe.

Redbank School in Westmead NSW is a short-term school facility for children with psychological, emotional and behavioural problems. It is the only school in the state that is a joint initiative of the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Communities, and the only school of this kind in Australia to accept students in all classes from preschool to year 12.

The school comprises three different units: the child and family unit (preschool to year 6), the adolescent and family unit (years 7 to 12) and the acute adolescent unit for children with severe psychiatric, usually psychotic, illnesses.

Understandably, most mainstream schools are not equipped to provide these children with the support they need. It is Luscombe’s job to ensure that Redbank does.

As principal, Luscombe’s role is to help create strategies for behaviour management
and learning, to develop and refine the most effective overall model for the school, and to lead the implementation of these practices.

When we spoke, Ian Luscombe said the overall strategy used at Redbank is based on a model called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), which is derived from an American model called Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Redbank has only been using PBL for the last couple of years but Luscombe said it was compatible with strategies they already had in place.

“We kind of derive those models ourselves,” he said.

“We’ve put our own personal touch on them... It takes three to five years to set up all the systems and the structures so that everyone’s consistent and on the one page. But prior to me knowing about the PBL I was actually doing similar stuff anyway that I’d set up myself.”

The defining characteristic of Luscombe’s approach to teaching, and the overall philosophy of Redbank School, is to instil consistency, permanency and predictability in the way students are educated and their behaviour is dealt with.

He said achieving this can only be the result of a whole school approach to balancing two specific areas of education.

“The first part of behaviour management is to get the academic program right. So the academics have to be okay for the kids, otherwise if it’s too hard the kids will tend to get frustrated and muck up, or if it’s too easy they’ll get bored and muck up,” he said.

“And the environment is the way we talk to the kids, the way we treat them and the awards and the consequences we give out to the children.

“A lot of these kids do come from really chaotic stressed families, so they may have been exposed to erratic or capricious management at home where Mum or Dad will say, ‘stop that’ and the next minute they’ll give in. So it’s unpredictable. What we have to do is be predictable for the kids.”
It is the strength of the framework and its clear articulation to both teachers and students that is the key to the Redbank program. Luscombe speaks passionately about his school and his students and the good he believes Redbank does.

He said, “It’s really lovely. I actually literally feel like we save lives. I think we do, we do save lives. We have actually had students come back and tell us ‘you people saved my life.’”

However, Luscombe did not discover his interest in this kind of specialised education until after unsuccessfully trying a range of other professions.

He began by studying geography, economics and statistics “and found out that I have absolutely no aptitude for geography, economics and statistics,” he said.

“I got my first job at the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, as an information research officer, so that’s working with businesses throughout NSW. I was absolutely hopeless at that job. I left after six months.

“Then I got a job as a market research executive, for a market research company in North Sydney, and I was there for 18 months and I discovered I was absolutely hopeless at that job too.”

Luscombe’s wife, who was also a teacher, suggested he try education. He said, “She liked her job and said it would be a good job for me, so I told my boss at the market research company I was leaving and he said, ‘that’s okay I was going to give you the sack anyway.'”

Luscombe worked for five years as a casual teacher until he received a permanent teaching position. However, he was suffering from depression at the time and unready for full-time work, so he resigned at the end of his first week.

After a period of unemployment he eventually became an integration teacher for emotionally disturbed children and discovered the career path that led him to Redbank.

“If I hadn’t resigned I wouldn’t have got into the special ed. area, and that's kind of the way I see things,” he said.
“When major things happen in life you can derive meaning from those events and most negative things that have occurred to me have actually ended up being positive in the long run.”

If we place this within Graham Wallas’s framework, especially viewing the continuation of events as Luscombe does, we could view this as part of the preparation stage.

Preparation includes the accumulation of all knowledge needed to engage in a particular creative practice, which in Luscombe’s case is education and the formulation of behaviour management strategies.

Arguably, every event on the path Luscombe has taken has informed his understanding of the world, and therefore his practice and the way he relates to his students.

This view of events as preparation is extremely broad, but also useful in the recognition of the influence that the totality of our individual backgrounds can have on our creative practice.

However, we can also view preparation in the context of the active acquisition of knowledge for specific tasks. For example, preparation is crucial in being able to interact with the students, and to therefore formulate appropriate ways of managing their behaviour.

It is Luscombe’s job to ensure all the teachers understand the framework in place and are therefore able to respond to difficult classroom situations with an effective, consistent approach.

“As you can imagine, these kids, their behaviour can be incredibly provocative and they’ll push your buttons all over the place. And so even when our buttons are getting pushed we still don’t respond to how we feel. We have to monitor how we feel. ‘I want to kill that kid’ – you monitor that but you don’t act on it,” he said.

“It can be so easy with these provocative kids to overreact, and if we overreact then we actually fulfil their belief in the world that adults are horrible nasty people and can’t be
trusted.

“So we’ve got to really show these kids an alternative worldview. The alternative worldview is, my alternative worldview is, I see the world as caring, compassionate, nurturing, so therefore I’ve got to act that out and I’ve got to deal with those kids that way.”

Luscombe has only recently begun to identify himself as creative and to think about his experience of the creative process.

He said new ideas and solutions often come to him when he isn’t consciously thinking about a problem and asked if that was something that happened to other people. It is.

In terms of Wallas’s model this is called illumination. It is that moment of “Of course! That’s it!” where ideas seem to appear without reason. However, the seemingly mystical nature of this stage can be explained by the existence of a stage between this and preparation.

Wallas identified this stage as incubation, which is where, while you are occupied with other things, your brain is busy sorting out all of that information you gathered during preparation.

Some critics question the existence of the incubation stage, and indeed it is very difficult to provide evidence for. Instead, some suggest that rather than the result of thought bubbling below consciousness, perhaps illuminations arrive simply because you are refreshed after taking a break.

Regardless of the debate about the nature of incubation, taking time away from a creative task is usually helpful. What is clear, though, is that preparation is absolutely necessary before any of this can occur.

Even though Luscombe seems quite taken by the fact his ideas appear at odd times, he is aware of the conscious work that needs to come first.

“I’ve got to do the cognitive work beforehand…and then that kind of lays the foundation I guess,” he said.
After you have laid that foundation, taken a break, and the light bulb has flicked on, you then have to decide what to do with your idea. This stage is the final in Wallas's theory and is called verification.

Illuminations can be accepted or discarded in seconds as you use the knowledge of your practice to decide whether an idea is creative or worth pursuing. Sometimes, however, you need other people to verify that you've made the right decisions.

Luscombe said his work is validated by the feedback he receives from parents, schools and the students themselves. He recalls stories of students who return years later to thank him and the other teachers for their help.

“I had a call only two months ago from a student I used to teach. He was 15 when I taught him…and he hadn’t seen me in about 20 years and he said, ‘I just wanted to come back and tell you that you kept me out of jail I reckon’.

“I said, ‘how come?’ and he said, ‘Well when I get into trouble I say ‘what would Mr Luscombe tell me to do here?’’” Luscombe said.

“That’s some validation, that I actually am doing the right thing, and I get a lot of satisfaction out of that…It sounds really clichéd, that I’m making a difference to make the world a better place, making some changes.

“We’re actually working in an area a lot of people are fearful of and don’t like and judge these sorts of kids, and we don’t judge them. We remove the judgment and we accept them for what they are. So in that respect too that’s a lot of validation that we’re doing that. We’re helping a part of society that’s often marginalised. We’re helping them get on.”

The whole process, from preparation to verification, can occur almost instantly and although the expression of Wallas’s model implies linear progression these stages do not necessarily occur in order. They repeat and overlap all throughout the creative process.

However, analysing creativity in this way is still valuable. Stage models like this provide
a framework for demystifying a process that is often seen as unexplainable. They can be applied to your particular creative practice as a whole or contracted to explain individual tasks within it.

Understanding how creativity and creative products emerge from this structure allows us to take ownership over the process, our individual experience of it, and the work that is required.

In a similar way, the model Luscombe has developed for Redbank provides both the teachers and students with a framework for behaviour and interaction, providing a foundation in which actions and relationships can be managed and understood.

In both cases, while they may not account for all of the complexities of human behaviour or all the factors that influence creativity, these frameworks do not limit our ability to engage with the world but enrich it, just as Ian Luscombe has enriched the lives of those children through his creative adaptation of the PBL learning framework.
Benjamin Law

Freelance writer Benjamin Law says writing is just like putting together a jigsaw.

He said after you’ve gathered your information, “you’ve suddenly got all these puzzle pieces. Some won’t fit and some are just those weird, random puzzle pieces that don’t even belong to the puzzle...It’s like you’ve been given a puzzle without a picture of what it’s meant to look like at the end.”

The evolution of current understandings of creativity can be viewed in a similar way.

The initial investigation of creativity – beginning with the rejection of the romantic idea that it was something that couldn’t be explained – began in psychology, searching within individuals for qualities and behaviours that could explain the phenomenon.

Later, sociologists sought answers in the opposite direction, looking to the people, influences and structures outside individuals that could explain how and why creativity occurred. In other fields, post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes argued that we should re-examine the concept of authorship or even do away with it all together.

In isolation, each of these theories fails to comprehensively explain the creative process. However, by finding a meaningful way of combining each of these pieces we come far closer to completing the puzzle.

Most current research in creativity lies in this kind of interdisciplinary or confluence approach. It recognises that creativity is complex, the result of multiple factors and the relationship between them – not the product of individuals alone nor the result of external factors, but a combination of both.

Creativity theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity is one framework that seeks to explain creativity in this way.

Csikszentmihalyi’s model proposes that creativity is the product of a system with three equally important components: an individual (the person who puts a work together), a domain (specific areas of knowledge and the works they include), and a field (the people who control access to the domain).
An examination of the practice of individuals such as Benjamin Law provides a strong case for its existence and importance.

29 year old Law has written for a range of publications including The Walkley Magazine, The Griffith Review, New Matilda, ABC Online, Cleo, Sunday Life, Crikey and Kill Your Darlings and is a regular contributor to frankie, The Monthly and Qweekend.

This year Law released his first book, The Family Law, a chronicle of his childhood and adolescence in Queensland as a young Asian male.

“I would say it’s a black comedy memoir about growing up,” Law said.

“There’s a lot of wrong humour in it. It’s sort of nostalgic. It’s like the Wonder Years meets David Sedaris except everyone’s Asian, but there are some really weird moments in it as well…I think the one thing that people always leave with from the book is a very vivid image of my mother’s vagina.”

Law’s writing is characterised by a distinctive personal style. Law describes himself as a “double-barrelled minority: being gay and Asian in a country that isn’t predominantly gay, isn’t predominantly Asian,” which he says gives him a unique perspective and has an obvious influence on his work.

The book Law is currently working on is called Gaysia and focuses on the personal stories of queer people throughout Asia. When we spoke he had just returned from Malaysia where he was interviewing and gathering stories.

In terms of the systems model, the individual refers to the person who produces a work and encompasses the influence of their personal background on their practice. Even if your work is not as specifically connected to your life as Law's is, the things you are exposed to ultimately contribute to the practice you choose and the way you participate in it.

Not only is background important to the creative process but it is also important for an individual to structure their creative practice in a way that best supports their
participation in it and also supports their most effective working habits.

Law prefers to write early in the morning, have a cup of green tea, go for a swim, and write some more in the afternoon. Yet often, especially now as he is travelling to do interviews, he must write wherever he can find the time, including in airport lounges and on public transport.

Law finds it important to segment his time, as he works on multiple projects at once and needs to ensure he meets each deadline. The hours he works also depends on the requirements of each task.

With an impending deadline for his new book Law wakes up at 5.30 and aims to write at least 1000-2000 words before lunch. He also likes to make sure he is wearing pants.

“If you just roll out of bed and start writing it’s not as healthy a mental state. If you’re treating your work environment a little slobbily that can often come off in your writing as well,” Law said.

“And it just feels gross.”

It is a light-hearted response but reflects Law’s serious commitment to his craft.

Law lists discipline, hard work, and focus as essential for turning your creative pursuit into a career and said it takes time to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be good at what you do.

“You do have to learn skills, and for writing it’s how to structure, it’s how to grab someone’s attention from the start, it’s how to create dialogue that rings true.

“And the best books that you read, the ones that are really easy to read, the ones that feel effortless, are the ones that were probably the hardest to write and that’s because it takes discipline and discipline is something that is learned,” Law said.

Each type of creative practice requires specific sets of skills and knowledge, and the place you find those things is called the domain.
The domain is essentially a knowledge system. It refers to specific areas of creative practice and comprises all the accumulated works in that particular area as well as the rules and structures through which those works are created. In Law’s case, this is the domain of freelance writing.

Engaging with your domain by familiarising yourself with these things is how you come to understand the conventions of your practice, the appropriate way of participating in it, and where you fit within that context.

Although Law did not always want to be a writer (he dreamed of being a child television star) his exposure to the domain began in his childhood.

Reading and writing were emphasised both at home and at school and Law and his siblings would spend every evening reading books. Law also read a lot of magazines as a teenager and remembers a specific article in *Rolling Stone* as particularly inspiring.

“There was a really interesting, huge article in *Rolling Stone* about a set of twins that had been born in The States in the 60s and one of them had had a terrible circumcision accident and they had this incredible story about how they tried to make one of the boys into a girl,” he said.

“It was about all these gender politics, gender theories of the time, and it blew my mind as a teenager reading that kind of stuff…I thought, ‘wow writing is quite amazing and powerful.’”

As well as originating from personal experiences, Law said ideas for his own work often come from conversations with friends, discussions about writing and drunken stories scribbled on his hand.

“You don’t get ideas on your own,” Law said.

It is a simple statement, a seemingly obvious point, but it says something about the reality of creative practice that often goes unsaid.

Even as a writer, an occupation generally viewed as solitary and somewhat
disconnected, you do not operate in isolation from the rest of the world. Your ideas must originate from somewhere and doing that involves engaging with people and things, outside influences and experiences of all types.

This engagement not only allows you to put ideas in a form that will be suitable for the domain but it also allows you to evaluate them, to give you a standard you can use to gauge whether or not your work is in fact creative.

Law said he bases the judgement of his writing on whether or not it is something he would like to read.

“Good writers read a lot,” Law said.

“I’m interested in strange, slightly dysfunctional families. I read a lot about them in fiction and non-fiction. I’m interested in articles about strange things and people I’ll probably never meet, or cultish things, or things to do with sex and religion or youth. I like reading about that stuff, so that’s the only way I know it’s a good idea, ‘would I want to read that?’”

Familiarising yourself with what is occurring in your domain is vital no matter what you are doing. If you are a writer you should read, if you are a musician you should listen to music, if you are a physicist you should keep abreast of current theories.

Engaging with your domain allows you to not only understand what it is you are doing and how to do it but also what the current standard is and where you fit within this.

There are reasons a piece of writing can be judged as good or bad, there are structures that make it so. The knowledge of these things is held within the domain and the more familiar you are with them, the better your work will be.

“All writing has different techniques that you need to adhere to to ensure that it’s a good piece of writing,” Law said.

“Whether all of those things are used effectively are basically criteria on which you can judge whether it’s a really good read or just a piece of crap. And you can study those conventions at university but even as readers we understand intuitively how those
As well as making creative judgements using the knowledge acquired by reading others’ work and through his own experience of writing, Law also shows drafts to people he trusts, including editors and other writers.

Law said if he can impress these people or make them laugh, he knows he must be doing something right. In terms of the systems model these people are referred to as the field.

These people make the decisions about which works will be accepted as creative and allowed to enter the domain. They have earned the right to make these judgements because they have the corresponding accumulated domain knowledge and occupy the positions to do so, for example as editors or publishers.

Ultimately, the individual in the system must liaise with the field in order for their work to reach an audience other than themselves, which, as Law said, is a writer’s ultimate aim.

“To get your work out there, to know that it’s actually being read, is really fundamentally important to writers. There’s nothing more depressing than writing something that doesn’t actually do what it’s intended to do, which is to be read.”

This audience also forms part of the field as they influence creative practice in their response to particular works. For example, a positive response from audiences can influence an individual’s motivation to continue their creative practice.

Law said, “I was just at the Byron Bay Writer’s Festival, and I’ve got people that I’ve never met before in my entire life coming to me saying that they enjoy my work and that’s incredibly gratifying…It’s really lovely to hear that the one way conversation you thought you were having is actually a two way conversation.”

Essentially, creativity could be viewed as the result of a three way conversation – the product of a system in which all components are equally important.

The individual’s role within this system is to engage with their domain knowledge in
order to develop the expertise necessary to participate in creative practice and to also liaise with the field to ensure their work is recognised as such.

By approaching creativity in this way, looking beyond single sources for the explanation, we recognise that creativity is a complex process, a puzzle with multiple pieces.

Then, as Law said, “you have to work out which way you’re actually putting these puzzle pieces together to form the best picture.”
Brendan O’Connell

The ancient belief in divine madness held that poetry and great works of art were produced in a state of altered consciousness over which the artist had no control. They were merely acting as a channel for the spontaneous outpouring of creativity direct from the gods.

This thinking has transferred through the centuries, manifesting today in beliefs in the mysterious nature of creativity and the notion that creativity cannot be explained.

More than that, many romantics also believe that attempts to explain creativity are not only futile but also damaging, as if to look too closely is to somehow permanently break a spell that sustains creativity.

However, current understandings indicate that creativity is the result of conscious work rather than extraordinary thought processes or inspirational separation from reality.

Creativity is a process that encompasses the knowledge acquisition that allows you to do what you do, the employment of that knowledge to produce a creative work and the evaluation of that work by yourself and by others.

Having an awareness of how that process works can only make you a better creative practitioner. Understanding exactly how you do what you do, how you work best, and your strengths and weaknesses within that allows you to improve your practice and facilitates creativity.

Brendan O’Connell’s approach to his work is characterised by such self-awareness, self-evaluation and a dedication to improving his practice.

Even though he thinks his chosen industry is weird.

“Why would you make theatre?” he said. “You have a room in the dark that you light up and all of a sudden people come out and pretend to be someone else and dress up in funny clothes and then you clap or you sit there in silence.”

And yet, O’Connell makes theatre.
“It’s such a weird concept but it’s actually, it’s amazing.”

At the beginning of 2011 O’Connell moved from Newcastle to Melbourne where he works as a freelance director and producer and is co-artistic director of a live art collective called Big One Little One.

Prior to that, from 2008 to the beginning of 2011, he was the artistic director of Newcastle youth theatre organisation Tantrum Theatre where he received two City of Newcastle Drama Awards including the Newcastle City Council Award for outstanding achievement in Newcastle Theatre.

In essence though O’Connell has been making theatre in some form since primary school where he would devise and rehearse plays with his friends at lunchtime. He didn’t originally plan to be a director, beginning his involvement in theatre as an actor.

“We would get large groups of us together at lunchtime and write stuff or we’d get these monthly magazines that would have plays in them and we’d do them ourselves,” he said.

“We never actually staged them but we’d always rehearse them. It was very odd.”

Since then, after beginning directing productions at the suggestion of a lecturer, O’Connell has directed a variety of very different styles of performance.

O’Connell has directed existing scripts such as Nick Enright’s Blackrock, for which he covered the stage in three tonnes of sand. He has also facilitated devised work such as Dreams of a Forgotten City, which was developed during rehearsal in response to Newcastle’s Fort Scratchley where it was also performed.

In his current guise as co-artistic director of Big One Little One O’Connell is developing a one-on-one performance called Blind Date in which participants are led around the city blindfolded.

This diversity has typified O’Connell’s involvement in theatre from the beginning of his career.
When he first finished school and began studying drama at the University of Newcastle he took advantage of every chance to involve himself in the industry, both at the university and outside of it, and even created some of his own opportunities.

In his second year of study O'Connell said he was involved in 20 different shows, whether acting, directing, or working backstage.

At the same time he curated a year of student performances, worked as a theatre critic for ABC radio, began a free website promoting Newcastle theatre which he ran for five years and began at Tantrum Theatre as a volunteer.

O'Connell said throwing himself into the industry so fully from the outset is the achievement he is most proud of.

“I was really putting myself out there and learning as much as I could,” he said.

“I think that's the only way you can learn. Good or bad experience, experience is the key to making work, because if you don’t do it then how can you learn anything else? How can you get better?”

It was this commitment and active involvement in the industry, this conscious work, that O'Connell said helped him get into the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) where he studied directing.

He said his training at VCA gave him the formal structures in which to understand his craft and to make sense of his previous experiences as a director.

It is the combination of this formal training at VCA, the knowledge he gained experimenting with directing at University, and his broad understanding of the many components that comprise theatre that has allowed him to develop a particularly rounded and considered approach to his creative practice.

O'Connell can outline in minute detail the many steps he takes from the choice of a script or stimulus for a devised work to the performance of the show and its evaluation.
When directing an existing scripted work, before it progresses to further stages like casting, O’Connell already knows the script intimately.

O’Connell reads the script multiple times, each time to gain a different and specific level of understanding. The first reading he does is for enjoyment, taking note of his own emotional response to the work.

Then, in the second reading, O’Connell writes down lists of questions, such as “who is this person in relation to that person?” as well as facts like “this person is this person’s sister”.

He said by the end of this reading he should be left with a list of facts and no questions. He then uses the information as a resource for the actors and crew to draw from in their individual roles.

Any questions that are not answered by the script he works on answering in collaboration with the actors in rehearsal. O’Connell said he likes to give actors and other creative personnel space in the rehearsal room to explore their own interpretation of the work.

“I was directed when I was younger, by directors, one in particular, who would, first day, ..block you through exactly where you had to stand. So then you’d have for the next four weeks the ability to go, ‘Oh yeah, so this is where I go and this is where I move’. He was very big on it. He was a very visual director and knew what he wanted. I’m not like that at all,” O’Connell said.

“I know what I want but at the same time there’s no way I’m not going to tell people that’s what needs to happen, because that’s just my representation of the play, whereas I’m working with up to 15 people who may have totally different ideas to me. And of course there’s the argument that maybe I could provide more…but I’m kind of really hesitant to do that straight away. I really think it’s key for performers to do something themselves – to understand on their own terms.”

In the final part of this initial analysis O’Connell reads the script again, coloured highlighters in hand, identifying practical concerns such as props and stage directions.
He said this information is just as important to gaining a thorough understanding of the text as any other form of analysis.

“You just kind of ignore the little gaps that have stage directions or that aren’t text, because it’s like, ‘well the text is the most important stuff,’” he said.

“But actually it’s not. It’s also the directions and the ‘he smiles’ or ‘he walks across the room.’ You think that’s really simple and ignore that direction but actually you need to know that stuff, and even if you don’t use it you need to be aware of why it’s there.”

In a similar way, O’Connell recognises that no show can happen without regard for practicalities like ensuring you have enough resources or securing a venue.

O’Connell even writes his own rehearsal schedules. This job is generally reserved for the production’s stage manager but he said this is something he can’t fathom, seeing it as just as creative and necessary as any other part of the process.

“Anything like that is just as important as the so-called creative work you do in the rehearsal room,” O’Connell said.

“You might not think it’s creative but you have to use your creative understanding of directing and rehearsing and apply it to a very mundane technical task of a schedule so you can say, ‘okay, well with my creative knowledge of what it’s going to take to make this play, and what this scene will require – this scene with two actors, it’s six pages – it’s actually going to take x amount of hours of rehearsal time.’”

All these things are just as much a part of the creative process, and affect the outcome of the show just as significantly, as any other decision that has to be made.

Even an activity that appears largely solitary and singular, like painting or writing, is not simply a matter of sitting down and producing a fully formed work.

All creative practice relies upon gathering and synthesising outside information and developing skills to support your practice, all of which is earthly, identifiable work.

Although O’Connell now has a decade of directing experience and such a clearly
articulated working process he said whenever he begins a new project he always feels like he is doing it for the first time.

Yet the fears he has, of building relationships with new actors and a new work, of feeling as if he has to relearn the entire process, is always relieved by falling back on the support of his existing knowledge of the process, the result of the conscious work and preparation he has done both directly for the current project and from accumulated experience of previous work.

O’Connell is also highly self-critical and hyper aware of his strengths and weaknesses.

He describes himself as an aural director, focusing not only on the way the actors’ dialogue sounds but also with incorporating music into the performances he directs. Yet on the other hand O’Connell said he believes he is not very strong visually.

O’Connell said he is good relating to actors, probably as he began his involvement in theatre as an actor. Yet, he said he doesn’t give as many compliments as he should and is sometimes inarticulate in expressing what he wants an actor to do.

However, O’Connell’s criticisms of himself do not originate from a place of negativity but from a strong desire to improve his practice and a passion for the scope there is to achieve this.

He also sees this constant evaluation of his own work as a crucial part of creativity and the foundation of the overall evolution of his practice.

“The reason I keep making work is because I know I can never do anything good enough,” he said.

“It’s about the ongoing experience of understanding, so you’re always retaining things from the past…Even if you don’t think it does, even if you can’t remember ‘oh in this moment right now I’m doing this because I got it wrong in that production three years ago’ I think everything is coming from there, from past to current work.”

In this way, his awareness of his own practice not only assists but also drives his creative work.
O’Connell combines this with a commitment to seeing a wide range of other people’s work to gain an awareness of what is happening in the industry and his place within this, as well as gaining feedback from people he trusts.

He is also supplementing his practical experience with further formal training, returning to study a Master of Arts and Cultural Management at the University of Melbourne.

It is all part of his ongoing pursuit of self-improvement in his creative practice.

“I want to learn more, experience more and get as much out of it as I can,” he said.

“That's what drives me.”
Rowena Foong

Every day people gather, build and discard new relationships. A person’s ability to achieve what they want and need largely depends on the success of his or her interactions with others. This includes the ability to be creative.

Identifying, managing and maintaining those key relationships becomes particularly important when you are producing creative work as part of a team, and even more so when that team is family.

High Tea With Mrs Woo is the clothing label designed by Malaysian-born Newcastle-based sisters Rowena, Juliana and Angela Foong.

Sitting in their Newcastle store before it opened for the day, Rowena (gently-spoken, immaculately presented, enviably shiny asymmetrical haircut) spoke to me about the label’s philosophy, its history, and the relationship with her sisters that is the foundation of High Tea With Mrs Woo.

High Tea With Mrs Woo has two stores, one in Newcastle that opened in 2004 and another in Paddington, Sydney. They also wholesale to around 20 other stores in Australia and have recently opened an online store.

Foong said she is often asked to describe what the label is “about” and said while this is difficult it is important to be able to communicate who they are, likening it to an artist statement you might find in a gallery.

“Whenever we make a collection of designs, the way we collaborate together, we always draw from our memories – so a lot of the memories we shared as sisters, when we were younger. So the way that we choose fabrics, or the way something feels, it all comes from that source,” she said.

“We work together by getting together, talking about how we’re feeling or what’s happening in our lives and then figure that out in terms of how we like to express it in clothing. Usually we talk about it in terms of themes or imagery and then you look at the types of clothing that fit that sort of feeling.”
That is perhaps the strength of the three sisters’ partnership. Although they all perform slightly different roles within the business, Rowena is responsible for media as well as website and logo design, it is their shared memories and experiences that form the foundation of the label.

“We have a dress that we make called ‘Waiting for Jack’…The shape of it is very classic Chinese, lots of historical background to it, it dates back a long time, but our version of it is reversible and is very contemporary,” Foong said.

“The first one we made was because we found a fabric that reminded us a lot of our grandmother, a very nostalgic print, and my sister was already working on this pattern and it just sort of worked out. So we attached it all together with all the fabric that made us feel closer to our grandmother in a way.”

As children, the sisters spent their holidays at their grandparents’ shop where their grandfather was a goldsmith as well as a watch designer and repairer. Foong said the feeling of history and connection to that building influences many of their collections.

Family forms a large part of their creative practice, as a family run business, the inspiration for their collections, and also as an influence in their path to becoming designers.

Their aunties were all good at sewing and their mother could also sew, knit and crochet, passing these skills onto her daughters while they were young.

“I was probably in Year 8. Mum said, ‘well I can’t afford this Billabong jumper for you, you’ll just have to learn how to sew,” Foong said.

“Probably that’s when it all started. I realised ‘well okay I can make my own stuff’.”

Despite this early engagement with the craft, the Foong sisters did not always plan to start a clothing label together.

Rowena and Juliana both studied graphic design, while Angela did economics. The knowledge they gained in those career paths would prove useful for High Tea With Mrs Woo, yet the label began as a hobby.
A friend ran an op shop on the premises that is now the High Tea With Mrs Woo Newcastle store, and asked if they wanted to take it over. Foong said they were already making clothes as a hobby and thought it would be a fun way of making some extra money for a couple of years.

When the clothes began selling they began to question whether fashion might be a viable career option. They decided to enter competitions to find out how the standard of their garments compared to the rest of the country and ended up winning the 2005 Mercedes Start Up Award as part of Australian Fashion Week.

“It was just like, ‘all right, let’s just try it, it sounds great,’” Foong said. “We’re pretty enthusiastic. So we won that and that was it. That kind of launched us into the fashion world.”

Recognition such as this can have an enormous effect on creativity. Not only does it provide the motivation to keep going, in confirming that you are actually creative, it can also be crucial in allowing you to engage in the creative process in the first place.

High Tea With Mrs Woo does not have any external financial backing so they rely on grants and awards to keep operating.

Fortunately, they have been successful in winning awards for everything from marketing and exporting to a $50 thousand grant to upgrade their computer system.

Foong said in receiving such recognition or being invited to speak about High Tea With Mrs Woo at times she feels like an impostor, as neither her nor her sisters have ever had training in fashion beyond high school.

However, Foong said it helps to remind herself that what they do have is almost a lifetime of practical experience.

Whether gathered from formal or informal training, all forms of creativity require an underlying knowledge of the conventions of your practice. It does not matter how you have acquired this knowledge as long as you have it and continue to learn.
Foong said she believes understanding the skills and conventions of your craft is the basis of all creative practice, not just fashion design, and even improvised performance.

“When I think about impro music I think, ‘well they’re just making it up as they go’. However, behind that is a whole set of skills and a whole set of establishments. So they are able to be free only because they have all that behind them,” she said.

Foong’s statement parallels current thinking about creativity which indicates that even those people we hold up as geniuses, even child prodigies like Mozart, were only able to achieve what they did through ordinary hard work.

While many creative figures have fabricated stories to uphold the illusion that their poems or artworks simply emerged fully formed in a dream or a trance, closer examination proves their stories false.

For example, in his 2006 book Explaining Creativity Keith Sawyer says that poet S.T. Coleridge claimed Kubla Khan came to him whole during an opium-induced dream, yet early revisions of the poem reveal that is untrue.

The fact remains, even if it feels as if a creative work has simply appeared to you, you are only able to execute that idea with a fundamental knowledge of your practice, something that at some point you have learnt.

Foong talks with ease about her practice, the many structures that are integral to it, and the importance of understanding and manipulating these to create their collections.

As well as this foundation of shared knowledge, the collaboration has flourished under the unique, complementary interests they have each developed.

Foong says Juliana enjoys experimenting with the structure and manipulation of fabric through different cuts, while Angela is interested in people and culture.

Foong’s particular interest is in the textiles themselves. She is passionate about discovering how different fabrics act and the way they can alter the look and feel of a
garment.

“There are so many nuances. They’re so small sometimes that I think you can only improve the more and more you do it,” she said.

“Say we’ve got this cardigan, and the first cardigan we made was of this particular wool jersey…The following season you use that pattern again, change it a little bit, and you buy a new type of fabric and it’s lighter, thinner, falls a bit different, and you think it’s going to be great and use exactly the same pattern and suddenly it’s two sizes too big.”

Foong said it is also important they understand the shape of women’s bodies, the way they change as they get larger, the way fabrics respond to this, and how to grade the sizing of garments to compensate.

“Women’s body shapes are constantly increasing...most women are a pear shape these days, and [the garments] sit on the hips. They’ll cling. So by finding the right kind of weight it’s not going to do that,” Foong said.

Foong also said it is crucial to her and her sisters that the clothing that bears the High Tea With Mrs Woo label is of a certain quality and makes the wearer feel confident and comfortable, and they understand which fabrics they can use to achieve this.

She said, “We’re sort of hard wearing, we just run around so much. We really like our clothes to last, so we generally have to choose sturdier fabrics. So it’s often use those harder fabrics that make you feel capable, and a lot of women will comment whenever they’re wearing something of ours that they feel really secure.”

Developing an understanding of the intricacies of the relationship between material and design, and building and running a successful business obviously requires work.

Rowena, Juliana and Angela are responsible for designing the collections, sewing a large portion of the garments, attending showings with buyers, managing sales and staff at their two stores, squeezing in meetings in the car, and achieving all this within the demanding schedule of the six month fashion cycle.

Foong said they generally work every day, and often up to 12 hours a day, although
they have recently made a commitment to having Sundays off. She prefers working on Saturdays when there are no disruptions and she has the chance to accomplish tasks uninterrupted. Foong also ideally likes to begin the day with a clean table.

Just as it is important to understand the foundations of your creative practice it is also necessary to be aware of how you are best able to participate in it, to know your own needs and to structure your environment accordingly.

Failing to do this can negatively affect your creativity, as Foong said she discovered with the label's recent change in sewing studio.

Their previous space was a “great warehouse, but really dark. No windows. There was like one big roof light, which was great, really interesting space, but at the end of the day there wasn’t any natural light, so by the end I just didn’t want to be there. I just felt my energy being suctioned in the space. So it was really difficult and I didn’t enjoy it,” she said.

“Now we’ve moved into a new place. There’s windows, there’s light, and just a few months ago we were cutting the samples and we just had the music on and were just working away and I was going ‘wow I haven’t felt like this in ages’. It was just so easy and felt nice and light…I think that actually helps you, with the optimum place/space to work in.”

Part of ensuring that your work environment facilitates your creativity is managing your relationship with those you collaborate with.

Although the strength of High Tea With Mrs Woo is the family relationship that underpins it, Foong said it wasn’t always easy to work so closely with her sisters, particularly during the first few years.

Realising the label would not survive if they continued fighting, and rather than giving up, they asked a friend to be their informal mediator.

“For one year, every week, he would come into the shop, make dinner, sit at the table and he would mediate us,” she said.
“And we eventually worked out how we could respect each other, or understand each other differently, so that was a huge help, and from then it's just got a lot better. So ten years down the track and we still fight but we're able to overcome it.”

Rowena, Angela and Juliana's relationship is sewn into their collections, and High Tea With Mrs Woo has emerged from their shared memories and experiences and their ability to translate this history into a physical, wearable form.
“Creativity” is an extraordinary word. It can be used to imply eccentricity or dishonesty, to explain or excuse disparate personality traits like reclusiveness or extroversion, excessive arrogance or shyness.

Some people separate themselves from the word, using it to describe people whose work they can’t comprehend, while others wrap their identity in it, believing in their unique ownership of a mysterious gift.

We also often make a distinction between being a creative person and being creative in a particular profession.

The label “creative person” seems to belong to people who have a quirky way of looking at the world, and while valid if that is how you choose to define creativity, does little to further our understanding of how the products and ideas that shape the world come into being.

Debbi Gomel developed and runs her own rapidly growing business called Art ‘N’ Move but she is hesitant to describe herself as creative.

“I wouldn’t say that I’m a really creative person but I guess how I wrote the programs and things like that, I guess I was creative…I guess in my field I probably am,” she said.

In distilled form, current definitions describe creativity as producing work that is novel and recognised as valuable or appropriate for its context.

In this way – despite the prevalence of its association with the arts – scientists, chefs, teachers, and business people like Gomel who are producing innovative work in their particular practice are all equally entitled to claim ownership of the term.

A number of theorists, particularly psychologists, do suggest creative people may share certain personal characteristics, yet they do so with caution. What we’ve discovered is that creativity is far more complex than a matter of personality.
The research into this phenomenon is telling us that the creative process is influenced by individual background as well as factors beyond an individual’s control.

Gomel’s business Art ’N Move is a developmental program for mums and toddlers. The centres run weekly 45 minute classes that incorporate movement, art, dance, drama, music and story-telling and began with Gomel looking for a way of entertaining herself and her children after the birth of her second child.

“I’d been teaching full time and then after I had my second child Jamie I didn’t want to carry on full time so I thought, ‘what can I do as a nice part time job?’” she said.

“Ariel was two and Jamie was new born and there was nothing in the area that did art and craft for toddlers so it began with that. And I thought, ‘my toddlers have had enough of the art. They can’t just have a class for two minutes’, so that's where it built up – ‘Okay, let’s do a theme. Let’s do music, stories and games all around the theme so we can make the class 45 minutes’.”

Gomel said she had a “feeling there was a real gap in the market” that her existing experience and skills allowed her to fill. In business this is essential.

If the good or service you are providing does not have anyone who wants it there is little point in producing it. In this way, Gomel’s creative practice is linked with and responds to the overall nature of the industry at a specific time.

The same can be said of any form of creativity. The nature of the practice you choose to pursue is influenced by trends and movements beyond your individual interests.

In fact, wider changes in industries affect the information you are exposed to and therefore what you are likely to develop an interest in in the first place.

Similarly, you need that knowledge of other people’s work in order to understand how to engage in that practice and to determine whether or not your own participation is innovative or creative by comparison.

The growth of Art ‘N’ Move over the last nine years demonstrates Gomel’s understanding of her market and her place within it.
Since beginning Art 'N' Move classes in Bondi in 2003 she has sold licenses for the program to 18 different locations across New South Wales and Victoria and even recently in Hong Kong.

The Art 'N' Move label now includes three different programs for three different age groups, all written by Gomel. They are the original Art 'N' Move program for children one to four years old, Play 'N' Move for babies from six to 14 months old, and Learn 'N' Move, a school readiness program for children four to five years old.

Gomel said she has also grown with the business.

Starting small has allowed her to gradually develop the necessary business skills and she has made a conscious effort to equip herself with tools needed to manage its expansion, for example learning how to use specific computer programs such as MYOB and Excel.

Part of this growth has also been accepting changes in her role and responsibilities. While she does still cover for staff, Gomel no longer teaches regular classes herself, and two years ago she took on one of her teachers as a partner to handle the everyday running of the business.

“I used to do everything and found it really hard to delegate but then I was obviously not functioning very well,” she said.

“Now I have been focusing more on making sure the office is running efficiently…rents and bigger picture things, but also now my main focus is speaking to the prospective licensees with the legal documents and all that kind of thing, so the growth.”

A large part of being creative is being aware of your limitations and adapting as the boundaries of your creative practice change.

Gomel altered the parameters of her creative practice by expanding the business and in turn had to change the way she operated within this process.

Gomel, like everybody, has a limited amount of time to devote to her creative practice
and these changes mean she is able to distribute that time most effectively.

Gomel said understanding how to work with and within boundaries such as time limits is crucial to the survival of her business. Cost is obviously another important consideration.

Even if you are not motivated by the prospect of making a profit, money still affects all creative practice by affecting the resources that are available to you.

Gomel has to ensure all the activities she plans for the Art 'N' Move classes fit within their given budget, thus influencing Gomel’s creative process in devising these programs and therefore shaping the creative product.

“There might be an art activity that I want to do with the children but it’s just going to be too expensive. Because we’re obviously there as a business to make money, I've got to look at that. If it’s something I need to photocopy, well I can't really photocopy 700,” she said.

“Costings, timings and everything: I don’t think the business could function successfully if I just spent what I wanted, so I think they’re of highest importance.”

Gomel is right. Despite our romantic conceptions of creativity, the consideration of structures such as these financial ones are just as crucial to the process as any personal quality.

When talking about expanding the business and developing the programs Gomel said, “To be creative I've got to really put my mind to it. I've got to believe in it.”

However, she qualified this by saying she thought this hard work was necessary for her “type of creativity”.

It is common for people to express the attitude that hard work is vital to their creative practice but assume it is easy for others. Indeed, the implication is that the less work you have to do the more creative you are.

However, this not the case. No matter what form of practice you are engaged in, or
what our romantic myths of genius tell us, conscious work is essential to creativity. For everyone.

Gomel credits her parents with instilling this value in her, passing on the knowledge gained from their own life experiences.

“My parents were actually holocaust survivors, so they came here after having a very hard life and worked extremely hard while we were growing up,” she said.

“They were in the café/restaurant business. So I guess they always had that strong sense of work ethic. My brother and I, my brother’s not in business but he’s a hard worker, so that’s probably from what we saw happening in the family.”

When developing the program Gomel said she likes to have a designated, quiet space for working.

“I like my own space,” she said.

“At the moment I’m finding everything very difficult because we’re actually renovating and we’re renting...and I do find that very hard because I don’t like a lot of noise. So I do like to have my own space and I like to have quiet.”

Gomel is also very determined. She said she does not like to leave a task unfinished and will often work late into the night until it is done.

“I like to get everything done. I don’t like leaving things undone so I’ll do it till it’s finished,” she said.

When developing the programs Gomel bases her decisions on her knowledge of children’s needs, devising activities that the children will enjoy and that will further their development.

Gomel is motivated by the opportunity to share her programs with as many children as she can and to ensure that program is of a high quality.

She said feedback from parents and children is vital to her ability to evaluate her
creative decisions and is at the heart of her motivation to continue.

“When I see, for example in class, how much they’re enjoying things and the feedback we get, that drives me,” she said.

“I guess for some people it might not matter but I’m not an overly confident person so for me that’s very important,” she said.

Knowing that the children and parents are enjoying the classes is not just valuable in encouraging Gomel to continue her creative practice but is also vital for the growth of the business.

These people are her market and without them she would not have a business, let alone have experienced such recent expansion.

In fact, the majority of the people buying licences to set up Art ‘N’ Move centres come directly from within the classes or have heard positive reports from people who have attended them.

“The lady that’s taken it to Melbourne, she used to come as a parent to our Mosman centre and then her husband relocated, so she then approached us about taking it there,” she said.

“We haven’t even advertised and it’s really just been word of mouth. We’ve now got an opportunities page on the website and I think it’s amazing a lot of the people have just been looking for classes for their child and then see that and it’s come from that.

“It’s been amazing.”
Clare Bowditch

From a romantic perspective, some would argue that removing the mystery that surrounds creativity makes it less magical and the works that result from it therefore less impressive.

However, being able to explain creativity does not mean those feelings of what can be a consuming immersion in the process will feel any less extraordinary. On the contrary, it should mean you are able to achieve this state more often.

Clare Bowditch is many things: an ARIA award-winning musician; “woman of the year” (Rolling Stone 2010, Yen Magazine 2008); social commentator, writing for ABC's The Drum and appearing on the broadcaster’s Q&A program; a mentor to young songwriters; and most recently, an actor, playing Rosanna on Channel Ten’s Offspring.

Bowditch is also a force of positivity. Her latest single is called You Make Me Happy and is from her forthcoming fifth album, which will be called The Winter I Chose Happiness.

She is also generous but somewhat cautious when speaking about her creative practice and the joy she gets from living this, as she terms it, “creative life”.

Bowditch said she doesn’t believe creativity is something that can, or indeed should, be defined. “It's a mystery to me and I’ve never questioned it too deeply,” she said.

“In terms of analysing it, as Carl Schroeder once said and Jeff Buckley went on to say and I now re-quote, 'you can dissect the frog, you can pick it apart and see how it works and so on, but once you’ve done that you can’t put life back into the frog'. And that’s very much the attitude that I take in regard to creativity. I believe that it’s indefinable but you know when you’re in the presence of it.”

This idea, that to define or to explain creativity is to damage it, is an idea that very much reflects romantic and inspirational conceptions of creativity.

However, interestingly, Bowditch’s descriptions of her overall practice could be seen to reflect many ideas in line with a rational approach to creativity.
The difference is essentially in deciding what the term encompasses.

Bowditch chooses to make a distinction between creative careers and the work involved to maintain them, and creativity itself. She said hard work and commitment play an “enormous role in creative careers” but is not sure they play the same role in what she characterises as creativity.

“Creativity itself is actually fairly effortless I think,” she said. “I think the main problem that we have with creativity is that we try too hard.”

Certainly, engaging in creative practice often does feel effortless. Ideas appear from nowhere, seemingly unasked for. Time seems to distort – or at least you are unaware of it passing – and when you stop working, you look at your page and wonder where it all came from and how you achieved so much.

“That’s what writing satisfying songs is about, in a way,” Bowditch said.

“I wrote a couple of songs the other day where I finally worked out where to put the image I had, which is just a blue dress twirling round the room. I found the spot for it, I found its home, and that was a wonderful feeling. I got a true high.”

That high is so commonly experienced and reported by those engaged in creative activity it is little wonder we have developed stories of people channelling the gods or some mysterious force within. That is what it feels like – mysterious and special.

Bowditch’s theory is that “time goes wonky when you’re deeply in the midst of a creative process” and essentially it does, or at least our perception of it.

Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi, whose work in creativity originated from his study of the psychology of happiness, calls this state of intense concentration “flow”, and, although it may feel mysterious and inexplicable, he also offers an explanation for it.

Csikszentmihalyi identifies a number of conditions for flow: having clearly defined goals and the ability to assess how well you are doing along the way; a freedom from distraction and the enjoyment of the activity for its own sake; and perhaps most
importantly, the practitioner’s skill level must be equal to the difficulty of the task.

In flow, you are not aware of anything else occurring around you – of time, distractions or unrelated thoughts – because you are so focused on the task you simply do not have enough attention left over to be conscious of these things.

“I think usually it’s a sign that you’re on to something. That’s my theory,” Bowditch said.

“I love that feeling. I had it writing an article a few weeks ago. Just suddenly three hours had passed. It’s a pretty great feeling.”

As a creative practitioner, this is the place you want to be. And as long as the activity you are experiencing flow within is not damaging to you or others, it will generally be followed by happiness.

However, in order for you to be able to achieve flow, you have to have a certain level of proficiency at your chosen practice so you can meet the challenges that practice presents.

Your skills and the level of challenge must also increase over time to prevent boredom and allow you to progress. The only way to achieve these things is through conscious work.

It is the preparation you do, specifically for the particular creative task and the knowledge and skills you have gathered over a lifetime, that allows you to have an idea and to determine whether or not it is useful.

That is why current academic definitions of creativity include everything that leads up to, surrounds, and comes after a moment of insight and contributes to the development of a creative work.

Although Bowditch would say that it refers to a creative career rather than creativity itself, current research would include the hard work she does leading up to that effortless state of flow within the creative process itself.

Bowditch said hers “is a self-taught story”. While she had piano lessons as a child, she
said for the most part her training has been learning instruments on her own, picking up a few formal classes along the way.

Bowditch can trace the steps in the development of her musical ability. She says many of the skills that she no longer gives a second thought to, skills that are integral to being a musician, were things she consciously had to learn.

“It’s very much like driving a car. When I first started playing in public I couldn’t sing and play guitar at the same time. Then I could sing and play guitar but I couldn’t sing and play with the loop pedal, and then you just learn those skills and they become unconscious,” she said.

“The point of playing all those shitty gigs for all those years is that you get a chance to learn those skills out of the public eye, and hopefully by the time you’re actually moving forward in your creative career, if that’s what you choose to do, you have some strength and some practice behind you.”

Bowditch made the decision to commit to her own creative career when she was 27. This meant for many years her song writing was mainly done very early in the morning while her young children slept or before she had to go to work, and Bowditch writes a lot of songs.

“Songs are like ice bergs,” Bowditch said. “You’ve always written 50,000 more songs than people actually hear.”

Yet, committing to life as a musician, with her family, is one of the things Bowditch is most proud of. Bowditch and her husband Marty Brown (who has also played in Bowditch’s band and produced some of her albums) have three children together.

Music was also part of Bowditch’s own childhood. Her father “had his three chords that he really loved on guitar” while her mother particularly loved to sing, and she said they would often sing together as a family.

Sharing a love of music seems to be very important to Bowditch.

Bowditch devotes a lot of time to mentoring young musicians, leading classes and
providing words of encouragement. On her website she says: “Later this year, I’ll begin using my website to share everything I know about how to make your living by doing the thing you love (and why this makes the world a far better place too!).”

Bowditch cites “humans” as her biggest inspiration and it seems that making those connections, those collaborations with others, is a significant part of what she refers to as her creative life.

“We are humans relating in the world. We meet other humans. They affect us. My way of processing that is for me to write a song about it,” she said.

“I’m just proud of the fact that I committed with my family to living the creative life, which is a really rich and exciting life, and that as part of my choice I now get to encourage other people to create as well.”

When I called Bowditch she was doing her grocery shopping – “Can you give me just one sec here? I’m just going to order some olives…Okay love, I’m back with you. The lady here at the deli asked me if I was Italian because I use my hands so much when I’m talking!” – and that night she was cooking dinner for seven people before they would rehearse together.

This fostering of community and relationships with others in her industry is important to Bowditch, just as she values the connection she has with her fans.

During last year’s Winter Secrets tour, she invited the audience at her gigs to give feedback on her songs and used her website to answer questions that fans wrote on pieces of paper at her shows.

In many ways, Bowditch is providing the same support for others that she received and was so valuable for her own career.

“I didn’t know I was on track with my ideas until one day finally, after much encouragement, I gave a tape of songs that I’d written to a musician that I knew,” she said.

“And I was able to see from his reaction that I was on to something. It wasn’t really until
that point that I had that faith."

Advice from others in your industry not only helps you work out whether or not your ideas are creative and helps you hone your ability to make those judgements for yourself, it can also help you understand how to operate within your industry.

Any creative domain has its own sets of rules and structures that you must understand and be able to use and operate within. In the music industry, that includes a range of legal and technical considerations from contracts with all those involved, to the specifics of the sound quality of your recording.

“There are a whole lot of rules and structures that exist within the music industry and within the creative industry that are necessary and equally frustrating at the same time,” Bowditch said.

“I think it’s absolutely imperative that you learn those skills early – before you sign anything, before you commit to anything – and that was probably why it took me until I was 27 to really commit to a creative career, because I didn’t want to know the rules. I didn’t know how I could find room in my head for that administration when all I really wanted to do was write songs.

“So that is where good conversations with elders in your field really come in handy. And that’s what I did, I sought out that information."

Bowditch sees these rules as separate to the creative process of writing a song, but in many ways, if we consider creative activity within that broader context and as the result of a multitude of influences and interconnections, knowledge of these rules inevitably affects the entire way you operate as a creative practitioner and the work you produce as you are producing it.

Regardless of the way you define it, ask any creative practitioner why they do what they do and most will tell you the same story as Bowditch. They do it because of the way it makes them feel.

“Joy. A great deal of joy. And being hooked into that real high of being in the middle of a creative maelstrom,” Bowditch said.
It makes them happy.
Alison Bell

Live performance, and theatre in particular, is about relationships: the relationships explored within the world of a play, of characters to each other and to their stories, of directors to actors and to the stories they tell, and of actors to audiences in performance.

Live performance is particularly unique in this last respect, in that the process of creation occurs in front of and in collaboration with the audience.

Performance is not repetition, although the basic dialogue, set and movement may be the same. Instead, shows change in response to each new audience and to the relationship established between audience and performer each night.

For actor Alison Bell, it is a curiosity about this human interaction and the development of these relationships that attracts her most to her particular creative practice.

“I’ve been thinking a little bit about this recently…I think I’m genuinely curious about human nature – human beings and how we behave, and how we interact, and how we coexist,” Bell said. And she uses her own relationships and interactions with those around her to explore that curiosity.

“Relationships with my friends and family and people in my life, and encounters with other individuals play a large part in my work,” she said.

“Because I think acting is actually about having the capacity to be other than yourself and to understand or empathise ways of behaviour that are not necessarily familiar to you.”

These relationships with her family also influenced her decision to become an actor. Both Bell’s parents were involved in amateur theatre when she was growing up in Grenfell and then Canberra – her mother as an actor and her father as a set and props designer.

Influenced by this exposure, Bell said she also remembers making the decision to pursue an acting career after seeing a production by Bell Shakespeare.
“I saw Richard III and Romeo and Juliet, and it was in 1993 I think, I would’ve been 14 or 15, and I just realised that was what I wanted to do. I found it deeply affecting being in the audience when I was that age,” she said.

“I was a very shy kid but for some reason when I was on stage I felt quite liberated. In primary school, I remember that I realised that when I was in Grade Five and I had to do a performance, it kind of actually felt like a natural high, and I know that sounds a bit pretentious but it just kind of felt like where I belonged.”

Bell, unarguably, belongs. Now, to her relief, she rarely has to audition for shows – she describes auditioning as “a horrible experience” – but is instead usually approached with scripts.

Bell usually knows at least a year in advance which shows she will be doing, and this year is particularly full already.

She is currently rehearsing Tribes (Melbourne Theatre Company) which will begin its season in February, will follow that by reprising her role in The Book of Everything (Belvoir) for a two week season in New York and return to Australia for rehearsals for Old Man (Belvoir), followed by A Conversation Piece (Belvoir), and is also optioned to film a third season of the ABC TV show Laid at the end of the year.

It’s a demanding schedule on its own, but its scale is also magnified by Bell’s approach to her work, which she describes as “obsessive”.

“As soon as I know that I’m on a show, that’s when the acting starts. As soon as I’ve said yes to a project, even then, even in my head I’m already working as an actor. I’m already acting when I’m reading the play. The process starts then…I can’t not. I don’t know why but it starts as soon as I know who I’m playing, and every time I read them I can’t switch that part of my brain off,” she said.

“Sometimes I wish I had a job where you clocked off when you walked out of the office. But when you’re creating a show, creating a character, it kind of lives with me all the time while I’m working on it and while I’m performing it. It’s a hard thing to shake.”
For this reason, Bell said the most important piece of advice she has received, and what has now become a personal rule for her practice, is to look after herself and to “live well”.

This includes making sure she has nice meals when she comes home and doing exercise such as pilates and yoga. The more demanding a role, the more important this becomes.

Bell said she found playing Rosalind in *As You Like It* last year particularly emotionally exhausting. She said she felt nervous – “A little bit sick. A little bit terrified” – every night of the five week season, and attributed this to the character’s rapid swinging between different heightened emotional states.

However, for an actor, the creative process is not just about understanding your own character and their emotions in isolation, but more so about their relationships with the other characters, and the emotions that come from this.

Bell said that building the world of the play, and trying to stay in that reality, relies on that interaction. It is also one of the things she enjoys most about her creative practice.

“When you get up on the floor, book in hand, script in hand, you start to experience what it is to have that exchange of energy with another actor,” she said.

“You can sit in your bedroom all you like and read plays and act by yourself in your bedroom but I think what I love about it is working with people and I guess the aim is always for it to be an interaction, and not just a case of learning your lines and delivering them but actually genuinely communicating with someone else.”

Professional actors in Australia have only a short time to perfect that interaction before the performance season, with the rehearsal period for a professional theatre company lasting only four to five weeks.

However, the nature of this rehearsal period and the development of these relationships vary greatly depending upon the approach of the director.

Bell said she has worked with a variety of directors with many different approaches.
“One of the main directors I work with, you do a lot of talking but when you’re on the floor he lets you go. He doesn’t interrupt very much. He just lets you find your way and he’s quite patient with allowing you to find it,” she said.

“And then you have other directors who stop you every line or every second line and tell you where to be and what your subtext might be in that moment – who don’t leave it up to you so much. And there’s the director I’m working with presently who is very Socratic in his method, and so you will do a lot of discussing but you won’t be necessarily answering questions.

“He will be asking questions for you to just think about and that’s what you take onto the floor with you. So there are as many methods as there are directors, so the process is always different.”

In this way, the shape of a production is largely determined by the actors’ relationships with each other as well as the directors’ relationship with the actors. However, the relationship of an audience to a work is just as significant as the process that occurs in the rehearsal room.

Many actors, including Bell, speak about being able to identify a stage in the creative process where a show needs an audience.

Bell makes the point that as an actor is inside the work – physically so – it is very difficult to make judgements about the quality of that work, and therefore external audience feedback becomes crucial.

“I mean it’s designed to be performed live, theatre. There’s a moment where you can really feel that a show needs that other element and that is the live audience to respond to it, so you kind of get a feeling, so can get an understanding of the response that it will garner,” she said.

“It’s particularly necessary when you’re doing a comedy and the director has seen all the funny bits thousands of times and everyone in the room has stopped laughing.”

In this way, the process of creating theatre does not occur solely in the rehearsal room.
with a product emerging to be presented on opening night and repeated each performance afterwards. Rather, the show is newly created in front of and in collaboration with each new audience.

As a result, just as no two audiences are the same, no two performances are the same.

As the audience reacts to the work being presented the work itself changes, with the performers altering their presentation, emphasis and energy in response to that live feedback. Bell said that unpredictability is something she enjoys most about theatre.

“Some gags are just sure things – every night, that’ll be a laugh. But there are those awful performances where you go, ‘No one laughed at that gag that gets a laugh every single time! Tonight it was tumbleweeds!’” she said.

“Audiences. Part of their charm is that they’re unique. Each house is a unique house, and it’s funny, you can never 100% rely on a reaction. You never know what you’re going to get.”

Theatre, like all live performance, is itself unique in this way, in that it may be viewed as a live demonstration of the interaction of the individual, social, and cultural components necessary for creative practice to occur, in all its forms.

The actors, the individuals, interact with the cultural artefact of the script and knowledge of how to perform it, while doing so in reaction to the social judgements of the audience, who are also participating with the cultural knowledge of what theatre is and what it means to be an audience member.

These relationships are what allow creativity to occur. As Bell said, “That’s what makes acting exciting. Exchange.”

Theatre emerges out of the relationship of actors to the text and characters, actors to each other and characters to each other, directors to script and characters, directors to actors and production crew, and finally, the audience to the actors and the script as it is performed.

The same principle can be applied to all creative practice, as the work of all individual
creative practitioners is shaped by their relationships and interactions with those around them and the cultural context their work exists in.

And just as actors perform their show a little differently each night, so too does each artist, writer, scientist or musician take what they have learned and use it to improve whatever comes next.

“So every night you come in and you have another go,” Bell said. “See if you can make it better.”
Kim Baston

The romantics and the Inspirationists say that creativity exists somewhere outside the ordinary operation of the world. It is apart, beyond, other.

“Throw away the rule book!” “Think outside the square!” they cry.

But these catch-cries and the ideas they spring from, that creativity is born from the absence of constraints, have no place in or connection to the reality of creative practice.

We are taught to live in fear of squashing our creativity, of confining it with rules and limitations. Yet all action, including creativity, is performed within, governed by, and replicates existing structures.

Structure enables creativity to occur. New work evolves out of the traditions of old work. Our ability to attempt a creative task relies on knowledge of relevant rules and each decision we make during the process is a parameter we set for ourselves.

It could be argued that the clearer the parameters or guides you have to work within the easier it is to be creative.

Composer Kim Baston embraces structure. Her career is based on an understanding of musical structures and the ability to work within and fulfil the requirements of a brief.

She doesn't think of these things as being limiting or constraining but rather as the foundations that enable creativity and guide the creative process.

Working this way Kim Baston has had what she calls a portfolio career. “The scraps of paper that you shove in an envelope kind of career,” she said.

Baston was born in London in 1959 but moved to Australia at the end of 1993 with her Australian husband.

Primarily she is a musician and a composer but has applied these skills to a range of occupations.
Baston can play the oboe, flute, saxophone, accordion and a range of unusual instruments such as the gothic harp, although the piano remains her favourite.

She composes music for theatre and film, has toured with various bands and often turns her hand to directing.

Baston lectures in circus history and circus culture at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in Melbourne and created and runs the NICA clown band.

She has also completed a PhD on the function of music in theatre and says she now has a passion for research despite originally planning to drop out of the program after a year.

However, Baston said her career in music really began because as a child she wasn’t very good at ice-skating.

“My parents thought, according to their story, that I needed to have a hobby because otherwise I’d be a lonely person in later life and they decided that as we lived near an ice-skating rink I should just do ice-skating,” she said.

“And I was terrible, unbelievably appalling at ice-skating. A dreadful, dreadful thing. And the second hobby, they thought, ‘she seems to like playing on Granny’s old piano and so maybe we’ll give her piano lessons.’ So I’m glad I wasn’t any good at ice-skating.”

Although trained in classical music Baston said she didn’t feel she was suited for a career in the area, preferring the opportunity theatre offered to explore a range of musical styles.

Now after many years of composing there are few styles Baston’s career hasn’t covered.

After developing an understanding of the structural foundations of a wide variety of genres Baston says she can write you anything from a Renaissance harmony to a country and western song and even played in a heavy metal band for a recent show.
This flexibility and diversity, both in the type of works she does and the hours in which she does it, suits Baston's preferred working methods and consequently aids her creativity.

In order to be creative it is not only important to understand how the structures of your domain operate but also to be aware of how you work best and to organise your habits and environment accordingly.

Some creative domains are obviously more flexible than others. Baston is lucky her profession is flexible enough to allow her to make music late at night when she feels she works best.

Baston also likes to clean her house before she begins a project and does the same when the project is over. She even includes the time she takes to do this in the fee she charges.

She also likes to see her ideas in a form that can be physically moved around.

“I write all my ideas, all my little bits of scenes on a series of cards, like little file cards or A4 paper, all the bits that I know about, and then I spread them all around my living room which is purposefully free from furniture so I can do that,” she said.

“And then I move it around till I see something that I think will make a shape and then I work from that. I find physically moving things useful.”

If Baston has trouble finding a solution she breaks the tasks into smaller pieces, tackling one section at a time.

“Sometimes it’s just trying to forget about the overall massiveness of what you have to do,” she said.

“Now I might have 10 separate pieces of music, so if one’s not working I’ll just move onto another one and work on that and then that may suggest answers to the other one.”
Overall it is a process that has worked well for Baston. She never applies for jobs and says she has never really had to. People approach her based on her reputation.

However, she doesn’t view what she does as particularly special and when first asked is unsure if she should call herself creative.

Baston sees her work as essentially problem solving. She talks about building blocks, of developing interesting ways of following instructions.

“I’m a hack,” she said. “I like writing music but, you know, I only do it if you’re paying me to do it.”

Yet just because Baston takes what she calls a “practical” approach to her work and wants to be paid for it doesn’t mean she isn’t creative.

In fact, the concept of creativity as problem solving comes far closer to explaining her individual experience of the process than ideas of genius, innate talent or extraordinary thought processes.

From this perspective creative works evolve out of existing parameters and structures, of questions to be answered. They are the culmination of a range of choices to be made throughout the process, informed by all the choices that have come before.

Baston says she enjoys having deadlines to meet and briefs to fulfil.

“I like the limitations, otherwise it’s an abyss of nothingness really,” she said.

“And that’s always the hard bit with starting something new, because a lot of it is very open, and as soon as you start narrowing down the possibilities it becomes much easier to work within them and every decision you make kind of fills in the abyss a little bit.”

Essentially Baston’s career is built on using the structures she has become familiar with and narrowing these possibilities to make music that has a purpose.

Each show has a different brief and the music she creates must fulfil the specifications
of that brief.

She might be required to slow down or speed up the action of a film or a play, or to create a particular mood using a particular style in a particular scene.

Each piece of music must run for a specific amount of time and most importantly all the music must be completed within the project’s timeline.

Baston says the ability to fulfil the requirements of the brief in the allocated time is crucial. She says if you can’t do that you can’t do the job.

“You can be a fantastic artist in many ways but if you can’t work within the structure that you’ve got, within the deadline, then you’re useless,” she said.

“It is about somebody coming and saying, ‘I need that piece of music in two days. Bring me something.’ You have to do that otherwise you will not get employed again. That’s the nature of it…You have to be flexible and you have to be not precious and you have to deliver on time.”

Baston recognises that creativity doesn’t exist unattached to the rest of the world. She knows that the process of creativity is inseparable from the context in which it occurs and the principles that guide the production of a work.

Baston says, “None of the stuff that I’ve been doing is ever in isolation. It’s a piece of music that has a function…So therefore if it doesn’t fulfil that purpose it’s not a successful piece of art. Its terms are not just its own terms.”

Baston’s attitude reflects a key idea in current understandings of creativity, that is, the concept of appropriateness.

For a work to be recognised as creative, to be published, displayed, seen or heard it must fulfil the requirements of the domain it is created for and be considered a valuable addition.

Baston’s ability to make valued contributions to the domain of music in such a variety of styles comes from a fundamental understanding of the way music works, that is, of its
Structures operate at a number of levels within all creative practice. At a most basic level there are specific reasons we can identify a work for what it is, for example a sculpture as a sculpture, a novel as a novel and a song as a song. We recognise melodies, notes, chords, verses and choruses.

Within that, there are particular reasons certain music belongs to certain genres and can be identified as such. We can differentiate reggae from death metal because of the way the songs are structured, for example the tempo, the type of instruments used and how they are played.

Baston’s versatility lies in her ability to recognise and replicate these structures and to identify which style is most appropriate for which task.

If she doesn’t know how to play a certain style she finds out and adds it to the vast and growing number of skills in her musical vocabulary.

It’s a challenge she enjoys. For example, she recently had to compose a hip hop piece.

“I’m not a hip hop person, I’m an old girl who hates hip hop, but I had to make something that sounded like a hip hop piece which was quite fun to do,” Baston said.

“It took me a while to work it out but if I had to do another now I could go, ‘oh I can use all these buttons on my computer program that I never bother using which are made for that type of work’.”

Baston is most proud of these things, of the achievements that most people wouldn’t know about or notice. For example when a soundtrack has a clever relationship of keys, being able to produce an entire play in two weeks, or when someone doesn’t argue with her fee.

Baston says in most projects she has three jobs to do, the job the brief requires, the job the director wants and the job of pleasing herself.

“More often than not, because often if I’m working in music in theatre you have a very
short time to do something, it’s more likely that you will do the job the director wants and the job that the show wants – which sometimes can be different things, sometimes you have to protect the director from stupid decision they might be inclined to make – but it’s less easy to completely satisfy sometimes what you think needs to be done,” Baston said.

She is happiest when she can do all three.

Baston has built herself a flexible career that allows her to explore her interests and work the way she likes best. She can work the hours she wants on a range of vastly different projects and be selective about the ones she chooses.

Yet with this flexibility Baston realises that everything she does exists within parameters and that these parameters are actually what enable her to be creative.

Baston is paid to do a job she loves. She makes music within strict parameters, she understands and relishes their importance, and despite romantic perceptions of links between freedom and creativity she is no less creative for this.

However, I don’t think she would care if you thought she was.

“If someone’s going to pay me to write music, excellent, fabulous, then we’re all happy,” she said.

“This is all a fabulous way of spending your life, I think.”
Part Two: Exegesis

An Exploration of the Creative Process Through the Practice of Freelance Print Journalism
1.0 Introduction

As conducted from within the rational tradition, this research begins with the premise that creativity is a process that can be understood and that, despite enduring romantic and inspirationist claims to the contrary, to do so is not to damage but to facilitate it (Boden, 2004; McIntyre, 2012a; Negus & Pickering, 2004; Pope, 2005; Runco & Pritzker, 1999; Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg, 2006).

This PhD project consists of two parts: a creative project and an exegesis. Using the methodology of practitioner based enquiry (PBE) I engaged in the practice of freelance print journalism, producing a series of 20 feature articles titled Profiling Creativity. Each article focused on a different creative practitioner and their experience of creativity, and these practitioners were drawn from a range of areas of practice – those traditionally associated with creativity such as art and music, and those that are not, such as science and maths – as a demonstration of the diversity of creative activity (McIntyre, 2012a; Sawyer, 2006). In keeping with the requirements of the methodology of PBE, I maintained a journal throughout the process of developing Profiling Creativity that documents and provides evidence for my experiences of creativity. The exegesis that follows is an exploration of the nature of creativity as I experienced it in writing these profiles, as documented in my journal, and as the practitioners interviewed for the profiles described their experiences of creativity in their own particular practices.

Primarily, this research explores the nature of creativity as the product of a system, emerging from the interaction of the individual, culture and society, using Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity (1988, 1997a, 1999b) and its three components – domain, field and individual – as the primary framework for this investigation. This analysis also draws on numerous other theoretical perspectives within the scholarly research on creativity and cultural production. For example, Pierre Bourdieu’s theories on cultural production (1977, 1996b) are closely aligned with and provide additional depth to the examination of Csikszentmihalyi’s model (McIntyre, 2012a). Similarly, discussions of structure as both enabling and constraining creative practice (Giddens, 1979; Wolff, 1981), motivation for engaging in creative activity (Amabile & Tighe, 1993), and the conceptualisation of creativity as a series of stages (Wallas, 1976) also provide useful insight the nature of this process. It is by engaging in the practice of freelance print journalism, with the additional access this gave me to the experiences of other cultural producers, that this particular PBE project allowed me to
test out these ideas in a way that not only provides insight into the nature of the
creative process as I personally experienced but also into the commonalities of all
creative activity.

1.1 Operational Definitions

This research will employ Phillip McIntyre’s definition of creativity as:

A productive activity whereby objects, processes and ideas are generated from
antecedent conditions through the agency of someone, whose knowledge to do
so comes from somewhere and the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued
addition to the store of knowledge in at least one social setting (2008b, p. 1).

Building upon McIntyre’s definition, Janet Fulton uses the following definition of
the print journalist in her examination of creativity and this practice: “A print journalist
produces news-oriented non-fiction work, primarily via writing, using identified
professional practices and presents that work to an audience via a print or online
medium” (2011a, p. 10). As this research project specifically examines freelance print
journalism, and as Edstrom and Ladendorf refer to freelancers as “self-employed
journalists” (2012, p. 1), in making a minor addition to Fulton’s definition the freelance
print journalist will be defined for the purposes of this research as someone who is self-
employed and produces news-oriented non-fiction work, primarily via writing, using
identified professional practices and presents that work to an audience via a print or
online medium.

These definitions will be explored in greater detail in the examination of the
relevant scholarly literature and overview of the context of this research contained in
the following chapter.
2.0 An Overview of the Context of the Project

2.1 Communication and Media

This research project is located within the discipline of communication. However, the popular use of the term “communication” implies a certain simplicity that belies the diversity of origin, definition, and application of this particular area of scholarly activity.

Communication research has been applied to a wide range of specific areas of study, and the methods and methodologies used to carry out this research span from objective to subjective territory (Berger, 2000, 2005; Griffin, 2000; Hornig Priest, 1996; Tan, 1985; Weerakkody, 2009). The areas focused on include media framing (Gillespie & Toynbee, 2006; Schirato & Yell, 2000), technology (Flew, 2005; Hirst & Harrison, 2007; Mackay & O'Sullivan, 1999; McLuhan, 1974), gender studies (Gauntlett, 2002; Kearney, 2012; van Zoonen, 1994, 2002), rhetoric (McLuhan, 1974), representation (Toynbee, 2006), media effects – particularly in relation to media violence (C. A. Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007; Potter, 1999), international communication (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2006; Thussu, 2000), and audience studies (Hall, 1973; 1992; Moores, 1993; Morley, 1993; Turnbull, 2010).

This diverse set of applications has been centred in an equally diverse set of understandings of communication, with the study of communication and media having its origins in disciplines as varied as politics, economics, sociology (Briggs & Burke, 2002; Gittlin, 2002; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008; Tunstall, 1970), psychology, behavioural science, linguistics, cultural studies (Carey, 1989, 2002; Collins et al., 1986; Kellner, 1995; Lull, 2000) and semiotics (Cobley & Jansz, 2004; Gripsrud, 2006). Such a multidisciplinary list makes comprehensive analysis of communication studies somewhat difficult, yet as Denis McQuail argues, “the absence of a fixed disciplinary base during much of the history of mass communication theory has held back the development of a body of substantive theory, but it has promoted change and diversity of theoretical approaches” (2002, p. 5). Introductions by researchers such as McQuail (1987, 1994, 1997, 2002), McLuhan (1974), Cunningham & Turner (2002), Schirato & Yell (2000), Gillespie & Toynbee (2006), Severin & Tankard (2001), Fiske (1990), and Flew (2005) provide an overview of the numerous approaches to the study of communication and media and the particular areas of study these approaches are
Em Griffin, in his particular attempt to “make sense out of the great diversity in the field of communication theory”, identifies seven major traditions of research (2000, p. 47). These are:

1. The Socio-psychological Tradition: Communication as Interpersonal Influence. This largely objectivist approach is primarily concerned with the systematic testing of cause-and-effect relationships in sending and receiving messages to “predict when a communication behaviour will succeed and when it will fail” (Griffin, 2000, p. 35).

2. The Cybernetic Tradition: Communication as Information Processing. This approach “regards communication as the link connecting the separate parts of any system” including computer, family and media systems (Griffin, 2000, p. 36). The cybernetic approach introduces concepts of noise and feedback and their potential to alter information in sent messages.

3. The Rhetorical Tradition: Communication as Artful Public Address. This approach originates in Greco-Roman oratorical tradition and views speech and public speaking as important and influential. It also emphasises “the power and beauty of language” and seeks to improve rhetoric through stylistic devices and training (Griffin, 2000, p. 39).

4. The Semiotic Tradition: Communication as the Process of Sharing Meaning Through Signs. According to Griffin, “A sign is anything that can stand for something else,” including objects, actions and words (2000, p. 39). The semiotic approach is concerned with the meanings humans ascribe to certain signs and symbols that have no inherent meaning of their own (Griffin, 2000, p. 41).

5. The Socio-cultural Tradition: Communication as the Creation and Enactment of Social Reality. Those in the socio-cultural tradition argue that humans create and reproduce their reality through the language that they use. They contend that different languages and vocabularies not only reflect social and cultural differences but also construct them (Griffin, 2000, pp. 41-43).

6. The Critical Tradition: Communication as a Reflective Challenge of Unjust
Discourse. The critical tradition originated with the German Frankfurt School, includes the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1973), and argues that language, the mass media, and scientific study perpetuate social inequality and injustice (Griffin, 2000, pp. 43-45).

7. The Phenomenological Tradition: Communication as the Experience of Self and Others through Discourse. This tradition emphasises the importance of individual subjective experience and the sharing of this experience with one another through “an intentional process in which the only agenda both parties have is to understand what it’s like to be the other” (Griffin, 2000, p. 46).

Each of these seven traditions appears to have its own separate agenda, vocabulary and definition of communication and research agendas yet the lines between them often blur (Griffin 2000, p.47). For example, it could be argued that the particular research project being undertaken here is closely linked to the phenomenological tradition, as it is centred on my individual experience of creativity seen through the practice of freelance journalism, as well as the experience of other creative practitioners as shared through interviews. However, this project also explores the theory that creativity is the product of an identifiable system (namely Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity (1988, 1997a, 1999b), which will be further examined in section 2.3 of this literature review and explored in greater detail as the framework for the analysis section of this exegesis) a theory that corresponds with the principles of the cybernetic tradition. Thus, in demonstration of the potential for hybridity, my research exists both within and across a number of the identified traditions of communication.

From one perspective, the study of communication is all about messages: how they are created, transmitted and received, as well as the factors that influence these components, how they do it, and where they originate (Cobley, 1996). However, it can be argued that the diversity in approaches, as seen above, exists in the representation of this process, which elements are included, and how they are privileged. In correspondence with this idea, the many models that are used to represent the process of communication exhibit a similar diversity of theory and confluence of approach to the research traditions they originate from. James W. Carey argues that these models not only represent communication but actually determine how it is carried out and “consequently, create what we disingenuously pretend they merely describe” (1989, p.
Denis McQuail identifies four such models of communication: the transmission model, the ritual or expressive model, the display or publicity model, and the reception model (1994).

The transmission model, based on the work of Harold Lasswell and Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, is perhaps the most dominant of the four (McQuail, 1994, pp. 49-50). Often referred to as the process model, it focuses on the origin of the message and regards communication as a linear process, concerned with “who says what to whom, through what channel and with what effect?” (Carey, 1989, p. 15; Fiske, 1990; McQuail, 1994, pp. 49-50; Schirato & Yell, 2000, pp. 4-5). This model may be represented as:

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Sender ➔ Message ➔ Receiver
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(Schirato & Yell, 2000, p. 4)

The second model identified by McQuail is the ritual or expressive model (1994). This model focuses on the mutual satisfaction of sender and receiver, development of community, and shared understanding and belief (Carey, 1989, p. 18; McQuail, 1994, p. 50). In contrast, the display or publicity model of communication recognises the purpose of mass communication may be to “simply catch hold of visual and aural attention”, for example through advertising (McQuail, 1994, p. 52). Finally, the fourth model identified by McQuail is the reception model. The emphasis of this model lies at the opposite end of the process implied by the transmission model, with power in the hands of the receiver rather than the sender. In this model, the receiver determines the meaning of the message that is sent, and all messages are open, polysemic, and “interpreted according to the context and culture of receivers” (McQuail, 1994, p. 53). This model is also referred to as the cultural context model (McIntyre, 2012b; Schirato & Yell, 2000).

Just as this particular project spans two different traditions of communication, it also exists at the intersection of two of these models: the transmission model and the reception model. The transmission model focuses primarily on the sender of the message, which is particularly relevant to my research with its focus on creative practitioners. However, despite its dominance, the transmission model is ultimately too simplistic to adequately describe the process of communication (McQuail, 1994; Meyrowitz, 2002, p. 100). As McQuail states, the model is “incomplete and misleading.
as a representation…of the diversity of communication processes which are at work” (1994, p. 51). Specifically, the transmission model fails to consider the influence of the context that messages are created, sent and received in, an element that is particularly relevant to current research in creativity (Bourdieu, 1977; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a). The reception or cultural context model, on the other hand, focuses specifically on reception and the context it occurs within. However, as this model tends to omit the sender, it too provides an inadequate representation of the process of communication. Thus, this project takes place in the confluence of the transmission and cultural context model, existing both within and across the two frameworks, just as it bridges the phenomenological and cybernetic traditions of communication research. Therefore, it is necessary for this creative project to consider and combine both of these models.

In the vein of the oft cited “thesis, antithesis, synthesis” trajectory of theory, Phillip McIntyre proposes a reconciliation of these models of communication (McIntyre, 2012b). Emerging from the work of Bourdieu and Csikszentmihalyi in the study of creativity and cultural production, and focusing on the questions of how messages are created, McIntyre proposes that the process of communication is more appropriately conceived of as a system. This system comprises a symbol structure that provides information necessary for specific acts of communication, an agent who understands and manipulates those symbols, and a field made up of those who share the usage and recognition of that information and constitute the social structure communication must take place in (McIntyre, 2012b). Thus, communication emerges as a product of the operation of this system, taking into account both social and cultural context and including but not privileging either sender or receiver. It is this model that is most applicable to the way my research into creativity and journalism is conceived and conducted, particularly with its focus on Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity, as further articulated in section 2.3 of this literature review and explored throughout this exegesis (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1997b). With this research now located in the context of a broad disciplinary framework we can now turn our attention to the more specific aspects of this project. Since I am examining freelance print journalism and creativity an exploration of these two areas of concern will now be outlined in the following chapters of this literature review.
2.2 Freelance Print Journalism

As I am exploring creativity through the practice of freelance print journalism, with the creative project taking the form of a series of character profiles, the research is also clearly situated in the literature on this particular practice. Journalism practice as research is becoming an increasingly popular form of enquiry and topic of discussion (Niblock, 2007, 2012). Lynette Sheridan Burns contends that the reflection involved in this is:

the bridge between journalism theory and professional practice. It is through critical self-reflection that journalists develop self-reliance, confidence, problem-solving abilities, cooperation and adaptability while simultaneously gaining knowledge. Reflection is also the process by which journalists learn to recognise their own assumptions and understand their place in the wider social context (2002, p. 33).

The place of my research in the continuum of research as practice is more fully explored in the methodology chapter that follows this literature review. However, in order to discuss journalism it is first necessary to define it. As discussed in the introduction to this project, defining the word journalism – what it actually is and who does it – is a particularly difficult task. In fact, most current literature on the subject contains multiple discussions of the problems associated with this task (Conley & Lamble, 2006; Harcup, 2004, pp. 2-9; Sheridan Burns, 2002; Tapsall & Varley, 2001, pp. 3-20). From this we can discern that contemporary journalists fulfil many roles across many media forms and these roles and forms are constantly evolving, yet journalism research has struggled to accurately reflect the changing landscape (Tapsall & Varley, 2001; Zelizer, 2007). Tapsall and Varley argue that “the journalistic environment has altered almost beyond recognition, and continues to evolve rapidly; however, our understanding of what or who a journalist is has not progressed at the same pace” (2001, p. 1).

In existing attempts to define the term, some prefer to focus on what a journalist does (Tapsall & Varley, 2001). McQuail in Harcup argues that journalism is “writing (and the audiovisual equivalent) for public media” (McQuail in Harcup, 2004, p. 2). Similarly, Hachten defines journalism as “the gathering, the processing, and delivery of important and interesting information and developments by newspapers, magazines, or
broadcast media” (2005, p. xiv). Others theorists include a social element or component of duty as a distinguishing feature of the journalist, as opposed to those who simply use journalistic skills (Harcup, 2012; Tapsall & Varley, 2001). Tapsall and Varley point out that the type of work a journalist produces depends on the role they see themselves fulfilling, whether as a watchdog, truth-teller or recorder of history (2001, pp. 3-4). Harcup argues “journalists have a more social role and that goes beyond the production of commodities to sell in the marketplace. Journalists inform society about itself and make public that which would otherwise be private” (2004, p. 2).

In a reflection of the way McIntyre (2008b) defines creativity, as previously outlined in the introduction, Janet Fulton uses the following definition in her examination of creativity and the print journalist: “A print journalist produces news-oriented non-fiction work, primarily via writing, using identified professional practices and presents that work to an audience via a print or online medium” (Fulton, 2011a, p. 10). Fulton’s definition, as does the majority of her research (2008, 2010, 2011b), draws upon literature in the study of creativity, as discussed in detail in the following chapter, and reflects the principles of Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity, thus recognising the influence of the individual, social, and cultural in the production of journalistic work (1988, 1997a, 1999b). As this systems model is the chief theoretical perspective underpinning my research, Fulton’s definition is particularly appropriate for use in this project.

For the purposes of this research I occupy the position of a freelance print journalist engaged in creative practice. In comparison to formulating a definition of journalism, defining freelance appears to be a much easier task. Edstrom and Ladendorf refer to freelancers as “self-employed journalists in the media industries who deliver material to the press, electronic media, the Internet and the information businesses” (2012, p. 1). With the addition of this element to Fulton’s definition, we can define a freelance print journalist in the following way:

A freelance print journalist is self-employed and produces news-oriented non-fiction work, primarily via writing, using identified professional practices and presents that work to an audience via a print or online medium.

This is the definition of freelance print journalist that will be used throughout the
analysis contained in this exegesis. In the literature, there is an ongoing discussion of the advantages of freelancing, particularly in the rapidly evolving media environment and the shrinking of news organisations (Edstrom & Ladendorf, 2012, p. 9). For example, in their study of Swedish freelance journalists, Edstrom and Ladendorf discovered:

Rapid changes in the media industries make the idea of a lifelong career with one employer less likely, and even employed work has increasingly become structured by short-term projects and goals. Being self-employed transfers the decision about changes and transformations to the individual him- or herself, rather than the organizations...Going freelance might provide the opportunity for assignments with more depth and analysis than employed work (2012, p. 9).

There is a certain implication of freedom in the role of the freelancer reflected in this statement. However, while a freelance journalist may not have to comply with specific structures unique to the news room, they still most certainly operate with and within the most fundamental principles, influences, constraints and structures of journalism (Fulton, 2011a; Harcup, 2004, pp. 12-27; McIntyre, 2012a, pp. 103-117). As Ricketson contends:

A hard lesson for any writer to learn is that the principles of good writing and storytelling are sound and not in need of overhaul. Harder still is the lesson that at the outset writers do not really know much about writing (Ricketson, 2004, p. 187).

In order to gain a firm grasp of these principles, it is useful to consider the numerous available guides for journalists that provide a foundation for understanding practice across all platforms and also for writing feature articles and profiles in particular. Such publications include Conley & Lamble’s *The Daily Miracle* (2006), Maskell & Perry’s *Write to Publish* (1999), Lynette Sheridan Burns *Understanding Journalism* (2002), Tony Harcup’s *Journalism: Principles and Practice* (2004), Bell’s *The Language of News Media* (1991) and Matthew Ricketson’s *Writing Feature Stories* (2004). The profiles I am creating here as a freelance journalist for this project are based on each individual practitioner’s experience of the creative process and firmly placed within the context of research on creativity, yet despite this additional element they still follow the traditional structure and elements of the character profile as
indicated by the various guides. These guides offer an understanding of all aspects of researching and writing stories, particularly features, as well as traditional news values, finer points of grammar and structure, advice on how to overcome pressures and difficulties, as well analysis of the history, nature, and role of the journalist. There is also a similar amount of literature that focuses specifically on individual journalistic skills, the most prominent skill being the media interview (Adams, 2001; P. Bell & Van Leeuwen, 1994; Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002). A number of writers (Conley & Lamble, 2006; Ricketson, 2004; Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002; Sheridan Burns, 2002) agree that the interview is a fundamental skill for journalists, with a range of advice for obtaining, preparing and conducting interviews such as preparation, using silence, seeking clarification and listening.

In terms of my own practice, the theoretical foundations provided in these guides are supplemented by their practical manifestation in the multitude of profiles featured in newspapers, magazines and online every day, and particularly each weekend. Weekend newspaper supplements such as the “Good Weekend” found in the Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian’s “Weekend Australian”, and “Weekender” in Newcastle’s The Herald, provide a few of the many examples of the feature format on which this creative project is based. Similarly, published collections of profiles are also a useful resource. Journalist David Leser’s The Whites of their Eyes (1999) combines examples of the profiles he has written with an explanation of the process. This book is a collection of 22 profiles written between January 1989 and January 1999 on figures such as Pauline Hanson, Richard Carleton, John Howard, and Alan Jones, and includes an introduction that gives Leser’s personal insight into the writing process. Similarly, The Best Australian Profiles compiled by Matthew Ricketson traces the history of the character profile, primarily beginning with the New Yorker profiles in the 1920s and includes the most exceptional examples of the form written by Australian journalists (2004) which provided a template for my own work.

Much of the literature on journalism is also focused on the numerous issues and difficulties journalists face. Perhaps the most regularly debated current topic is the effect of new technology such as digital cameras, mobile phones and the Internet on journalistic practice (P. Anderson & Geoff, 2007; Barr, 2000; Fulton, 2008; Kawamoto, 2003a; Lanson & Croll Fought, 1999; Quinn & Filak, 2005; Tapsall, 1999; Thussu, 2000; Tickle, 1999). In the last few years, the effect of social media, particular Twitter, has also become an increasingly important topic (Hermida, 2010; Marwick & Boyd,
The introduction of such technology is said to have a number of disadvantages, for example, the immediate nature of the Internet has greatly reduced the time-frame in which journalists are required to gather and distribute news and this has implications for accuracy and depth as journalists struggle against greatly increased time pressures (Kawamoto, 2003b; Thussu, 2000). However, most critiques argue that the advantages of such technology, for example the ease with which information can now be transmitted, largely outweigh the disadvantages. In her exploration of creativity and print journalism Janet Fulton (Fulton, 2008) argues that journalism has always been an "ever-changing" industry and that by adapting to the technology while retaining principles of "good journalism" these difficulties are readily overcome. As Keith Kawamoto asserts, "journalism students should continue to be taught the fundamentals of good and ethical writing regardless of what medium they choose to work in" (2003b). As will be further explored in the analysis, my own experience of writing Profiling Creativity was significantly influenced by and also changed as a result of adopting certain technology into my practice.

What exactly constitutes "good and ethical writing" is also a popular subject in the literature on journalism (Berkowitz, 1997; Hachten, 2005; Harcup, 2004; Sheridan Burns, 2002; Tanner, Phillips, Smyth, & Tapsall, 2005; Tapsall & Varley, 2001; White, 1991). The notion of objectivity is perhaps the most common term associated with ethical journalism. Objectivity is traditionally held as the ultimate state to which journalists should aspire. However, as Sally White states, "these days the idea that the perfect journalist is a totally objective observer is acknowledged as an impossibility because reporters are too much a product of their societies and their own lives not to have biases, feelings and opinions" (White, 1991, p. 161). On the other hand, theorists agree that journalists should still strive to report as fairly, as balanced, and as accurately as possible. This includes not only treating situations and people with respect, but also ensuring that everything that is printed is entirely factual. As Conley and Lamble state:

It is far better to print a story written by a journalistic plodder that is true than to print one that has been written by a word magician that contains errors. Inaccurate journalism is ineffective journalism. Worse, it is dangerous journalism (Conley & Lamble, 2006, p. 156).

Many critics are doubtful of the ability or willingness of journalists to maintain
such ethical standards. According to Csikszentmihalyi, Gardner & Damon, journalists face “pressures so formidable that many have lost hope for the future of good journalism” (Csikszentmihalyi, Damon, & Gardner, 2001, p. 179). Pierre Bourdieu (1996a) is particularly critical of contemporary journalism, its involvement in politics (also discussed by Tiffen (1989)), the influence of advertising, and the conflation of news and entertainment. He argues that in the current media environment, “real information, analysis, in depth interviews, expert discussions, and serious documentaries lose out to pure entertainment” (1996a, p. 3). Csikszentmihalyi, Gardner & Damon, however, offer solutions to the issues faced by journalists, for example, the use of moral consciousness, mastery of the domain and development of “second-nature practices”, and are confident that despite the pressures, journalists are still “able to call forth sources of strength to prevail” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2001, p. 185).

In terms of my project, it is important to note that in profile writing the subject of the article is particularly personally affected by what is written, and thus more sensitive to anything they may perceive as an unfair judgement, regardless of the journalist’s intentions. As David Leser (1999) states “there a few people who can withstand a relentless scrutiny,” and although this project does not aim to expose the profile subjects in the way Leser does, it was important that I remain aware of the potential impact of any perceived criticism.

Barbie Zelizer states:

When a phenomenon is as widespread and as well-known as journalism tends to be, it can seem counterintuitive to look for new ways of thinking about it. And yet finding new ways of thinking about journalism is point-center to ensuring journalism’s future (Zelizer, 2007, p. 111).

Through my research, I am contributing to these new ways of thinking about journalism by examining my own practice within the context of creativity research. Researchers such as Fulton and McIntyre have already made significant contributions to the examination of creativity and journalism, dispelling the myth that journalism is not inherently creative and subsequently examining the practice in terms of the literature on creativity (Fulton, 2008, 2010, 2011a; McIntyre, 2012a, pp. 103-117). Because of the nature of the profiles I have written, my project has the additional element of developing a broader discussion of the commonalities of all creative practice, emerging
from the comparison of my journalistic practice and the information I received from the practitioners who are the subjects of my character profiles combined with the literature on creativity and cultural production. It is this literature, particularly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model, that I am testing in this project and that is the subject of the following and final chapter of this literature review, which provides the context for my own creative journalistic work.
2.3 Creativity and Cultural Production

The third and most significant body of research literature associated with this project is the study of creativity and cultural production. The nature of creativity is the central concept explored in this project, through the practice of freelance journalism situated as it is within the context of the discipline of media and communication.

Creativity is popularly viewed as an unexplainable phenomenon that not only cannot but also should not be studied. It is surrounded by a popular mystique that says to examine creativity is to somehow endanger it and to explain the creative process is to potentially destroy it (Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 8; Boden, 2004, p. 14; Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). However, current scholarly research indicates that not only is it possible to study and explain creativity, it is also very important (Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 13; Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Creativity is frequently credited as the source of human advancement and even as a distinguishing feature of humanity itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, pp. 1-2; Sawyer, 2006, p. 3; Weisberg, 2006, pp. 1-3). Thus, as a concept and process invested with such importance, attempting to understand creativity and subsequently replicate it should be regarded as a positive pursuit (Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 26; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 4-5). However, misconception and subsequent objection to scientific study has meant a rational approach to creativity research has only recently developed (Sawyer, 2006, p. 3; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, pp. 3-4).

Perspectives on creativity are generally divided into three categories: romantic, inspirationist and rational, with most current literature giving an overview of all three (Boden, 2004; Negus & Pickering, 2004; Pope, 2005; Runco & Pritzker, 1999; Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). At present, the majority of research into creativity – including this project – resides firmly within the concept of rationalism. However, popular use of the term remains strongly connected to the “mystical approaches” of the romantic and inspirationist positions (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 5).

Within the inspirationist perspective, creativity is the product of the external influence of a mysterious, often divine, being or force. This theocentric position originates in concepts such as the ancient belief in “divine madness”, the idea of the artist’s Muse, and Judaeo-Christian beliefs about the creation of the world (Albert & Runco, 1999, p. 18; Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 3; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 18-19; Sternberg
Particularly prevalent among poets and artists, advocates of this view describe themselves as passive vessels or mediums for inspiration with little control over when such intervention will occur or what form it will take (Albert & Runco, 1999, p. 18; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 5). For example, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato argued “a poet is holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired...for not by art does he utter these, but by power divine” (Boden, 2004, p. 14). Similarly, Socrates gave the credit for most of his achievements to his semi-divine “demon” (Sawyer, 2006). Yet while the origins of the inspirationist position may be ancient, the beliefs at their core endure within current popular understandings of creativity. For example, John Lennon described himself as a “channel” for “the music of the spheres” (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 3). In this way, the inspirationist position implies that all creative works come into being without any deliberate effort on the part of the individual and are therefore essentially born of nothing more, as W.B. Yeats once described his poetry, than “a mouthful of air” (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 3). However, something – that is, creative ideas or products – simply cannot emerge from nothing (Aristotle, 1960, p. 142; Boden, 2004, p. 15; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994). While from an inspirationist viewpoint “creativity seems to be not only unintelligible, but strictly impossible...No craftsman or engineer ever made an artefact from nothing” (Boden, 2004, p. 15). Instead, as Keith Sawyer states, “Scientists have discovered that creativity is mostly conscious, hard work” rather than the result of divine intervention (2006, p. 18). In this way, current research into creativity wholly rejects the inspirationist position.

Romanticism, on the other hand, also emphasises the mysterious nature of creativity, yet in contrast to the inspirationist view’s theocentrism it contains specific beliefs about the individual as creator. The evolution of romanticism is said to have begun in part during the Renaissance, with the movement toward an anthropocentric view of the world that gave humans the credit for human achievement (Albert & Runco, 1999, p. 18). However, for the most part, the particular beliefs that characterise this perspective originated in the 1700s with the English Romantic Movement (Sawyer, 2006). The romantic viewpoint, still very much alive today, is primarily centred on the notion of genius. The concept of genius in this case refers to exceptional individuals with almost superhuman capacity for creativity and also refers to the ambiguous quality these people are said to possess (Albert & Runco, 1999; Boden, 2004; Howe, 1999; Sawyer, 2006; Weisberg, 1993). According to Michael Howe, these geniuses are “a race of godlike individuals...possessing marvellous and practically boundless
capabilities that the common run of men and women could never dream of” (1999, p. vii). In all cases, the only way to become a genius is to be born one. Creativity, in this sense, cannot be taught or learnt (Boden, 2004).

The genius view that sits at the heart of the romantic perspective of creativity is also associated with specific beliefs about the creative process itself and the state of being one must enter in order to perform a creative task. For the romantics, creativity occurs only in a heightened state in which the individual is acting solely out of emotion and instinct, operating free from conscious thought and rationality (Sawyer, 2006, p. 14). Freud, who accepted romanticism uncritically (Petrie, 1991, p. 5), believed creativity was the expression of the blocked “id” energy – the id representing the most primitive human needs – and was associated with the irrational, the primitive and the unconscious (Weisberg, 1993, pp. 28-29; Zolberg, 1990, pp. 109-110). Consequently, the idea that one must enter a heightened state of consciousness (or unconsciousness) or an altered state of mind in order to be creative generated a number of other notions that have become entrenched in popular understandings of creativity. For example, the romantics believed that mental illness was a side effect of creativity, and as this idea was embraced, many poets and artists feigned madness “simply because they thought they were supposed to” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 17; Weisberg, 1993, p. 29; Zolberg, 1990, p. 110). A similar phenomenon occurred in relation to drug use, with the idea that in altering a person’s state of mind drugs could promote creativity (Pope, 2005, pp. 243-247; Sawyer, 2006, p. 208).

Like the inspirationist view, romanticism is problematic. According to Margaret Boden, “romanticism has a defeatist air, for it implies the most we can do to encourage creativity is to identify the people with this special talent, and give them room to work” (2004, p. 15). However, scientific study of creativity has found that creative success has more to do with deliberate effort and commitment rather than being the prerogative of a privileged few (Howe, 1999; Sawyer, 2006; Weisberg, 1993). For example, individuals deemed more creative are generally significantly more productive than less creative people. Generally, half of all works in any creative domain are produced by just ten per cent of people in that field (Sawyer, 2006, pp. 18-19). The romantic perspective also ignores the influence of acquired skill and training on creative ability. For example, Mozart is regarded as a child genius, yet he underwent rigorous musical training from a very young age and did not compose his first masterwork until he was at least 21 (Howe, 1999, pp. 3-5; Sawyer, 2006, p. 225; Weisberg, 2006, pp. 212-218).
Similarly, despite their apparent immediate success and the almost unparalleled position they now occupy in popular music history, the Beatles were not always the exceptional musical artists popular culture now understands them to be (Clydesdale, 2006; Weisberg, 2006, pp. 218-222). In fact, the Beatles suffered continual rejection by record companies and were only signed by Parlophone – a comedy label – because producer George Martin liked the way they worked as a group. As George Clydesdale contends, “the Beatles were not that good in the early days and getting signed by a comedy label is not a compliment” (2006, p. 137). It was only after years of hard work, dedication and development of their collective musical talent that they became “the Beatles” as we now know them. Thus, although natural ability undoubtedly contributes to creative ability, scientific study has found that everyone shares at least some creative potential, and with dedication this potential can be developed and harnessed to significant creative achievement (Boden, 2004, p. 22). In other words, “creative geniuses are not born. They are made” (Clydesdale, 2006). Ultimately, rather than diminishing the achievements of those that the romantic perspective deems geniuses, the fact that creativity is open to everyone only makes their success more remarkable as they “have been able to shape formidable capabilities from the same basic materials that millions of people are born with” (Howe, 1999, p. viii).

Similarly, current rationalist theory also rejects the romantic association of creativity with an altered state of consciousness. This includes connections between mental illness and creative potential, a concept that has endured and has been coupled with the modern idea of eccentricity. Numerous studies attempting to link creativity with illnesses such as schizophrenia and manic-depression have not provided conclusive proof that this is the case. While some tests have suggested the incidence of those with mental illnesses may be higher in some creative domains such as poetry, it is important to note that these studies have never found any direct causal link between mental illness and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 331; Sawyer, 2006; Weisberg, 1993). As Sawyer states, “despite almost a century of work…evidence in support of a connection has been remarkably difficult to find” (2006, p. 87). Instead, most studies have found the incidence of mental illness among those deemed creative to be generally no higher than that of the general population. There is also evidence to suggest that mental illness can negatively affect creativity. For example, Sylvia Plath who suffered severe depression said, “When you are insane, you are busy being insane – all the time…When I was crazy that was all I was” (in Sawyer, 2006, p. 87). Also, just as many poets and artists cultivated eccentric personas simply because they
believed that was how a creative person was supposed to act, many individuals also exaggerated stories about their drug use. Most notably, S.T. Coleridge claimed that his poem Kubla Khan came to him whole while on an opium high; however, the evidence of earlier drafts of the work belie this myth, possibly spread to add interest to what was essentially an unfinished fragment of a poem (Sawyer, 2006, p. 208; Weisberg, 1993, p. 46). Overall, the most significant factor casting doubt upon these romantic notions is current research that suggests that creativity is not the result of an altered state of mind at all, but of ordinary thought processes (Weisberg, 1993). Thus, when coupled with the evidence that creativity is the result of deliberate commitment and conscious hard work, these romantic notions are rendered problematic in the explanation of the creative process.

Ultimately, we can conclude that “romanticism provides no understanding of creativity” (Boden, 2004, p. 15). In fact the idea that creativity is a mysterious process that cannot and should not be explained is embedded in both the romantic and inspirationist perspectives (Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 8; Boden, 2004, p. 15; Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 8). According to Sternberg and Lubart, “it has been hard for the scientific approach to shake the deep-seated view of some people that, somehow, scientific psychologists are treading where they should not” (1999, p. 5). Even with these mystical perspectives placed to one side, scientists have been reluctant to explore creativity as it has been seen as either too difficult to define or unworthy of legitimate study, resulting in a lack of institutional support (Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 8; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 2-4; Sternberg, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 4). However, in 1950 the president of the American Psychological Association (APA) Dr J. P. Guilford shocked the behaviourist-dominated audience by delivering his keynote speech on the importance of studying creativity, a moment which many regard as the beginning of modern creativity research (Feldman et al., 1994; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 39-41; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 3).

Today, most of the work done in this growing area of study is carried out from within the rationalist tradition, founded on the premise that creativity is a process that can be explored, explained, and understood. Rationalism emphasises reason, conscious thought, planning and skill and is “the belief that creativity is generated by the conscious, deliberating, intelligent, rational mind” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 15). It is in this rationalist vein that scientists have attempted to unravel the creative process using a diverse range of methods, producing an equally diverse range of theories. Beginning
with Guilford, and stemming from an established tendency to focus on the individual as the locus of creativity, the discipline of psychology has tended to dominate rational research on creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Psychologists Sternberg and Lubart identify seven major approaches to the study of the creative process (1999, pp. 4-12): The first of these have been labelled Mystical Approaches. As previously mentioned, these include the romantic and inspirationist perspectives, which while influential do not fit with a rationalist study of creativity.

Second are the Pragmatic Approaches. These refer to commercially popular approaches primarily focused on developing or enhancing creativity. Examples include Edward DeBono’s “thinking hats”, Alex Osborn’s brainstorming technique, and James Adams’s “Conceptual Blockbusting” (Weisberg, 1993, pp. 58-67). However, while popular, these techniques lack a solid theoretical basis and do not attempt to actually understand creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 5). In this way, these approaches have been as “equally damaging to the scientific study of creativity” as the mystical approaches (Weisberg, 1993, pp. 58-67).

The third of the major approaches to the study of the creative process are the Psychodynamic Approaches. These are centred on the notion that creativity emerges from the conflict between consciousness and primitive unconscious impulses. Freud asserted that artists and writers use their work as a socially acceptable means of expressing suppressed instinctive desires such as for sex, warmth and food, using irrational, primitive “primary process” thinking (Weisberg, 1993, pp. 28-36; Zolberg, 1990, pp. 109-110). Similarly, the behaviourists viewed creativity as an unconscious pattern of cognitive behaviour (McIntyre, 2012a). The idea of primary process thinking informed subsequent creativity theory, such as in the idea of adaptive regression, and was supported primarily by case studies of high profile individuals such as Leonardo da Vinci (Martindale, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 6). However, many theorists question the suitability and accuracy of these case studies in exhibiting primary process thinking, the extent to which primary process thinking actually influences creative activity, and even cast doubt on the validity of the concept itself (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, pp. 6-7; Weisberg, 1993, pp. 28-36; Zolberg, 1990, pp. 109-110).

The fourth approach, according to Sternberg and Lubart (1999) are the Psychometric Approaches: The psychometric approach to creativity, pioneered by Guilford, proposed that rather than focusing on well-known creative individuals
researchers could study creativity by conducting simple tests with ordinary people. These tests, such as the "unusual uses" test in which subjects are asked to identify as many uses as possible for objects such as a brick or a cardboard box, were designed to identify concepts such as fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 331; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, pp. 6-7; Weisberg, 1993, pp. 58-67). However, researchers have since criticised the extent to which this criteria accurately represents creativity. As Sawyer contends, “It’s hard to measure creativity with a paper and pencil test. For one thing it’s hard to know if the test is really measuring creativity rather than some other trait” (2006, p. 46). Similarly, other studies have confirmed that these tests have “little or no predictive validity” and that changing variables such as the duration of the test could significantly alter individual results (Sawyer, 2006, p. 46; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 7; Weisberg, 1993, p. 61). In one type of study subjects were first given an independent rating for creativity based on criteria such as publication and then performed the given tests. Those who were initially rated as most creative did not necessarily perform better in these tests (Weisberg, 1993, p. 61).

Fifth in the list of approaches to studying creativity are the Cognitive Approaches. From this perspective cognitive theorists are concerned with identifying the actual mental processes involved in creative thinking. This has involved research using human subjects as well as computers specifically designed to simulate creative activity (Boden, 2004, pp. 7-8; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). The attributes that the psychometric tests above were designed to identify were believed to be indicators of lateral or divergent thinking, commonly viewed as necessary for creativity. Divergent thinking refers to the process of departing from what is known to create something new, as opposed to convergent thinking which uses logical progression to reach a conclusion from given information. However, current theory appears to indicate that creativity is in fact born primarily out of convergent processes, with divergent thinking also playing some role, but certainly not a dominant one (Lin & Cho, 2011; Runco & Acar, 2012; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 45, 57; Vincent, Decker, & Mumford, 2002; Weisberg, 1993, pp. 58-67). For example, studies of the work of eminent creative individuals have found nothing that indicates divergent thinking in their creative processes. For example, Charles Darwin’s notebooks leading to his theory of evolution, the reports leading to the discovery of DNA and Picasso’s sketches for some of his most famous paintings all exhibit the use of convergent rather than divergent thinking (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, pp. 6-7; Weisberg, 1993, pp. 58-67). However, this is not to say that convergent or
“ordinary” thinking is simple. Rather, everyday thinking comprises numerous and varied mental processes and while cognitive theorists have attempted to identify those that contribute to creativity, the sheer complexity of this task is a major limitation of this approach (Sawyer, 2006, pp. 66-67).

Also related to these traditions in psychology are attempts from within neuroscience to explore the connections between the biological structures of the brain and what is characterised as the creative mind (McIntyre, 2012a). One of the most popularly dominant ideas to emerge from this approach is the concept of lateral dominance, or the notion that an individual is either “left-brained” or “right-brained”. The left side of the brain is said to be associated with analysis, problem solving and logic, and the right side with art, imagination and openness (Martindale, 1999; McIntyre, 2012a; Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2006). Therefore, in accordance with the romantic perceptions of creativity and the conflation of art and creativity, the implication is that if you are right-brained you are likely to be more creative. However, despite its enduring pop culture popularity, this idea is widely rejected – particularly by those who study it – as an overtly simplistic representation of the complex workings of the brain (McIntyre, 2012a; Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2006). As Sawyer states:

In general, researchers have discovered that it’s too simplistic to associate any particular domain of creative activity with either hemisphere; rather, the various components of skill required for performance in any creative domain are located throughout the entire brain – components like motivation, inspiration, performance, perception, and evaluation – and they move around as domain expertise increases (Sawyer, 2006, p. 81).

The sixth of the major approaches to the study of the creative process, according to Sternberg and Lubart (1999) are the Social-Personality Approaches: As the name suggests, this approach investigates the influence of personality and social environment on creativity. Researchers have produced numerous lists of the characteristics creative individuals are thought to possess, ranging from boldness, freedom and spontaneity to metaphorical thinking and articulacy (Chavez-Eakle, Eakle, & Cruz-Fuentes, 2012; Feist, 1999; Sawyer, 2006, p. 47; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 8). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi posits ten sets of paradoxical personality traits existing within creative individuals including intelligence and naiveté, playfulness and discipline, and humility and pride (1997a, pp. 51-76). However, he presents these characteristics
as small part of a much broader theory and warns “you cannot assume the mantle of creativity just by assuming a certain personality style” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 56). Other theorists within this approach focus on the relationship between motivation and creativity. For example, the interplay of “intrinsic motivation” or performing a creative task for the sheer pleasure of it, and “extrinsic motivation” or external incentive such as a deadline or reward (Amabile & Tighe, 1993; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, pp. 8-9).

The seventh and last of the major approaches to creativity are those designated by Sternberg and Lubart (1999) as Confluence Approaches. While psychology has been the dominant player, research within the discipline of sociology has also made a significant contribution to the rational study of creativity, particularly in shifting the focus to influences outside the individual. For example, Vera Zolberg (1990) and Janet Wolff (1981) – with a specific focus on the arts – both argued for recognition of the importance of external social conditions in which creative individuals and artefacts are located. Similarly, in Art Worlds Howard Becker (1982) proposed that all art is a collective activity and that we must consider all the individuals who necessarily influence the production of a creative artefact, including for example those who manufacturer the materials used to create a work. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has also been particularly influential in his discussion of cultural production (1977, 1993). His concepts of capital, field, field of works and habitus are particularly relevant to this project and will be discussed in more detail in relation to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity, the central theoretical perspective being tested out in this research (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b).

It can be seen that most of the approaches mentioned above search for the source of creativity in one particular site, largely ignoring the findings of other disciplines. According to Sternberg and Lubart, “Unidisciplinary approaches…have tended to view a part of creativity as the whole phenomenon, often resulting in what we believe is a narrow vision of creativity and a perception that creativity is not as encompassing as it truly is” (1999, p. 4). For this reason, a number of current researchers of creativity tend toward an approach that considers and combines theories from multiple disciplines. This is referred to as a confluence approach and provides a vehicle for examining and explaining creativity in all its complexity. This particular research project is situated within this confluence approach, and in particular, aims to test out Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity (1988, 1997a, 1999b).
Contrary to the prevailing author-genius centred understanding of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model is founded on the premise that creative works are never the product of the individual alone. Creativity is not singularly the result of specific cognitive processes, motivations or personality traits and neither can it be explained by social processes alone; rather, it is the result of a systemic process involving the interplay of societal influences, cultures and the individual. As Csikszentmihalyi states, the fundamental principle underlying this system is the idea that “we cannot study creativity by isolating individuals and their works from the social and historical milieu in which their actions are carried out” (1988, p. 325). Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model indicates that creativity is a combination of the shaping influence of three main forces: the individual, the field, and the domain, as illustrated in the diagram below:

![Diagram of Csikszentmihalyi's Systems Model of Creativity](image)

Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi’s Systems Model of Creativity (1999b, p. 315).
Permission to copy and communicate this work has been granted by the author.
The domain in Csikszentmihalyi's model refers to specific areas of creative practice and includes all the existing works in that area along with the symbolic rules and structures through which these works are made. Bourdieu (1996b) uses the term “field of works” (Toynbee, 2000), or more precisely, the “space of works” (1996b, p. 233) to describe the same accumulation of artefacts that embody the heritage of works that have been done to this point in time which comprise particular arenas of cultural production. Domains are essentially knowledge systems and together they form cultures (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b). According to Csikszentmihalyi, creativity occurs when someone introduces a change or variation to a domain, and that variation is absorbed back into the domain and carried through time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1999b; Weisberg, 1988). However, before an individual is able to do this, they must first develop sufficient knowledge of the conventions and structures of that domain (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 118; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 29; Giddens, 1979; Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 68; Sawyer, 2006, p. 125; Weisberg, 1988, p. 173; Wolff, 1981, p. 9). All domains have their own “symbolic rules and procedures” that an individual must engage with in order to produce work that can be considered creative and for others to understand and recognise that work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 27; 1999b). Firstly, domain acquisition is crucial to an individual's ability to participate in specific creative activity at all, for example, to know how to play an instrument or understand a language in order to write a novel in it. Secondly, knowledge of the domain and its traditions is necessary to an understanding of where particular works fit in relation to what has come before, and subsequently central to judgements about whether or not that work is creative. As Csikszentmihalyi states:

The domain is a necessary component of creativity because it is impossible to introduce a variation without reference to an existing pattern. ‘New’ is meaningful only in reference to the ‘old.’ Original thought does not exist in a vacuum. It must operate on a set of existing objects, rules, representations, or notations (1999b, pp. 314-315).

It also important to note that the rules and requirements of domains change over time. Many researchers define creativity in terms of novelty and appropriateness; however, what is appropriate and novel for any particular domain is relative to the period in which it is created (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 27-29; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 3). For example, a particular style of painting may be valued as highly creative and innovative at one point in history, yet regarded as
unremarkable years later. As Csikszentmihalyi states, “without a historical context one lacks the reference points necessary to determine if the product is in fact an adaptive innovation” (1988, p. 326). However, knowledge of a domain alone is not sufficient for an individual’s work to be deemed creative. Another component is needed to recognise it as such, and this is the role of the field.

The field in the systems model refers to the experts or “gate-keepers” who are responsible for making decisions about the appropriateness of creative works and whether or not they will be accepted as part of the domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; 1997a, p. 28; 1999b). In other words, it is the collective job of the field to determine whether or not a work is in fact creative. It is not enough for an individual to simply produce a work. A work may exist, but without verification from the field it cannot be accepted into the domain, certainly cannot alter this domain, and thus, it cannot be deemed creative. As Csikszentmihalyi contends, “If you cannot persuade the world that you had a creative idea, how do we know that you actually had it?” (1999b, p. 314). In this way, the field is linked to the notion of audiences. Sawyer argues that audiences can be generally categorised into intermediaries, connoisseurs, amateurs, and the general public, with works selected by the intermediaries and then passed outward— all are members of the field (2006, p. 127). Similarly, Zolberg (1990) regards an artist’s ability to gain the acknowledgement of peers and teachers as just as important as talent in gaining success in the art world, and this principle can be applied to all domains. The components of the field and the domain also interact with one another. The field has the power to shape the domain by determining which changes will be accepted and which will not, while the nature of the field is determined by who is attracted to the domain at any particular time. Bourdieu (1993) emphasises the influence of economic and power relations between sub groups in what he also terms the field, and certainly all fields vary in their willingness to accept creative additions into their domains. However, if an individual is to succeed in making a creative contribution to their chosen domain, interaction with the field and its particular values and judgements is unavoidable.

The individual in the systems model refers to the producer of a creative work or works, influenced by their personal background and experience. As the aforementioned approaches to the study of creativity reveal, it has been rare that studies have looked beyond the individual for an explanation of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 327). However, as Zolberg in her description of how artists work argues, “understanding how
people become and remain artists is possible only on condition of examining the larger support structures of society and how they impinge on artists themselves" (1990, p. 135). That is not to dismiss or diminish the individual’s contribution to the creative process – despite suggestions that we reconsider or if not do away with the concept of authorship altogether (Barthes, 1977; Becker, 1982; Foucault, 1977) – or to say that personality, talent, and intelligence play no role in the creative process. Csikszentmihalyi (1999b) argues that certain personal characteristics such as a high level of intrinsic motivation may make it easier for certain individuals to operate within the creative system. As previously mentioned, he also presents a set of personality traits that appear to be common to creative people (1997a, pp. 51-76), many of which tend toward complexity, meaning that creative personalities can be seen to exhibit often contradictory extremes that are present in all individuals but have been polarised in most people (1997a, p. 57). He further suggests that:

creative persons are characterised not so much by single traits as by their ability to operate through the entire spectrum of personality dimensions...What dictates their behaviour is not a rigid inner structure, but the demands of the interaction between them and the domain in which they are working (1999b, p. 331).

This description complies with his broader assertion that “creativity is the property of a complex system, and none of its components alone can explain it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 56). The systems model demonstrates that these personal characteristics, best described as necessary but not sufficient, are only part of the reason for the recognition of an individual’s creativity and it is only by interacting with the field and the domain that creativity can occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Kaufman & Baer, 2005; Sawyer, 2006; Zolberg, 1990).

Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model reveals that creativity could not be the product of an individual’s actions alone, regardless of any particular cognitive styles, talents or individual characteristics they might happen to possess. Rather, creativity requires the interaction of all three components, an interaction that is both iterative and recursive with each process repeating itself and generating other processes as a result (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b). In order to be recognised as creative an individual must understand these systemic relationships, the workings of the model as a whole, and learn to operate successfully within it.
For researchers, the confluence approach to study that this model represents requires the knowledge of multiple disciplines; while this may be difficult to master Csikszentmihalyi says “the returns in knowledge, however, are well worth the effort” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 338). However, a number of criticisms of the model do exist.

Robert Weisberg disagrees with the element of value judgement inherent in the system, based upon his objection to the inclusion of both novelty and appropriateness in definitions of creativity (2006, pp. 65-70). Weisberg argues that it should be sufficient for a product to be novel to the individual producer of the work and that the requirement for appropriateness or usefulness should be additional to the notion of creativity. However, Weisberg’s criticism ignores the fact that novelty is also a relative value judgement, made – even if by the individual alone – with an acquired knowledge of the requirements of the field and traditions of the domain. Weisberg also objects to the implication that what is considered creative by the field may change over time. He says:

Csikszentmihalyi does not view as problematic the possibility of change in a person’s creativity, but I think that allowing the creativity of a product (and of the person who produced it) to vary when its value changes creates difficulties for understanding creative thinking (2006, p. 65).

However, as McIntyre argues (2012a, p. 81), this is ultimately a manifestation of the positivist/relativist divide and therefore not sufficient grounds for rejecting the model. It is also useful in this case, as Janet Fulton (2011a) proposes, to consider Margaret Boden’s distinction between P and H creativity (Boden, 2004). P-creativity (psychological) refers to ideas that are novel to the person who created them, regardless of whether or not someone else has previously produced the same work (Boden, 2004, p. 43). On the other hand, H-creativity (historical) refers to artefacts that have value as ideas that no one else in human history has ever had (Boden, 2004, p. 43). H-creativity is therefore necessarily also P-creative. Thus, on these grounds, even if the field at large considers the H-creative value of a product to be diminished, by definition the artefact will still remain P-creative.

Rob Pope presents perhaps the most detailed critique of the systems model,
with three primary criticisms (2005, p. 68). Firstly, he argues that it “privileges the notion of the creator as a ‘person’ (singular)” (Pope, 2005, p. 68), ignoring the collaborative and collective nature of this component. This is a valid argument in terms of the implication of Csikszentmihalyi’s use of the word “individual” or “person”; however, the terminology does not preclude the model from accounting for the creativity of groups, and indeed Csikszentmihalyi (1999a) and Sawyer (2006) have both applied the model in this way. In a similar interpretation, Runco (2004) misrepresents the model by implying that it begins with the individual. However, as Csikszentmihalyi explicitly states, “Each of the three main systems – person, field, domain – affects the others and is affected by them in turn…The starting point on this map is purely arbitrary” (1988, p. 329).

Pope’s second criticism is that the model does not account for the potential for hybrids across domains (Pope, 2005, p. 68). However, Csikszentmihalyi clearly acknowledges the inevitability and importance of interaction between domains, which in any case are already identified as existing of sub-domains. No part of the system exists as somehow separate from the rest of the world or external influences, and each individual inevitably brings knowledge of other domains to the system and the variations they produce participating in it. Csikszentmihalyi states:

Integration, synthesis both across and within domains, is the norm rather than the exception…almost all scientists cross and recross the boundaries of physics, chemistry and biology in work that turns out to be creative. Even when not directly integrated in one’s work, other domains contribute to the overall mental life of creative individuals to a degree that belies the stereotype of the sterile, narrowly trained specialist (1997a, p. 329).

In his final major critique, Pope argues that Csikszentmihalyi does not sufficiently address the likelihood that the field may refuse or be unable to recognise “the really creative (or crazy) act” that exists beyond the understanding of the most dominant members of the field, or that members of the field may disagree with one another (2005, p. 68). This assertion is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, no creative artefact can exist that does not at least in some way reference existing domain conventions and could therefore be completely beyond the scope of the experience of the field. Secondly, acceptance or judgement by the field does not require overwhelming consensus. What is important is that either enough or at least the right
people, depending on the field, recognise the product or idea as valuable. As a final addition Pope (2005, p. 69) also argues that Csikszentmihalyi does not adequately address the post-structuralist ideas presented by those such as Foucault (1977) and Barthes (1977). However, the underlying thesis of the model is that all three parts of the system – domain, field, and individual – are equally important. In this way Csikszentmihalyi’s model explicitly does not privilege the individual or author but repositions it in a system that also includes cultural and social influences, and in this way it attempts to synthesise the wealth of creativity theories from a range of specific disciplines, including post-structuralism.

Despite these criticisms, Pope still contends that “Csikszentmihalyi’s systems-based approach offers a powerful corrective to notions of creativity focused exclusively on creators or on creative products” (2005, p. 69). The study of creativity using the systems model is currently being used in a range of arenas such as Australian children’s literature (Killen, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), Australian fiction writing (Paton, 2008, 2009), documentary production (Kerrigan, 2008; 2009; 2011; Kerrigan & McIntyre, 2010); and western popular music songwriting (McIntyre, 2006b, 2008a, 2010). In my own research I am testing out this model through the practice of freelance journalism and the systems model forms the theoretical perspective underlying the research being tested out through PBE.

In conjunction with Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model, Graham Wallas’s stage theory also provides a valuable tool for analysing creativity and understanding its nature as a process (1926, 1976). The theory is most applicable to the individual’s experience of creativity, and while in accordance with the systems model I am not seeking to privilege the individual’s role, Wallas’s framework is particularly useful in terms of my project as I do occupy the position of the individual in the system. Wallas identifies four principal stages in the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (1926, 1976). The first stage, preparation, refers to the initial period of development of a creative work or idea, “during which the problem was ‘investigated in all directions’” (Wallas, 1926, p. 91). Not only does preparation involve the gathering of information and resources for the specific creative project, it also includes “the whole process of intellectual education” an individual has undergone to gather the knowledge and skills necessary to generate this creativity and allow its progression (Wallas, 1926, p. 92). In reference to the systems model, preparation may be viewed as a necessary period of domain acquisition.
The second stage of Wallas’s framework is incubation. This refers to the further development of the creative idea after preparation is complete. This incubation may occur at various times throughout the entire creative process and is primarily a subconscious process “during which ideas churn around below the threshold of consciousness” while the individual is focused on another task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 79; Wallas, 1976, pp. 72-73). However, as Sawyer (2006, p. 61) states, incubation is “the least understood stage in the creative process.” Weisberg (1993, pp. 45-50) argues that there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that this period of unconscious problem-solving is responsible for generating creative ideas, or that it even exists, and instead he argues that it be attributed to the increased productivity after a break. However, most psychologists agree that unconscious processing does at least to some extent guide the combinations of thought leading to creativity (Sawyer, 2006, p. 64).

Illumination, the third of Wallas’s stages, refers to the “final ‘flash’ or ‘click’”, that is, “the culmination of a successful train of association” (Wallas, 1976, p. 72). In other words, illumination or insight is the point where a creative idea is completed. However, this single moment is often mistaken for the entire process and credited as creativity itself. As Sawyer simply states, “insight is overrated” (2006, p. 71). One project can involve numerous insights of different sizes, often bringing to light more questions and problems than they solve and while they tend to appear suddenly, they can always be traced back to “the prior work that the creator was engaged in” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 71). Wallas and Csikszentmihalyi both assert that these illuminations or insights occur as the result of a period of incubation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Wallas, 1976).

The final stage of Wallas’s theory is verification. He describes it as the point where “the validity of the idea was tested, and the idea itself was reduced to exact form” (Wallas, 1976, p. 72). Verification is the period where a creative idea or insight is examined and its value assessed, leading to either the completion of a creative work or to a renewal of the process in search of an alternative. After all, “many creative insights turn out to be bad ideas” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 68). It is only through this verification that the good ideas are kept and the bad thrown away and thus a creative work takes form. This stage is also dependent on knowledge of how the field one is working in makes decisions.
Csikszentmihalyi offers his own critique of the stages of the creative process and while his analysis closely follows Wallas’s he offers five stages instead of four (1997a, pp. 79-80). Csikszentmihalyi includes preparation, incubation and insight but instead of verification he adds the stages, “evaluation” and “elaboration.” He says evaluation is the stage where “the person must decide whether the insight is valuable and worth pursuing” and elaboration is the point where the creative project takes its form and “takes the most time and involves the hardest work” (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, pp.79-80). Essentially, these additional stages of evaluation and elaboration represent Wallas’s verification stage divided in two.

When analysing the creative process in this way it is vital to remember that these stages do not occur in a strictly linear fashion. As Csikszentmihalyi states, this framework "gives a severely distorted picture of the creative process if it is taken too literally" (1997a, p. 80). Instead, these stages overlap one another and the entire process is repeated numerous times throughout the development of one project. In this way, the nature of this process closely resembles that of the cyclical character of the systems model, which also remains at work continually shaping the direction of a project throughout these stages.

As the continuing popularity of the romantic and inspirationist perspectives demonstrates, many people remain unaware of the nature of creativity as a process. Instead, the illumination stage alone is mistaken for creativity itself and ideas that appear suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, are thus attributed to a mysterious force or unique gift. However, the explanation for the persistence of such notions may lie in Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a). Habitus is closely related to intuition and refers to the ability to perform the actions necessary to a creative task without conscious thought. Bourdieu describes it as:

Principles of the structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72).

Essentially, habitus refers to an individual’s ability to internalise and at times embody and reproduce certain knowledge and practices to the degree they may act
and make judgements based on this knowledge without being conscious they are doing so, or of having ever learnt how. According to Schugurensky habitus is a state of cultural capital “embodied in the individual as long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (2008). Thus, this embodiment of knowledge and structures predisposes an individual to act in particular ways and allows that person to perform these actions with such apparent ease that this phenomenon has given rise to notions of divine inspiration and genius (Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1993; Schugurensky, 2008).

Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1997a; Perry, 2005) identifies a “flow state” as characteristic of the experience of creativity. Flow or “autotelic experience” refers to “an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” experienced while immersed in a creative activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 110). Sawyer suggests that flow is driven by intrinsic motivation – doing something purely for the enjoyment of the task itself. It may also be the result of the internalisation and embodiment of specific knowledge and practices, or, a well-developed habitus (2006). As Negus and Pickering state:

It is the hard achieved skill and ability which allows for this dreamlike or mysterious sense of being at one with and receiving artistic ideas. This aspect of the creative act is not so mysterious as it seems – although it certainly is magical (2004, p. 20).

Ultimately, flow and habitus combine to create what can be an extraordinary experience of creativity out of ordinary conscious hard work. The importance of the absorbed structures a creative individual deals with and their influence on creative decision making also demonstrates the relationship between structure and action. This concept is one of the most important points of contention in sociology and has significant implications for creativity research. Commonly, sociology may be divided into two categories: structuralist theory that argues human behaviour is determined by social structure, and social action theory that says human actions create society (Haralambos & Holbern, 1995, p. 903). However, Anthony Giddens (1979, 1995) argues that rather than being separate, structure and action share an interdependent relationship in which “structures make social action possible, and at the same time…social action creates those very structures” (Haralambos & Holbern, 1995, p. 904; Lull, 2000). This interdependence is referred to as “structuration.” In terms of creativity, romantic and inspirationist perspectives imply that we need to be “free” from
structures in order to be creative. The same idea is applied to the seemingly opposed relationship between innovation and tradition. However, this is “a beguiling but misleading view” as structures are not only inescapable, but actually make creativity possible (Giddens, 1979; Negus & Pickering, 2004; Wolff, 1981, p. 68). As Janet Wolff argues:

> Everything we do is located in, and therefore affected by, social structures. It does not follow from this that in order to be free agents we somehow have to liberate ourselves from social structures and act outside them. On the contrary, the existence of these structures and institutions enables any activity on our part, and this applies equally to acts of conformity and acts of rebellion (1981, p. 9).

Thus, in line with Giddens’ ideas, an individual or agent must engage with the structures of a domain in order to produce a creative work, and for others to be able to understand it, while at the same time they are transforming that domain through the action of creativity. The same may be said of the relationship between the field and the individual and the field and the domain. It is only through the existence and operation of this system, which includes choice-making agents interacting with social and cultural structures, that creativity can occur.

For this project I will be using the definition of creativity produced by Phillip McIntyre, emerging from his examination of this literature described briefly above and drawing on the Aristotelian notion of being that “whatever comes to be is generated by the agency of something, out of something, and comes to be something” (Aristotle, 1960, p. 142). McIntyre defines creativity as:

> A productive activity whereby objects, processes and ideas are generated from antecedent conditions through the agency of someone, whose knowledge to do so comes from somewhere and the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued addition to the store of knowledge in at least one social setting (McIntyre, 2008b, p. 1).

If one conclusion can be drawn from the study of current research into creativity and cultural production it is that creativity is complex. Yet it can be understood. The answer does not lie in romantic or inspirationist claims that it simply cannot or should
not be studied. Furthermore, examining personal characteristics alone cannot fully explain creativity, but neither can ignoring the individual and looking only at social or cultural context. Instead, creativity takes its form from the interrelationship between a distinct system, stages, and structures. Only with an understanding of this system, along with a strong level of commitment and hard work, can an individual operate as a successful creative practitioner. It is the validity of this system, structures and stages that this creative project aims to explore through the practice of freelance journalism within the framework of communication and media.
3.0 Practitioner Based Enquiry as Methodology

In the beginning stages of any type of research, determining how you will answer your research question is arguably just as important as the question itself. Of the almost endless combinations of methodologies and methods available to a researcher, the approach you select must depend on a consideration of the purpose of the research, as well as an examination of the assumptions made about knowledge and its discovery (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The methodological approach taken in this particular research is practitioner based enquiry (PBE), a methodology of self-reflection in which the researcher explores specific activities through participation in and reflection on their own practice (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 4; Murray & Lawrence, 2000, p. 10). PBE is closely linked to action research (Parsons & Brown, 2002), reflexive ethnography, anthropology, and participant observation and is aimed ultimately at improving the practice that is the subject of research (Davies, 1999). A relatively newly developed methodology, PBE has been used most prominently in industries such as nursing, social work, and teaching (Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Fuller & Petch, 1995; Johns, 2006; Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Parsons & Brown, 2002; Radnor, 2002; Shacklock & Smyth, 1998; Taylor, 2005). More recently, it has been applied to research within information and communications technology (Regan, McIntyre, & Nesbitt, 2011), popular music (McIntyre, 2010) and documentary production (Kerrigan, 2011). These last three incorporated aspects of the system model of creativity into the research. In the case of this current research project, the subject of PBE is freelance journalism, and more broadly creativity as a whole, as explored through my engagement in and reflection on the production of a series of 20 feature articles. However, before exploring the specifics, possibilities and criticisms of PBE, as well as its usefulness for this particular project, it is helpful to examine the broader assumptions that underpin the research and therefore inform its direction (Blaikie, 1993; Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004). Michael Crotty presents a particularly useful guide for examining the relationships between the different levels of understanding involved in the conduct of research – moving downward from Epistemology to Theoretical Perspective, then to Methodology, and finally to Methods – with the nature of each level informing the next (1998, p. 4).
Essentially, Crotty’s framework asks the researcher to consider “how do I know what I know?”, “what do I already know?” and “how do I go about finding out more?” Firstly, in accordance with this framework, underlying every methodology is a particular “scaffolding” of identifiable assumptions about knowledge and reality (Blaikie, 1993; Crotty, 1998, p. 1; Grix, 2004). These layers of meaning are related to ontology and epistemology. Crotty defines ontology as the fundamental beliefs “concerned with ‘what is’, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Following from this, the way one views reality has significant bearing on beliefs about how, and how much, we may know about this reality (Crotty, 1998). This is epistemology, or “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know”, and includes the beliefs held about the nature of this knowledge and its possibilities (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). This is important as the ontological and epistemological position a researcher holds has a direct relationship to the sort of research methodology that researcher uses.

It can be claimed that this particular research project is grounded in an ontological and epistemological position referred to as constructionism. Constructionism is often described as the synthesis of the opposing objectivist and subjectivist approaches to research. The objectivist tradition holds that truth exists within objects independently of consciousness “waiting for us to discover it” and thus rejects the notion that meaning can be derived from interaction between the two (Crotty, 1998). Conversely, a subjectivist ontology and epistemology holds that meaning does not exist on its own, but is imposed on the object by the researcher (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism, however, may be viewed as a reconciliation of the two approaches, with meaning neither subjectively ascribed to an object, nor objectively inherent within it. Instead, as Crotty states, “there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world…Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (1998, pp. 8-9).

Thus, the methodology of PBE may be identified as the product of a primarily constructionist ontology and epistemology, as it requires the practitioner to seek understanding of the object of study through personal engagement with it. PBE incorporates a process of “reflecting-in-action” and reflecting “on” action and promotes the value of the practitioner’s personal experience, explored both during and after the particular activity (Johns, 2006; Schon, 1983). For this research, PBE allows for reflection upon my own creative process as an “insider” actively participating in
freelance journalism, while also enabling the exploration of creativity as a whole in the comparison of my experience with that of other practitioners, as documented in the profiles.

In accordance with the University of Newcastle's rules for research higher degrees and guidelines for examining theses in the creative arts, this particular research consists of a creative project (20 profiles) accompanied by an exegesis (University of Newcastle, 2009, 2011). The exegesis “must provide a rationale for the techniques and strategies adopted in the creative component, and must situate them in relation to a theoretical and/or historical cultural context” (University of Newcastle, 2011). In terms of Crotty's framework, this context locates the theoretical perspective, or the philosophical stance that provides the criteria, grounding and logic for the basis of the methodology (1998, p. 7).

The overarching theoretical perspective that informs this particular research and use of PBE is Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b). Csikszentmihalyi's model is founded on the premise that creative works are never the product of the individual alone, but are the result of a systemic process of circular causality involving the interplay of society, culture and the individual (1988, 1997a, 1999b). In addition to Csikszentmihalyi's model, the additional theoretical perspectives governing this project incorporate a range of other theories about creativity and cultural production, for example Graham Wallas's stage theories (1926, 1976) and Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural production (1977, 1993); however, the three components of the systems model – domain, field and individual – provided the categories for the initial analysis of my data (Schmidt, 2004) and form the structure for the chapters of analysis in this exegesis. In terms of a theoretical perspective that is concerned with the nature of creativity, PBE is a particularly useful methodology as it allows the researcher to become an active participant in the practice under investigation.

In the broader discussion of all research that is linked to practice, it is important to clarify exactly where the researcher as practitioner is situated in relation to the practice, and how the research is being conducted in relation to this. Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes outline the difficulty and need to make sense of the variety of terms used to describe research linked to practice, and a number of frameworks have been proposed for this clarification (2007). Christopher Frayling makes a distinction (in art
and design) between research conducted for, into and, as in this project, through practice (1993). Similarly, in her discussion of journalism practice as research, Sarah Niblock articulates a difference between theory-first and practice-first research (2012). Practice-first research, like this project, “offers a space to ‘test’ out theoretical concepts in practice”, just as this project tests out Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model (Niblock, 2012, p. 11). Linda Candy, on the other hand, makes the division between practice-led and practice-based research (2006, 2011). PBE falls into the latter category as:

an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes…Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes (Candy, 2006).

In PBE, the researcher very much occupies the position of insider within the practice being researched. According to Murray and Lawrence, PBE is the process in which practitioners “systematically enquire into their own institutional practices in order to produce assessable reports and artefacts” (2000). This methodology incorporates a process of “reflecting-in-action” and reflecting “on” action and promotes the value of the practitioner’s personal experience and the study of the process both as it is occurring and afterwards (Johns 2006; Schon 1983). This is in fact one of the most significant features of the methodology, with the insight gained from this perspective viewed as necessary for a complete understanding of any activity (McIntyre, 2006a). However, to a certain degree PBE also requires the researcher to be simultaneously “inside” and “outside” the research. The successful application of PBE requires the “acquisition of a capacity to step in and out of two roles” – the individual as practitioner, and the practitioner as researcher (Murray & Lawrence, 2000, p. 10). However, despite the separation of these two roles, as the researcher remains practitioner throughout the entire process they are ultimately always inside the object of study.

The role of this insider is generally referred to in terms of reflective practice and reflexive practice, with the two terms occasionally, and sometimes confusingly, used interchangeably (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998). In her discussion of journalism research as practice, partly in order to distinguish this research from the everyday reflection undertaken by journalists, Sarah Niblock argues for the use of the term reflexion in
order to firmly place it within an academic context (2007, 2012). She asserts the importance of "embracing practitioner perspectives but always in the knowledge that the researcher – however much they might align themselves with professional practice – is at one and the same time employed in higher education or research as their habitus" (Niblock, 2012, p. 8). This becomes particularly important when addressing and finding a balance in the ethical conflicts that may arise from the dual role, for example, implied consent for interviews versus formal consent forms, and preserving participant rights to anonymity (Dodson & Sterling, 2012). However, Bolton distinguishes between the two by defining reflexivity as "focusing close attention upon one’s own actions" and the process of reflection as "looking at the whole scenario: other people, the situation and place, and so on" (2001). In other words, both reflection and reflexivity involve the examination of one’s own practices, yet reflection also involves examining these practices within context, which, in light of the principles underlying Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model and the complexity of the creative process, is a definition that is particularly appropriate for the aims of this research. In addition to the articulation of this self-reflective insider position, the successful application of PBE also relies on systematic study, including the application of specific theories and research methods (Fuller & Petch, 1995; Murray & Lawrence, 2000, p. 10).

In order to gather the material needed to write the profiles and also investigate the creative processes of other cultural producers, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews – one with each of the participants who would be the subject of a profile. In accordance with this method I was guided by a set of questions but not limited to these and was free to explore other topics as they arose (Hopf, 2004; Mason, 2002; May, 2002). This type of interviewing (as opposed to a structured interview) has the disadvantage of being time consuming and can create difficulty in comparing answers, yet it allows for flexibility in response and enquiry not available to other methods (Appleton, 1995; Burns, 1997; Hopf, 2004; Mason, 2002; May, 2002; Robson, 2002). The transcripts from these interviews, in addition to the profiles themselves, also comprise the data for the comparison of my experience of the creative process with that of other creative practitioners. These interviews were analysed according to the practice of refining and coding via categories – both pre-defined and emerging from the data – the results of which are articulated in the exegesis (Appleton, 1995; Burnard, 1991; Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Most importantly, however, interviewing is well recognised as a key journalistic skill and thus was a vital
part of my participation in PBE as a freelance journalist (P. Bell & Van Leeuwen, 1994; Conley & Lamble, 2006; Tapsall & Varley, 2001).

This project is primarily centred on my participation in freelance journalism, designed to provide an insight into that specific practice as well as the creative process as a whole. This participation encompasses all the activities necessary to creating the 20 profiles, including preparation, researching, interviewing, writing, editing, revising, and seeking publication. However, in order to provide tangible evidence of this process for others, and indeed to make sense of it myself, I kept a research journal for the duration of the project. The use of a personal research journal is one of the distinguishing features of PBE and details the practitioner’s experiences while engaged in the activity being studied (Bolton, 2001; Fuller & Petch, 1995; Hinds, 2000; Johns, 2006; Murray & Lawrence, 2000). It is important to note that this journal is not simply a personal diary but a valuable research document. It is a record of ideas, activity, and moments of difficulty and success that might otherwise be forgotten, as well as a tool for understanding these events (Bolton, 2001; Murray & Lawrence, 2000). Murray and Lawrence describe the journal as “a literary device through which the problematic nature of…enquiry is rendered intelligible, first to self, and subsequently to significant others” (Murray & Lawrence, 2000, pp. 14-15). In this way, the research journal I kept for this project provides evidence for my practice as a freelance journalist writing the profiles, and subsequently informs the exegesis by allowing me to compare my experience of creativity with that of the profile subjects.

Finally, as completed artefacts, the profiles themselves are also necessary for a complete understanding of the research, both in the information they contain about the creative practitioners and also as a crucial reference point for the articulation and analysis of my process as presented in the exegesis. Combined, the 20 profiles, the interview transcripts and the research journal form the data for the analysis contained in the exegesis, and as multiple methods of data collection they also fulfil the requirement for triangulation in qualitative data collection (Denscombe, 2010; Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Robson, 2002). By comparing my own experience of the creative process with that of the 20 creative practitioners documented in the profiles, and through the application of previous research to these findings, this research was informed by a multidimensional approach to the study of creativity and cultural production. It is this approach, through PBE, that has allowed me to test-out and validate evidence of the systemic nature of creativity, specifically as it is demonstrated
by the operation of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model (1988, 1997a, 1999b). However, PBE is not the only approach that could be used to investigate creativity and journalism, and in order to discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methodology it is necessary to examine its criticisms.

Like any methodology, PBE has certain limitations. Primarily, although it also the methodology’s defining feature, the insider perspective occupied by the researcher is the main source of criticism. Critics assert that in being so close to the activity of study, practitioners may allocate a dimension of personal ownership to the research and develop a bias that may prompt misrepresentation of the character of the subject (Fuller & Petch, 1995; Hinds, 2000; Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Zuzanek, 2005). Similarly, all practitioners bring certain “ontological and epistemological baggage” to their research, and as a result may only discover confirmation of patterns they already subconsciously expect to find (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 8; Murray, 1992, p. 18; Zuzanek, 2005). Similarly, it may be argued that fulfilling the dual roles of individual as practitioner and practitioner as researcher is a particularly difficult task and one that, even if achieved, can alter the object of research and distort the results simply through the act of studying it (McIntyre, 2006a; Murray, 1992; Sternberg, 1994; Zuzanek, 2005). Some also question the practitioner’s ability to accurately recall their own experiences, and thus, the degree to which self-observation is a valid research method at all (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 8; Zuzanek, 2005). Criticisms of PBE also come as part of broader rejections of self-reflection and self-reflexivity, and even more broadly of all qualitative research (Ashmore, 1989; Gherardi & Turner, 2002; Lynch, 2000).

However, these criticisms arise from a primarily objectivist ontology and epistemology that disregards the validity of conclusions drawn from individual or insider experience (Crotty, 1998; McIntyre, 2006a, p. 9). Therefore, as PBE operates on the constructionist premise that the primary value of such research lies within the experience that arises from interaction between practitioner and practice, objectivist criticisms of this methodology are rendered problematic. Similarly, PBE is also significantly informed by phenomenology, a tradition that is founded on the “intentional analysis of everyday life from the standpoint of the person who is living it” and places great value and emphasis on the subjective experience (Griffin, 2000, p. 45). From this standpoint, the primary strength of PBE is allowing the researcher to gain a unique and arguably essential insider perspective of the practice being researched. Not only is this knowledge valuable in its own right, it may also be added to the wider body of research.
from all methodologies in order to gain a truly comprehensive understanding of a particular subject, in this case, creativity. Similarly, the criticism of a practitioner’s ability to recall information does not only apply to those engaged in PBE but is applicable to those in all research camps, including objectivist research, as each relies in some way on discursive frameworks and interpretation in the collection and analysis of data (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 9). Thus, unless all research is to be abandoned on these grounds, the limitations of the researcher’s “cognitive nets” in all methods must simply be accepted, and recognition given not only to the limitations but also to the advantages of each methodology (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 9).

Paradoxically, the advantages of PBE, like its limitations, lie in the position adopted by the researcher. The primary strength of the application of PBE is that it allows the researcher to gain a unique and arguably essential “insider” perspective of the practice being researched, a perspective that would be unavailable to an allegedly independent or impartial researcher. Some theorists also argue that the active participation and reflection required of the researcher in PBE is the primary method through which humans gain most practical knowledge (Bolton, 2001, p. 3; McIntyre, 2006a, p. 9). Donald Schon (1983, p. 54), Christopher Johns (2006, p. 3) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, p. 72) in his concept of habitus, refer to the largely intuitive nature of many practices and the subsequent lack of conscious thought needed to carry out these processes. However, as Schon states, “phrases like ‘thinking on your feet’, ‘keeping your wits about you,’ and ‘learning by doing’ suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it” (1983, p. 54). In terms of reflective practice and journalism specifically, Lynette Sheridan Burns says:

reflection is the bridge between journalism theory and professional practice. It is through critical self-reflection that journalists develop self-reliance, confidence, problem-solving abilities, cooperation and adaptability while simultaneously gaining knowledge. Reflection is also the process by which journalists learn to recognise their own assumptions and understand their place in the wider social context (Sheridan Burns, 2002, p. 33).

The knowledge gained through this reflection-in-action, followed by reflection-on-action, may then be directly introduced back into the area of research in order to improve and develop that practice. According to Fuller and Petch (1995, p. 3),
"research conducted by practitioners is an idea whose time has come," and this would appear to be the case as the methodology is validated in its inclusion as standard practice in areas such as education, nursing, and social work (Bolton, 2001; Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Fuller & Petch, 1995; Johns, 2006; Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Parsons & Brown, 2002; Radnor, 2002; Shacklock & Smyth, 1998). PBE is also very similar to autoethnography and the technique of participant observation in ethnography (Davies, 1999; McIntyre, 2006a). This method has been used and justified by anthropologists as a valid means of gathering knowledge and thus, as “participant observation can be seen as a close approximation of the description of the activity of a reflective practitioner” the practice of PBE is equally justified (McIntyre, 2006a, p. 5).

Not only is the knowledge gained from the exploration of the practitioner’s experience valuable in its own right, it may also be added to the wider body of research from all methodologies in order to gain a truly comprehensive understanding of a particular subject. This makes PBE a particularly useful methodology for the study of the creative process and therefore the research detailed in this exegesis. In this research I am the practitioner enquiring into my own process to gain this necessary insider’s insight into the process of freelance journalism and creativity. By comparing my own experience of the creative process with that of the 20 creative practitioners documented in the profiles, and through the application of previous research to these findings, this research is informed by a multidimensional approach to the study of creativity and cultural production, made possible through the methods available to PBE. It is this approach that has allowed me to test-out the systemic nature of creativity, specifically as it is demonstrated by the operation of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model (1988, 1997a, 1999b). This exegesis contains the final conclusions drawn from analysis of the data collected using the methods of PBE, in accordance with what is arguably the primary aim of all research – to seek the truth (Peirce, 1978; Phillips & Pugh, 1988; Tan, 1985).
4.0 Analysis

Current literature on creativity and cultural production indicates that creativity is best understood as emerging from the confluence of multiple forces (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; McIntyre, 2012a; Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model is one such confluence model, demonstrating that creativity emerges from the interaction of three main shaping forces: the domain, the field, and the individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b). This model forms the primary theoretical perspective underpinning this research project and as such the following chapters of analysis are broadly divided to correspond with each of these components. Structuring the analysis in this way also allows for the discussion of the influence of a range of other factors at work within the operation of the system, such as the relationship between structure and agency, as well as acknowledging that although this particular project is a practitioner based enquiry I am by no means the centre of the process.

As Csikszentmihalyi states, the starting point on the model is “purely arbitrary” (1988, p. 329). All three parts of the system affect each other and are affected in turn through “dynamic links of circular causality” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 329). It would have been possible to begin my analysis with any of the three components, and a number of the concepts discussed could have been included in multiple sections. In her exploration of documentary film making, Susan Kerrigan demonstrates this interconnected nature by representing Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model as a Venn diagram, with creativity occurring at the intersection of the overlapping circles of the three components (2011). I have, however, elected to begin this analysis with the domain as, in the way that it encompasses the cultural antecedents of creative works and the tools needed to participate in a certain creative practice, from the perspective of the practitioner it is arguably the most immediately identifiable place of beginning.
4.1 The Domain

As a confluence model, Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity encompasses theories about the social, cultural and individual elements of creativity and the necessary interaction of these components (1988, 1997a, 1999b). The domain, as a necessary but not sufficient component of the system of creativity in operation, is the cultural component of this model. It encompasses all of the works in a particular arena of cultural production and all of the knowledge embedded in them, as well as the conventions, symbols and procedures through which these works are made. This idea is supported by the complementary concept of Bourdieu’s (1993) field of works, or more correctly the space of works, which is similarly described as “the accumulated cultural work completed up to this time in a particular field” (McIntyre, 2012a, p. 75).

Csikszentmihalyi asserts that domains can affect creativity in three main ways: “the clarity of structure, the centrality within the culture, and accessibility” (1997a, p. 38). For example, if a domain has a well-defined structure, such as the clearly organised notation system of mathematics, novel variations to the culture are easier to recognise by members of the field. In terms of my practice, print journalism is certainly not as tightly structured as other domains yet is still governed by a range of very clear rules and conventions. Similarly, knowledge of the domain of feature writing and character profiles has been both central and accessible in terms of the access to it afforded by my experience and education, as will be further examined throughout this chapter of analysis.

Csikszentmihalyi contends that, “creativity occurs when a person makes a change to a domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 315). However, in order to make such a change, one must first acquire sufficient knowledge of that domain, that is, the knowledge system that one must familiarise themselves with in order to engage in creative practice. By examining my own practice, I discovered that domain acquisition was occurring and was necessary at a number of levels. This process can be summarised as follows. Firstly, on a broad level of practice, I needed to understand what a character profile was and what journalistic tools and techniques of production were needed to produce a series of these. Secondly, Profiling Creativity as an individual project also required a specific type of domain knowledge associated with its particular tone and content, as did each character profile as a separate project within this. Finally, as my knowledge of the domain grew, as I internalised this knowledge, and as I developed a body of work from which I could gain insights that would influence
the rest of the creative process, I acquired a body of knowledge drawn from the domain of freelance journalism that was unique to me as an individual. At all levels in this process I was also aware of the structures that governed my work: on a broad scale governing my participation, those I chose and imposed for myself, and the shaping effect of each choice I made in replicating these structures. The role of the domain in my creative practice as a freelance print journalist is documented in this chapter, as are the similarities in the experiences of the creative practitioners interviewed for the character profiles.

4.1.1 Practice Specific Domain Acquisition

Engaging with the particular cultural domain one wishes to contribute to is fundamental to an individual’s ability to participate in creative activity even at the most basic level. As simplistic and obvious as it may seem, in order to write a song, design a dress or produce mathematical equation, an individual must have first been exposed to an example of that work. Then, he or she must understand how to produce that work: what it comprises, what materials are needed (whether tangible or abstract) and how to put them together. As previously described, all of this information is contained in the domain.

Examining this from the level of my practice as a freelance print journalist, I can identify the sources and trace the development of my own understanding of what a character profile is and how to write one. I am able to pinpoint a number of significant instances of domain engagement that have not only influenced my ability to complete the profile series but also the nature of the project itself, that is, the decision to write character profiles and not use some other form. Apart from general exposure to the media, for example growing up in a household that bought a newspaper on weekends, the most obvious source of my domain acquisition at a practice level comes from formal tertiary training. In 2004 I enrolled in a Bachelor of Communication at the University of Newcastle and chose to major in journalism. Writing a character profile was one of the very first assignments I completed during that program in a course called Introduction to Professional Writing (CMNS1090). In Semester 1, 2012 I also taught this subject, which is essentially conducted in the same format in terms of the knowledge imparted as when I completed my undergraduate degree. The course covers fundamentals of journalistic practice including news values, forms of journalistic
writing, and grammatical and stylistic conventions. The process of teaching this subject highlighted for me just how much of the knowledge I have internalised as part of my creative activity that I have actually learned. As I wrote in my journal:

As well as reinforcing (and helping me articulate) my knowledge of grammar, news values etc. – there’s no better way than having to explain it to someone else! – teaching Intro to Professional Writing has reinforced just how much I actually had to learn. I even went back and looked at one of my old assignments for the course – terrible! I had no idea what I was doing! And although I’m by no means perfect now, there is so much of this stuff, e.g. knowing to use clean simple sentences, that I completely take for granted now. I rarely think about it. But there was a time when I didn’t really know any of it at all. Now it is obvious to me that there really has been a significant process of learning – of domain acquisition – and just how much the profiles I am writing for this project rely heavily on the information I gathered during my undergraduate studies (Coffee, Journal, 7 March 2012).

The necessity of such a process of learning is reflected in the existence of a period of domain acquisition in the experience of each of the practitioners interviewed for the profile series. This training is often formal – the majority of the practitioners have one or more tertiary qualifications specifically related to their field – yet it does not necessarily have to be. Peter Andrews describes the foundation of his theory of Natural Sequence Farming as “copying the landscape” and “a process of understanding the most elementary things and being able to build them to an ultimate conclusion” (Interview, 2 March 2009). Andrews developed this understanding over a lifetime of exposure to the Australian landscape, growing up and working on a property near Broken Hill and additionally spending at least 30 years as an adult specifically dedicated to studying his own property. His immersion in the domain of agriculture was informal in terms of a lack of institutional study but no less significant. Clare Bowditch on the other hand describes her development as a musician as “a self-taught story” although it appears to be a combination (Interview, 21 September 2010). Bowditch said:

So learning to be a musician, basically that was having piano lessons as a kid because I showed an interest in them and then realised I didn’t want to do that. And then for me it was picking up master classes from a jazz singer that I
admired here or a pianist that I admired there, and teaching myself the rest of the time. And that meant spending a lot of time with an instrument alone in a room, and really again following my instincts and holding out a little bit of faith that what I was doing meant something (Interview, 21 September 2010).

Ultimately, the way an individual gains the knowledge of a domain is irrelevant. What is important is that this domain acquisition occurs. As above, more often than not it is a combination of self-directed and formal learning, with each supplementing and enhancing the other. It must also be ongoing. In order to complete the profiles I did not just rely on this largely internalised domain knowledge but also actively sought out information about the techniques and conventions used to build a character profile in order to fill gaps in and reaffirm my existing knowledge. For example, although I had not decided which publication to pitch my profiles to I bought the *Fairfax Media Style Guide* and used it to establish a consistent style for all of the profiles in the series that reflected the professional standards of the domain. Similarly, I identified my interviewing technique as a particular area of practice that needed improvement. The first two interviews I conducted did not run as smoothly or have as successful an outcome as I had hoped. Although I received an adequate amount of information from the interviewees I felt I could have gained more. As I wrote in my journal:

Very unhappy with my interviewing technique. Need to *listen* more, give the interviewee space to think. I can hear myself panicking, needing to get the next question out, rather than exploring interesting themes that come up in the answer or asking them to elaborate. It comes from inexperience, lack of confidence and the feeling that I am wasting the interviewees’ time (Coffee, Journal, 5 May 2010).

I therefore sought out literature on the subject (for example, Adams, 2001; Conley & Lamble, 2006; Ricketson, 2004) and developed my own synthesis of the ideas I felt best related to my weaknesses in the area. For example, allowing for silences and modifying my interview questions for clarity. This effort to expand my knowledge of one of the core skills of journalistic practice, in other words to engage with and develop my understanding of the domain, had manifest and almost immediate positive results.

The last three interviews I have done (McAllister, Baston, Katz) have been so...
much better than any of the previous interviews I conducted. I put that down to: 1. My improved questions; they are much clearer than they were. In particular, I have added an explanation to the question about structures that gives examples of the types of things it refers to (it encompasses a lot). I don’t know why I didn’t do it before! It had always been a stumbling block, but now all problems seem to have been eliminated! Easy peasy! 2. I am becoming more confident as I gain experience. I still get very nervous, but ask the questions now with more conviction. I guess…more as if I have the right to ask them. I also give the answers time to breathe and don’t panic and jump in (Coffee, Journal, 7 June 2010).

In an individual’s ongoing engagement with their domain, consuming the work of other cultural producers is also very important. In my case this included reading other published feature articles and character profiles. I kept a pile of highlighted copies of various articles that I used to double check grammar and stylistic conventions, for example, the average length of quotes and frequency of their usage. The necessity of consuming the product you yourself create, that is, being engaged with the works that comprise your domain, was frequently emphasised by the profile subjects as essential to their own knowledge and creative activity. For example, Brendan O’Connell (Interview, 13 September 2010) said one of the only personal rules he has for his practice as a director is to see as much theatre as he possibly can; Heath Killen (Interview, 20 October 2010) has an extensive knowledge of the work of other designers and trends in that domain; and Benjamin Law (Interview, 9 August 2011) cites “good writing” as one of his major influences – “anything from the New Yorker to a really interesting pamphlet”.

This domain acquisition laid the foundation for me to engage in the practice of freelance print journalism. As Sharon Bailin argues, “one difference between creative and uncreative performances relates to having a real understanding of the discipline in which one is engaged” (1988, p. 97). The same preparation would have been necessary no matter what specific style or tone I decided to employ for this project or who I chose to interview. However, there was also a very particular set of skills and information, and therefore process of domain acquisition, necessary at the level of my specific project, Profiling Creativity.
4.1.2 Project Specific Domain Acquisition

In addition to the necessary enculturation in the domain at the level of the practice of freelance print journalism, a very particular body of knowledge was required for and underpins my specific project. As outlined in the previous chapter, the development of the series of feature articles employed certain journalistic expertise that would have been necessary regardless of the project I chose to create. However, this particular series of character profiles also required its own specific domain knowledge, as does any individual article or project. Not only is Profiling Creativity a series of character profiles, it is also a series specifically about those individuals’ experiences of the creative process and is situated within a very particular theoretical framework, that is, current scholarly research in creativity and cultural production.

My first engagement with the domain of creativity in an academic context was in 2006 during my third year of a Bachelor of Communication in a course titled Communication, Creativity and Cultural Production (CMNS3310), which continues to be coordinated by my primary PhD supervisor. This course was my first exposure to scholarly literature offering a rational exploration and explanation of creativity, and, as I will further discuss in Chapter 4.3 on the individual, I welcomed the challenge to my previously held romantic understanding of creativity. The literature and concepts I was exposed to then informed my honours year project, which took a similar approach to the study of creativity as this PhD does but consisted of four rather than 20 profiles (Coffee, 2007). I also later tutored into this subject as I was writing the profile series and this expanded and consolidated my domain knowledge at a project level in a way that mirrored the influence of CMNS1090 on the knowledge of my practice. As I wrote in my research journal:

Even though it has taken a lot of time away from actual work on the profiles I have found it really valuable in getting my head back in the theory, and am getting more ideas for ways I can integrate this with the profiles (Coffee, Journal, 15 November 2010).

In this way, both CMNS3310 (in roles as student and as teacher) and my honours thesis formed the preliminary work for and provided me with the knowledge base needed to complete Profiling Creativity, and informed my decision to continue to use the feature style to explore individual experiences of creativity and to situate them
within the broader framework of scholarly literature on the subject.

In addition to helping me address broader practical questions of style and grammar, reading the work of other cultural producers also influenced the nature of my individual project, providing a precedent for what I was trying to achieve. In particular, I found an article online titled *The Creativity Crisis* (Bronson & Merryman, 2010) in *Newsweek* that, although not entirely aligned with my particular theoretical perspective, did contain a number of similarities to my project. My research journal records the reassurance I found in discovering the article:

> It summarises ideas about current research in creativity in a feature article style, accessible to anybody, in a popular news magazine – exactly what I want to do. So this means (a) it can be done and gives me an example of how, as well as indicating people are interested in this stuff and (b) maybe someone will want my profiles and with the addition of the interviews they might be even more appealing (Coffee, Journal, 21 July 2010).

There are of course many articles in the popular press about or mentioning creativity; however, I was heartened by the fact that this feature article was both research based and integrated the work of theorists familiar to me such as Mark A. Runco, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and James C. Kaufman. It indicated that a place exists in the domain for a creative project such as mine. In this way, knowledge of the domain allows an individual to place their own work in context. After all, how is it possible to determine that a work is a novel variation without knowledge of what has come before? As Janet Wolff says, “‘New’ is meaningful only in reference to the ‘old” (1999b, pp. 314-315). If we choose to use Margaret Boden’s distinctions of P and H creativity, the ability to make and understand that a contribution is H creative relies heavily on this knowledge and in this way judgements about creativity – your own and others – are relative to your knowledge of the domain (Boden, 2004). Although I was already confident that in my project I was working within very specific journalistic traditions, this *Newsweek* article was further confirmation of the fact that it exists within an identifiable and recognisable context as a creative product.

One of the aims of *Profiling Creativity*, emerging out of the scholarly base that underpins the project, was to demonstrate that, despite being primarily associated with the arts, individuals may be creative in a range of vastly different professions. In order
to reflect this I began by devising a list of 20 broad categories, attempting to achieve a balance of industries that are popularly associated with creativity and those that are not. I also drew from the literature in the development of this list, for example, Keith Sawyer’s *Explaining Creativity* (2006). The original list of categories included: mathematics, theatre, visual art, cooking, engineering, architecture, business, film, farming, fashion, acting, dance, education, web design, industrial design, gardening, journalism, music, science, and writing. The final list of categories is slightly different. The categories of web design, industrial design, gardening and journalism were removed, graphic design was added, and the particularly broad categories of science, music and writing were each split in two. The factors contributing to this development will be discussed in Chapter 4.2 as they are located within my interaction with and accessibility of the associated fields.

The final list of categories included:

Mathematics
Theatre
Visual art
Cooking
Engineering
Architecture
Business
Film
Farming
Fashion
Acting
Dance
Education
Graphic Design
Popular Music
Music composition for theatre and film
Science education
Population health research
Playwriting
Freelance writing
Using this evolving list as a guide, I focused my selection of potential profile subjects on criteria that spanned my dual role as researcher and practitioner. Firstly, in accordance with my theoretical perspective, I decided to approach individuals who had been in some way identified as creative by members of their particular field, and secondly, I employed knowledge of news values in my selection, particularly prominence, currency and timeliness (McQuail, 1994, pp. 212-219). However, with such a diversity of categories my initial knowledge of many of these domains was limited and so also was my understanding of who would fulfil these requirements for both newsworthiness and social recognition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b; McQuail, 1994; Sawyer, 2006). Therefore, my selection of profile subjects required an engagement with each of these domains. After evaluating my existing knowledge, I searched mainstream media as well as industry publications for information, asking questions such as “who is in the news at the moment and why?”, “who is mentioned most frequently?”, “what are the major awards in this industry?”, and “who is receiving these awards?”. For example, when researching the category of visual art, I came across Sam Leach’s name in the Sydney Morning Herald:

I read an article in the SMH about the winner of the Wynne Prize for Australian landscape painting – Sam Leach. People are complaining because his painting looks very similar to another painting by 17th Century Dutch master Adam Pynacker. It raises some very interesting questions about originality…It really shows how prevalent these ideas [are] of something having to be ‘totally original’ in order to be creative or worthy of an award. Very exciting. Hopefully I can get an interview with him! Oh! He also won the Archibald this year! He obviously knew what he was doing. It’s not like an amateur trying to get away with a copy (Coffee, Journal, 14 April 2010).

In this way Leach fulfilled both sets of criteria and fortunately agreed to participate. In each case, after broadly researching a particular domain, selecting an individual to approach and receiving confirmation of their agreement to be interviewed, I then had to conduct more specific research on that participant in order to devise questions and conduct a semi-structured interview. The resulting interview transcript combined with the preparatory information to comprise a very specific body of knowledge that was connected to a single character profile. Thus, the larger domain associated with my project may be viewed as being composed of 20 sub-domains, one for each profile.
Similarly throughout the writing process it became very evident that the more comprehensive my understanding of each of these sub-domains – and to a degree, the more information each contained – the easier it was to write the associated article. As I wrote of the process of creating Kim Baston’s profile, “Going through the transcript again helps me become more familiar with the material, then I can recall it when I need to know and also know what can come next” (Coffee, Journal, 19 June 2011). This importance of familiarising myself with this domain knowledge is also apparent in the documentation of the profiles I found most difficult to write. For example, when writing Paul Bolton’s profile I wrote in my journal:

> Added a missing section bringing the info back to creativity. So much easier to write about the concepts than about the people…I think it’s not reading the transcript closely enough – I haven’t absorbed the information and therefore can’t just spit it out and have to stop and check (Coffee, Journal, 21 February 2012).

This is because my knowledge of the domain of scholarly creativity research was more extensive than my knowledge of Paul Bolton. In this way, when I encountered a problem or found my productivity slowing I either had to revisit the existing collected information, for example familiarising myself with the interview transcript as above, or seek further information elsewhere. In the case of Maggie Beer, the only participant who was interviewed via email, I found the interview transcript did not contain enough information for me to move forward. The same occurred with Karl Kruszelnicki – primarily because of my inexperience in interviewing. In both cases I found that existing feature articles and interviews provided a solution to this problem. As I wrote in my journal:

> Other profiles or feature articles are most useful because they have distilled all the biographical information into the most important and up to date (it is always easy to see when the article was written) facts (Coffee, Journal, 6 January 2012).

And later added:

> Finished KK in the end and I actually quite enjoyed writing it! I thought I would
hate it as the interview didn’t go so well, but it was great! I think that came, at least in part, from doing that extra research (Coffee, Journal, 10 January 2012).

And similarly, the conclusion I came to when writing Andrew Bagnall’s profile was that “there’s no point staring at the screen waiting for something to come up. I need to put the fuel in first, get that info processing in my brain, otherwise there’s no way it will spit something out” (Coffee, Journal, 9 January 2012).

Many of the practitioners, such as Lally Katz, Brendan O’Connell, Clare Bowditch, and Benjamin Law say they dealt with difficulties in their practice by asking questions of themselves and of their work. Katz said, “Often just writing out all your questions and then trying to answer them on my computer or on a notebook if that’s better for you, I find that really helps, rather than just having it all stuck in your brain” (Interview, 30 April 2010). Others, such as Heath Killen, Miles Green, Kim Baston and John Bilmon stressed the importance of always returning to the brief you have been given. Killen said, “It’s going back to the brief and re-evaluating and reassessing and working out ‘how do I do this?’ If you are having trouble, go back to the source and think and re-evaluate” (Interview, 20 October 2010). What these strategies have in common is a search for information, for knowledge. As I noted in my journal, “It’s all about information…Information is the key” (Coffee, Journal, 31 May 2011). That is, the completion of a creative artefact, and the ease with which this production occurs, relies on the acquisition of the domain knowledge specific to that project.

4.1.3 The Individual as Domain and the Internalised Domain

In addition to the importance of the domain at the levels of project and practice, I also identified the role of my own accumulated work as a domain from which I drew knowledge about how to engage in my creative practice. This specific domain consists of a certain set of works, my own works, that share commonalities in structure, rules, codes and conventions, and I found myself building upon and drawing from this knowledge system. As Csikszentmihalyi said, “In many ways each domain describes an isolated little world in which a person can think and act with clarity and concentration” (1997a, p. 37). In this way, the examination of my own practice and writing allowed me to identify and emulate the characteristics of my best work, to avoid those of my worst, and to move forward in and improve upon my creative practice.
Accordingly.

As previously mentioned, *Profiling Creativity* extends upon the work completed in my honours year. My honours thesis also consisted of character profiles of creative individuals and I revisited this work in the beginning stages of my PhD. As I detailed in my journal, the examination of these honours character profiles led me to make a number of very deliberate decisions about the direction and tone of the PhD series:

After reading back my honours profiles (with much cringing and asking 'did you really think that was funny?') I have decided to approach my PhD profiles with a more serious tone and even further embedded/intertwined with the research – a task of achieving the right balance between the two and remaining accessible to a general audience (Coffee, Journal, 26 May 2010).

Similarly, once I began the series, I found my approach to the profiles evolved in response to the difficulties and successes I was having with each one. The most significant occurrence of this came after I had created drafts of the first five profiles and felt that two were noticeably more interesting and cohesive than the others. I then made the decision to compare the profiles and identify the reasons for this perceived difference in quality. Over a period of time, manifest through a number of insights, I discovered that the more successful profiles were built primarily around a single, specific concept located in the creativity literature – rather than primarily based on biographical information or personality – with the individual’s experience of creativity located and explored within this context. As my journal records:

Have just gone back and read all of the profiles previously written and realised the best two are the ones that have a more serious tone – begin with a theme of creativity rather than with an image about the person. Not sure yet whether to keep a mix or to rewrite the others in that style. Was very valuable to go back and identify that (Coffee, Journal, 17 June 2011).

And later that day:

Ahh! Just realised that’s why LK’s [Lally Katz’s] doesn’t work and how to fix it! Wallas stuff comes out of nowhere because I haven’t set it up as a profile about creativity. It looks like a straight character profile with that intro. Need to add

And about a month later:

Realising I write much better work when I really grab hold of a creativity theory I am interested in and get my teeth into. In this case structure. Also found this was the case with SL [Sam Leach] and the fascinating issues about originality it raised (Coffee, Journal, 22 July 2011).

I was then able to convert these identified strengths into a rule that allowed me to move forward with the project by applying a consistency to the profiles that did not previously exist. I also went back and re-wrote the profiles that did not fit within this structure. In this way the domain of my individual work directly shaped the direction of the creative work as a whole. This was a continuous process, and as I accumulated a number of profiles I became aware of specific habits that existed in my writing, for example words I tended to use most frequently, clichés I was prone to using, and grammatical habits such as excessive comma use. As I identified these in my work I could then make a conscious effort to change these tendencies. For example, I wrote in my journal “Exported PA [Peter Andrews] to send to Phillip, after I added in missing dates etc. Even then found one comma I needed to remove. Always removing commas. Always” (Coffee, Journal, 17 June 2011). Throughout the process I also became more keenly able to identify problems in my writing as they occurred – whether that be with the concepts or the structure of the article – and was conscious of the fact that if I ignored the issue it would not simply go away. Sam Leach articulated this feeling when he said, “What it actually feels like is that I actually always knew what I wanted to do but I was reluctant to do it because it means more work” (Interview 10 June 2010). I came to recognise that if I had identified something as a problem then the chances are that it was, and I needed to either collect more information or work out an appropriate way to address it. In June 2011 I wrote, “Am learning not to disregard instincts…If I feel like something isn’t right, don’t ignore it. Find out what the problem is and do something to fix it” (Coffee, Journal, 18 June 2011), and in the process of drafting the latter profiles I found this process much easier. For example, when creating Rowena Foong’s profile I recorded in my journal:

Feel an impending problem. Too many quotes and not enough creativity tie-in
or strong argument. Will keep plugging though and then do a read through when I’m done to see how it works as a whole and then how I should fix it (Coffee, Journal, 14 January 2012).

Although, in this case, I made the decision to wait until the end of my first draft to address the problem, I had directly pinpointed what the issue was and was aware of the fact that it would have to be fixed. This ability came from the experience of drafting and re-drafting previous profiles and acquiring knowledge of the essential components and re-occurring problems with the composition of those elements. A similar process occurred with the interviewing process. As well as researching existing literature on the subject, I also examined my interview transcripts to identify where I had difficulties, why that was, and what I could do to change this. For example, a recurring note in my journal regarding my first few interviews was that I could “hear’ the questions I didn’t ask but should have”, that is, I should have sought more information or clarification of the answers the participants gave (Coffee, Journal, 7 July 2010). Very soon after this entry I wrote, “Noticing times when I actually am asking the extra questions I need to. Drawing out the information instead of leaving important concepts unexplored” (Coffee, Journal, 28 July 2010). The journal also contains many entries that include lists of questions to add to the semi-structured interview and amendments to existing questions. For example, “Another question to add: How do you know if your work/an idea is good or creative?” (Coffee, Journal, 3 August 2010). In this way, I was continually and directly drawing knowledge from my existing individual domain to improve the creation of artefacts that would then be absorbed back into it.

The process of drawing from my own individual domain also included the collation of a pool of ideas that could be rearranged and selected from. I used the Stickies software program to keep digital notes on my computer desktop. For example, if an idea for an introduction did not necessarily work in one profile, there was a chance I might be able to use it in another. This record of ideas proved very useful. For example, as I was writing Kim Baston’s profile I recorded in my journal, “Trawling sticky notes (digital) for ideas I might have written down that could help. Ooh – found one!: ‘We create structures for ourselves and reproduce them – big or small scale’…Very related to KB’s ideas” (Coffee, Journal, 18 June 2011). This movement of ideas was also reflected in the practitioners’ experiences of creativity. For example, Clare Bowditch spoke of finding a place for a specific image she wanted to use in a song:
I wrote a couple of songs the other day where I finally worked out where to put the image I had, which is just a blue dress twirling round the room. I found the spot for it, I found its home, and that was this wonderful feeling (Interview, 21 September 2010).

In this way, individuals continuously refer to the store of their own work and knowledge in order to be creative. Certainly, that knowledge is gathered and curated from the combination of broader cultural traditions and symbol systems, that is, larger domains, yet as it comes to be distilled, combined and represented by the individual it forms a domain unique to that individual. This is also connected to the necessary process of the internalisation of the domain. Csikszentmihalyi argues, “To be creative, a person has to internalise the entire system that makes creativity possible” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 51). He says:

Artists agree that a painter cannot make a creative contribution without looking, and looking, and looking at previous art, and without knowing what other artists and critics consider good and bad art. Writers say that you have to read, read and read some more, and know what the critics’ criteria for good writing are, before you can write creatively yourself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 47).

In terms of the outcome of this internalisation of domain knowledge, I found that as my project progressed I was making fewer notes in my journal about attention to grammatical errors – either due to the fact that I was not making as many or that I was correcting them immediately without conscious consideration. This process of domain acquisition and internalisation is always ongoing; there is always more to learn and this is how an individual continues to be creative. As Benjamin Law said:

You never stop learning and I think that’s probably why the best writers are usually older. Writing is one of those things that…you’re supposed to get better with age…It’s about getting information and processing it, and getting wise (Interview, 9 August 2011).

This is also very closely associated with Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus – the embodiment of certain types of capital that predisposes an individual to act in particular ways – which will be examined further in Chapter 4.3 in relation to the individual in the systems model (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). Throughout this project, I, as
an individual, have developed my own domain, which has emerged from the immersion in and internalisation of specific types of knowledge that I have been exposed to – both related to my practice and my project. The subsequent development of an awareness of my own habits and tendencies within the use of this knowledge, and of my failings and successes, has created a domain specific to me as a creative practitioner, or in a sense I, the individual in the system, have become my own domain.

4.1.4 Structure, Agency and the Domain

While structure and agency are often represented as operating in opposition to one another, they are as Anthony Giddens proposed, “two sides of the same coin” (Haralambos & Holbern, 1995, p. 904). Their relationship is one of interdependence: all human action is governed by and occurs within the bounds of certain structures, while at the same time these structures are created, replicated and transformed through human action. As Janet Wolff said, “all action, including creative or innovative action, arises in the complex conjunction of numerous structural determinants and conditions. Any concept of creativity which denies this is metaphysical and cannot be sustained” (Wolff, 1981, p. 9). Consequently, rather than being a force that quashes creativity, structures in fact enable creative action to occur and help shape the products that are the result of this action.

Examining the relationship between structure and agency in relation to the domain in Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model also helps illustrate the role and importance of this component in the creative process. Different structures guide the creative process at different levels within the domain. On a broad scale, in my own practice as a freelance print journalist I am confined to the structure of the language I write in, that is, English. This includes adherence to sentence and grammatical conventions so that my work can be read and understood. I must also adhere to the codes of print journalism, and for this project in particular, feature article and character profile style. This includes the use of quotations, inclusion of facts and subjects’ biographical information, the development of a coherent narrative structure, and employment of a clean and concise writing style. Similarly, I chose to write my profiles with adherence to the Fairfax Media Stylebook (Fairfax Media Publications, 2010) in order to ensure consistency and professionalism across the series. Without utilising the conventions of the domain, Profiling Creativity would not be recognised as journalism,
let alone as creative, and so the importance of understanding what these structures are and how to use them actually gives the work its form and legitimacy as a creative artefact. Freelance writer Benjamin Law described his own experience of the importance of understanding the conventions of the domain you are working in, saying:

All writing has different techniques that you need to adhere to, to ensure that it’s a good piece of writing – it has structure, narrative, tone, humour, dialogue, exposition, has research, and you do need all of those things to ensure that it’s a good piece of writing. Whether all of those things are used effectively are basically criteria on which you can judge whether it’s a really good read or just is a piece of crap. And you can study those conventions at university but even as readers we understand intuitively how those conventions work as well (Interview, 9 August 2011).

In my research journal, I recorded that I was “continually surprised by the amount of minute changes I make and reverse, make and reverse, and make again” and that they were “all small things but so important” (Coffee, Journal, 11 February 2011). As an example:

This morning I swapped around the order of a list of the words and this afternoon I changed it back. Such minute differences that seem to matter so much: the detail, the rhythm of the phrases and sentences and paragraphs. It’s just as important to me how a sentence sounds out loud as the information it contains (Coffee, Journal, 6 December 2010).

As a reflection of the sentiment of Law’s statement, this is a recognition of the importance of utilising the conventions of my domain and acknowledgement of the power these structures can have when used in way that the field understands – as Law says – as “good”. It is about being able to understand the symbol system and make advantageous choices with and within this structure, rather than somehow operating outside of it. As Negus and Pickering argue:

Our understanding of creative practice cannot then be confined to what is taken as inspirational and radically new. Even when this occurs, creativity still involves working with recognisable codes, conventions, and the expectations they generate. Indeed, for much of the time it entails putting together various words,
sounds, shapes, colours and gestures in a recognisably familiar but only slightly different way (2004, p. 70).

In this same way, creative practitioners also establish and reproduce their own codes, conventions and expectations. Each choice the agent makes while engaged in the creative process establishes a new set of rules that governs and guides the subsequent development of their creative work. During our interview, composer Kim Baston described the process as “filling in the abyss" and spoke about how she welcomed defined structures. She said:

Parameters are good. And I like those, I like the limitations, otherwise it’s an abyss of nothingness really. And that’s always the hard bit with starting something new, because a lot of it is very open and as soon as you start narrowing down the possibilities it becomes much easier to work within them and every decision you make kind of fills in the abyss a little bit (K. Baston, Interview, 25 May 2010).

This interview with Kim Baston prompted me to consider the structures I had created for myself in my project. As I wrote in my journal:

I’ve been trying to see how this narrowing down might apply to my own writing and I guess some of these choices have already been made. They are feature articles, one per person, around the theme of creativity. The questions I chose to ask are also part of this – I can’t talk about something they [the interviewees] haven’t discussed with me. I guess then it comes down as far as choosing themes for paragraphs, then sentences, then words, and I see here the relationship between agency and structure. I am making certain choices (agency) that then create structures that subsequently govern the following choices I make from then on (Coffee, Journal, 2 December 2011).

I began to make the most progress when I made clearly defined choices about the tone, content and style of the articles. As has been discussed earlier in the chapter, my initial revision of my profiles revealed that the articles were more focused and interesting when firmly located within the domain of scholarly creativity research. In determining this, I provided myself with at least a basic guideline for beginning each profile. For example, I determined that each introduction must begin by addressing
some aspect of the research, and each profile should aim to explore this theory by demonstrating its practical application to the experience of a particular creative practitioner. By analysing each interview transcript and assessing which concept from the literature emerged as most prominent in that participant’s experience of creativity – rather than first selecting and then applying a concept – I was able to further narrow the framework on which to build the profile. This guided my selection and arrangement of information, quotations, and supporting examples and rather than constraining my practice, developing these parameters necessarily facilitated the creative process.

Many of the practitioners interviewed expressed similar sentiments, and even if they were not as enthusiastic about the importance of structures as Baston they could at least identify that knowledge of the structures of their particular domain was essential for their creative practice. For example, Heath Killen said:

You get a brief, it’s got parameters, it’s got a message, it’s got particular constraints on that project, be they in terms of the size of a poster, the colours that can be used – so your limitations. All kinds of limitations specific to each project. And so you have to figure all that stuff out before you even start making anything, before you start sketching, there’s a lot of things to think about before that and to me that’s a very big part of the creative process (Interview, 20 October 2010).

Similarly, David McAllister said, “I think the structures are there for a reason, to aid really the performance or the creation of work...I think ultimately the structure around the process is actually the thing that makes it happen” (Interview, 29 April 2010). In terms of “making things happen,” one of the most significant – and to me, unanticipated – ideas to emerge from my practice was the role of technology as a structure for facilitating my creative practice. In terms of technology’s relationship to the domain, Terry Flew argues that technologies are the “the tools and artefacts used by humans to transform nature, enable social interaction or extend human capacities” and in this way “inevitably intersect with cultures” (Flew, 2005, pp. 25, 26). Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1999b, p. 317) says the domain includes “technical procedures,” while Toynbee (2000) asserts that Bourdieu’s field of works – which, as has already been discussed, is very similar to and supports the investigation of Csikszentmihalyi’s domain – includes techniques and codes of production. Knowledge and use of technology is necessarily connected to these things.
Individuals select and use the technologies available to them in ways that accord with the conventions of their cultural domain as well as societal expectations. At the same time, individuals are also limited by the capabilities of that technology and the creative process and the actions of the creative practitioner can be significantly guided by the nature of that technology. Similarly, this technology gives the creative product its form and allows creative action to occur. Here again, we see the interplay and inseparability of structure and agency. When engaging in creativity it is essential to understand how to use the technologies necessary for your practice. In many industries, this knowledge is constantly evolving and failing to keep up can negatively affect the creative process. For example, for Miles Green, working in an industry such as visual effects, understanding the latest technologies and how to use them is essential. Green said:

[T]hings change pretty much every couple of months – there’s usually a new technique that comes out for some aspect that we’re doing. There’ll be new fluid solvers for fire and particles. There’ll be new water solvers for some of the ocean that we’ll have to do. It doesn’t stand still actually for very long. I guess it’s like web design. New standards come along, applications get quicker, you’ve got to keep up and know the latest technology otherwise you very quickly fall behind (Interview, 26 May 2011).

In this way, Green’s creativity is necessarily connected to technology. Harshavardhan Gangadharbatla (2010) argues that technology has such an influence on creative practice that the systems model should be modified in order to include it as an additional component. However, technology is encompassed quite comprehensively within the domain and is inseparable from the cultural knowledge needed to operate it, yet Gangadharbatla’s assertion is interesting as recognition of the essential role technology plays in creativity. In terms of my own creative practice, there were two main types of technology that had the most influence on the construction of the profiles. Firstly, I used ExpressScribe for transcribing my interview recordings, which allowed me to slow down the audio speed or have the track automatically double back on itself every few seconds. I could also control the playback using keyboard shortcuts without clicking out of my word processing program. This dramatically increased the speed and ease with which I transcribed my interviews. Secondly, and most importantly, I started using Scrivener rather than Microsoft Word for all of my word processing. As I wrote in
my journal:

Have just started using the program Scrivener after seeing a blog post on The Thesis Whisperer website. Agree with some of the things she argues about it accommodating the way theses and other articles are put together in pieces – not written beginning to end – as Microsoft Word seems to want you to do. Maybe it will help clean up the mess I end up with at the end of my docs and put plans in easy reach. Will give it a go (Coffee, Journal, 20 January 2011).

After trialling for a month, I had discovered how to best use it to my advantage. I noted in my journal:

Scrivener allows you to see all the different parts you need for your project – plans, transcripts – in the one document. But also, if you click fullscreen, you get just the page you’re working on on a black background. It makes it clear, gets rid of the clutter, much easier to concentrate (Coffee, Journal, 21 February 2011).

From this point onward, my journal entries are dotted with comments such as “Yay Scrivener!” (Coffee, Journal, 18 July 2011). The program allowed me to develop a highly structured routine of planning, revising and synthesis of information, and in this way, influenced the shape of the profiles that were created using the program. I will outline and discuss this procedure in more detail with regard to my individual routine in Chapter 4.3; however, the value of this particular technology was certainly in the structure it provided and the ability to establish defined parameters.

It is the utilisation and replication of the cultural conventions that govern my creative practice, with the understanding of what these appropriate structures are and how to use them, that actually allowed me to be creative. Structures, rules and conventions make action possible. Profiling Creativity could not have been created without knowledge of my domain at the levels of practice and project, the cultivation and examination of a domain unique to me as an individual, and recognition of the enabling role of the structures that exist within the domain. However, the systems model is the product of the systemic interaction of the individual, culture and society. It is this social component, the field, and my experience and relationship with it that will be investigated in the following chapter.
4.2 The Field

As mentioned in the previous chapter, creativity occurs when a change is made to a domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997a, 1999b). Those responsible for making decisions about which products and ideas will be accepted into the domain and which will not are called the field. The field comprises the social component of the systems model and is in continual interplay with the domain and the individual within this system. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that “the easiest way to define the field is to say that it includes all those persons who can affect the structure of a domain” (1988, p. 330), and it does this in a number of ways, not only in its gatekeeping role but also, as will be discussed throughout this chapter, in the effects of its response on the way practitioners engage in practice. Pierre Bourdieu, with reference specifically to cultural production, refers to a similar concept that he also calls the field (Bourdieu, 1993). In his discussion, Bourdieu emphasises the influence of economic and power relations between sub groups in the field, and argues that all fields vary in their willingness to accept additions to their domains (Bourdieu, 1993). However, as Csikszentmihalyi asserts, “a culture could not survive long unless all of its members paid attention to at least a few of the same things” (1997a, pp. 41-42). Not all fields seek or respond to novelty in the same way or judge it against the same criteria. A field’s ability to encourage novelty depends on how well connected it is to the rest of the social system (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 44). Fields can also be either proactive or reactive, that is, either actively seeking out novel contributions to the domain or waiting for it to be presented to them (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 43). Finally, the field may have broad or narrow filters for judging this novelty (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 44). In this way, an understanding of the field necessarily includes a knowledge of audiences, and as Sawyer proposes, this not only includes intermediaries but also the broader public and those in between (2006, p.126-133). This is also linked to the idea of markets, which Jason Potts describes as arenas where “new ideas may enter and transform the extant economic and social system” (2011, p. 25). In his discussion of economics and creative industries Potts argues that “if economies and cultures are both continuously transforming (that is, evolving) from within through complex co-evolutionary interactions” – echoing Csikszentmihalyi’s characterisation of the nature of the interactions in the systems model – “then the role of markets and market institutions becomes central” (2011, p. 19). From the perspective of the individual in the system, if a practitioner wishes to make a contribution to the domain they must understand the characteristics of their particular field (and audiences and the market) and what is
expected of individuals who wish to make a contribution to the domain it is associated
with.

In occupying the position of the individual in the systems model in my practice of freelance print journalism it was my responsibility to acquire an understanding of the conventions of the field, just as I was required to with knowledge of the domain. In engaging with the field while writing *Profiling Creativity*, and in discussing the experiences of the creative practitioners interviewed for the profiles, I also developed an awareness of the field’s role as it extends beyond the evaluation of novelty. Csikszentmihalyi contends that part of the field’s role is to “pass on specialised symbolic information to the next generation” and I found that accepting the advice of experts and mentors significantly influenced and improved my own practice (1988, p. 330). Similarly, I discovered the power of recognition from members of the field, including audiences, to not only let others know that an idea or product is creative but also to affirm this for the individual who produced the work. I also developed knowledge of the implications of the field’s influence over practitioners’ reputations, the importance of building and maintaining relationships, and the consequences of a failure to operate within the expectations of the field, in particular, a failure to adequately consider an intended audience. My experiences of this social element of the creative process, as well the experiences of the practitioners interviewed for the profiles, are detailed in this chapter.

4.2.1 Understanding the Field

Just as individuals in the system must develop an understanding of their chosen domain in order to participate in the creative process, they must also acquire a thorough knowledge of the field they work in. This includes identifying who its members are, as well as the requirements and expectations of that field. In Janet Fulton’s (2011a, 2011b) exploration of the social organisation of print journalism she identified this field as including other journalists (from cadets to senior practitioners), editors, sub-editors, media owners and audiences. Fulton also includes PR practitioners in her discussion, as although they “do not have a direct influence on what products are to be included in the domain” they do have significant influence on the way journalists seek, access and receive information, and this way “have expanded the domain of print journalism” (2011a, pp. 233, 235). In completing *Profiling Creativity*, in my dual role as
both practitioner and researcher, I not only had to engage with the field of journalism but also the field of academic research, including university staff and in particular my research supervisor. Throughout the various stages of the development of the project I found it necessary to engage with different members of these fields at different times, and to negotiate the various associated requirements of completing a project that is both a PhD creative work and a piece of journalism.

In beginning the profiles, in seeking access to interviews with practitioners for the first of my categories, I quickly became aware of the central role of publicists, agents, managers and personal assistants. In searching for a practitioner’s details, it was very rare for me to find a direct contact for the individual I wished to eventually speak to. Most interview requests were made via an intermediary such as a media manager or a publicist, as this is where I was usually directed in searching websites for particular practitioners. The advantage of this, in the cases where I received a response and the participant agreed to be interviewed (the majority of my requests were unanswered) was that further correspondence in arranging an interview time and date was always very efficient. If there was a change to the schedule I was always contacted with plenty of notice. When I corresponded directly with a participant it generally took longer to arrange interview times, and the schedule was more likely to be subject to change.

In the later stages, as my understanding of the role and importance of these personnel grew, I began directly emailing agencies (for example, literary agents, acting agents) to request interviews with particular individuals. As I did this, I also became aware of the most efficient ways to find the right organisations. For example:

Had a minor (but major) breakthrough I wish I’d had a year ago. Have been searching “person’s name’ + agent” in Google for contact info and not coming up with anything. Tried “person + management” and instant result. Very frustrating but good now that I know (Coffee, Journal, 15 April 2011).

Eventually, I progressed to emailing companies as well as agencies without a specific practitioner in mind, instead requesting that the organisation put me in touch with anyone who would fit the requirements of my project and be available for an interview. The advantage of this was that these organisations had direct access to numerous practitioners from each field, and through them so did I, and therefore more
chance of finding at least one suitable individual for me to interview. For example, I was put in touch with Alison Bell, Kim Baston and Miles Green by contacting Belvoir, the National Institute of Circus Arts, and Animal Logic respectively, and making a general request.

Similarly, I also came to recognise the value of using my personal contacts with members of the fields associated with each of the categories I was using as a guide for the profile series. This resulted in some changes to the category list, as mentioned in the previous chapter. For example, I added the category of playwriting, as a playwright friend of mine had a direct contact with Lally Katz.

My friend, who I know through Tantrum Theatre, has a connection with Lally Katz – she was her mentor in an emerging writers program – and she asked Lally if she would mind giving me her email address. Lally replied straight away and seems lovely. Interestingly I did try to contact her initially through her agent, yet received no reply. It helps to have contacts! (Coffee, Journal, 20 April 2010).

Similarly, in my own capacity as a member of the field of theatre, I was able to personally contact Brendan O’Connell, having performed in a number of shows he directed. One of my sisters is a circus performer and I mentioned her name when I approached the National Institute of Circus Arts, who then connected me with Kim Baston – resulting in the division of the music category into composition and popular music, and the removal of the gardening category. In the field of education, my father is a teacher’s aide and he put me in contact with Ian Luscombe, as well as Paul Bolton. I divided the category of science in response to the addition of Paul Bolton and removed industrial design. Finally, I changed web design to graphic design when a fellow RHD student put me in contact with Heath Killen, and altered journalism to the broader category of writing (Benjamin Law) in order to increase my chances of finding a participant after I received a number of refusals from journalists. I also wanted to avoid overlapping analysis with my own role as a journalist.

All of these changes in my practice, changes to who I contacted and how, reflect a developing understanding of the way the field operates and the importance of altering my practice accordingly, to maximise my chance of gaining interviews and therefore access to the information necessary for me to write the profiles. It is also evidence of the significant control these intermediaries have over the eventual shape of
my creative work; in determining who, if anybody, I was put in contact with they directly influenced the content of the articles. Once I did gain an interview it was also necessary for me to develop a more specific understanding of the nature of each practitioner’s individual field, and in particular its relationship to current popular notions of creativity, before I conducted the interview. For example, in the case of science, despite the fact that “it takes creativity to bring together all the competing theories and all the potentially relevant data and come up with a framework that best explains the data” it is not historically or popularly thought of as being creative (Sawyer, 2006, p. 264). In this way, I approached the development of interview questions as well as conversation with the participants in a way that anticipated such assumptions and could draw out evidence in their experience that might challenge these assumptions. As I documented:

When I begin an interview, I give the participant a little speech about the project. I find that I tailor it to the person’s profession and their possible view/knowledge of creativity. E.g. Art – possibly more romantic than science. Change speech accordingly (Coffee, Journal, 21 July 2010).

Generally, this provided me with a relatively accurate expectation of the interviewee’s attitude. For example, Karl Kruszelnicki had difficulty accepting that scientific work was in fact creative. Anticipating this, I was able to use my questions to draw out an account of Kruszelnicki’s working process, and despite his initial assumptions this account did support current scholarly theories and definitions of creativity. However, this method was not completely foolproof. For example, Sam Leach, who I had anticipated would hold at least some romantic beliefs about creativity, in line with the particular connection of these notions to visual art and painting in particular, was surprisingly rational in his understanding (Sawyer, 2006, p. 177). For example, one of his very first responses was the sarcastic: “So it’s not just being visited by a kind of Greek goddess? I always assumed it was just a muse flew down” (S. Leach, Interview, 10 June 2010). Despite this, familiarising myself with the relationship of particular fields to notions of creativity was always a useful task in allowing me to understand the interviewees’ responses in the context of the overarching attitudes of the portion of society they belong to. When it came to other stages of the project, the requirements of the field were more straightforward – but no less important to understand.
When submitting my work for publication, I had to ensure that I knew which members of the field to send it to and what format they required it in. For those publications that called for submissions (that is, were proactive in Csikszentmihalyi’s terms), the correct email address and submission guidelines were very clearly identified. For example, when submitting to the arts magazine *RealTime* I wrote in my research journal:

It is the only real theatre based magazine (and all the profiles available at the moment are about theatre) so I think I'll go with it. Looked at the guidelines and have to: submit a CV; cut 500 words out of each (they accept submissions of 500-1500 words); single spacing with double space between paragraphs (Coffee, Journal, 11 January 2012).

For those publications that did not solicit submissions, but that I thought my articles might be suitable for, I firstly had to find a name and contact details for the editor – or section editor if part of a larger publication. Then, without a list of specific submission requirements, I simply used the format I came to recognise as standard: double or one-and-a-half spaced with Times New Roman or Arial font. This is also why the profiles appear in this format in this PhD. However, I did not always submit the articles straight away. As I read more submission guidelines as well as tips from editors for pitching work, I discovered that the usual process for a freelancer is to make a pitch first and then submit an article if the pitch is successful. With this understanding, I altered my submission process to reflect this convention by developing a pitch to send through (including short descriptions of usually up to four selected profiles) with a note that said I could provide copies of any or all of the articles if requested. Although no articles have been published as yet – for reasons I will discuss in more detail in section 4.2.4 – I found I was more likely to receive a positive response with this pitch-based approach. In this way, as was the case right throughout the process, as I developed a deeper understanding of the field’s operation I was able to interact more effectively with it and its members.

4.2.2 Collaboration and the Importance of Advice

An individual’s participation in the creative process is necessarily influenced by the social system they are part of. This not only includes the necessity of
understanding and adhering to the conventions of the field, but also the effect of engaging with mentors, fellow practitioners and audiences in a more collaborative sense. Negus and Pickering argue that the “creative act, even that which might seem lone and private, is social and operates within a chain of communicated experiences” (2004, p. 85). In the experience of creating Profiling Creativity, I spoke to other RHD students, academics, my supervisor, editors, journalists, potential readers, and other creative practitioners. Sometimes these discussions were formal and other times informal. Sometimes my problems were answered directly and other times the conversation had an unintended impact. In all of these ways, the articles I wrote and the way that I wrote them were significantly shaped by my interaction with members of the field and the suggestions, information and advice I received from these people.

The advice I received from the field was crucial to the formation and consolidation of the overall tone and shape of the profile series, the content of individual profiles, and also the development of my working process. I significantly changed my approach to writing in response to the advice of the field. For many years, my writing process involved moving strictly sequentially through a project, unable to move on to a new section until I had perfected the previous one, sentence by sentence. I was also convinced that as I had always written this way, or at least felt as if I had, this was the only way I could ever write. This is a very romantic notion, one I harboured even with a rational understanding of creativity, and perhaps a reflection of how deeply-seated these romantic conceptions of creativity are. However, in order to increase the speed that I was producing the profiles with I decided to act upon the advice I had been given – particularly by my supervisor who had written regular feature articles himself as a music journalist – to begin the process by writing as much as possible without worrying about whether or not it is perfect. When working on Brendan O’Connell’s profile, I wrote:

Trying a different – and often recommended – way of writing. I just bashed out as much as I could (minus quotes) without worrying about how it is written or it being perfect. I got 766 words! It was actually pretty easy (Coffee, Journal, 20 September 2011).

This practice – which I termed creating a “rush draft” – soon became a central part of my writing ritual and increased my productivity. As I later recorded, when creating Benjamin Law’s profile:
Now will expand as I did for BOC [Brendan O’Connell] in keeping with advice everywhere and which really seemed to speed up the process last time: just bash it out till you have nothing left to say, in messy half-sentences, and flesh the skeleton out later (Coffee, Journal, 14 October 2011).

The benefit of testing out and accepting this advice highlighted for me the importance of listening to the suggestions of those in the field and acknowledging the value of their experience and expertise. In a similar process, in my journal I frequently referred to the fact that it took me longer to write the introduction than any other part of the profile. In my initial approach to working this meant I was frequently stalled on the introduction and unable to complete the rest of the profile until it was done. However, after a discussion with my supervisor about writing introductions I decided to make a change. I wrote, “Ah! After struggling for a while, I remembered my supervisor’s advice to write the intro last! Will do that” (Coffee, Journal, 29 October 2010). This practice then became integrated into my increasingly tightly structured writing routine and consequently increased the speed of the production of the profiles.

Not only did this interaction with the field affect the way I wrote, it also influenced the overall shape of the profiles. For example, simply having to articulate the nature of the profile series to my supervisor and other colleagues helped to clarify it. I did not completely realise that I had made a decision to focus the profiles on concepts from the literature on creativity until it came up in a discussion with my supervisor. As I documented in my journal:

During the last discussion I had with my supervisor I realised how much clearer the direction and my conception of the profiles is in my own head. I see them as a series about creativity rather than individual profiles. It was only in articulating this to my supervisor that I came to realise that this idea had really consolidated itself in my head. I believe that has come about as a way of reconciling some of the earlier problems I have had about how to organise the information: balancing biographical info, info about their creative process and the overall aim of the creative project (Coffee, Journal, 29 October 2010).

In this way, although I was not directly asking for advice or information, this interaction with the field assisted my creative process by prompting me to articulate my
ideas to someone else, therefore clarifying what it was I wanted to achieve. Having an outside perspective on my work, for example through regular meetings with other RHD students as well as informal conversations, usually provided me with solutions or suggestions that I had not previously considered. For example, I wrote in my journal that one fellow student:

made a very valuable suggestion about the publication of my articles. In my head I was stuck on the idea of all 20 being a series (as they will be in my PhD); however, it hadn’t occurred to me that I could publish them in little bunches, or even singles, in different publications. When she suggested it I didn’t know why I hadn’t thought of it before. Always great to have the input of someone outside the work who can see things that maybe you cannot (Coffee, Journal, 21 July 2010).

At other times, simply seeking advice was useful, even if it did not directly solve the problem. For example, I asked a colleague if she had any suggestions about how to write about the few practitioners who contradicted themselves, that is, who gave romantic definitions of creativity that were not supported by their accounts of the creative process. This colleague could not offer any solution to the problem; however, I wrote that “it was helpful to talk to someone about it – to acknowledge that it is a real issue and that I need to do something about it before I can move forward (Coffee, Journal, 11 November 2010). This also prompted me to discuss the issue with my supervisor, who helped me develop a solution that I will discuss further in section 4.2.4.

The importance of discussing your work with other people was also a theme that emerged from my discussion with the other practitioners I interviewed. For example, Benjamin Law identified the fact that many of his story ideas originated from social interaction. He said:

You don’t get ideas on your own and sharing information, talking, having drunken conversations about writing, they always stir things up and a lot of the story ideas in terms of writing are things that I’ve written on my hand from a friend telling me an interesting story they’ve read or experienced and I’m like ‘actually that should be a bigger story for a certain publication’ (Interview, 9 August 2011).
Similarly, Andrew Bagnall said he regularly sought advice from colleagues both within and outside the company he works for:

At GHD, where we’ve got obviously thousands of staff, there’s usually someone who knows the answer. So there’s a large part of using our internal network then also our external network. We’ve got other people that we liaise with frequently, even some that are competitors, but we still ring each other after work and discuss things (Interview, 31 May 2011).

For me, one of the most important roles of the field was contributing to the editing of each of the profiles in the series, in particular, the contributions of my supervisor and my sister. After I had made a number of drafts of an article, to the point where I was unsure what further changes needed to be made, I would send it to my sister for her to read and provide feedback. In this role, my sister was essentially representative of a potential audience member, part of the field in their ability “to determine whether the innovation is worth making a fuss about” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 41). My sister is a consumer of print journalism but had no knowledge of theories about creativity, and therefore was able to give insight into whether or not the profiles would make sense to a general audience, and perhaps more importantly, whether or not they were interesting. She also picked up spelling and grammatical errors that I failed to notice. As I wrote:

My sister called me last night and we went through KB’s [Kim Baston’s] and LK’s [Lally Katz’s] profiles. She pointed out some spelling mistakes I just didn’t pick up on – even reading back the sentence I didn’t see it until she told me. Also pointed out sentences that didn’t make sense or were unclear and ones that were maybe a bit weak. I changed some problems then (i.e. spelling) and marked others for later (Coffee, Journ, 22 August 2011).

Her input became a crucial part of the process. After my sister’s feedback I would revise the profile again and then send it to my supervisor who would make suggestions regarding broader questions of structure and content. I would then make changes accordingly, and if they were major revisions I would send it back once more for approval. In this way, the suggestions of these members of the field significantly influenced the shape of my creative work.
I also sought advice from sources outside my immediate personal contacts, for example by following freelance writers on Twitter who provided tips for pitching articles and links to publications I could send my work to, as well as reading blogs such as the Thesis Whisperer which provided more general research and writing support. I also attended seminars such as a profile-writing workshop at the Sydney Writer’s Festival. Finally, my creative process and the way I understood it was influenced by comparing my experience with that of the practitioners I interviewed for the project. For example, I adopted Lally Katz’s technique of asking questions of her work when she became stuck. Katz said, “What I’ll do is I’ll start writing a letter to myself on my computer saying what’s going on? Why am I confused?” (Interview, 30 April 2010). This process proved extremely useful in my own practice, allowing me to pinpoint problems and therefore directly address them. Similarly, I also began to look at each choice I made when creating the articles as filling in “the abyss” as Kim Baston (Interview, 25 May 2010) had described it, and in this I way became more aware of the impact of each decision and the progress I was making, even if only by small increments.

As Howard Becker proposes in *Art Worlds*, “All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people” (1982, p. 1). Becker’s statement can easily be amended to encompass all creative work. Part of understanding the nature of creativity is recognising that an individual is not somehow separate from their society, just as they are not separate from the influences of culture. By recognising the important role of other people in my creative process and my place within a wider community, and taking on board the advice of experts in the field, I was able to develop a more efficient writing process and improve the quality of the resultant creative work. As Claire Bowditch said of her experience:

“I don’t know any person who is, one: creative in their field; and two: successful in it without being part of a much broader community. The most successful musicians I know are ones who really, really work with other musicians and learn from them and are humble about it. You don’t just create a vision in and of yourself (Interview, 21 September 2010).

### 4.2.3 The Importance of Recognition

Creativity is not a property that is inherent within the objects we ascribe that title
to but rather is a sociocultural value assigned to them. It takes a group of people with specific associated knowledge and expertise, that is, a field, to make judgements about creative products. As McIntyre states:

> It is the value attributed to the novel and unique combination of antecedents by the society creativity occurs within and by the social organisation specifically concerned with the knowledge in which the creativity occurs that eventually accords an act of creativity creative status. Novel objects and ideas which are generated from antecedent conditions are thus only creative within a specific sociocultural framework (McIntyre, 2012a, p. 5).

Sometimes the field comprises only a small group of experts while at other times it encompasses the entire general public (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 326). What is unavoidable in all cases is that in order for a work to be considered creative, a group of people with the required expertise must recognise it as such. This recognition from the field is not only vital in allowing an individual’s work to enter the domain he or she wishes to contribute to but also has a number of other important implications for an individual’s ability to participate in the creative process.

If I had not received institutional recognition from the University of Newcastle I would never have been able to begin this project. I was awarded honours (first class) for my Bachelor of Communication (Honours) project, which formed the preliminary work for *Profiling Creativity*, and it was this result that allowed me to be accepted into the PhD program. I also received an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship, which gave me the means to devote the required attention to the project. As Csikszentmihalyi argues, “Disposable wealth is one of the conditions that makes selection of novelty possible. In addition, it takes disposable attention – people who in addition to being wealthy have the time to take an interest in the domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 331). In my case, the disposable wealth of the scholarship created the space for this necessary disposable attention, as I did not have to find full-time employment and could therefore use the surplus time to work on developing the profiles. It would have taken far longer to achieve the same results without this support. In a reflection of this, Sam Leach said it was receiving a major award that facilitated his development as an artist. He said:

> For me I had this enormous stroke of luck right when I finished my
undergraduate degree. I was studying painting part time, and I really enjoyed painting but it was difficult to get enough time in the studio to really develop it. But I sort of managed to produce this painting that won a competition – the metro competition, which was $40,000 – which was enough for me to stop doing any other work and just be in the studio full-time for a year. And so I spent that year just painting about 60 hours a week in the studio and doing really little else. I progressed far more in that single year than I had in any year previously and that really set the foundation for me to be able to continue to work professionally. That year allowed me to develop enough to establish an ongoing practice (Interview, 10 June 2010).

In this way, the field’s recognition of Leach’s work in the form of such patronage was crucial to his ability to continue his creative practice as an artist, and also markedly improved it as a result. Similarly, Rowena Foong said it was not until she and her sisters won a Mercedes Start-Up Award that they committed to the development of the clothing label. She said:

We tried the competitions and the second one we actually won: the Mercedes Start-up Award. That was like a friend said, ‘Oh you know, there’s a fashion competition where you win $5000 and you win a runway show at Australian Fashion Week and you get a mentorship and stuff.’ And I went, ‘okay cool.’ It’s so intuitive. It was just like, ‘All right, let’s just try it. It sounds great.’ We’re pretty enthusiastic. So, we won that. That was it. So that kind of launched us into the fashion world (Interview, 3 June 2010).

In addition to the economic capital and resulting benefits associated with these formal awards, this type of recognition also constitutes what Bourdieu would call symbolic capital, or “a degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour” (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 7). Bourdieu's field, described by Johnson as “concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations,” is very similar in nature to Csikszentmihalyi’s field, and agents in these fields use varying types of capital (cultural and social) to negotiate their position within these spaces (in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 6). In this way, an award as symbolic capital constitutes a recognisable indicator of an individual’s place within the field and their status as creative. As Csikszentmihalyi contends, “We have faith in the domains of art and science, and we trust the judgement of the field, that is, of the artistic and scientific
establishments” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 327). For example, although modest about his own status as a Member of the Order of Australia, David McAllister said, “I’m always impressed when I see people that have wood on their lapel and I think, ‘Obviously they’ve done something important’” (Interview, 29 April 2010).

The effect of this recognition is evident even in the way Profiling Creativity was put together. As noted in section 4.1.2, in seeking to interview creative practitioners I was necessarily contacting individuals who had been recognised as creative by their field. For example, I had no prior knowledge of Jon Borwein or his standing within mathematics until I read that he had been awarded a fellowship of the academy of science; I discovered Sam Leach in a similar way – as a recipient of both the Wynne and Archibald prizes; and I was put in contact with John Bilmon after contacting PTW and enquiring about architects who had worked on the multi award-winning Watercube. Yet even if not in the form of a formal award, all of the practitioners profiled in the series had been recognised by their field in some identifiable way, whether that be in the act of publication, employment or participation in prestigious projects. That is, with the approval of the field, their work had been accepted into and therefore changed a particular domain. Without this acknowledgment I would never have contacted these individuals for inclusion in the series, as quite simply, I would never have known who they were. The importance of this information is similarly evident in the way the profiles are constructed. Not only was it important that I understood the place the practitioners occupied within their field, it was also crucial that I communicate that information to the readers of the profiles. That is, I had to let the audience know why I was writing about these people in the first place, to give context as well as reason to believe this practitioner’s experience of the creative process was worth reading about. As I noted during my construction of Maggie Beer’s profile, “I always begin profiles by including the awards a person has received or work they have done that people might know about. (The power of the field, reputation, capital.) Demonstrating that they are creative” (Coffee, Journal, 1 November 2011).

However, the field is not only instrumental in letting others know that an individual’s work is creative; it also is responsible for letting that practitioner know. The importance of the field’s recognition in alleviating self-doubt and providing motivation was a recurring theme not only in my experience of the creative process but also in that of the practitioners I interviewed. Throughout the process of writing Profiling Creativity, I regularly felt that I could not judge whether or not my work was of an appropriate
standard. In fact, I often felt that I could not at all gauge where it sat on a spectrum of quality. It was at this stage that the input of my sister and my supervisor, those who I sent my work to for revision, became most important. For example, as I wrote about sending profile drafts to my sister:

I can’t stress enough how important this process is. I like to do it before I send it to my supervisor (so he doesn’t see my silly mistakes). It helps so, so much, because after a while I just have no idea whether or not what I have written it is good or bad (Coffee, Journal, 22 August 2011).

Similarly, the effect of receiving reassurance from my supervisor is a demonstration of the power of extrinsic motivation to facilitate creativity. As my journal records:

Received feedback on BOC [Brendan O’Connell], LK [Lally Katz] and BL [Benjamin Law] from my supervisor. Got some very positive feedback – in a way anyway. Said BL [Benjamin Law] didn’t have my ‘usual dazzle’ – which made me happy to think I usually dazzle!! And also said BOC [Brendan O’Connell] had ‘the sparkle you do well’. I was very flattered. Gave me a boost. Have to re-visit them all now. Will make changes saved as new draft. Getting there! (Coffee, Journal, 9 November 2011).

Without this validation, in combination with their advice, I would have found it very difficult to find a reason to keep writing. As Csikszentmihalyi contends:

At some point in their careers, potentially creative young people have to be recognised by an older member of the field. If this does not happen, it is likely that the motivation will erode with time, and the younger person will not get the training and the opportunities necessary to make a contribution. The mentor’s main role is to validate the identity of the younger person and to encourage him or her to continue working in the domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 332).

The practitioners interviewed for the profiles also spoke of the importance of such social recognition as a way of alleviating self-doubt and providing a means of gauging the quality of their work. For example, Debbi Gomel (Interview, 30 August 2010) said she felt validated by positive feedback from customers as she described
herself as “not an overly confident person”. Rowena Foong (Interview, 3 June 2010) said she and her sisters entered competitions to work out “whether we were actually making anything that was of a standard”. Similarly, Benjamin Law echoed my own experience of the writing process, saying:

Writing is just like a constant balancing act between ridiculous amounts of unjustified confidence and crippling low self-esteem. So recognition is the thing that can really help prevent you from getting too far down in questioning your own work. Most of the writers I know, most of the good writers I know, are ones who are their worst critics…I don’t think anyone, no matter how long they’ve been writing, ever gets over that sense of complete uncertainty. Because every time you write something new you don’t know what the story should look like (Interview, 9 August 2011).

For Heath Killen, acknowledgment of his work from the general public can be just as valuable as that coming from his peers. He said:

When you get that acknowledgement from someone that isn’t in the industry, it’s such a rare thing that I think that’s very, very gratifying. It almost falls on the same level as someone you do admire. It’s sort of funny. I guess someone that you do admire and someone that doesn’t know anything about design, there’s almost an equal status there because they both represent something different. On one hand somebody knows everything you’ve gone through and everything you’ve done, and so for them to acknowledge you and to recognise you as good I think is very gratifying. But also someone that doesn’t have any prior notion of design who appreciates what you’ve done is almost the same. It’s sort of like, ‘Oh wow. I’ve managed to cut through somehow’ (Interview, 20 October 2010).

In this way, while the field’s central role is to determine which creative products will enter the domain, this social recognition has consequences for creative practice beyond that function. Recognition from the field operates as a symbol of a creative practitioner’s status, a motivating force, and promotes access to resources (for example, money and therefore time and attention) that support domain acquisition. The following section of this chapter will explore the additional power of this social component of the systems model to influence reputation and the consequences of this
ability for creative practitioners.

4.2.4 Reputation, Relationships and Rejection

The judgement of the field, whether positive or negative, has a direct influence on the way agents participate in creative practice. A favourable judgement has the power to shape an individual’s reputation in a way that can expand access to previously unavailable opportunities and resources. Likewise, rejection by the field can limit this scope, or at least alter the boundaries a practitioner’s work is carried out within. Of course, at least in part, this is to a degree outside of the individual’s control, dependent upon the particular field’s willingness to accept new additions to the domain. For example, as Csikszentmihalyi states, “A new idea will face difficulties in being recognised as creative if the field is defensive, rigid, or embedded in a social system that discourages novelty” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999a, p. 331). However, regardless of this, creative practitioners must recognise the power of the field to shape their reputation, the consequences of this, and the importance of cultivating and maintaining key relationships with those who hold this influence. This includes audiences and consumers.

Maggie Beer understands that her business, and therefore her creative practice, relies on the continued support of her customers and their perception of the brand. She said, “I am…hugely reliant on my customers continuing to trust my brand. That is, to know that Maggie Beer Products is a guarantee of flavour, quality and integrity” (Email Interview, August 24 2010). Similarly, Heath Killen spoke about the benefit of the visibility generated by keeping a design blog. He said, “It’s benefited me in terms of business because it’s definitely helped increase my profile and people are starting to know who I am because of it” (Interview, 20 October 2010). However, opening up your work in this kind of way, offering it to the field for judgement can be daunting, specifically because of the potentially damaging consequences of an unfavourable judgement. Brendan O’Connell spoke about his fear of receiving a negative reaction from audiences and peers:

That’s the scary element for me. We invite a lot of people from Sydney and further to come to our shows, and when they do come it’s pretty terrifying because I feel like I’m this uncreative, regional, whatever, young person who
has no experience compared to them. So it’s kind of like this double-edged sword whereby them coming and seeing the work it’s kind of validating what I’m doing, and I know that sounds kind of like I’m up my own arse, but it feels like it’s validating it because they’re getting a chance to see it and they understand the work I’m making. But at the same time, what if it’s shit? What if it is?…Because this may influence things if it makes them think I’m really bad at what I do, or seem it. It’s probably peers and audiences [that judge his work], but it’s scary either way. Audiences, it’s scary because people pay money to come and see your work and…who really wants someone to pay and see a show and then they don’t like it? You don’t want that at all, obviously (Interview, 13 September 2010).

The nature of a practitioner’s reputation has significant implications for the way he or she conducts their creative practice. My own lack of an established reputation within the field of journalism influenced the way I approached the publication of the series. Although the profiles appear as a series in this project, I realised that as I was unknown to the field I would have a much better chance of having the profiles published individually rather than as an extended series. For this reason, I offered small groups of the profiles in my pitch, noting that I could supply one or all of them as requested. To support this structure, I also made sure that an audience’s understanding of the profiles was not dependent on having read previous articles in the series.

Similarly, I also had to consider how the actual content of the profiles might affect my reputation, as well as that of the participants. For example, I was unsure about how to approach writing about practitioners who were romantic in their definition of creativity yet whose explanation of their experience of the process was aligned with a rational understanding of creativity. I did not want to upset or offend any of the interviewees by misrepresenting their particular understanding of the creative process, or by appearing to make a personal judgement in pointing out this contradiction. At the same time, I did not want to tacitly support a romantic conception of creativity by publishing these ideas without addressing them at all. I spoke to my supervisor and developed a solution in response to his advice:

Had a meeting with my supervisor today to discuss some marking issues and the problem I’ve had writing about interviewees who contradict themselves.
Turns out, the solution is relatively easy! He suggested I just use phrases like: ‘They say this…but another way of looking at it is this…’ Excellent! That shouldn’t upset anybody too much I don’t think. I’ll still have to be careful with wording but at least I have a solution now (Coffee, Journal, 22 November 2010).

Many profile writers see it as part of their role to present a balanced and accurate mini-biography of the person they are profiling, even if the portrait that results is unflattering. As Matthew Ricketson explains, “To do it well, a profile writer also requires sound judgement of people, which means most profiles tend to be done by experienced journalists” (Ricketson, 2004, p. 24). However, the profiles in Profiling Creativity are not traditional character profiles in the sense that I have not spent long periods of time with the individuals and those close to them with the purpose of evaluating their lives and personalities. More importantly, I am not an established or experienced journalist, and therefore it could easily affect my future access to the domain – to interviews with practitioners and publications – if I developed a reputation for writing articles that were unjustifiably critical. For this reason, while I did make some small comment on the practitioners as I personally related to them in the interview, I avoided wider ranging commentary on their personality. I also tried to remain critical of the ideas they presented on an academic level without implying any associated reflection on their character. In making these choices I was also acknowledging the necessity of maintaining the relationships established throughout this project, in the capacity of these individuals to provide or deny me access to the domain in the future. In this way, it is important for creative practitioners to consider the potential for their relationships to affect their ability to participate in the creative process. For example, Heath Killen spoke about his developing understanding of the importance of maintaining a positive working relationship with his clients. He said:

I think a lot of designers feel this way that clients are the enemy and that your vision is absolute. I think up until a couple of years ago I felt that way too but I’ve since really stopped feeling like that because I want to express myself through my work…but I’ve learned how to do that in collaboration with clients, so in the last few years I’ve really embraced the relationship with clients. I think that a lot of them are wrong a lot of the time, and we’ll go through those discussions, but I think it’s become a more collaborative process with my clients (Interview, 20 October 2010).
Killen said that despite this perceived divide between clients and designers, preserving that relationship is vital because, quite simply, “If they don’t like you, they don’t pay you and your work doesn’t get made or seen” (Interview, 20 October 2010). Michael Howe, in his critique of the idea of genius, argues that being able to engage with society has played a role in the success of even those most famous for their creative contributions. He proposes that:

Darwin would never have enjoyed the success he earned were it not for the fact that in addition to the intellectual capacities, fierce determination, and single-mindedness that he possessed in common with other geniuses, he also had some impressive diplomatic skills, as well as courage and a marked ability to get on with others (Howe, 1999, p. 16).

This ability to get along with others is particularly important when the creative work is based on group collaboration. Rowena Foong said the success of High Tea with Mrs Woo relies on the ongoing ability of the three sisters to work together. The Foong sisters have put a great deal of effort into maintaining their relationship. When they had difficulty communicating in the beginning stages of establishing the business, they established weekly mediation sessions to address the conflict. Foong said, “We eventually worked out how we could respect each other, or understand each other differently, so that was a huge help, and from then it’s just got a lot better. So ten years down the track and we still fight but we’re able to overcome it” (Interview, 3 June 2010). Regardless of whether the relationship is with those an individual is working with directly or with the gatekeepers who approve the work, engaging with others – the field – is an unavoidable part of producing creative work. Csikszentmihalyi argues that:

It is impossible to separate creativity from persuasion; the two stand and fall together...In other words, if by creativity we mean the ability to add something new to the culture, then it is impossible to even think of it as separate from persuasion (1999b, p. 314).

If an individual cannot convince the field that his or her contribution is valuable, their work will not be recognised as creative. I have discovered this in my own experience. In the completion and pitching of my profiles I failed to appropriately adhere to the expectations and conventions of engagement with the field, and therefore
my articles have not as yet been published. In a typical relationship with a publication, the freelancer will pitch an article to a publication and if the pitch is successful, will then write the story. However, in the completion of my project, I wrote the profiles without a specific publication in mind and then afterwards attempted to find one that the articles would suit. This proved more difficult than I had anticipated. I received a resoundingly similar response on each occasion of submission: that the articles were of a high standard/interesting/well-written but simply not right for that particular publication. As already noted in section 4.2.1., I did receive an initially positive response when I emulated the traditional conventions by pitching the articles and then providing the article at the editor’s request. However, when I provided the articles, they were rejected for the reason mentioned above. Interestingly, early in the process I had anticipated that this could be an issue, writing in my journal: “Things I must remember to do: Stick to a style. Decide and research what this should be (i.e. Pick a publication)” (Coffee, Journal). However, I failed to understand the significance of this observation. Essentially, I failed to appropriately identify or consider a specific intended audience for the series. This includes a failure to consider specific interests or prior knowledge that the audience or audiences might have, and this affected the way I constructed the pieces. Sawyer argues that audiences “have an influence on the creative process, even if the creator is alone in a room in the woods” and this is still true in my case, except that the primary audience I was considering was me (2006, p. 128). I did give thought to external audiences, yet I did not apply this to the way the profiles were written in a necessary targeted way. Instead, I constructed the articles with a more general consideration of what I assumed was interesting, but what I now realise was largely what I found interesting, rather than researching and writing in a specific way for a specific potential publication or readership. The advantage, however, of this realisation now is that I am aware of exactly where the difficulty lies and can begin to solve the problem. I have two options: to keep looking for a suitable publication for the profiles as they are or to rewrite them for a specific publication, a strategy that so far I have not had the time to execute but will engage with in the future. Peter Andrews’ (Interview, 2 March 2009) failure to gain support for natural sequence farming from the relevant figures in government is similarly indicative of the consequences of a failure to receive the support of the field.

Overall, in acknowledging the necessity of this social element of the creative process, creative practitioners must recognise the necessity of understanding what is expected of them by this field and the potential of these agents to shape their
engagement in creative activity. Yet just as importantly, as the individual in the system, practitioners must also acknowledge their own capacity to use knowledge of the operation of the field and its expectations to build and maintain relationships that will give them the best chance of making a contribution to the domain.
4.3 The Individual

Historically, and it continues in popular romantic understandings of creativity, attempts to explain the creative process have focused on the individual (Boden, 2004; Sawyer, 2006). Confluence models that incorporate cultural and social elements, such as the systems model of creativity, are not designed to downplay the contribution of the individual but to acknowledge the other factors at play. Attempting to explain the creative process without the consideration of all of these elements fails to give an adequate picture of the complexity of the nature of creativity. However, given that individuals are necessary but not sufficient for creativity to occur, it is still useful to examine the way the experiences, background, and characteristics of individuals influence their participation in the creative process, the choices they make within this activity, and their relationship with the other components in the system.

In this project, I occupy the position of the individual in the system. In this way, the previous chapters have examined the role of the field and domain from the perspective of the individual as I engaged in freelance print journalism. In this chapter, I will examine the way my personal background has influenced my practice of freelance journalism and this project in particular. I have chosen not to discuss personality; as Csikszentmihalyi argues, even as he proposes some traits, “none of these personal characteristics are sufficient, and probably they are not even necessary” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999b, p. 328). Instead, using my research journal, combined with the experiences of the creative practitioners interviewed for the profiles, I have found it most useful to explore the way individuals’ backgrounds, motivations, the rules and routines they develop for themselves, and their predispositions influence their engagement in the creative process.

4.3.1 Personal Background

There is certainly no one path or set of steps an agent must follow in order to make a creative contribution. As with the social and cultural elements of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi argues that “having the right background is indispensable but certainly not sufficient for a person to make a creative contribution” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 1). However, it is interesting to trace the paths that people have taken and to identify the influences and encounters that have shaped their creative practice and the
choices they have made within it. Individuals are influenced by the unique combination of relationships with members of certain fields, the domains they are exposed to and encouraged in, and the specific ideas they encounter and absorb in their experience of the world. In the close examination of my own creative practice I have been able to identify certain characteristics of my work and working process and explore these in the context of the shaping events and experiences unique to my own personal background. Similarly, in the diversity of practices of the cultural producers interviewed for Profiling Creativity, each practitioner was able to identify specific incidents, individuals and opportunities that played a role in shaping the idiosyncratic paths they took.

The practitioners identified a range of influences in their upbringing and experiences early on in their lives that contributed to their eventual involvement in specific domains. For example, Benjamin Law said reading and writing formed a significant part of his childhood. Law said:

There was a lot of emphasis on both of those things when we [Law and his siblings] were growing up. We did some sport but we were all very big readers, especially as kids, as well. And our school would have picture books that we had to bring back home every night, and that was sort of a big thing that we'd do every evening – reading books. And as a teenager I read a lot of magazines, and we always had magazines in the house as well. Everything from Who Weekly to random other things that my Dad would get (Interview, 9 August 2011).

Similarly, Heath Killen said he can identify the particular influences of his father and his nanny, not only on the development of his practice but also directly in the work he makes now. Killen’s father is an architect who also used to paint and draw, and his office was downstairs in the family home. In this way Killen was exposed to and fascinated by processes of drafting and illustration early in his childhood, skills that are central to his current graphic design work. Killen also often experiments with collage in his designs, a practice directly influenced by the nanny he had as a child. Killen said:

We used to do collage together, so it’s kind of like I’ve been doing the sort of illustration work I do now for 30 years because I used to do it with her. We used to cut up my Mum’s Woman’s Day magazines and all that kind of stuff and paste them into old ledgers and journals that my Dad used to have from...
downstairs, and [it was] sort of a little bit of formal training in terms of composition and collage and all that kind of stuff (Interview, 20 October 2010).

Alison Bell’s choice of creative practice was also influenced by her parents who, although not professional actors, were both involved in amateur theatre. She said:

My mother and my father, this is kind of a long way back, were both involved in the Grenfell Dramatic Society. And I remember as a child loving watching the shows. And my mum used to perform and my dad used to build the sets and that kind of stuff. And actually my mother – both of them were teachers, my parents – and my mum was a drama teacher, so in that respect I guess it was a direct influence (Interview, 11 January 2012).

Bell also spoke about the sense of belonging she felt on stage in a Year 5 class performance, as well being “deeply affected” as a 14-year-old by Bell Shakespeare performances of Romeo and Juliet and Richard III (Interview, 11 January 2012). Similarly, architect John Bilmon attributes his love of architecture to a fascination with the two water tanks near his childhood home. He said:

One was a big concrete-like structure and the other was a metal structure, and they were massive big tanks built up on piers, and the concrete one in particular had the columns with arches on the top and so on. It was sort of like growing up beside a big Roman thing or something like that, so I think that inspired me to take an interest in architecture. I genuinely believe that (Interview, 28 March 2011).

As the practitioners’ experiences demonstrate, an individual’s personal background can significantly contribute to the type of cultural capital he or she acquires and therefore the domain they choose to contribute to. As Csikszentmihalyi asserts,

Cultural capital consists in the educational aspirations of one’s parents, the nonacademic knowledge one absorbs in the home, the informal learning that one picks up from home and community. Moreover, it involves the learning opportunities that include schooling, the availability of mentors, exposure to books, computers, museums, musical instruments, and so forth (1999b, p. 328).
In this way, it is not only the knowledge you are exposed to but also how the people around you encourage you to use that knowledge that contributes to the creative practice you choose to engage in and the extent of this involvement. Like Benjamin Law, Lally Katz was raised in a family that emphasised reading, writing and storytelling. Katz’s high school drama teachers encouraged her to put this knowledge into practice in the form of playwriting and to develop her skills by giving her the opportunity to write plays for other students to perform. Importantly, Katz also said that her parents “always said that I could do whatever I wanted, and so there was never any kind of feeling of working in theatre wasn't a proper career or anything” (Interview, 30 April 2010). The shaping influence of my own personal background makes an interesting comparison to Katz’s experience. In my case, it was the fact that theatre was not presented as a viable career option – or at least a prohibitively difficult one – that in part led me to study communication at university, and therefore acquire the knowledge and experience that allowed me to write Profiling Creatively. I had initially considered pursuing a career in theatre, however, while this was not explicitly discouraged, influences in my school and home environment emphasised the difficulty of establishing such a career. Therefore when it came to selecting university preferences at the end of high school I was encouraged to investigate other options. As Csikszentmihalyi argues, “It is not realistic to expect a great deal of talent to be attracted to a domain, no matter how important it is, if there is little chance of practicing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 333). As my experience indicates, the same can be said of the perception of the chance of practicing in a domain. However, my choice to study journalism was not simply a matter of arbitrarily selecting an alternative. There are a number of identifiable influences that affected that decision.

Reading and writing have always featured heavily in my life. My parents regularly read books to my sisters and I when we were young, and I was encouraged to write my own stories both at school and at home. Two of my clearest memories from kindergarten are winning first prize for a story I wrote for book week, and being taken by the school principal to the Year 6 classroom to read the students a book about lady beetles. The fact that these memories are still so vivid indicates that this recognition had a significant motivating impact on me. The complexities of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation will be further explored in section 4.3.2. As my interest in reading and writing developed, my family actively supported it. I often received books for presents and was encouraged to attend a number of extracurricular writing classes as a primary school student. These interests became more specifically tailored to journalism as I grew
older. My parents regularly bought weekend newspapers and I gradually developed an interest in reading the supplementary weekend magazines, and in particular the character profiles within them. Eventually, I became the person who would be most likely to ensure that we bought the paper. I also remember a Year 11 English teacher praising me for a feature article I wrote for an assignment and showing it to the class, an act that was very influential in its timing at a point when I was actively making decisions about my future study choices. In this way, the combination of exposure to the domain of journalism and encouragement by those around me played a significant role in my first engagement with the particular practice this project is examining.

The nature and content of the project, *Profiling Creativity*, has also been shaped by a number of identifiable influences in my personal background. For example, the project’s basis in scholarly research in creativity is the result of my exposure to the literature in the university course Communication, Creativity and Cultural Production, a core third year course in the Bachelor of Communication program at the University of Newcastle. This course is unique to this particular program, and therefore, it is very unlikely that I would have formulated a project on this particular topic if I had not made the decision to study in Newcastle, a choice that was directly influenced by the fact that I had friends and family in the city.

In addition to the role of these influences – primarily my family and my education – in shaping my broader trajectory towards creating *Profiling Creativity*, I can also identify their effect on elements of my actual working methods. In particular, in documenting my practice I soon became aware that I was constantly reading my work out loud to myself. As I wrote in my journal, “It is vital for me to hear it out loud to see if it makes sense and if I like the way it sounds. The rhythm of sentences and paragraphs is almost as important to me as the info they contain” (Coffee, Journal, 12 November 2010). I became interested in identifying the reason for this, and later proposed that perhaps this habit developed out of ten years study of speech and drama while at high school. I wrote:

The detail, the rhythm of the sentences and paragraphs, it’s just as important to me how a sentence sounds out loud as the info it contains. Maybe that comes from a speech and drama history – lots of poetry and prose reading. Maybe that’s where I get my – what feels like innate now – ability to tell if the rhythm of a sentence is right or not (Coffee, Journal, 6 December 2010).
As a very significant part of my life, speech and drama inevitably affected my relationship with language and the way that I understand it, and its particular focus on poetry has contributed to my ongoing concern with the rhythm and patterns of my own writing.

In examining the appearance of ideas seemingly from nowhere, Arthur Koestler asserted that rather than emerging from nothing “they may be likened to an immersed chain, of which only the beginning and the end are visible above the surface of consciousness. The diver vanishes at one end of the chain and comes up at the other end, guided by invisible links” (in Boden, 2004, p. 15). This is particularly reminiscent of Graham Wallas’s stages of creativity (1926, 1976), and the imagery is pertinent not only to the emergence of ideas, but also more broadly to the way practitioners come to be involved in certain domains and make choices within them. As I discovered in the exploration of my own creative practice and that of the practitioners interviewed for Profiling Creativity, close examination of one’s individual history can highlight the importance of previously forgotten influences and experiences that provide at least part of the explanation for the way he or she engages in creative practice. As Lally Katz said, “It seems like it’s coming from nowhere but actually it’s coming from who you are, and the conversations you’ve had, and the people you’ve met, and the places you’ve lived in, and the dreams that you’ve had” (Interview, 30 April 2010).

4.3.2 Work, Motivation and Flow

Despite assertions from the romantic and inspirational perspectives about the mysterious nature of the emergence of creative ideas and works, from the perspective of the individual creativity has far more to do with deliberate work and conscious devotion of attention. Even the most famous examples of unexplained and innate genius do not hold up to examination within a rational approach to the study of creativity. For example, in Genius Explained (1999), Michael Howe asserts that even the abilities of someone like Mozart “can be accounted for in the same ways that help explain the developing capabilities of hundreds of other young musicians who have patently not been geniuses” (1999, p. 6). While personal background may influence the type of activity an individual engages in, it is only through conscious work within this that he or she may be creative.
In my own experience of creating *Profiling Creativity*, it would be impossible for me to claim that the work involved was anything but deliberate, or that it could have been achieved without this work. My learning journal in itself is evidence of this, as it constitutes a detailed record of the creative process as it was occurring. Had the profiles appeared to me without explanation through the influence of some external muse or emerged from nothing but my own internal genius the journal would have been very empty. However, instead, it provides documentation of the evolution of the project and each individual profile through conscious decision making, research, trial, error and the ongoing development of skills and knowledge. For example, it contains many entries that are simply lists of actions, such as: “Made Scrivener document. Copied transcript across. Read transcript through. Made ‘initial ideas’ document” (Coffee, Journal, 4 November 2011). Other entries are attempts to document the less linear aspects of the process, particularly editing and revision. For example:


While very different examples, both entries are evidence of the necessary work involved in the creative process. This sentiment was echoed by the cultural producers interviewed for the profiles. The dominant message from the practitioners was that hard work and commitment are central to their experience of the creative process, their own creative success, and the achievements of other practitioners they knew. Lally Katz likened creative ability to a type of fitness. She said:

It’s like you can be a naturally fast runner but if you don’t run every day, if you don’t practice, you’re not going to stay fast. You’re not going to keep up with the other people who are running every day. So I think it’s almost like, it’s sort of like being an archaeologist or something as well. You might be a naturally good archaeologist but if you don’t dig you’re not going to find anything…I think sometimes people can think that being creative shouldn’t have to be about hard work, it should just be something that comes easy. Or people sometimes think that it is something that is easy, but it’s not. Any artist that I know that’s had success, especially long term success, it’s their whole life. They’re working at it
all the time. They never let up. It's full-time, day and night (Interview, 30 April 2010).

Similarly, David McAllister spoke about his role in ensuring that the dancers in the company work to make the most of their ability.

If you just have natural ability and no application and you don’t work to the maximum of your ability, you never achieve what you can. You can never achieve really the heights that you have the potential to achieve. And I think potential is an incredibly dangerous word, because there’s nothing worse than not living up to a potential, not fully exploiting that potential. And often part of my job as artistic director is to continually push dancers to reach their potential or to go past what they think they can achieve. And I think the only way you really ever get to the end of your career and have really maximised your ability is by working every day as hard as you can. Now some days that will be a lot more than other days, because obviously you can't work at the same level your whole career, or just physical and emotional things inhibit you from being able to work at a certain level every day. But for the amount of output you have on that day, if you can walk away each day going ‘I gave today everything I had to give it’ then you will have achieved something, even if it has been an incredibly frustrating day. I think the art of performance and the art of making something happens through really 90% extremely gritty, hard and determined work (Interview, 29 April 2010).

As part of the work of creativity, Brendan O’Connell asserted that even tasks not generally considered creative are just as important as the other elements in the creation of a play. For example, putting together a rehearsal schedule.

You might not think it’s creative but you have to use your creative understanding of directing and rehearsing and apply it to a very mundane technical task of a schedule. So you can say, ‘Okay, well with my creative knowledge of how it’s going to take to make this play and what this scene will require – this scene with two actors, it’s six pages – it’s actually going to take x amount of hours of rehearsal time from my experience’. And so that has to translate across as well. And I know a lot of people who don’t focus on rehearsal schedules because they just think they’ll get people when they’re
available and it's actually, I think there’s an art to scheduling. I know that’s really weird but it’s really important, and I think it’s those elements, anything like that, is just as important as the so-called creative work you do in the rehearsal room (Interview, 13 September 2010).

When specifically questioned about the relationship between “hard work” and creativity, the only two practitioners to dispute its role or raise a question were Claire Bowditch and Paul Bolton. As mentioned in her profile, Bowditch’s definition of creativity is significantly narrower than that encompassed by the research, restricted essentially to what Wallas (1926, 1976) would call the moment of illumination, and which Bowditch said she believes should be “effortless” (Interview, 21 September 2010). However, Bowditch did assert that hard work is essential for “creative careers” and also spoke of the work involved in learning to be a musician, tasks that are certainly encompassed by current scholarly definitions of creativity and the definition used in this specific research. Paul Bolton’s response to the question was very different. Bolton did not dispute the fact that the creative process involves deliberate labour, saying, “I think you have to spend significant time doing it” (Interview, 19 October 2010). What he did disagree with, however, was the specific use of the word “hard” and the implications within this of struggle, or as he described it, “something unpleasant”. Instead, Bolton emphasised the enjoyment he finds in his creative work. He said:

It’s fun. I mean at the end of the day I would rather do something that’s fun that helps people. But honestly if I had to say to myself, ‘What’s motivating me more? Helping people or having fun?’ It’s honestly the fun. I don’t think they’re separable. If I didn’t find this fun I wouldn’t be any good at it and I wouldn’t do it. I don’t feel guilty or bad about it. It’s just the way it is. That’s the reason for turning the computer on and looking at the proposals, looking at the issues that we have. It’s very much a ‘here’s a problem’ and it’s fun to try and solve that problem. We have 6000 girls enslaved in basically effective slavery, what can we do to improve their mental health and function? I mean that’s a problem, but it’s also frankly a fun thing to think about in a perverse sort of way (Interview, 19 October 2010).

Paul Bolton’s experience is an illustration of intrinsic motivation, which as Amabile and Tighe explain “is the motivation to engage in some activity primarily for its
own sake – because the activity itself is involving, interesting, satisfying or personally challenging for the individual" (1993, p. 15). The practitioners interviewed for the profiles also spoke about the pleasure they find in immersing themselves in the work of creative activity. For example, Maggie Beer (Email Interview, August 24 2010) said, “Work is my life... and I love every moment of it”, and John Bilmon said:

I can’t escape my profession, I see it all around me, I see it wherever I go, and I love it. It sort of sustains me…There aren’t many architects who in my opinion have achieved a lot in their lives who haven’t put in a lot of hard work and commitment. But at the same time, it’s incredibly satisfying and deeply pleasurable (Interview, 28 March 2011).

The benefit of being intrinsically motivated is that devoting the necessary time and attention to the creative process is far easier if an individual enjoys what they are doing. However, it is not the only form of motivation that drives creativity. The other form is extrinsic task motivation, or, motivation where activity is chiefly driven by factors outside of the individual, such as deadlines, feedback from other people, and external reward such as payment. It is commonly asserted that extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity. For example, this can be seen manifest in problematic notions such as the perceived oppositional relationship between commerce and creativity (Negus, 1995). However, this idea is rooted in a romantic understanding of creativity, and in my own experience of creating Profiling Creativity extrinsic factors played an equal role.

As explored in chapter 4.2, I responded particularly well to encouragement from the field and found it very important to my creative activity and drive to continue in it. Positive feedback motivated me in that it provided me with reinforcement that my work was good and therefore worth continuing with, while constructive criticism and advice gave me specific direction and reason to engage in the creative process in order to improve my work. This not only included advice from experts but also general encouragement and support from friends and family. For example, I documented this strategy in my journal:

Spoke to a friend who is staying with me. She gave me some useful advice. Her friend who did her masters had a desktop picture that said ‘do one thing’ and every time she looked at it she had to do at least one thing. It’s really resonating
with me. Have been saying it to myself today and it helps. Everything is just small steps. Do one thing. Makes it seem easier. I only have to do one thing. But that's how it happens! (Coffee, Journal, 15 April 2011).

The usefulness of segmenting tasks in this way is connected to the other extrinsic factor that most influenced my creative process, that is, deadlines. I found although I did not always achieve everything in the time I set myself, I achieved far less when I had no allocated timeframe. For this reason, I came to realise the importance of consistently revising my plans so I was always aware of which tasks I had completed and how much was left to do. The creative practitioners interviewed for the profiles also spoke about the importance of deadlines to their activity and their role in shaping the creative product. For example, Heath Killen described deadlines as:

Very important. Very, very important because I probably would not finish anything otherwise. Because I really feel like often with a project I will go through a lot of changes...And sometimes what ends up being published is completely different to where I started off in every conceivable way. So I kind of feel like I could work on one project for the rest of my life, just changing it incrementally or in big ways forever and ever (Interview, 20 October 2010).

In this way, rather than limiting creativity deadlines can actually support it by providing parameters for the scope of the work and ensuring that goals are achieved. This was certainly the case in my experience of the creative process. Overall, I found that extrinsic motivation often provided the initial impetus for me to engage in creative activity, while the intrinsic motivation to continue in that activity emerged out of this engagement. This is reflected in Lally Katz’s account of her experience of playwriting and the way she conceptualises the creative process:

I always think of it sort of like going in to outer space. Leaving the atmosphere’s really hard but then once you’re in space it’s kind of easier. You’ve got more time and space around you. Sometimes there are comets or monsters or whatever, you’ve got to navigate into a different planet or something, but I think a lot of it is discipline. You never want to do it. For some reason every writer I know, we always kind of go ‘oh yeah writing, I love writing’ and then it actually comes time to write and you don’t actually really want to do it, and you kind of don’t think you really can do it. It’s sort of like, it’s almost kind of just tying
yourself to the mast or something, or forcing yourself out of the world. And then once you’re there it’s great. Once I’m in there there’s nowhere I’d rather be anywhere (Interview, 30 April 2010).

Experiences like this, of creativity as effortless activity once engaged with, are that of a state Csikszentmihalyi refers to as flow or autotelic experience (1997a, 1997b). In flow, the experience of the creative process is one of intense concentration and “an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 110). An individual may lose track of time, unaware of all external distractions, in complete focus on the task. In this way, it is possible to understand how this state may appear mysterious or give rise to notions of channelling external forces of inspiration. However, among other conditions such as clear goals, freedom from distraction and constant feedback, flow may be primarily explained as the result of the alignment of an individual’s skills with the challenge of the creative activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 20). This is also connected to Bourdieus’s (1977, 1993) notion of habitus which will be explored in section 4.3.4. Personally, I was more likely to experience flow towards the end of the creation of each article and also more frequently the more profiles I wrote. This personal experience corresponds with Csikszentmihalyi’s explanation, as the increase in my experience of flow aligned with the growth of my skills and knowledge within each profile and across the creation of the project. Flow can be a powerful motivator for creativity, as individuals return to creative activity for the experience and the satisfaction of achievement that follows it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a). As I wrote in my journal:

Have been reading about flow, really taking note of the part about how you don’t actually feel happy really while in flow, but afterwards when you look back at what you have achieved. Because when you’re in flow, you are so focused you don’t have time for the distraction of recognising it. I do feel flow, autotelic experience, more often now than at the beginning of the process. And it isn’t until after I stop and realise how much time has passed and what I have achieved that I know it has happened. But when I do, that does make me very happy (Coffee, Journal, 21 October 2011).

I did not experience flow every time I wrote. The drive to complete Profiling Creativity came from both an intrinsic impulse as well as extrinsic factors. Sometimes I was driven purely by the deadline, while other times I worked solely for the enjoyment
of writing. Often engaging in the creative process because of extrinsic factors would give way to the intrinsic. However, seeing the frequency with which I experienced flow increase alongside the development of my skills and knowledge gave me the most important practical demonstration of the benefits of hard work on the creative process beyond the mere achievement of specific tasks. As Phillip McIntyre argues, “the most appropriate motivator is to ignore whether you are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Instead, look for the challenges that are equal to your skills and make sure you start the autotelic, or flow, experience happening” (McIntyre, 2012a, p. 201). For me, this involves identifying how I work best, including developing personal rules and a structured routine, as well as making changes to my work environment.

4.3.3 Rules, Routine and Environment

In addition to exploring the reasons I engage in the creative process, the creation of Profiling Creativity also gave me an insight into how I work and how I work best, including the importance of defining parameters for myself. As previously discussed, rather than being a factor that restricts creativity as the romantic perspective would suppose, structures both provide limits for and enable creativity to occur. For many of the practitioners interviewed for the profiles this took the form of self-imposed rules or guidelines. For example, Heath Killen (Interview, 20 October 2010) will always set himself a brief even when working on personal projects. Benjamin Law, as he works from home, likes to make sure he is always wearing pants as he believes that “if you’re treating your work environment a little sloppily that can often come off in writing as well” (Interview, 9 August 2011). When involved in a play, particularly an emotionally demanding one, Alison Bell’s primary rule is to be “kind” to herself. She said:

I often put in place those little things if I’m working on something. Particularly something that’s disturbing or distressing. And at the moment the play I’m working on or the character I’m working on, the character I’m developing has a very, very sad trajectory in the play. So doing things like making sure I have nice meals and going to pilates, and just doing things that kind of look after my soul (Interview, 11 January 2012).

As these examples demonstrate, these personal rules vary depending on the nature of the particular activity. However, they are all designed to ensure that both the
work produced and the practitioner's ability to produce it are at their best. As Jon Borwein said, “There are as many rules for as many people but I do think that a certain level of routine is enormously important” (Interview, 1 April 2010). One of my own personal rules for Profiling Creativity was to avoid clichés. While, when used in the right way, clichés have their place in aiding a reader's understanding, generally they make for wordy or thoughtless writing and add little to the meaning. As such, I made a conscious effort to edit them out of my work. As I wrote in my journal, “Just read a sentence 'closed its doors'. Gave the computer a dirty look. Deleted 'its doors'” (Coffee, Journal, 13 January 2012). I also made the conscious decision not to use any jokes in the profiles. I made this decision partly because of the more research-focused tone of the articles, and partly because of the embarrassment I felt when reading back those I had written into my honours profiles (as mentioned in the domain chapter in section 4.1.3). Occasionally I would include a joke in a draft of a profile, yet even if I was initially reluctant I always eventually decided it was best to remove it. For example, as I recorded in my journal, “Had gag about MB (Maggie Beer) being like favourite babysitter. Not sure if right tonally or plain silly. Put it in scraps folder while I consider it. Not ready to let it go yet” (Coffee, Journal, 1 July 2011). Although I revisited it, the joke did not make any subsequent drafts.

In addition to these personal rules, one of the most important characteristics of my experience as the individual in the creative process was the development of a routine. My participation in the practice of freelance print journalism was governed by a working routine that became increasingly tightly structured as the process continued. As Maggie Beer said,

I think that to achieve your goals, you must have a plan and structure. This works for me, and has taken me time to arrive at this process (M. Beer, Email Interview, August 24 2010).

This applied to both my daily writing routine and the individual steps of writing each profile, and both took well into the process to develop. At the beginning of the process I did not have fixed hours, and as a result, I found the time it took to write each profile significantly varied. However, once I had a designated daily routine my productivity significantly increased. I began work at the same time every day, had a lunch break at the exact same time, and occasionally even wore the same outfit. This allowed me to designate specific tasks to specific times of the day, and the discipline of
a full working day prompted a corresponding increase in professionalism in my attitude. In terms of the routine of writing the profiles themselves, this also became more defined as I wrote more, as my attitude changed, and as I adopted new technology. As discussed in section 4.2.2., I eventually abandoned the romantic idea that I could not change my writing process, which consisted of moving strictly chronologically through the article and ensuring each paragraph was perfected before moving on. Instead, I employed advice from the field that included writing the introduction last and also beginning the drafting process by writing as much as I could in a very fast, very rough draft. In my learning journal I termed this activity making a “rush draft”, and I soon incorporated it into the regular structure of my writing process as it provided me with a significant base of around 800-900 words to build each profile from (for example Coffee, Journal, 13 January 2012). The structure of this writing process, its increasingly defined nature, and the visibility of its structure were also all significantly influenced by the technology I used.

Initially, working in Microsoft Word, all of my preparation – including all planning and jotting down ideas – occurred in the same document. While this was still effective in that I produced a number of articles this way, it often resulted in unclear or confusing documents. It also meant all the planning I did was erased or gradually taken over by the completed article, making the documentation of the process less visible. However, at the beginning of 2011 I began using the word processing program Scrivener. This program allowed me to create a file for each article that collected and combined multiple individual documents, which for me included plans, transcripts, important quotes, research and each of my numbered drafts (Coffee, Journal, 20 January 2011). All of these could be accessed and edited from a side bar in the document. I could also create a template specific to the profile with pre-prepared folders for each of these standard categories. As a result, I could access all of the resources, information and ideas that informed each article from the one file, and more importantly, easily track the progression of the creative process as I retained documentation of each step of planning and drafting.

After seeing mention of it on Twitter and also on the Literature Review HQ website, I also began segmenting my working day using the Pomodoro Technique. This involves working for 25 minutes at a time (one pomodoro) with a five minute break in between each block and a 15 minute break after four pomodoros. The aim is to allocate a specific task to each 25 minute block. For example, after I had completed my
rush draft I would break it into sections, one to be completed per pomodoro. I also used a timer that sat in the corner of my computer screen, so I was always aware of how long I had left to complete each task and how long I had left in each break. I adopted the pomodoro technique permanently very quickly after beginning it in August 2011 (Coffee, Journal, 15 August 2011). After this date my journal entries contain frequent references to the increase in productivity that came from structuring my process in this way, and the effect this segmenting had of making each task, article and therefore project seem more manageable. This was also highlighted in the difference I recorded when I stopped using it. As I wrote in my journal, “Stopped using pomodoros for ages. Got up at 5 AM today. Started them again. So much more productive, bloody hell. I NEED this structure. Helps keep control of time. It doesn’t escape me” (Coffee, Journal, 2 December 2011). I also supplemented my use of the pomodoro technique by downloading a program called Leechblock which allowed me to prevent distractions by blocking particular websites during certain times of the day, for example social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

In addition to eliminating distractions, finding the time to work, and ensuring that time is used effectively, an individual also needs the physical space to engage in creative activity. I found that establishing a designated working environment for myself, in combination with a disciplined routine, played a significant role in facilitating creativity. As I recorded in my journal:

Finally sorted out the study. Now have a proper place to work, rather than at the dining table (or on the lounge – not good for productivity with the temptation of daytime TV right in front of me). It feels fantastic actually. Notice the difference already. Having a designated workspace I feel so much more focused and comfortable and the days pass very quickly while I’m working. Very happy to have my own little area, much more organised, hopefully productivity also increases! (Coffee, Journal, 27 June 2010).

Similarly, Rowena Foong spoke about the effect of moving from a space she didn’t enjoy working in to a more pleasant environment:

For the last four years we’ve been working in another workshop…Great warehouse, but really dark. No windows. There was like one big roof light, which was great, really interesting space, but at the end of the day there wasn’t
any natural light. So by the end, last year, the year before, I just didn’t want to be there. It just felt, I just felt my energy being suctioned in the space. So it was really difficult and I didn’t enjoy it. And now we’ve moved into a new place, there’s windows, there’s light, and just like a few months ago when we were cutting the samples, two months ago, and we just had the music on and were just working away and I was going ’Wow I haven’t felt like this in ages’. It was just so easy and felt nice and light. The space has so much light you don’t even have to turn the lights on and you can feel the day progressing. I think that actually helps you, with the optimum place, space, to work in (Interview, 3 June 2010).

Although I was very happy working in the study in my house, I also occasionally felt the need for a change of environment. A couple of times throughout the creation of Profiling Creativity I had the opportunity to go away with my partner when he travelled for work. A new environment with my partner at work all day, as I wrote in my journal, “means no distractions. Can’t be called up to go into work or tempted to have a coffee with friends. Lovely” (Coffee, Journal, 26 August 2011). I also set up an area in each of these new environments as designated study spaces and allocated myself tasks to complete during this time. In this way, I created both space and time that facilitated the creative process.

The combination of the techniques I used, the elimination of distractions, the implementation of technology, and the use of my research journal allowed me to develop a process that was not only highly structured but also very visible. Just as a mathematician or a scientist is required to illustrate the steps he or she took to reach a certain conclusion, I also aimed to record my “working out”. Beginning after the interview had been conducted and transcribed, at the end of the writing Profiling Creativity the steps in the process of writing each article could be broken down as follows:

- Annotate transcript.
- Create new Scrivener document using profile template.
- Copy interview transcript into Scrivener document and re-read.
- Pull out important quotes individually and copy into quotes folder.
- Add factual or biographical information to ‘information’ section. Do further research if necessary (Internet) and add to folder.
- Create document with dot points of ideas and themes.
- Decide on creativity theme using above (quotes and information).
- Plan article around theme.
- Rush draft (without introduction).
- Section rush draft into segments, one for each pomodoro.
- Set timer. Begin using Pomodoro technique.
- At the beginning of each new day read back what has been written.
- Begin new numbered draft if significant changes required.
- Write introduction.
- Send to sister for feedback.
- Revise as per sister’s feedback (new draft).
- Send to supervisor.
- Revise as per supervisor’s feedback (new draft).

This process is also bookended by searching for interviewees and conducting and transcribing interviews, and the process of seeking publication. At times more research was necessary in the middle of the drafting process and I often created a new plan before each new draft; however, overall, this is the defined process I used to create most of the profiles and to create them most efficiently. The fact that I can lay the process out in such specific steps serves to illustrate the nature of creativity as process and the result of conscious work. Perhaps the usual lack of visibility of these steps in creative activity such as writing or visual art may be another reason for the perpetuation of myths of channelling inner genius or inspiration, and the lack of recognition of practices such as maths and science as creative. However, rather than being detrimental as the romantic perspective would suggest, it was this tight structure, in combination with a designated daily routine and the establishment of a distraction-free work environment that enabled me to work best, to produce articles more quickly and with fewer drafts. In this way, this framework enabled me to be creative.

4.3.4 Habitus and the Internalisation of the Systems Model

In examining the creative process, practitioners are not always able to easily articulate the reasoning behind decisions they make or actions carried out in their specific creative practice. Indeed, over time, much of the knowledge and many of the skills involved in creative activity can become so entrenched that individuals may feel
as if they are things they have always known. In order to explain this, it is useful to explore Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus in his discussion of cultural production. Bourdieu describes habitus as:

Principles of the structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends (1977, p. 72).

Or, as Webb, Schirato and Danaher describe it, “We are disposed towards certain attitudes, values or ways of behaving because of the influence exerted by our cultural trajectories” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 38). In this way, in order to understand the individual's role in the systems model it is interesting to examine the way his or her particular habitus influences their participation in creative activity and the choices they make within it. As Bourdieu states, there is not always a “conscious aiming at ends” (1977, p. 72) involved in the choices individuals make within creative practice, particularly if they have been involved in the domain for a long time. For example, a painter may make judgements based on their knowledge of the formal rules of composition without having to actively or consciously consider those rules. However, this does not mean that once something becomes absorbed as part of an individual's habitus it is impossible to identify it or examine its influence. As Schon states, “phrases like ‘thinking on your feet’, ‘keeping your wits about you,’ and ‘learning by doing’ suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it” (1983, p. 54). As detailed in Chapter 3.0, this type of reflection is central to practitioner based enquiry (PBE), the methodology this project is founded in. As a central feature of PBE, it was my learning journal that allowed me to document the creative process as it was occurring and to use this to examine my habitus, to identify the significant elements of my cultural history that have contributed to it, and to track its development throughout the creation of Profiling Creativity.

In my research journal, I was able to identify particular behaviours manifest in my habitus and explore the interactions with both the domain and the field that contributed to these behaviours. For example, as previously mentioned in section 4.3.1, I found myself constantly reading my work out loud, often without realising I was doing it. I believe my experience in theatre and the study of speech and drama significantly influenced my habitus and this particular pre-disposition in training me to
place emphasis on the sounds and rhythm of words as they are spoken rather than written. This is also an example of bodily hexis, or the physical embodiment of habitus. Webb, Schirato and Danaher describe it as "the physical attitudes and dispositions which emerge in individuals as a result of the relationships between particular fields and individuals' habitus" (2002, p. x). In this way, I found myself unconsciously vocalising my work as a result of my interaction with the field and domain of speech and drama and its influence on my understanding of words and language in this particular way. Interestingly, I was also able to later link this element of my habitus to my tendency to over-use commas.

Have been thinking a lot about habitus in terms of the reoccurring problems I have with my writing. Why I'm predisposed to doing certain things. For example, I always use too many commas and have to come back through and take them out. Thinking about the reasons why I might do this (even though I'm getting better!), my theory is I have to make sense of my writing by reading it out loud. Always muttering to myself. Therefore I write as if the writing will be read aloud and therefore put in commas where pauses would go in speech. And the reason I think I do that is because of my speech and drama training as a child. I did speech and drama every week from year 2 to year 11. My teacher would mark our readings with / for a pause and // for a longer pause. I think I put a comma where she would put a / (Coffee, Journal, 15 July 2011).

Another example of the manifestation of my habitus was the ability to make judgements about my work, or as Graham Wallas would refer to it, the verification stage of the creative process (1976). As I was consciously examining the process as it was occurring, I became aware of and was often surprised by the speed with which I discarded or accepted ideas as I was writing, without consciously examining the reasons for these decisions. The ability to do this is part of the journalistic habitus I have developed, and which I became more aware of when reading some of the how-to journalism and feature writing textbooks. I recorded in my journal my realisation of how much domain knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the field I had absorbed but had forgotten I had ever learned:

Interesting to flick through the rest of the book and realise that I have absorbed so much knowledge about sentence structure, conventions, writing concisely, active and passive sentences etc. But I no longer think about or realise I know
it. I was actually thinking, ‘Oh, do I really know that much about feature structure? Or sentence structure and rhythm? Or what an editor looks for in a pitch?’ But reading the chapters and examples I am reminded that I do know and do all the things, and that I have picked them up in my undergrad studies and through reading and studying other articles, and am just no longer so aware that I am following those rules (Coffee, Journal, 7 September 2011).

I was also able to see a similar process occurring in the development of my habitus over the course of the creation of Profiling Creativity. I was able to track the acquisition and internalisation of domain knowledge and understanding of the field by taking note of what was not recorded in my journal. For example, I began by consciously identifying certain bad habits or tendencies within my work, such as the previously mentioned over-use of commas, and made an active effort to change these. After noting these issues, throughout my journal there are many mentions of actively removing these commas or taking out clichés. However, towards the end of the process, these entries become increasingly less frequent until eventually I no longer mention them in my notes at all. Claire Bowditch described the development of her habitus in a similar way. She said:

It’s very much like driving a car. When I first started playing in public I couldn’t sing and play guitar at the same time. Then I could sing and play guitar but I couldn’t sing and play with the loop pedal. And then you just learn those skills and they become unconscious, and that’s the point of playing all those shitty gigs for all those years (Interview, 21 September 2010).

In the examination of my process I also came to trust my ability to identify problems in my work. As I began to recognise the extent of the foundation of knowledge that was the basis of my habitus, I came to accept that if I thought something was problematic it most likely was, and it was therefore something I would have to address. I recorded in my journal the beginning of my realisation of this:

There are all these things I know I have to do or change but I tend to ignore them till the end. For example, I know I have to cut out a quote in KB [Kim Baston] but I don’t want to have to replace it with words I have to write myself. Laziness. But I will inevitably have to do it (Coffee, Journal, 5 August 2011).
As I came to directly address it, the realisation of the strength of this aspect of my habitus facilitated the creative process by prompting me to fix or at least note problems immediately, rather than ignoring them or hoping my intuition might be incorrect. Sam Leach expressed a similar sentiment in his own approach to problem solving. He said:

Basically I find that what I need to do sort of suggests itself to me, and what it actually feels like is that I actually always knew what I wanted to do but I was reluctant to do it because it means more work. Eventually I just admit that I have to just do it anyway and get on with it. It sort of depends on the stage that the work is at really. I guess if a work is nearly finished but there seems to be some problem then that’s the approach. If it’s sort of earlier in the process I kind of find that just action is the best way for me to produce a solution. So if I just sit down and try and think about it in an abstract sense it usually doesn’t get me that far. I need to physically work on it to try and develop a solution and so sometimes that means that I’ll be over-painting sections several times to get the right result, and sometimes it means that I completely ruin the painting rather than fixing it. But either it gets ruined and dies or it’s a worthless painting anyway. So I’ve just got to crack on really (S. Leach, Interview, 10 June 2010).

In examining its composition, I discovered that my habitus reflects both knowledge of the domain of journalism and the requirements of the journalistic field, as well as my interaction with various other fields and domains such as the scholarly rational study of creativity. This habitus predisposes me to act in very specific ways and the shape of Profiling Creativity reflects this, as I made choices both within individual articles and across the project more broadly in accordance with the internalised knowledge of these various cultural and social influences. As a creative individual, my understanding of my creative practice only makes sense in relation to the culture and society in which that practice is situated. In recognition of the power of a creative practitioner’s habitus and their place within the system, the individual must engage with the domain and the field in the knowledge that developing and internalising an understanding of these components will facilitate their creative practice. In my own position as the individual in the systems model, and in recognising my own position within a system in which the domain and the field are equally influential, it is up to me to continue engaging with and strengthening my knowledge of those components in order to improve my creative practice as a freelance print journalist – to make the
development of my habitus a reflection of the system at work. As Csikszentmihalyi says, “To be creative, a person has to internalise the entire system that makes creativity possible” (1997a, p. 51).
5.0 Conclusion

Creativity is complex. Explaining how it occurs is more than a matter of locating it in the brain, quantifying a set of necessary personal qualities or pin-pointing the characteristics of the right environment. As the literature indicates, previous attempts to explain the creative process in this way have demonstrated that examining any of these components in isolation results in “a narrow vision of creativity and a perception that creativity is not as encompassing as it truly is” (1999, p. 4). Instead, it is the confluence models that do not look singularly at the individual, society or culture but examine all three together that provide the most useful way of accounting for and explaining the complexity of the system creativity emerges from. From my position as the individual in Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model – the particular confluence model examined and theoretical framework underpinning this research – and using the methodology of practitioner based enquiry, my participation in the creative activity of freelance print journalism has allowed me to examine the creative process and its systemic nature as an active participant in it. Additionally, the nature of the creative project as a series of feature articles about other creative practitioners allowed me to compare my own experience of creativity with that of other cultural producers, and served to highlight the necessity of accounting for all three components – field, domain and individual – in explanations of creativity.

An explanation of the way a creative product or idea has come into being is incomplete without reference to the cultural antecedents that preceded and influenced it. In the systems model this cultural component of creativity is referred to as the domain and was instrumental in the creation of Profiling Creativity on multiple levels. Firstly, the domain operated at the level of practice in my acquisition of the journalistic skills needed to produce a series of feature articles. Secondly, there was a level of domain knowledge required for the specific project I was creating, including the knowledge of each particular interview subject as well as literature on creativity in which to frame their experience. Finally, as the series grew, the existing collection of profiles became a domain in itself from which I developed knowledge used to write future profiles and edit those I had previously written. This examination of the domain not only demonstrates the importance of possessing an understanding of the techniques, skills and conventions of the culture you wish to contribute to, but also that a process of learning must occur for an individual to gain this understanding. Echoing Aristotle’s (1960, p. 142) notion that “whatever comes to be is generated by the agency
of something, out of something, and comes to be something” that is the basis of the definition of creativity used for this research, all of the practitioners interviewed for the profiles recalled engaging in some process of domain acquisition, whether through formal training or informal exposure to particular creative products or ideas. However, as with all parts of the systems model, engaging with and understanding the domain is necessary but not sufficient for creativity to occur. Csikszentmihalyi argues that creativity occurs when a product or idea is accepted into the domain and changes that domain as a result. That contribution then becomes part of the store of knowledge that, as it is preserved within the domain, can inform subsequent creative activity. However, as I discovered in seeking publication for the articles in Profiling Creativity, in order for this to occur those who control access to the domain must recognise the contribution as valuable.

Both Csikszentmihalyi and Bourdieu refer to the social organisation that controls and “can affect the structure of the domain” as the field (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 330). The way the field does this is not simply limited to the act of blocking or accepting creative products or ideas as they are discovered or presented to it. The existing requirements and preferences of the field shape the way individuals engage in creative activity well before they present the artefact for evaluation, and an agent’s ability to participate in creativity is just as dependent on an understanding of the expectations of the field as it is of the rules of the domain. The examination of my creative process and that of the other cultural producers demonstrated the multiple ways the field shapes and influences the creative process. At the most basic level, I was required to develop an understanding of who the members of the particular field were and how it operated as a whole, including who performed what role, the relationships between these people, and how to engage with them accordingly. This applied at all stages of the development of Profiling Creativity, from obtaining interviews through intermediaries such as agents and managers, through to contacting editors when seeking publication. On a more personal level, the significance of the mentoring role of the field was also evident in both mine and the other practitioners’ experiences of creativity, both in the provision of feedback and expert advice as well as in encouraging and supporting ongoing participation in the creative process. In particular, positive validation from the field proved to be crucial to the individual’s own understanding of his or her work as creative, and was therefore an important motivation for continuing to engage in creative practice. The role of these relationships also extended to idea generation, whether through informal conversations between peers or
in formalised collaborative relationships. More broadly, recognition from the field, whether in the form of awards, prizes or remuneration, not only provides the individual with the resources needed to sustain creative practice but also constitutes symbolic capital that, as a recognisable indicator of an individual’s status as creative, may lead to further opportunities for creative practice. On the other hand, these opportunities and the chance of recognition are significantly limited if an individual does not appropriately engage with the field, as was demonstrated by the rejection of my profiles as a direct result of my failure to tailor them to a specific publication. In this way, the field influences an individual’s ability to enter a domain, the shape of their work by determining what is considered appropriate for that domain, and the recognition and longevity of that creative work as well as the practitioner’s success within their chosen creative practice. As such, the individual must ensure they understand the expectations of the field and build and maintain the relationships that will facilitate their participation in the creative process and acceptance of their work into the domain.

The aim of using a confluence model to explain creativity, removing the individual from the centre of the process and positioning it instead as one component of a system, is not to dismiss the individual’s contribution but to demonstrate that each of the components and their relationships with one another are equally important to the creative process. In writing Profiling Creativity, and using the methodology of practitioner based enquiry to examine this process, I occupied the position of the individual in the system. From this position I was able to not only gain a personal insight into the nature of the individual’s relationship with the domain and the field, but also into the role of the individual’s unique personal background and the factors that influence how and why they engage in creative practice. In examining my own background, it became apparent that my family life, attitudes of mentor figures, opportunities available to me and characteristics of my education all contributed to the development of my skills and interests, my eventual choice to engage in journalism and the nature of Profiling Creativity itself. The same can be said of the practitioners interviewed for the profiles, as they traced their choice of creative practice, the nature of their participation and the content of their work to their own unique combination of experiences and influences. In other words, all of these things contribute to the development of habitus, predisposing the individual to engage in particular types of creative practice in particular ways. Examination of my experience and the other cultural producers also served to further dispel the myths that continue to surround the creative process. Conscious work and commitment to creative practice rather than
divine inspiration or innate genius were repeatedly emphasised as necessary for creativity, the development of habitus, and – particularly in my experience – the achievement of flow, while extrinsic factors did not stifle creativity but worked in combination with intrinsic factors to motivate the individual. Similarly, across investigation of all three parts of the system, structures were seen to facilitate creativity and shape creative products and ideas, rather than act to impede the process. Most crucially, my productivity, work quality, and ease and enjoyment of the creative process were facilitated by the development of a highly structured routine and environment to accommodate it. These personal preferences and working methods were different to many of the practitioners’, just as their preferences were different from each other’s; however, the importance of understanding how they worked best and developing a framework that supported this remained the same. Overall, in a reflection of the model’s fundamental assertion that creativity cannot be explained without consideration of all three components and their interaction, it is the individual’s ability to internalise the system – that is, an understanding of the domain and the preferences of the field – that allows him or her to participate in the creative process.

In this way, using the framework of Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model, this research validates the systemic nature of creativity. This particular investigation indicates that creativity occurs through the ongoing interaction of a domain in which works can be understood and preserved, a field that determines which works are appropriate for the domain, and an individual who, with an understanding of their place within the system, commits to the work needed to produce products and ideas. This was validated by my own experience of the practice of freelance print journalism, occupying the position of the individual, with evidence of the system at work at both macro and micro levels within my creative activity. It applies at the level of my decision to become a journalist, the nature of Profiling Creativity itself, and at the level of individual decision-making within the project. However, most importantly, the implications of the research do not only apply to freelance journalism, feature writing, or my individual project. The multi-layered nature of this exploration of creativity allowed me to compare my own experiences of creativity with that of other cultural producers across a diverse range of practices, and as such, draw wider conclusions for creativity as a whole. The similarities in my own experiences and the experiences of the 20 cultural producers interviewed for the articles that comprise Profiling Creativity demonstrate that, no matter how ostensibly different creative activities may appear, this activity and the resulting products and ideas are all governed by and emerge from the
operation of the same system.


McIntyre, P. (2008b). *The systems model of creativity: analyzing the distribution of*


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