THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE
"NON-CREATIVE"
IDENTITY

How prevailing stereotypes about creativity and creative people lead to personal, social and cultural outcomes that limit our individual and collective creative potential

Key Words: *Identity, Creativity, Creative Identity, Non-Creative Identity, Creativity Stereotypes, Creativity Culture, Creative Potential, Social Constructionism, Social Systems, Creative Validation, Innovation, Identity Economics, Organizational Change, Design Thinking, Creative Class*

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ABSTRACT

Creativity has become a highly desirable commodity, and it can be argued that the challenges we face as a species will require a great deal more of it. Taking a social constructionist perspective, creativity is described as having a coherent and knowable cultural form within any particular society, although currently ignored. Further, the social construction of identity is reviewed, and creative identity is presented as a fundamental condition for maximizing individual, and in aggregate, societal creative potential. In light of new quantitative research stating that less than half of us believe we are creative; a multi-method qualitative study was conducted to better understand this outcome, and the personal, social and cultural factors that influence the construction of a "non-creative" identity – the marginalized majority. New insights and explanatory frameworks are presented and leveraged in the design of organizational and cultural interventions that encourage the emergence of a more inclusive "Creativity Culture."

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1. INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONING CREATIVITY

Bruce Nussbaum recently announced in a Fast Company article on April 6, 2011, that, "Design Thinking is a failed experiment." Since then many have followed suit including Helen Walters (Doblin), Kevin McCullagh (Plan) and Don Norman, an early champion of user-centered design who recently stated that, *"Design Thinking is a nonsensical phrase that deserves to die."* This tells us that the language of Design Thinking may no longer represent the movement's intentions.

These sentiments become clear when we turn our attention to the organizational and economic problems that Design Thinking was meant to improve. Beyond the now tiring corporate success stories of Apple, Procter & Gamble and General Electric, we often find instead employee frustration, failed organizational integration and often cutting criticism from the design community itself. We even see resurgence in the scientific management ideologies it hoped to change. When we begin to fail in popular, hopeful experiments like Design Thinking, what do we learn about ourselves?

Observing the arc of movements like Design Thinking forces one to ask if our culture is properly set up to apply ideas and philosophies, like Design Thinking; philosophies that can be more fundamentally described as platforms for developing more adaptive and creative organizational cultures — experience to

date would indicate no. As Nussbaum writes in the same article, *"from the beginning, the process of Design Thinking was a scaffolding for the real deliverable: creativity."* Unfortunately, it appears the movement may have never fully internalized this particular sense of self.

What happened to movements like Design Thinking? What does its rise and more recent fall from grace tell us about the state of our relationship with creativity? Design critics and journalists such as Bruce Nussbaum and Helen Walters, as well as thought leaders including Tim Brown (IDEO) and many others, have worked hard to shed light on its applied successes and shortcomings, believing that if the mainstream could simply understand what Design Thinking is and what it is not, its potential might yet be realized. Indeed, it has been discussed and applied — for over a decade — and its potential remains elusive to most, or simply rejected by the organizational cultures that attempted to embrace it. How is it that a well-articulated, well-resourced, often enthusiastically promoted management-friendly process, designed to deliver the innovation that organizations and the economy was asking for, could lose its lustre so quickly? A deeper analysis is needed here.

Consider the results of IBM's 2010 Global CEO study. Every two years IBM commissions a considerable qualitative and quantitative study of 1500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 different industries around the world — all in the name of better understanding the pulse of global business. The 2010 study produced landmark conclusions. For the first time in the study's history, *"chief executives*

believed that — more than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision

— successfully navigating an increasingly <u>complex world would require</u> <u>creativity</u>.

The report goes on to say that:

> "*less than half of global CEOs believe their enterprises are adequately prepared to handle a highly volatile, increasingly complex business environment. CEOs are confronted with massive shifts — new government regulations, changes in global economic power centers, accelerated industry transformation, growing volumes of data, rapidly evolving customer preferences*" — that, according to the study, *"can only be overcome by* <u>instilling 'creativity' throughout an organization."</u> (IBM, 2010, p.24)

Clearly, these failed attempts to instil a more robust culture of creativity within our organizations via Design Thinking have not failed due to a lack of intent or effort.

How is it possible that at virtually the same moment in time the global C-suite calls for creativity to permeate their business, and the bastions of Design Thinking (a scaffold for creativity) announce the death of their movement? While seemingly the same, the intention of Design Thinking and the CEO's intention to "instil creativity throughout the organization" must somehow be in conflict — or rather, their approaches must in some way be flawed. What is to blame here?

A recent study published by Adobe in April of 2012 on the developed world's feelings toward creativity, creative identity and creative potential, titled *"The State of Create: Global Benchmark Study on Attitudes and Beliefs about Creativity at Work School and Home,"* found that less than half the world's population — 39% (52% in America) — believe they are creative, and only one in four believe they are living up to their creative potential *(see infographic below)*. This study should

sound off alarm bells from the world's corner offices. But since its release, it has received only minor press and has sparked minimal public dialogue. These results are much more than interesting census-style factoids on creativity; rather, they point to the existence of deeply rooted and systemic inequities related to our conceptions of creativity in our culture. These inequities, as demonstrated by this study, seem to limit the creative identity and thus creative potential of approximately three out of four adults.

The way forward, it seems, may not be found in questioning movements like Design Thinking, but rather in questioning our relationship with creativity itself and how our cultural concepts of it work to embrace some and marginalize others. Therefore, the question becomes, can we meet our economic and social desire for innovation with so few engaged in maximizing their creative potential? Or rather, should we wait to find out?

Table 1: Adobe "State of Create" Infographic
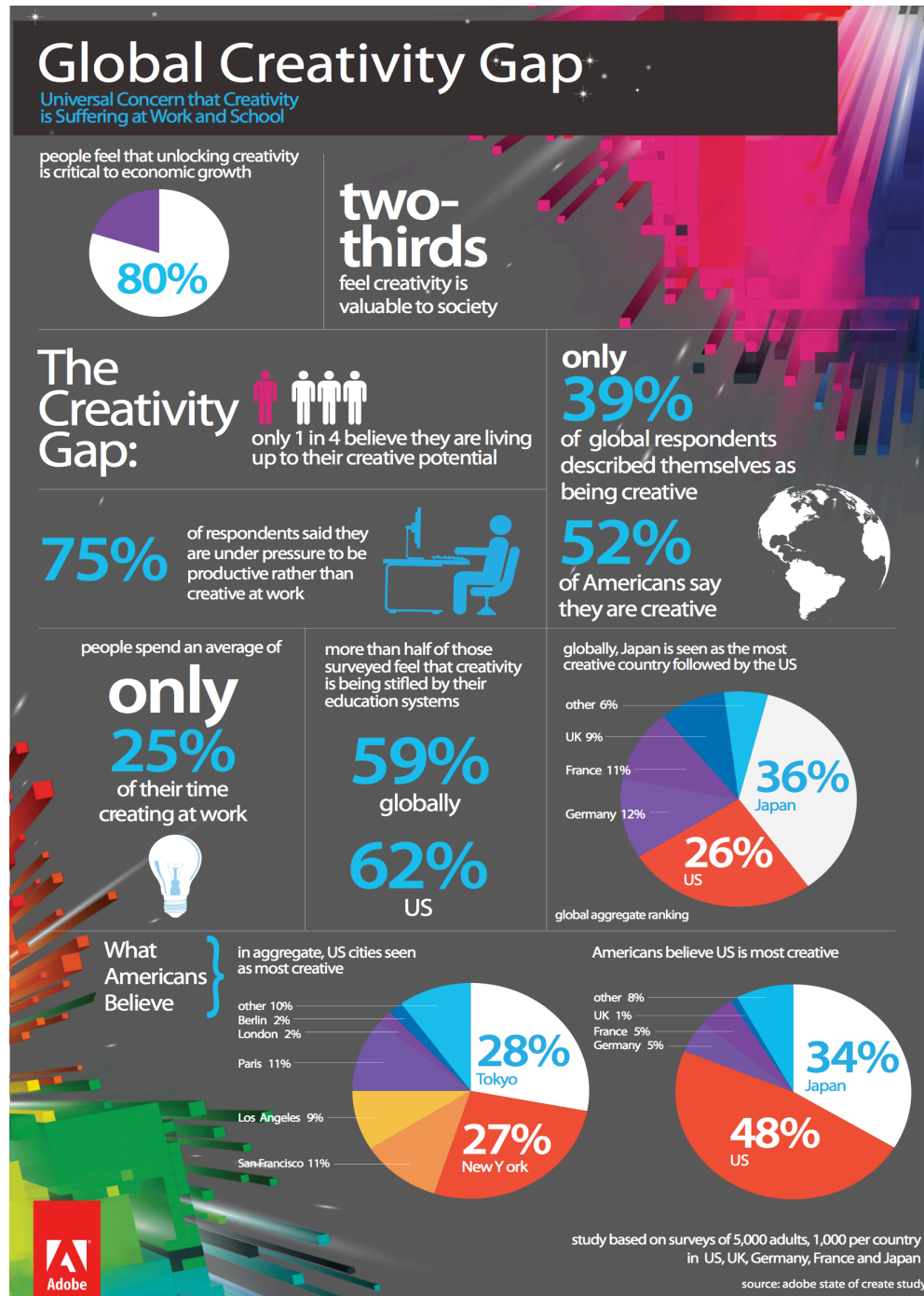
THESIS STATEMENT

The Design of an Inclusive "Creativity Culture"

This research suggests that creative identity plays a critical role in supporting creative expression and creative potential. Further, a whole society's creative potential is amplified when more of its citizens feel free and capable of expressing themselves creatively within their respective social contexts. Unfortunately, on average only 39% of people in developed economies believe they are creative; 61% do not. These outcomes point to the prevalence of exclusionary cultural constructs for creativity and creative people that marginalize creative identity and limit our individual and collective creative potential.

In response, this research asks how we might develop a more inclusive "Creativity Culture" that supports the development of creative identity throughout a society, while cultivating the latent creative potential of its "non-creative" members. Further, it speculates on what that more inclusive relationship and culture might look like, how we might measure it, and how we might encourage its emergence.

A Social Constructionist Frame of Reference

The social constructionist frame of reference starts with the perspective that creativity represents a uniquely human, universal and social capacity, much like empathy or humour. Therefore, the divisive social categories and disassociation from creativity that we observe within our society are not the product of genetic

inevitability, but rather a social and cultural fabrication; a construction. To be overly simplistic, this disassociation is the product of a whole society of people enacting dominant norms and "scripts" about creativity that serve to embrace some and marginalize others. The enactment of a different set of norms or "scripts" would just as easily create a different, more inclusive result.

This logic is consistent with a social constructionist point of view on identity, reality and meaning. This perspective is well suited to the topic of "non-creative" identity given its ability to conceptualize identity and cultural production as a socially interconnected system. Therefore, identity can be observed as a *"social artifact, an entity molded, prefabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural [and historically derived] scripts and centers of power"* (Cerulo, 1997, p. 385).

Over time, *"humans naturalize these meanings and treat them as real, out there, objective facticity. In this respect, humans come to suffer from a "retrospective illusion," in that we treat as objective reality what we ourselves have created. At this stage, patterns of meaning making developed through time become 'common sense'"* (Zerilli, 2001, p. 20). This perspective helps to frame exploration into the development of a creative vs. "non-creative" identity as a process that we ourselves produce and reaffirm within our social contexts. Importantly, this view also suggests that both individuals and societies have an equal role in shaping the constructs that in turn shape us.

The aim of this research is to better understand the factors that influence and contribute to the social construction of a "non-creative" identity, so that, if desired, a person, organization or society can more consciously alter the social and cultural "inputs" or "constructs" related to creativity, to generate the "outcomes" that are most desired. The underlying assumption being that the ability to maximize individual and collective creative potential is optimally reflected in a society where more people feel free and capable of enacting a "creative identity," regardless of their social context or category.

Re-constructing Creativity

In order to fully apply a social constructionist perspective to creativity and creative identity, and to place the findings of this research into proper context, a review of the forces that influence our current constructs for creativity, and shape the social enactment of its identity, is presented. In doing so, this research explores the origin and history of our relationship with creativity, as well as the more recent surge in academic interest in the subject and the bias this research has held. I will also explore how the development and application of industrial and scientific management philosophies have further narrowed and deconstructed the meaning of creativity in society and in our organizations. I will review thinking and enthusiasm for the emerging "creative economy" and reflect on the difference between creative identity and "creative class." In addition, I will review factors that influence the social and psychological construction of identity and how each colludes during social interaction to define our behaviour and self-perception. I will also review the role of "Identity Economics," a recent evolution

in the field of behavioural economics that helps to explain the role identity plays in shaping social and economic outcomes in society. These perspectives are integrated to form a new measurable theory called "Creativity Culture," whose analysis is fundamentally based on identity, rather than demography or socioeconomics.

With this context in hand, I will explore the social construction of a "non-creative" identity through the eyes of participants in this research. In doing so, I will expose the underlying personal, social and cultural layers of their relationship with creativity and the forces that promote the construction of a "non-creative" identity. I will then make more tangible discussions about creative potential and describe some of the behavioural and social tendencies that contribute to its value limiting effect on both identity and productivity.

Finally, I will apply this new insight to propose a series of personal, organizational and cultural interventions designed to move us toward a more inclusive "Creativity Culture." I conclude with the suggestion that the "non-creative" identity represents a uniquely useful indicator for measuring the creative health, productivity and innovativeness of a society.

"It would be really great if you didn't let people divide the world into the creatives and the non-creatives, like it's some God given thing. And to have people realize that they are naturally creative and that they should let their ideas fly."

- David Kelly, 2012

2. BACKGROUND

THE ROOTS OF CREATIVITY

Cultural Roots

Our ideas of, and constructs for, the meaning of creativity in today's society are not new; in fact, they are very old. Understanding our cultural relationship with creativity today requires an understanding and appreciation of its historical roots and its "cultural genus."

Our earliest connections to the concept of creativity remain deeply rooted in our culture. The biblical story of creation and the Greek concept of the "the muse," while no longer central to contemporary discussions of creativity, continue to shape our understanding.   In these ancient times, creative acts were more the property of "spirits" who used man as a conduit for expression — they were not the property of man. While the divinity expressed by these concepts and stories has been lost over time, their sense of mystery and connection to the extraordinary persists in our collective subconscious.

Our association to divine creativity underwent a long but significant transformation during the Renaissance. As Sternberg (2010) notes, *"at this*

historical moment, the divine attributes of artists and artisans were recognized and often emphasized as manifestly their own and not of divine origin" (p. 6).

Artists during this period were considered uniquely capable of accessing this quality to create new forms of expression and meaning. The dominant creative construct soon became that of the individual "creative" genius. Sternberg further notes *"eventually four fundamentally acceptable distinctions became the bedrock of our present day ideas about creativity; (a) Genius was divorced from the supernatural; (b) genius, although exceptional, was a potential in every individual; (c) talent and genius were to be distinguished from one another; and (d) their potential and exercise depend on the political atmosphere at the time"* (2010, p. 123).

It was the Enlightenment's often-extreme emphasis on reason and its principle that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, could be gained through its application, which fed the fires of the Romantic Movement and its ability to galvanize and extend early stereotypes related to creative genius. The Romantics rejected the aesthetically and emotionally deprived world of Rationalism, believing that "*creativity is something that is beyond the mere exercise of reason. There is something mysterious about creativity, and we do not want to strip our existence of all traces of mystery"* (Coyne, 2007, p. 138). The yang of Rationalism feared the outcomes of a life driven by Romantic ideals, a fear well expressed by Plato in this passage from *The Republic*: *"we must give poetry entry into our city only so far as hymns to the gods and panegyrics of the*

good are concerned. But if you receive the honeyed muse in lyric or epic, be sure

that pleasure and pain will be kings in your city, instead of law and whatever

reasoned argument the community shall approve in each case to be best" (Saul,

2001, p.161).

This sentiment was echoed by the Swedish writer August Strindberg centuries

later when he asked that we *"kindly control our imagination, that is what makes*

men beasts" (Saul, 2001, p. 130).

In his essay *Creativity as Commonplace,* Coyne describes how Romanticism

created a new ideology in response to Rationalism, based on the idea that *"within*

each of us there is a creative spirit waiting to be let out, but only too readily

constrained by tradition, social pressure and the rule of mediocrity" (p. 136).

John Ralston Saul explored in detail the lasting effect of this ideology on our

relationship with imagination, and by extension creativity (Saul, 2001). In this

work he sums up the disruptive legacy that we have inherited from the

Romantics:

> "*It is difficult to adequately express the damage done to our sense of
> ethics and imagination by the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth
> century. This Romanticism was basically a reaction to the dominance of
> rationality in the arguments of the eighteenth century — or rather to the
> impossibility of actually living with such a level of abstraction. But the
> movement was one of reaction; a shadow of the phenomenon it opposed,
> drawing its life from the apparent. And so Romanticism is the shadow-life
> or reason. This is an inextricably intertwined love affair, full of battle and
> built upon the fundamental dependence of the Romantic. Put another
> way, the more remarkable the Romantic expression, the more it
> reinforces the ideology of a rationally led world"* (p. 129).

In contemporary terms, this provides new perspective on a culture where "Designers" and "Innovators" can often become celebrities.

This ideological interplay ultimately ends up marginalizing our culture's relationship with creativity. As all ideologies do, they draw lines around reality from a particular perspective, and while the Romantic's espouse an individually human relationship with creativity, they do so at the expense of its inclusivity and shared human experience. Saul goes on to write, "*Romanticism has often tried to portray, as its own, imagination's great strengths of inclusiveness and openness to the other. In the first instances of the Romantic perception, this can be true. But because the Romantic is so profoundly obsessive and operates in a shadow life of rational methodology, it is not naturally inclusive or open. Left to its own logic it quickly becomes exclusive and closed in upon its particular truth"* (p. 130)*.*

Ultimately, the Romantic celebration of creativity as essential, via only its greatest expressions, reinforces a cultural belief that creativity's "*source is limited and unstable"* (Saul, 2001, p. 128). This creates an ideological trick that first presents creativity as a capacity to be nurtured in all, only to keep its proper expression at an unapproachable distance from the ordinary person. Sawyer (2012) presents a more hopeful analysis: *"through the centuries Europeans have held to different conceptions of creativity. Artists have been of as poorly paid trades people and as divinely inspired geniuses. Creativity has swung between rational and romantic conceptions. There hasn't been a single historically continuous definition of creativity. The message for us today is that our*

conceptions of creativity are not universal; in fact, our own society should be able to rise above these historical limitations and take us beyond our creativity myths"
(p. 32).

Academic Roots

> *"It is impossible to survey all of the works and ideas that have been generated with regard to creativity. Not only is it a truly multidisciplinary phenomena but investigations themselves can harness many disciplines"*
> *– Susan Greenfield, 2009.*

While age-old Romantic ideas about creativity still permeate the mainstream, they have also played a defining role in shaping the academic realms of creativity research.   Following J.P Gilford's now famous presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1950, where he called upon his members to explore the nature of creativity and development, we have seen a wellspring of research and interest in the area. Over the past 60 years, his call to action has inspired a body of work that is as diverse in approach, scope and application as creativity itself.

However, until recently, research had focused almost exclusively on studying the "eminent creator," or perceived geniuses in their field — an area now commonly referred to as "Big-C" creativity. This field focuses on the works, lives, methods and madness of eminent creators in an effort to decode their creative gifts. Kaufman and Sternberg accurately expresses this orientation; *"most definitions*

of creative ideas comprise of three components. First, those ideas must represent something different, new and innovative. Second, they need to be of high quality. Third, creative ideas must also be appropriate to the task at hand. Thus a creative response to a problem is new, good, and relevant" (2010, p. 182).

Recognizing that a focus on genius levels of creative expression *"causes us to overlook a necessary distinction between creative product and creative experience"* (Sternberg, 2009), creativity researchers have more recently developed smaller "magnitudes" of study to better reflect the many dimensions and scales of creative experience. Those include "Pro-C" or professional-level creativity, "little-C" or everyday creativity and more recently, developed by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009), "mini-C" creativity, which represents the subjective, emotional and personal levels of creativity. Connected to each "magnitude" are multiple domains of research, all with varying levels of modesty in their explanatory approach, and well summarized by Sternberg in his latest, *Creativity* (2009). While most diverge in their theoretical frameworks, differences do not always lead to contradictions in interpretation (Boden, 1996, p. 3)

Table 2: Leading Domains of Creativity Research

Field of Study	Point of View on Creativity
Developmental	Creativity develops over time (from potential to achievement); mediated by an interaction of person and environment (i.e., place, educational and family structures).
Psychometric	Creativity can be measured reliably and validly, differentiating it from related constructs (IQ) and highlighting its domain specific nature.

Economic	Creative ideation and behaviour is driven by "market forces" and cost-benefit analysis (i.e., investment decisions).
Stage & Componential Process Theories	Creative expression proceeds through a series of stages or components; the process can have linear and recursive elements (i.e., stages of preparation, incubation and insight).
Cognitive	Ideational thought processes are foundational to the creative person's accomplishments (i.e., divergent, convergent and metaphorical thinking, and conceptual combinations).
Problem Solving & Expertise Based	Creative solutions to ill-defined problems result from a rational process, which relies on general cognitive processes and domain expertise (i.e., problem representation and heuristics).
Problem Finding	Creative people proactively engage in a subjective and explanatory process of identifying problems to be solved (i.e., subjective and exploratory processes).
Evolutionary (Darwinian):	Eminent creativity results from the evolutionary-like processes of blind generation and selective retention (i.e., generative ideation meets social judgment and chance).
Typological	Creators vary along key individual differences, which are related to both macro-and micro-level factors and can be classified via typologies.
Systems	Creativity results from a complex system of interacting and interrelated factors (i.e., Collaborative, social creativity, and chaos and complexity theory).

What each of the above domains of creativity research share is a common objective, one focused on defining *what* creativity really is, *how* we can use it and how we *measure* the value of its products. These areas of focus are in many ways the most essential questions to ask, and it makes perfect sense that the academic community would initially surround the subject in this way. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is now becoming possible to identify some of gaps and blind spots this focus has created.

If we look at the dominant cultural perspective applied to creativity research, as reported by a 2009 KEA study on *"The Impact of Culture on Creativity",* it comes from Western societies that define creativity as "*product-oriented and an originality-based, aimed at solving problems (…) emphasizing individualism, and a certain work ethic with a belief in progress"* (p. 22)*.* These two orientations converge in the vast majority of creativity research and have defined a body of work that reflects both product and genius orientations.

While the list above demonstrates a very impressive breadth of study into *what* creativity is, there has, at the same time, been a void in research discussing how creativity's culture is connected to our personal, social and even economic behaviours that seek to capture it. While these works are essential to our understanding of creativity, the academic community's *curriculum vita* projects a very particular culture and bias toward creativity, which has continued to frame our relationship with creativity along with the historical bloodlines of the Romantic Movement. As a result, the academic community has often overlooked *"subjective creative experiences in favour of objectively evaluated creative products,* an orientation that can *result in a partial conceptions of creative phenomena, and runs the risk of excluding theoretical considerations of creative potential (Runco year), and reinforcing myths and misconceptions about the nature of creativity"* (Beghetto, 2007; Plucker & Dow, 2004). Although more recent research seems to be breaking the "Big-C" mould in exciting new ways, according to Richards, "*more often than not scholars have looked at practices*

that are still socially recognized as appropriate domains for creativity — arts, media, entrepreneurship, marketing, and software development."

This is an unfortunate legacy of the past first 50 years of research into creativity, a legacy that on one hand developed critical insight into creativity, while on the other, supports a narrow cultural narrative. As a result, this focus has neglected the vast majority of the population in its analysis. In this environment, *"people's everyday creative accomplishments often go unrecognized. These oversights can be serious; they signify a potential loss in personal awareness, identity, potency, and mental health, in the opportunity for conscious development of ones innovative talents, and the ability to benefit self and others"* (Richards, 2007, p. 502)*.*

Ultimately, regardless of the theoretical or scientific approach, a bias has persisted in the framing of much of the research into creativity. When one takes a step back and looks at discourse around creativity as a whole, we can observe a strong bias toward *helping people be more creative*. The bias here is found in the word *more*. In essence, this frame of reference has assumed that everyone sees himself or herself as creative and that they are thus likely to be interested in being more creative. This assumption is in fact incorrect as the Adobe study proves, and has limited the audiences and impact of these works.

What we are left with is a body of excellent, diverse research into the origins and nature of creativity that for the most part focuses its analysis on how you or we

can be better at it. This has come at the expense of an equally valuable frame of reference that explores the barriers, both social and cultural, to creativity and creative identity. To be fair, some great work has been done, particularly within the organizational setting by leading thinkers like Teresa Amabile who have explored the barriers to creativity and human engagement within corporate settings (Amabile, 2011). It seems we have much more to learn about the process of removing constraints than we do the amplification of talents.

Ultimately, academia's focus on the most creative among us, in its efforts to distil and explain creative genius, has over time reinforced Romantic ideas about creativity. As a result, these explorations have reinforced a narrative in our culture that supports the view that only a select few are capable of being creative, and that an equally limited number of people are capable of understanding it. No doubt we still have much to learn on the subject.

THE CULTURAL STATE OF CREATIVITY

"We marginalize the imagination; that is, refuse to consider the usefulness of the imagination, because it fills us with uncertainly and therefore fear. Instead, we cling to the truth of the gods." - John Ralston Saul, 2001

The Breaking Down of Creativity

It can be argued that with the rise of post-industrial management ideologies, driven by reason and science, *"the concept of the soul has lost favour"* (Saul, 2001, p.138)*, as we have given increasing primacy and status to the brain and its cognitive powers*. Ruth Richards, in her exploration of *Everyday Creativity* (2007), describes that same loss: *"as a result of the power of science, some social or practical decisions have been too readily subsumed under technical concerns (Tucker, 1975; Schneider et al., 2001). "Consequences have included a breaking up of old concepts and structures in the turmoil of new discoveries, and has involved a discarding of form, wholeness, coherence, of one's previous life and history, along with their ultimate meaning of identity"* (p. 511). After sixty years of research into creativity, the concept of creativity itself has been broken up into countless pieces and mined for its valuable elements. But as a cultural and identity construct, creativity is much more than its parts, its process, its products or its idols. Therefore, if we care to understand how creativity flourishes, we must imbue creativity with the "form and wholeness" that Richards describes.

From this perspective, we can imagine the effect this "breaking down" of everything might have at the individual, experiential level of creativity. It makes possible, through industrial science, the division and classification of creativity and creative identity; *"we still think about two classes of humans: those who can do art, and those who cannot."* Ruth Richards goes on to ask; *"how and why have some of us perhaps separated off the creative genius in our own minds?*

We may find some clues in common conceptions of aspects of creative person and process" (2007, p. 511)*.*

Those "common conceptions" Richards refers to are often the Romantic ideas that mythologize the creative self and its products.

This breaking down of creativity is an example of how the dominant ideologies of the time can shape and mould its meaning — exposing creativity in its true form, a cultural construct "*that evolves with time and across countries (…) in a way that reflects cultural constraints"* (KEA, 2009, p. 22)*.* Our current drive to deconstruct creativity's mysterious nature and process down the neurological level has unfortunately distanced it from its social form and most relatable narratives. As a result, *"we struggle under layer upon layer of sedimented mental constructs. No wonder one may sometimes wish for a beginner's mind"* (Richards, 2007, p. 509)*.*

Creativity^{TM}

"There are indeed certain instances in which social/cultural realities largely determine the possibility or lack of possibility for developing creativity in a given field." - D. H. Feldman

It is also important to recognize the role that dominant management philosophies have played in shaping our relationship with creativity. Organizational cultures are not separate from the culture in which they reside, and thus tend to reflect on

the individual many of the same norms and stereotypes that are prevalent at the

societal level. But in the case of creativity, interest in capturing its economic

value has also meant that "*the meaning of creativity is indiscriminately applied*

and has been largely affected by business management literature setting rules to

help the emergence of creative organizations" (KEA Report, 2009)*. As previously*

mentioned, the emergence of Design Thinking is one such attempt by

organizations to distil and repackage creativity in its most objectified form yet —

"the process toolkit."

For many organizations, the *"military is still the model, and sports the metaphor"*

(Sternberg, 2009), and pushes for a more intimate relationship with creativity as

represented by Design Thinking, where *"arts is the metaphor"* (Sternberg, 2009)

have caused deep cultural conflicts and tensions. "*Design Thinking originally*

offered the world of big business — which is defined by a culture of process

efficiency — a whole new process that promised to deliver creativity. By

packaging creativity within a process format, designers were able to expand their

engagement, impact, and sales inside the corporate world. Companies were

comfortable and welcoming to Design Thinking because it was packaged as a

process" (Nussbaum, 2011). Central to this tension was the absence of process

to support creative identity within its productization strategy and application. You

cannot simply give creative tools and process to someone who disassociates

themselves from creative acts, and expect change. The process will never stick,

it's not who they are.

Instead Design Thinking chose to focus on the role and status of design within

the organizational hierarchy. One could argue, to the detriment of fostering

deeper more inclusive relationships with creativity. Rather than reconnect people

with their latent creative identity, the approach has been focused on awakening

the "designer in everyone" by internalizing well-articulated, well-polished "design

processes," such as the IDEO's Human-Centered Design (HCD) Toolkit. The

result, in contrast to the more democratic intent, has been a battle over the

sanctity of design as a professional identity.

Identity is where creativity and design fundamentally differ. Design is by definition

a formal profession and designer a professional identity, and it remains as such

today. However, creativity is not a professional identity and never has been;

rather, it has historically been a quality of creators from all fields. No single

profession can lay claim to creativity or define its work solely by its reference.

Creativity is a social identity, not a professional one.

The typical organizational culture continues to prize certainty, particularly in

today's rapidly shifting economic climate. This tends to create a need to

measure, and an associated fear of the immeasurable, both forces that push the

imagination and creativity to the margins (Saul, 2001). In many organizational

settings it remains true that if you imagine, or create too far outside the lines of

the culture, you may risk diminishing your own professional standing. Risk taking,

in essence, is often seriously discouraged (Amabile, 1998). Organizational

settings like these play a key role in maintaining the divided relationship with

creativity as represented by the Adobe study, by mirroring that division on an organizational level. We still see many hierarchies that divide "the creatives" into a separate organizational role, and one would assume, person. A similar division happens at the professional and organizational level for "non-creative" identities. The majority of professional fields and organizational cultures still register themselves as "non-creative" and in most cases place value on employees would diligently maintain the status quo. Organizational cultures like these tend to efficiently evacuate individuals who are unwilling to surrender their "creative-identity." This perpetuates an escalating process of professional division that intensifies professional stereotypes and concentrates creative and "non-creative" identities into their socially sanctioned professional domains.

To be clear, it is not simply organizations that fear uncertainty and ambiguity, it is people. "*Many of us are frightened of the uncertainty or instability this spatial force (imagination) implies and so find ways to shut it down. In a society as linear and structural as ours nothing could be easier. We have only to act as the structures expect us to act"* (Saul, 2001, p. 145)*.* We cannot expect this need, or its resulting organizational culture to disappear, even under a radically different cultural relationship with creativity. What should be noted here is simply the efficiency with which typical organizational cultures can break down and consume the still developing creative identities of the employees that stay.

The "Creative Economy"

"It is the most unique capacity that human beings possess, and it's the one thing that we will rely upon to take use safely into the 21st century."

- Sir Ken Robinson, 2010

Our economy, and its sustainable growth, is increasingly driven by the dynamic interaction between knowledge sharing and production, human creativity and technological progress. Trends, like increasingly open access to online education and tools/platforms for mass collaboration, driven by the increasing reach and bandwidth of the Internet, are creating cultures that are much more capable and active in the process of remixing themselves. In addition, Adobe's 2012 study outlined a clear sentiment about the centrality of creativity to both our economy and our society. "*Almost 9 out of 10 professionals overwhelmingly agree that creativity is required for economic growth, and is valuable to society (96%)."*

New generations continue to enter into this economy with command over ever more powerful social technologies and tools of expression; *"creative expressions are the heart of the digital economy in which millions of people cut and paste, mash, exchange digital files through the internet to invent new forms of social relations and modes of expression that are interactive and participative. These cultural expressions are also a powerful source of creativity"* (KEA, 2009, p.27). These dynamics and toolsets continue to remix our relationship with creativity to spur the economic activity that thrives on it.

Conversely, our physical and interpersonal density is rapidly increasing in the world's richly diverse urban centers. We have already crossed the 50% mark, and by 2030 the UN estimates that more than 60% of us will live in dense urban centers. This human diversity complements the previously mentioned technological and knowledge-based diversity, which can be observed in a "creative economy."

A quick scan of literature on how these trends are reflected in the American socioeconomic landscape quickly leads to Richard Florida's work on the Creative Class. Florida's research is connected to our relationship with creativity, and is an interesting look at both cultural and socio-economic change in America. Florida's work carves out two primary segments of the American population that make up the "Creative Classes" — totalling 41 million workers (up from 38 million in 1999), or approximately 30 percent of the U.S. workforce. These segments are largely defined by role, function and professional occupation, or as Florida articulates it, whether they *"create meaningful new forms or designs that are readily transferable or widely useful- such as designing a consumer product that can be manufactured and sold; or coming up with a theorem or strategy that can be applied in many cases"* (2011, Loc. 858)*.*

- **Super-Creative Core:** This group is comprised of a wide range of professionals including: scientists, engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, software programmers, film makers, as well as thought leaders in modern

society: non-fiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think tank researchers, analysts, and other opinion makers. The super creative class are employed to engage in the work on a daily basis. This work requires both creative problem finding as well as creative problem solving (Florida, 2011, Loc. 858).

- **Creative Professionals:** This group is comprised of a wide range of professionals who work in knowledge-intensive industries including: high-tech, financial services, legal services, healthcare, and business management. This work requires creative problem solving that often draws on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems, often requiring a high level of education and training (Florida, 2011, Loc. 858).

In Florida's recent manifesto, *The Creative Compact*, he makes claim to the size of these interconnected economic sectors; *"based on science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship; arts, culture, design and entertainment; and the knowledge-based professions of law, finance, health-care and education, the Creative Economy has powered economic growth over the past two decades, generating more than 20 million new jobs since 1980 (…) The Creative Economy accounts for nearly $2 trillion in wages and salaries, roughly half of the total"* (Florida, 2012, p. 1).

There is little debate about the larger transition we are making to a "Creative" or "Knowledge-based" economy, at least here in developed nations. Richard

Florida's work in this area, beyond his efforts to document this socioeconomic shift, is of particular note in this research because his work represents one of the few new cultural frameworks for creativity and creative identity to sink into the mainstream cultural construct of creativity. Florida's ideas have almost certainly reached more people, and possibly a few more continents, than the important ideas presented by, for example, Richard Coyne. And while the concept of the "Creative Class" presents some useful socio-economic insights into the clustering of creative people and output, that can help inform smart national and regional economic and urban policy, it can be argued that the measure has done little to expose the human, social and cultural dynamics that allow for or block participation in Florida's "Creative Classes." Rather, from a cultural perspective we can observe the concept of "Creative Class" leaning on and extending Romantic constructs and stereotypes in the language of 21st-century economics.

The Limits of "Creative Class"

In Florida's work, the concept of a "Creative Class" is intrinsically tied to a limited set of economic and socioeconomic valuations of professional role and creative production that, it would appear, only a small segment of society are either talented enough or educated enough to produce. While notably more appreciative of diversity in its analysis, and clearly more than a measure of education, within the "Creative Class" we find all of our Romantic and stereotypical definitions of creativity and creative people: the artist, the scientific genius, and now the disruptive "Designpreneur" (Ryan, Kwong, Haldenby, 2012). In our acceptance and use of the "Creative Class" construct we have also given

new life and prominence to some of these old ideas, aggregating them into a contemporary "class" system.

In addition, there is a fundamental difference between an analysis of "Creative Class" and an analysis of "creative identity." One of the central limits of Florida's concept is its assumption/bias that everyone in the "creative classes" in some way identifies as a creative person, participating in a creative economy. When you layer the result of the Adobe study on Florida's data we know this cannot be true given a full 48% of Americans do not believe they are creative, many of whom hail from Florida's "Creative Classes." Further, many of the professional domains that Florida includes in both the "Super Creative Core" and "Creative Professional" classes do not have a group identity or ethos as being a creative profession full of creative people. At best the "Creative Class" operates as a meta-label, useful for socio-economic and urban analysis/policy, but irrelevant to an individual's relationship to creativity and their creative identity. When we review the list of profession members detailed above, we are forced to confront *"the implausibility of their common cause"* (Markusen, 2006, p. 1).

More recently, with the release of the *Creative Compact*, Florida is taking a more inclusive stance, calling for society to maximize the creativity of all its members: *"We can't simply write off the tens of millions of workers who toil in low-wage service jobs. The United States and other nations will have to find ways to bring the service and manufacturing sectors more fully into the Creative Age. Every job can and must be creatified; every worker must be empowered to harness his or*

her own inner entrepreneur" (Florida, 2012, p. 1)*.* A call to maximize the creative potential of the service and manufacturing industries is a demonstration of the kind of inclusive thinking we need, but to assume that the acquisition of a creative identity is as simple as extending the definition of the "creative economy" or the "Creative Classes" is an unhelpful oversimplification. The issue here is neither Florida's intent nor his analysis, but the lens through which the theory frames the problem and challenge of inclusivity.

The socio-economic frame of reference that is presented by Florida, as valuable as it is, ultimately misses the central issues of culture, identity and social norms/stenotypes in its analysis. Our society and economy do not have "Non-Creative Classes" that we need to transform into "Creative Classes"; rather, we have "Non-Creative" identities who do not yet feel capable or comfortable enacting their own creative identity or creative potential within their respective social environments. We are best served by acknowledging the value and limits of this theory while shifting focus to the hard work of exposing this wicked problem at its social and human core.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CREATIVE IDENTITY

"How can we develop a sense of creativity, I would like to suggest that it is through the development of a robust sense of identity." – Susan Greenfield, 2008

Imagining Our Selves

John Ralston Saul (2001) describes people's ability to imagine themselves and their role in society as critical to both individual and cultural health. The search for selfhood is one of the most human of journeys. It is a journey as long as life, and with no other map than the one our imagination provides. In many ways, our imagination is the engine of our identity.

However, this journey is not by default good, fair or just. Our imaginations can betray our best interests and our ethics. They can be warped by images and models passed down and impressed by our culture or social context, and they can, as a result, stand in the way of social progress. This sentiment is hauntingly captured by Saul here: "*the old industrial centers, the isolated towns, the aboriginal communities and the new slums, have lost a reflection of who they are and why. Or they have had it smashed by others. And so they can only imagine themselves in the models delivered by civil servants, economists, businessmen and television from elsewhere. And these models, if people in East Germany or Labrador or central Australia try to fit in to their imagination, make no sense at all"* (2001, p. 122*)*.

The imagination is a powerful driver of identity, but what shapes the imagination? Ultimately, no imagination lives separately from its social context or the norms of its society. In the following section, we will explore the social forces and processes that shape our imaginations and identities in the kiln of social interaction.

Locating Creativity

"We are not all great or even good artists. But we are all intrinsically part of the imagination's inclusive nature." – John Ralston Saul, 2001

As we have discussed, creativity is of particular importance and value in the 21st century, to our education, to our economy, to our wellbeing and possibly to our survival. The question of who is "creative" and when has become especially important and equally confusing. In general, the answer to this question tends to depend on your definition. From an academic point of view, a person's bias can be largely described by their leaning toward either "Big-C" creativity (collectively determined value), or "Little-c" creativity (everyday creative experiences). The "Little-c" perspective is well described by Ruth Richard (2007) as *"being about everyone, throughout lives; it is fundamental to our survival. It is how we find a lost child, get enough to eat, and make our way in a new place and culture. It is not so much what we do as how we do it, whether this is at work or at leisure. With our everyday creativity, we adapt flexibly, we improvise, and we try different options, whether we are raising our child, counseling a friend, fixing our home, or planning a fundraising event"* (p. 25-54)*.* However, given the social constructionist perspective presented here, it is worth stepping back for a moment to review the argument for locating creativity in the "everyday" social realm of experience vs. the genetic gift, or objectively valued product.

The Neuroscience Perspective

In the 1970's the concept of the "left" and "right" brain was popularized, likely the first neurologically grounded cultural construct for understanding creativity and creative identity. The construct, which continues to persist in today's popular culture, defines creativity as a right brain activity and rational thinking as a left-brain activity, and that everyone is biased towards one side or the other (Sawyer, 2010, p. 83). However, this "neurological" theory is a myth and since its birth has not accrued any scientific evidence in its defense.

In recent years there has been a flurry of advanced research, and as a result, insight into the neuroscience of creativity. Much of this research has been focused on trying to find markers that could identify creativity, or perhaps creative people. Interestingly, rather than lifting the curtain to expose a biological wizard, or super creative gene, the work has mostly served to expose and reinforce creativity's inherent complexity. As Susan Greenfield described in 2008, *"there is no evidence that exceptionally creative individuals have some additional biologic feature unavailable to the rest of us ordinary mortals; as far as we know, not only is there no special gene, but no extra brain either, nor exotic transmitter."* That being said, this research has exposed interesting new insights into the biological experience of creativity, the influence of particular social or chemical triggers, and has even linked it to particular disorders like dyslexia, schizophrenia, drug use and other conditions that seem to amplify particular forms of neuronal activity believed to be associated with creative thinking.

However, these new insights into neural network theory seem to support the idea that creativity cannot be easily explained or segmented and that in fact our cognitive functions are distributed and holistic, "*there is really no difference in cognitive function between, say, remembering something and inventing a new idea. In neural network models the same architecture and algorithms apply in each case. We can add to this argument the simple linguistic observation that 'creativity,' 'feeling,' 'intelligence' and 'genius' are simply terms in language that we use in particular situations*" (Coyne, 2007, p. 138). While we now have deep insight into the creative experience from a neurological perspective, this research has not resulted in conclusions of the kind that can identify and separate those who are creative from those who are not. Rather, this class of research has done more to expose the amazing creative capacity and plasticity of people and the human brain we all share.

The Social System's Perspective

John Dewey presents a complementary perspective on the social experience of creativity to the one presented by Richards, but instead focuses on the essentially creative nature of social interaction; "*we are given to associating the creative mind with persons regarded as rare and unique, like geniuses. But every individual is in his own way unique. Each one experiences life from a different angle than anybody else, and consequently has something distinctive to give others if he can turn his experiences into ideas and pass them on to others*" (p. 3)*. From Dewey's perspective, in our everyday negotiation of the world we become essentially creative, as we cannot possibly think or reference the same

thoughts or have the same experiences as another person. This analysis

includes creativity's apparent capacity to manifest in all mediums of human

expression: *"emotions, intuitions, images and bodily feelings"* (Root-Bernstein, R.

& M. 1999)*.*

This is illustrative of a social systems perspective on creativity, which focuses not

on the person or product, but on its emergence in social interactions. Professor

Csikszentmihalyi (the father of the systems perspective on creativity) when

defining how creativity emerges*,* states that *"creativity does not happen inside*

people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a socio-

cultural context. It is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon" (1996, p.

26)*.*

This social systems perspective has recently been adopted and discussed by

many leading creativity thinkers, and has inspired new research. For example,

Mark A. Pachucki found in his study of *Creativity Narratives Among College*

Students (2010) that *"the notion that creativity can be usefully located at the*

intersection of the individual and group is a feature of pragmatist scholarship that

takes lived experience, individuality, group sensibilities, and social interaction as

fundamental projects in social change." He goes on to describe that *"across all*

creative types, social interactivity emerges as a major focus for these students;

many feel they are making a unique and creative contribution when they are

helping others, exercising leadership, organizing events, and simply hanging out

and talking. However, the very fact that creativity is reported as experienced in

rather routine settings, where students are performing tasks and engaging in activities that are bound by social norms and expectations, suggests that for many students, creativity is less about 'abandon' or pure expression and more about community and connection." Pachucki's study is able to connect the everyday and systems perspectives by concluding that *"everyday creativity — given its ubiquity — is a critical arena for developing habits of creative thinking, for learning how to negotiate new ideas in the context of social interaction, and for developing one's creative identity and sense of efficacy*." Studies like this add valuable insight to our understanding of the social construction of creativity, but unfortunately have not been featured prominently in either business or academic discourse on the subject.

Even theories not traditionally linked to creativity research, such as sense-making and hermeneutics lend support to this social perspective on creativity and creative identity. Both theories, explore the primacy of the situated nature of all decisions, judgments an actions – any of which could be described as "everyday" creative activities. Richard Coyne sums up this orientation by describing how*, "our incessant interaction with each other, our history and our environment are so intense that it makes sense to say that creativity, thought, memory and other cognitive functions are in the situation as much as in the organism."*

These theories teach us that "*whatever its origins, creativity is not meant to be a heroic model…yes there are great imaginations. Imaginations of genius. But then there are also great tennis players, which doesn't prevent tens of millions of*

people from playing decent tennis. There are great cooks, yet a billion-odd

people cook for their families. And their families seem as happy and as healthy

as the supply of food permits" (Saul, 2001, p. 159)*.* It is also important to keep in

mind the poignant results of Adobe's recent study on creative identity. The

research reminds us that regardless of whether you believe in an "everyday"

model of creativity or not — only 52% of Americans (39% globally) believe they

are creative, and only one in four believe they are fulfilling their creative potential.

These social outcomes certainly do not reflect the inclusivity or universality of the

social systems perspective described here.

The Social Brain & Identity

A perspective that locates creativity within social interaction is useful but not

enough to inform the assessment of how a "non-creative" identity develops over

time. For this analysis, the recent meta-analytical work of Bruce Hood (*The Self*

Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity, 2012) is an excellent and up-to-

date reference. This work cogently critiques our assumptions about identity as an

autonomous-self, independent of social context, concluding that it could be more

accurately described as an illusion by virtue of its malleability to social context

(Hood, 2012). Hood rests his analysis on a long history of sociological and social

psychological research into the specific social dynamics and psychological

mechanisms through which identity is influenced, shaped and constructed at an

interpersonal and group level. Many of the concepts reviewed below are well-

established ideas in their respective fields, however, their use in the context of

"creative identity" has been limited. Each of these concepts provides a lens

through which we can interpret the experiences of the "non-creative" identity, as presented in this research.

The "Reflected Self" & The "Multiple Self"

"Our self exists in the reflection that the world holds up to us" (Hood, 2012). This has also been described as the "looking glass-self" (Cooley, 1902). These expressions not only reference the influence that social expectation can have on how we present ourselves, but the critical meaning that social feedback and validation can have in directing, shaping and even determining our identity. You could say that we find our selves in the feedback and validations we receive from those around us.

Likewise the concept of "multiple selves" had a significant impact on the idea of social categories, *"identity may describe the interactions of an instant, a day, a few years, a lifetime, or generations. For example over the course of a day a woman may see herself as a mother at home and a processional at work. The social category then refers to how she sees herself at the time. And over a life time, people can dramatically change their understanding of their lives"* (Akerlof and Kanton, 2010, Loc. 247). As such, *"there are as many selves as there are sites whose local cultures specify the substance of self and subjectivity"* (Pollner, 2000, p. 408). It is important to internalize a similar truth about creative identity. In describing a creativity identity, this does not intend to evoke the idea of a global sense of self or dominant identity construct that transcends context, rather

that the person feels free to enact a creative identity when social circumstance calls for it. In essence, that it is at least one of a person's "multiple selves."

Mirroring & The Chameleon Effect

A significant amount of in-the-moment identity construction goes unregistered by the conscious mind. The concepts of "mirroring" and the "chameleon effect" play similar roles in shaping our behaviour in social situations — without us being aware of it. Mirror neurons, while still somewhat controversial, were first discovered in 1990 in Parma, Italy, and underpin a social process through which each of us experiences another's emotional response. They are the mechanism through which a remotely observed emotion can be tangibly felt — the foundation of our empathic senses. Mirroring can also modify our behaviour to reflect those around us, whether it be by repositioning our body, yawning or changing the tone of our voice. Similarly, the "Chameleon Effect" focuses on the social process of mirroring by referring to the *"nonconscious mimicry of the postures, mannerisms, facial expressions, and other behaviours of one's interaction partners, such that one's behaviour passively and unintentionally changes to match that of others in one's current social environment"* (T.L. Chartrand and J.A. Bargh, 1999, p. 76(6), 893). But as a purely social process, one can conclude that their primary functions are to help bind our identity to others (Hood, 2012).

The Self-Narrative

The idea that human memories are socially reconstructed is one of the most important discoveries in phycology (Hood, 2012). Memories are much more like

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stories that we tell ourselves over and over again, evolving them with time to fit

the moment (Sir Frederic Bartlett, 1932). As such, stories play a central role in

the construction and reconstruction of identity. From this perspective, identity can

be described as a narrative combination of our remembered self, our social

categories, our possessions and our relationships. Distinct versions of this

narrative are then enacted based on the context and expectation of the moment.

By viewing identity construction through the lens of a narrative story, it becomes

easier to identify why it is so easily manipulated and influenced by social context.

When we make choices that no longer seem to fit the structure of our previous

narrative, the resulting cognitive dissonance is easily resolved by the use of

some artful self-editing. Returning to the debate over the inclusivity of a creative

identity, at this scale of experience, it is possible to argue that identity

construction is itself a creative process.

The Power Group Conformity

This is an area full of seminal social psychological research, much of which is still

found to be surprising today. In short, regardless of who we think we are, the

pressure to conform to the group can in any single moment override our well-

polished self-narrative. One of the simplest and most well-published studies on

this subject it the "Asch Test of Compliance" first conducted by Solomon Asch,

where the length of a single vertical line is compared in length to three other

vertical lines of varying length. In the Asch test, one of the three lines is exactly

the same length as the reference line; however, this simple reality is later warped

when group conformity comes into play. The experiment goes like this: a group of seven participants are used to evaluate a number of these line-matching tests, where all but one of the participants is an actor. After guessing the right answer a few times, the six actors in the group then start to collectively choose the wrong line. Shocked and confused, the one real participant sticks with his point of view initially, but after it happens again and again, three out of four participants start to go along with the group as if they were blind. *"It is not so much the power of the group or peer pressure that shapes our behaviour, but rather our desire to be accepted"* (Hood, 2012, p. 295)*.* Even when faced with clear information, the fear of being an "outsider" or being ostracized from the group can motivate us to do things we would never believe possible or agree to do under normal circumstances.

Each of these social processes and mechanisms are important to keep in mind when we consider the forces at play in the social construction of a "non-creative" identity. These social mechanisms not only influence how we construct our self-narrative over time and how we express ourselves in the moment, but who it is we become similar to.

Identity as a Social & Economic Force

The theory of "Identity Economics" adds a useful layer to our understanding of identity and to our ability to connect the social mechanisms that operate at a micro level, to the macro implications of the distribution of creative identity in society and its broader economic and social outcomes. Identity Economics is a

recent branch of behavioural economics that has been pioneered by George Akerlof & Rachel Kranton. At its core it presents identity as a powerful economic force that influences choice and behaviour on both an individual and cultural scale. A review of this theory suggests that creative identity could have similar implications on choice and behaviour.

Economics has traditionally presented tastes and preferences as purely rational considerations, such as "I like coffee" or "I prefer driving to walking." While Behavioural Economics has extended this analysis into the emotional and the irrational, Identity Economics looks at identity and social context as a primary driver of choice and economic behaviour. As such, Identity Economics can be described as taking an "interactionist" or "social constructionist" point of view on human behaviour, rather than one independent of social context. This distinction mirrors the ideas presented by Csikszentmihalyi in describing the systems dynamics of creativity. This does of course mean that the factors that have the greatest influence on the construction and social enactment of identity are of critical concern for this theory. Below we will review the key concepts introduced by Identity Economics and how they help to outline the economic and social outcomes of creativity identity, or in this case, "non-creative" identity.

Social Norms

"In every social context, people have a notion of who they are, which is associated with beliefs about how they and others are supposed to behave.

These notions play important roles in how economies work" - Akerlof and

Kranton, 2010

An individual's perceived identity is highly influenced by the norms and

stereotypes they are subjected to in their environment. In this analysis, tastes

and preferences are influenced by the social enactment of *norms*, which are

defined by Akerlof and Kranton as *"the social rules regarding how people should*

behave in different situations, these rules are sometimes explicit. Sometimes

implicit, largely internalized and often deeply held" (2012, p. 96)*.* Whether they

evolve out of a motivation to maintain a "sense of belonging" or some other drive

for group preservation, these very same dynamics are at play during "creative"

social interactions, whether creative identity is enacted or suppressed.

Social Categories & Stereotypes

Cultures and communities have a strong tendency to divide themselves up into

different social categories. The categorization of people into groups and the

creation of stereotypes is often a necessary social practice needed to simplify

social complexity and help to shortcut decision making in social interactions

(Hood, 2012). As such, different social categories come with their own set of

norms and most likely their own set of stereotypes. This research presents the

most relevant social categories to creativity in the context of identity: those who

consider themselves "creative" and those who consider themselves "non-

creative." Depending on the operating norms of the group, being creative could

place you as either an "insider" or an "outsider" within the group.

Example: "Stereotype Treat"

Akerlof and Kanton outline a simple but illuminating example based on research conducted by Steele and Aronson (1995) that is summarized here to help draw a clearer connection between social outcomes and identity. The approach taken in this research follows typical protocol for research into Identity Economics whereby economic factors are controlled, and the social context or norms are varied. In this study, Stanford undergraduate students were "primed" with various racial and ethnic identities before taking an exam to show how these social categories and stereotypes can influence their perceived intelligence and thus their performance. In Steele and Aronson's research, a test was given to both Caucasian and African American students. The difference was that one group of only African American students were told this would be a test of "their" abilities, while the other control groups were given no such direction or "priming." The results were surprising. The "primed" African American students did far worse than those who were not "primed" with their racial social category and associated stereotypes. Steele and Aronson concluded that the drop in performance was due to evocation of race-related stereotypes about intelligence due to what they later called "stereotype threat."

Similar effects have been recorded when evoking "caste" identity in India, as well as with regards to stereotypes related to men being better at math and science than women. In each case, performance diminishes substantially when these

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identity-relevant social categories and stereotypes are evoked. There is no evidence to suggest that the social mechanisms described here would work any differently when equivalent stereotypes about creative identity are evoked during social interaction.

Identity Utility in Organizations

Identity Economics works by layering two categories of social evidence to assess an individual's "identity utility" in any given moment and for any given choice. This works by first assigning an individual to a particular social category as described above. This is then followed by outlining the relevant norms and stereotypes for that particular context. We are then able to assess the "identity utility" of any given decision by determining its alignment with these norms and stereotypes, and then assessing the gains or losses that follow from the individual's decision (Akerlof and Kanton, 2010).

Studies of identity within the organizational setting have been more plentiful in recent decades and help to illustrate how the economics of identity play out within the more specific boundaries of an organizational culture. Much of the recent literature on motivation within the workplace centers on identity in opposition to more industrial "Taylorist" theory that focused on task definition and assumed cooperation to be either irrelevant or automatic. When workers identify themselves with their roles and organization, "identity utility" and economic value is created through the associated intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. *"Identity economics suggests that a firm operates well when employees identify with it and*

when their norms advance its goals" (Akerlof and Kanton, 2010, Loc. 266). The opposite is also often true: when workers' identity is not in line with their work or their organization, they experience a loss in identity utility and a decrease in their intrinsic motivations.

Pink (2009) outlines three areas that help to affirm and develop identity and boost intrinsic motivation at work: autonomy, mastery and purpose. In the language of Identity Economics, alignment on these terms would equate to the employees' feeling as an "insider" to that culture, meaning that individual and organizational identity are in alignment.

Amabile supports the concept of "identity utility" but frames it in the terms of "inner work life." She describes "inner work life" as "*the usually hidden emotions perceptions and motivations that people experience as they react to, and try to make sense of the events in their workday. Inner work life is essentially moment-to-moment employee engagement and it strongly influences creativity and productivity. In other words, inner work life drives performance"* (Amabile, 2011). Amabile's research and point of view provide an elegant link between identity, identity utility and creativity.

The Identity Utility of Creativity

In the case of "creative identity," we can assume, based on the model of "identity utility," that individuals who believe they are creative will be intrinsically and socially motivated to exert higher efforts during social interactions of the "creative

kind." In comparison, individuals who have a "non-creative identity" will be intrinsically and socially motivated to reduce their effort in similar social interactions. Therefore, we can conclude by using this model that social settings and organizational cultures that do not align with or create cultures where creative identity is considered an "insider identity" may cause employees to experience a loss in their "creative identity utility." This loss is a direct outcome of the prevailing norms, social and professional categories that exist within that organization, and represents a tangible loss in human capital and creative potential.

While there certainly remains an ocean of "inner work life" operating under the surface, the concept of identity utility helps to make a critical link between organizational, social and economic output and our treatment of creativity in organizational settings. The currently observed relationship with, and distribution of creative identity in America described in the Adobe study, where only 52% of adults believe they are creative and 48% believe they are not, can thus be interpreted as the outcome of countless "identity utility" trade-offs, driven by social norms, stereotypes and context. This outcome eludes to the difficulty most individuals face when attempting to express themselves creatively and by virtue enact a creative identity.

Creative Potential

"All people have creative abilities and we all have them differently. Many people

do not discover their creative abilities because of lack of opportunity,

encouragement and skill. When individuals do find their creative strengths, it can

have an enormous impact on self-esteem and on overall achievement. Creativity

relates to the capacity in all people to combine skills, knowledge and resources

to solve problems in new ways in any context and within any group."

- Sir Ken Robinson, 2010

At the time of writing, there remains little research into the connection between

creative identity and the effect that it might have on the creative potential of an

individual, organization or society. In addition, *"there is very little research to*

determine how and when people develop a "creative identity," whether such an

identity is transferable across domains of activity, and whether engagement with

diverse forms of everyday creativity prepares a person for more extraordinary

creative endeavors" (Pachucki, 2010, p.140). We simply don't know because too

few have asked theses questions. As a result, our approaches to cultivating a

"creative culture" have remained relatively stagnant. For a society and globe that

continues to place increasing value on the social and economic benefits of

creativity and the innovation it generates, new approaches are clearly needed.

As previously mentioned, much of the research done on creativity, and by

association creative potential, has been focused on distilling creative genius into

tips, tricks, tools, and processes for mainstream consumption — a strategy that

by its very nature only connects with individuals who already include creativity in their self-narrative and who are already engaged, to various degrees, in maximizing their creative potential. But what about the creative potential of those who have no reason or desire to look? Who is engaging them? While identity is highly influenced by social context, its narrative does guide our behaviour and it does have a degree of resiliency over time. Further, creative expression often demands the resiliency offered by creative identity, without its sense-making role the path that optimizes our creative "identity utility," will most often be silence.

In a recent follow up to its benchmark study on creativity, Adobe has now turned to the topic of creativity in education. One of the most interesting findings is that *"57% of college educated professionals believe creativity is a learned skill that can be learned in their career, while only 65% believe it is a personality trait that is innate"* (*Adobe, Creativity and Education: Why it Matters, 2012).* These results mirror their earlier results on creative identity almost exactly. While 48% of America does not believe they are creative, a full 65% believe creativity is something innate that cannot be learned. This finding is more than a little discouraging, but should help to turn attention and focus to those very same people who through their adopted cultural constructs for creativity have been marginalized from it. Given these numbers, a strategy aimed at re-engaging the "non-creative" identity seems to hold greater potential for capturing more of our untapped creative potential, compared to strategies that focus on squeezing even more out of those who already recognize and enact their creative self.

The question becomes, how do we cultivate an interest in engaging and maximizing the latent creative potential of "non-creative" identities as a core strategy for maximizing society's creative potential and innovativeness? What might that more inclusive relationship and culture look like, how might we measure it, and how might we encourage its emergence? And what might we be able to achieve with the added human capital and creative participation it could capture? At the moment, we have few references.

> *"The psychological conditions which make a society or an epoch creative and consistently original, have been little studied, it seems likely that social conditions analogous to those seen in individual creativity are important. Freedom of expression and movement, lack of fear of dissent and contradiction, a willingness to break custom, a spirit of play as well as of dedication to work, purpose on a grand scale; these are some of the attributes which a creative social entity, whether vast or tiny can be expected to have"* (Frank Barron, IPAR, Berkley).

In essence, Barron is suggesting that to maximize creative potential we are best served by building a culture of creativity that shares similar attributes to a society's "creative" members. This analysis helps, in that it reaffirms the focus on the inclusivity of the identity, rather than the current focus on making creative process more optimal or efficient. Under the right social conditions it seems, creativity has always flourished. It is time to turn our focus away from the individual and questions of *what* creativity is, and start focusing on the social and cultural conditions that encourage creativity to emerge.

Adobe concluded in its study that; *"we need to empower and accelerate this shift. Creativity is a critical competency that should be taught within all disciplines. This will drive the global economy and the career success of the next generation*."

While this is agreeable, without a critical analysis of the ideas our culture imbues in us about creativity, and how those lessons influence our creative capital and participation, we are less likely to make progress towards this future. Ultimately, succeeding in these important projects to maximize our collective creativity, innovativeness and adaptability will demand new approaches that seek to identify and then break down personal, social and cultural barriers to the enactment and social construction of a creative identity.

THE THEORY OF "CREATIVITY CULTURE"

"Creativity is the engine that drives cultural evolution." - M. Csikszentmihalyi

The analysis presented here has been an attempt to critically examine our relationship with creativity, not only as an identity, but also as a cultural construct that has its own distinct form within a society that is shaped by dominant norms and stereotypes. Wrapping our hands around creativity's "cultural form" is an important step forward, given its influence on all manner of everyday "creative" social interaction, and our collective creative output. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the language or frameworks we need to discuss, critique and potentially improve that form. Instead we are more often marred by debate, both ideological and academic, that aims to establish which approach is most valid (see Design Thinking). As a result, creativity has remained an ill-defined, elusive subject matter that more often breeds confusion and conflict than it does productive

clarity. Without a simple, systemic framework for capturing and discussing creativity's cultural form, we will continue to struggle to find the common ground that is necessary for progress.

Fortunately, by viewing creativity through the lens of creative identity and "non-creative" identity, we are provided an alternative approach focused on human/social outcomes, rather than ideological validity. By conceptualizing the sum of a society's creative and "non-creative" identities, we arrive at an ideologically neutral and fundamentally whole view of what can be described as a society's "Creativity Culture."

This research introduces the identity-centric theory of "Creativity Culture" as an effective and practical framework for assessing and managing the productivity of creativity's applied cultural form, accessibility and resulting social and economic outcomes. This shift toward assessing the nature and efficiency of creativity's cultural form via the distribution and inclusivity of creative identity accomplishes four important tasks. Firstly, we are given cause to shift dialogue and debate away from more abstract definitions of *what* creativity is, and toward its applied meaning and related outcomes. Secondly, it highlights the essential role that creative identity plays in capturing and maximizing individual and collective creative potential. Thirdly, it conceptualizes creative identity as a social construction influenced by its cultural form and socio-cultural context, helping to reinforce the mindset that our current outcomes can be changed, should the form of our "Creativity Culture" change. Fourthly, it provides a simple measure of the

relative strength of prevailing inclusive and exclusive cultural constructs related to creativity, and gives cause to better understand their implications and track their changes over time.

The model is best understood as a simple feedback loop where the growth of creative identity competes with the growth of "non-creative" identity. Therefore, based on systems theory, a bias toward one identity would allow for more rapid growth of that particular identity. While not a perfect match, this system has similarities to the "Success to the Successful" archetype in systems theory whereby a small bias toward one outcome is reinforced and amplified over time. This social systems view helps us understand how different "Creativity Cultures" may come to clearly bias one identity over the other. In the systems diagram below, the US has shows a minor bias toward creative identity- 52% believe they are creative, while 48% do not. In comparison, only 45% believe they are creative in the UK, only 43% in Germany, only 36% in France and as little as 19% of people Japan (Adobe, 2012). The system presented here would therefore suggest that the cultural constructs supporting the enactment of a "non-creative" identity in each of these countries are both more ingrained and in a sense more "successful" that those supporting the enactment of a creative identity. The "success" of "non-creative" cultural constructs in Japan might lead one to conclude that an inclusive "Creativity Culture" might in fact be out of its reach, unless it were to experience a radical cultural shift. Whereas in the UK, progress might be much more likely, given similar efforts.

With time, the application of this identity-driven framework could enable new, measurable correlations between well-established social, organizational, and economic metrics that track innovation and employee wellbeing. It would become possible to subdivide a society's "Creativity Culture" by industry or profession in ways that provide a more specific, identity-centric view of creative participation and capitalization. In addition, applying this lens to measures like the "Creative Class" would provide new insights that help refine its impact on economic policy and urban planning.

Model 1: Conceptualization of America's "Creativity Culture"
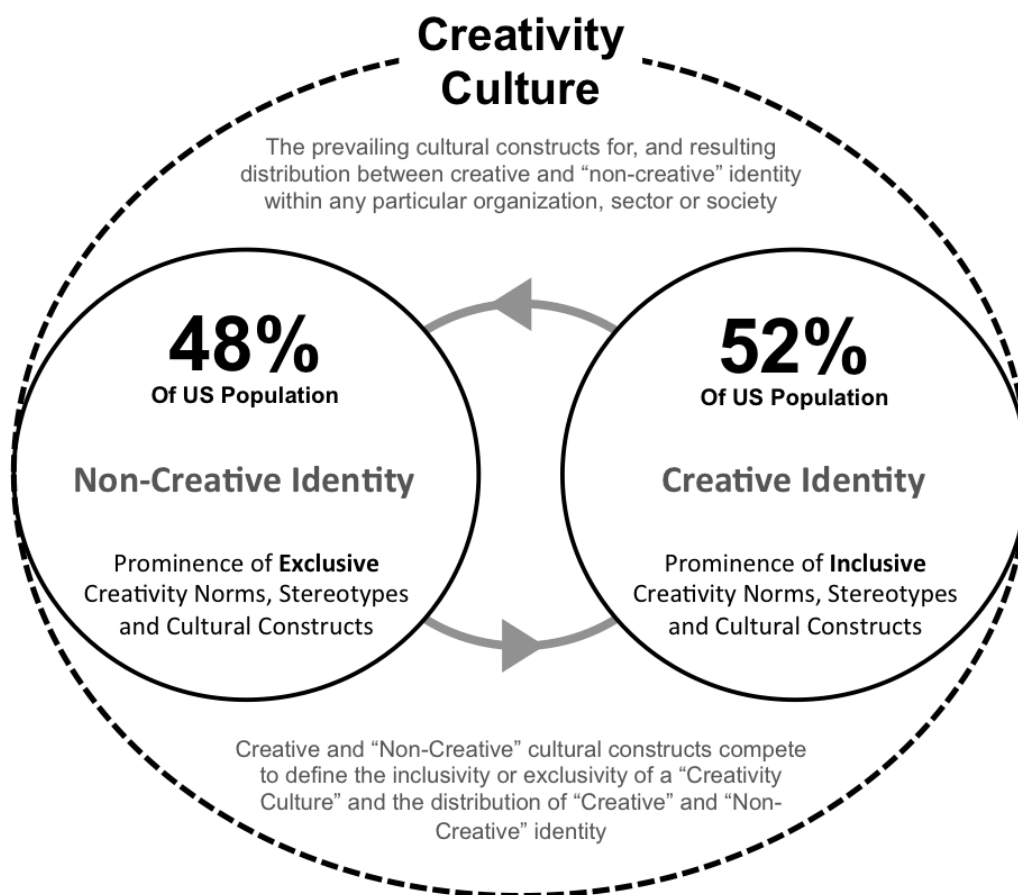
In the following section, an analysis of the "non-creative" identity is presented as an initial attempt to focus on this, until now, ignored segment of our "Creativity Culture." This analysis is used to generate new insight into the inner working of our "creativity culture," and the social construction of creative and "non-creative" identity. These insights are then leveraged in the development of specific strategies that could be employed in improving the inclusivity and productivity of our "Creativity Culture" and our "Creative Economy."

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research presented here was conducted from May 2011 through December 2012. The secondary literature review was conducted between May 2011 and June 2012, followed by a qualitative study that took place between September 2012 and January 2013.

Research & Synthesis Process

Two distinct diverging and converging phases broadly represent the research process used in this study. The first phase involved an extensive literature review, while the second phase applied this learning toward an in-depth qualitative study. Each phase involved lengthy divergent exploration, followed by an iterative process of synthesis whereby key conclusions and insights were converged upon.

Model 2: Research & Synthesis Process
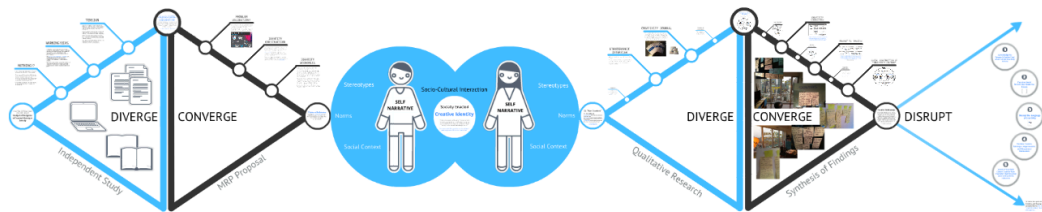
The social constructionist frame of reference that is applied in this work was

arrived at through the preceding literature review and was used to frame the

research questions and methodological approaches in the subsequent qualitative

phase of the study. In both the concept development and final synthesis of the

findings, particular emphasis was placed on visual methodologies (i.e., systems

mapping and concept mapping) to aid in the development of visual models and

illustrations. These methods were essential during periods of analysis, helping to

manage the complexity of the subject matter and to enhance the tangibility of the

results. Please see Appendix for more visual artifacts.

Research Questions

The qualitative phase of this research was designed to make progress against

three specific and distinct research questions, put in context by the previous

discussion. Each question explores a critical gap in our understanding of the

meaning and value of creativity and creative identity in society.

1. How do prevailing cultural constructs for defining and applying creativity influence the development of a non-creative identity?

2. How does "non-creative" identity limit individual, social and societal creative potential?

3. How might we develop a more inclusive "Creativity Culture" that supports the development of creative identity throughout a society?

Sampling

An online survey was used to screen participants for the qualitative phase of this research. Given the target audience's feelings toward creativity, the specific objective of this research to "explore the non-creative identity" was not shared at this stage. Instead, potential participants were informed that the study topic was related to "the relationship between problem solving and identity." The following criteria were used to qualify participants:

- Must self-identify as not being a "creative person"
- Must be between the ages of 25 and 50
- Must not be a part-time or full-time student
- Must have been in the workforce for a minimum of two years
- Must not work in stereotypically creative professional domains (art/design, etc.)
- Must not be self-employed

In order to mask the primary intention of the study, the participants' identification as not creative was imbedded in a set of generic personality-type questions. In order to help identify participants who most clearly self-identified as not creative, the question did not allow for gradients. Participants were simply asked to select one of two boxes: "I am a creative person" or "I am not a creative person." Qualified participants were later engaged via email to arrange participation in the study.

Participants

In total, ten "non-creative" participants were recruited, along with two "creative" participants who were to act as a control group. The "creative" participants mirrored the "non-creative" participants in all ways but their creative identity. The qualified participants represented a diverse group of ages, cultures, professional and educational backgrounds. It should be noted that the recruiting drew a skewed sample of gender bias toward women. To help mitigate this bias, only patterns that were observed across both male and female participants were included in these results.

- **Cultural/Ethnic Backgrounds:** *British, East Indian, Korean, Chinese, Italian, Dutch and French-Canadian.*
- **Professional Domains:** *Education, Insurance, Pharmacy, Transportation Demand Management, Accounting, Law, Marketing/Sales, Policy Research and Management Consulting*

- **Organizational Settings:** *The size of the represented organizations varied from 10 to 20,000, with a median of approximately 300 people.*

Methodology & Research Design

The final qualitative phase of this process was designed specifically for the social complexity and challenge inherent in understanding an individual's identity, or in this case, their "non-creative" identity. As such, a multi-method, multi-interaction research design was created. Extended timeframes were leveraged to encourage deeper layers of self-reflection and relationship building with each participant. The research involved four phases and three separate interactions that unfolded over a period of approximately eight weeks.

1. **Homework Exercise:** Participants were given a very simple and engaging homework assignment in advance of the ethnographic interview. The goal of the assignment was to help the participant reflect on the complex and difficult subject of identity. The assignment asked each participant to think about four defining moments in their lives that have shaped who they are today. They were also encouraged to bring to the interview four objects or pictures that symbolized or represented those moments. Each moment is described below.

    - One object/image that symbolizes/represents a defining moment you experienced **growing up** that has shaped who you are today

- One object/image that symbolizes/represents a defining moment you experienced in **adulthood** that has shaped who you are today

- One object/image that symbolizes/represents a defining moment that has shaped who you are **professionally**

- One object/image that symbolizes/represents who you **aspire to be**

These moments and artifacts were used to stimulate deep discussion about their background and identity during the ethnographic interview.

2. **In-context Ethnographic Interview:** Given the personal and context-dependent nature of the subject matter, it was important that the data collection include an environmental perspective. Given these needs, an inductive, semi-structured ethnographic interview method was used. The ethnographic emersions were conducted in either the participant's place of work or home (based on their preference) and involved a review of their homework as part of a two-hour explorative discussion about their identity as well as their perceptions, experiences and relationship with creativity. (See Appendix for ethnographic field guide.)

3. **Creativity Journal:** At the end of the ethnographic interview, participants were given a journaling exercise to be completed over the subsequent two weeks. The journal built on the discussions about creativity during

the ethnography and primed each participant to explore the "creative" or "non-creative" influences in their daily lives to further stimulate reflection on how various people and social contexts and environments influence their feelings on the subject. The journal consisted of six categories of exploration where they could capture their thoughts in the moment. At the end of the journaling period, each respondent was asked to read and reflect on what they had written to identify patterns or insights they had not considered previously. (See appendix for full creativity journal.)

- People & Social Interactions

- Work & Company Culture

- Home Life & Family Obligations

- Physical Environments

- Extracurricular Activities

- Free Space (to be used on any subject)

4. **Follow-up Interview:** The final phase of research involved a follow-up honing/sense-making interview that was used to dive deeply into one or more examples/experiences illustrated in the journal and capture important reflections experienced by the participant over their six- to eight-week engagement with the research. Close attention was paid to any evolution or change in the participants' self-perception as a result of the research process.

4. FINDINGS

INTRODUCING THE "NON-CREATIVES"

This section details some of the dominant themes that were captured in the qualitative phase of this research. It is important to mention prior to exploring each theme in more depth that they do not represent a complete view of who each participant is. Rather, this analysis focuses on their shared experience and views on creativity and their "non-creative" identity. As such, this analysis is centered on identifying themes relevant to this specific topic within the context of their diverse personal lives, professional experiences and cultural backgrounds. As with all qualitative studies, some themes were more dominant for certain participants than for others.

PERSONAL LAYER

Inter-relational Sense of Self

While some patterns in this research shine more brightly when viewed through the lens of creativity or creative identity, others appeared more easily as fundamentally shared orientations — this is one of those cases. Reflection and conversation about the defining moments that shaped who they are today often revealed a long history of prioritizing the well being of others over their own.

This core orientation is a social one and was evidenced most frequently by the willingness to sacrifice their own time, physical or emotional energy to either help, please or uphold the expectations of others. They presented, in this capacity, as prototypical examples of the socially constructed self. In some cases this orientation led to negative experiences where they had overinvested in the wrong people who took advantage of their generosity and social investment. The desire to please others or *"be everything to everyone,"* as one participant put it, can often be a drain on their relationships, daily life and even, at times, their well being.

- *"I seem to attract people who are super needy, and I have been taken advantage of many times in the past." – Ethnography*

- *"Sometimes I help people too much and not myself enough, I don't worry about myself enough. Let's say at work I'll have tons of things to do that will mean that I will be putting in a 65-hour week but anybody else that comes along and says (my name) I have a question, I will take the time to try to get information for them or help them out. Even with friends, if I am invited to something I will make a strong point to go, even if from my perspective I might need the time to sleep." – Ethnography*

However, this orientation was not exclusively evidenced in the negative; it was also described in terms of a commitment to family. While the extent to which participants exuded this devotion did vary, most described their connection with family as central to who they are and how they live their lives. In many cases this

role was connected to how they defined themselves *vis-à-vis* their siblings. Participants described themselves as the "reliable" ones who were willing to do anything for a family member without hesitation.

- *"Family is the most important thing to me. My obsessive loyalty to my family and that value of family first." – Ethnography*
- *"No man is an island, I am part of a collective." – Ethnography*

The pattern observed here illustrates a strong bias toward an inter-relational rather than an individualistic sense of self. While individualism focuses on the importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, this is far from the social and relational orientation that was described by participants in this research. Instead, the participants presented themselves much more in line with theory on the "presentation of self," first outlined by Erving Goffman. In this case, Goffman's analogy of the theater is useful as it would be accurate to interpret the priorities and orientations described here as those of "*players in a play*." However, in this case the lead character willingly chooses to place control over the interaction into the hands of another, rather than keep it for themself (Goffman, 1974).

Imagined Creative Potential

While participants in this study held a clear self-perception, as not being creative, they did express affinity toward creative activities and opportunities in the abstract. The responsibility and freedom to be creative, even if it is not something

they identify with at present, is both motivating and attractive. This extends to ideas about their ideal working environments and office cultures, to their dreams of a more creative career. Many would prefer environments where they are given projects that require more creative thinking and where management supports such endeavors. Importantly, this indicates that the presence of a "non-creative" identity does not mean that creativity itself is not valued. In fact, it seems to be quite the opposite.

- *"I would hope to be doing more work that would require thinking more outside the box. Thinking about how to solve a problem that hasn't been solved before. That would be unique and interesting work." – Ethnography*
- *"I like the opportunity to come up with creative solutions." – Ethnography*
- *"Creativity is something that people should try for; it improves satisfaction on many levels." – Follow-up Interview*

Although not attached to their current real-world self or circumstance, in most cases, the idea of being recognized as creative *in the future* was clearly valued and viewed positively. This would appear to support popular narratives about creativity that define it as a generally desirable "trait."

- *"I have a strong desire to be thought of as creative; that's why I took up photography five years ago." – Ethnography*

- *"I was told that I was super creative but in denial — I like that diagnosis"* – *Follow-up Interview.*

In addition, despite their disassociation from the same, the act of creating something new, whether that act is labeled as creative or not, clearly has value in their eyes. All of the participants solve problems on a daily basis and openly admit to enjoying that process and expressed a desire to engage in it more often and more ambitiously. This makes sense in the context of research into the connection between "inner work life" and productivity: *"people want to succeed at meaningful work, they want to succeed and they want to matter"* (Amabile, 2011)*.*

SOCIAL LAYER

Sensitivity to Group Membership

As described earlier, participants in this study displayed tendencies to focus externally on their social environment and on the perceptions and needs of those they are interacting with in the moment, as opposed to focusing more on themselves and their own needs. This inter-relational orientation seems to lead to a heightened sensitivity and concern for how others perceive them and how they fit into the group.

This sensitivity to group membership and the need to "fit in" was often linked to experiences in childhood where they struggled with either social or cultural exclusion, in one form or another. One participant, as an immigrant to Canada,

still struggles with this today. For others, these early experiences have motivated a plethora of identity projects over time, whereby they have attempted to recast themselves in a preferred frame — sometimes being successful and sometimes not. As adults they have moved past these early challenges and have found effective ways to develop stable relationships and social networks. However, the memory and experience of being "outside" the group remains with them and imbedded in their approach to social interaction and relationship building. Overall, this seems to have led to a preference for maintaining group norms and cohesion, and a sensitivity to behaviours that might threaten their own membership in a group or portray them as an "outsider."

- *"I was bullied for five years, it made me an introvert, it was a coping mechanism. I was a horrible student and never learned to learn until my undergrad (…) I tried reinventing myself as outgoing but it was hard work and I went back to being introverted." – Ethnography*
- *"There is still a lot I don't understand about Canadian culture, like hockey games (…) I still feel a little bit distant from the people here." – Ethnography*

The sensitivity and maintenance of group norms is also evidenced by a proclivity for consensus building. This makes sense given the central function of consensus building is to uphold and protect group norms and group cohesion. This places them squarely and safely in the center of any social situation, especially in times of conflict.

- *"I like consensus building ideologically, it fits with my view of the world and humanity." – Ethnography*

- *"My friends call me "Switzerland," I am always focused on getting other peoples' perspectives and try to avoid taking sides." – Ethnography*

- *"I don't like to offend anyone." – Ethnography*

The notion that some people are more sensitive to group membership and the threat of group exclusion is a critical idea in understanding the social construction of a "non-creative" identity. While all identities, as discussed earlier, are highly influenced by social context and relevant norms, to be more sensitive to such feedback could result in the amplification of this influence on identity construction.

Relative(ly) "Non-Creative"

The social construction of each participant's "non-creative" identity often has roots in early childhood memories that define them as such; however, this was not always the case and does not seem to be a prerequisite. For those who did experience negative creative feedback as a child, the memories remain vivid, even today. What we can conclude is that despite the ephemeral nature of such experiences they nevertheless influence personal and social trajectories as related to the development of a creative vs. "non-creative" identity over time.

- *"The reason is because when I was in that class, about drawing and designing (…) we had to design a poster to promote a fashion show (…) I was always getting the lowest marks (…) my best friend who is now a fashion designer was always getting the higher marks. The teachers kept making comments that this is not creative, so that is how I know I am not creative." – Ethnography*

- *"I have believed I am not creative since grade eight when I didn't do well in art, that's what you correlate creativity with, the grade you get in art, even in high school I was never good at art." – Ethnography*

Over time, these defining moments and memories act as powerful social markers that influence their group membership. While early memories of creative judgment can have a lingering effect, so do the presence of close relationships that effectively embody their construct for what constitutes a "creative person." These relationships seem to act as powerful reference points that reinforce the individual's "non-creative" identity over time. Unlike childhood imprints, these people live with them over time, reminding them of themselves and shaping their self-perception. Many of the participants in this study could easily reference close relationships likes these; in some cases, these reference relationships were siblings, and in others, close friends.

- *"In my school, family and friends' circles there are people who are way more creative than me." – Ethnography*

- *"My friends are very creative, my cousin is a graphic designer, and my friend is in fashion, and other is a chef. But my sister works at a bank so she is not creative." – Ethnography*

- *"Every person I have mentioned this to has commented on how I am not really a creative person. Even though I technically agree with them, is it weird that it's making me defensive?" – Journal*

Family identity can also be deeply influential and resilient over time. In some cases, brothers or sisters were labeled by parents as "the creative ones" when they were young, and continue to maintain that identity or role in the family today. Given we develop our self-narrative in part based on what and who we are not (Hood, 2012), these intimate comparisons and contrasts within the family environment can prove powerful.

- *"My sister is a high achiever and into everything (…) in some ways I was sort of middle of the road, don't rock the boat too much, not as much to worry about with me." – Ethnography*

- *"My younger brother is the quintessential definition of creative, so I would not want to try to justify to him that I am creative." – Ethnography*

- *"My sister is good at ideas, my brother is good at research." – Ethnography*

The result is that many participants had around them an ecosystem of culturally justified "creative" people that served both in their youth and still today as constant reminders of why they are "relative(ly)" not creative.

The Fear of Judgment

Often the "fear of failure" is used to diagnose those unwilling to take creative risks in their personal and professional lives. While the fear of failure was discussed in some conversations, what was significantly more prominent was the fear of "social judgment." This is an interesting nuance that helps to shed more light on the relationship between creative identity and whether or not an individual's dominant orientation is inter-relational or individualist. It could be argued that the "fear of failure" construct embodies a more individualist sentiment — failure in this sense is interpreted as an internal experience whereby our self-concept is damaged as a result of failing to achieve a predetermined goal. In contrast, the "fear of judgment" demonstrates a more inter-relational perspective as it reframes failure more in terms of a social threat to the self and possibly to group membership. This is an important insight into the "non-creative" experience and more accurately interprets the meaning of failure for the participants in this study.

- *"I don't like to fail." – Journal*
- *"I always thought of myself as a fairly confident person but it turns out that I make or don't make a lot decisions based on fear of judgment from others." – Journal*

- *"At thanksgiving with family (…) I had to write on a slip of paper how we would describe ourselves in five words or less. TOTALLY stressed me out and took over an hour to do because they will be read out loud (and quietly judged). Evidently making creative decisions stresses me out because I feel like I will be judged." – Journal.*

An often-sighted source of potential judgment was a lack of confidence in the quality of their ideas and their ability to articulate that idea clearly to the group. Some admitted to actively building themselves up for the possibility of rejection before deciding to share a new idea in a group setting.

- *"I would picture the room going silent, all eyes are on me, and I think about how they will try to shoot down that idea without hurting my feelings." – Ethnography*
- *"I feared that I wouldn't articulate my idea very well and that people would be more confused and think it was a really stupid comment." – Ethnography*
- *"I was not sure if my ideas were good ideas, it depended on who was in the room." – Ethnography*
- *"It's harder for me to express myself in a way that people might say 'oh wow, that's creative.'" – Ethnography*

Their focus on the potential for their own ideas to be misinterpreted and judged appears to be connected not only to their creative confidence and identity, but

amplified by their sensitivity to how they are perceived and defined by others. As a result, participants often described a preference for keeping novel or dissenting ideas to themselves, rather than risk subjecting themselves and their idea to group evaluation and judgment. Clearly, a high sensitivity to group membership and social judgment can play an important role in allowing for or suppressing creative forms of expression.

Lack of Creative Validation

As previously discussed, the concepts of the "reflected-self" and the role of social validation are central to the process of identity construction. It is no surprise then that the participants in this research, who rely heavily on feedback from others to define themselves, would recognize the role of social validation and positive feedback as critical to their relationship with creativity and their creative identity.

- *"Being surrounded by people that are all aspiring to do great things inspires me to do things outside my comfort zone." – Ethnography*
- *"You need someone to tell you to recognize and to remind you that you are better." – Ethnography*
- *"Maybe that's why I don't think I am a creative person, maybe I do things but because it's not acknowledged or something, that's maybe why I don't think like that." – Ethnography*

While almost none of the participants receive these forms of validation at present, the idea of being given feedback that their work is creative is perceived

as potentially influential to their current views on the subject. They imagine such

feedback as potentially very motivating and positive, despite feeling that their

present personal and professional activities do not warrant such recognition. This

desire makes sense as it hints to a future where the group itself has adopted a

more accommodating stance toward deviations from their norms thereby

reducing the perceived social risk of "creative" expression.

- *"The external validation of what is creative matters to me." – Follow-up interview*
- *"Other people identifying things as creative helps me see myself as creative." – Journal*
- *"If you are encouraged to do something creative and you are getting that feedback, it's kind of like a snowball, and you are getting feedback that you are doing good at it. I think that would promote someone toward thinking they are doing some good stuff." – Ethnography*

As a result, many participants rationalize their current self-perception about

creativity as driven by their environment, often their professional environment

due to the lack of any clear validation that what they do is in fact creative. The

limits, rules, routines and lack of validation tied to their role simply do not permit

identity-relevant forms of creative expression.

CULTURAL LAYER

The Role of Creativity Stereotypes

The journey into the "non-creative" identity has so far explored many of the personal and social dynamics at play. However, it was discovered that each of these dynamics are beholden to a series of stereotypes about creativity that seem to transcend social context, and influence each participant's "non-creative" identity. Participants consistently anchored their "non-creative" identity relative to these prominent stereotypes. As such, we observed a very high correlation between the logic of these stereotypes and the logic used to explain why they believed themselves to be "not creative." These results help to support the social constructionist perspective on creative identity, echoing Berger and Luckman when they wrote, *"the self is objectified in terms of the socially available typifications"* (Berger and Luckman, 1967, p. 73). The creativity stereotypes described here are similarly, for these participants, the most socially available typifications of creativity and creative people.

The set of four creativity stereotypes detailed below have been discussed in numerous critical works on creativity. However, they have never been discussed and distilled from the perspective of those people who reject a creative identity. In addition, the connection between these stereotypes and the social construction of a "non-creative" identity has not been rigorously explored. The significant role these stereotypes seem to play in shaping the "non-creative" identity of the participants in this study, and possibly much of the population who

feels the same, has been an illuminating finding in this research. **While the development of a "non-creative" identity is a more complex social process than the enactment of stereotypes alone, one can conclude that they are in and of themselves a wellspring of cultural, social and creative division**.

It should be noted that a person need not adopt all four of these stereotypes before the influence on the participant's relationship with creativity is realized. Often an ardent belief in only one or two of the four stereotypes seemed to achieve the same result. It was also possible for a participant to disagree with or reject some stereotypes without altering the influence of the others.

Table 3: Creativity Stereotypes that Shape the "Non-Creative" Identity

Stereotypes	Meanings	Creative Identity Logic
The *Artist* Stereotype	Creativity relates exclusively to the products of artistic works or endeavors	*I am not an artist and I cannot produce creative "art." Therefore, I am not creative.*
The *Genius* Stereotype	Creativity is achieved only when the person or work has been recognized as having made a significant impact on society or their particular field	*My work has never been recognized as either ingenious or visionary, and I have made little impact on the world or my field. Therefore, I am not creative.*
The *Originality* Stereotype	Creativity is derived from a wholly original idea that must not have been conceived by others in the past	*I have never created anything that is wholly original — my ideas are logical and clearly "inside the box." Therefore, I am not creative.*

The *Blank Slate* Stereotype	The ability to spontaneously and effortlessly generate new ideas "from nothing"	*I cannot create something from nothing, and a blank page makes me uncomfortable. I require references and process guidance. Therefore, I am not creative.*

The Artist Stereotype

By far the most dominant and consistently referenced stereotype in this research was that of "the artist" who represented a domain (art/design) that had exclusive rights to the products, process and identity of creativity. The connection between the ability to produce artistic works was often deeply engrained. The "artist stereotype" also has strong links to the idea that creativity requires the production of something tangible — such as a work of art. By definition, works of art occupy the physical rather than the conceptual realm. Therefore, you cannot be creative by only producing ideas, you have to make things. This product-centric relationship represents another important limiting force of this stereotype, a concern that has also been raised by Susan Greenfield (2008), *"we must be cautious about conflating prodigious skills or talents with creativity. Skilled sensory-motor coordination – the finely honed interaction between hand and eye deployed by a painter or fine-tuned mathematical reasoning is not necessarily creative."* And yet, this is exactly what we observe here.

- *"I have never considered myself creative because I couldn't draw, I was always considered the inartistic one. I was more science than creative and artistic in comparison to other people, classmates and family." –*
  Ethnography

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- *"I always attributed it to art, not things outside of art." – Ethnography*

- *"Creativity is about artistic endeavors like art and design, I have never applied it to cooking before." – Ethnography*

- *"I assume that it means draw, sing, dance, act, stereotypically creative things." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"Always assumed that non-arty things weren't creative." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"I have always defined creativity in an artistic sense, to be an artist of sorts, painting, fashion, design, things that involve movement and colour." – Follow-up Interview*

Impact on the self: The "artist stereotype" is one of the most narrow and exclusionary of the set. The simplicity of identifying who is an artist and who is not makes their own self-diagnosis disturbingly simple. If you have no artistic talent or ability, or even if you have received negative feedback in the face of moderate ability, this stereotype excludes you.

The Genius Stereotype

The "genius stereotype" was equally well represented in this research. Often it appeared that either the art or the genius stereotype operated as an anchoring archetype for the participant — some start from the work of art, others the work of genius. However, unlike the artist stereotype, where art was a repeated reference, in this case the use of the word *genius* is an interpretation based on the incredibly high expectations and standards of achievement that were

consistently used to define creativity and creative identity. These incredible achievements were also linked to ideas of leadership and having *vision,* which are seen as necessary to break important new ground. However, defining how such achievement would be judged was more complicated. Some were comfortable limiting the scope to significant achievement in their professional domain, while others expected that creative works achieve a broad social, intellectual or economic impact.

- *"There is no radical change that is going to happen in the world as a result of my ideas." – Ethnography*

- *"I do like creating new things but they are just not really, really, really, really innovative." – Ethnography*

- *"I am not good at the creative stuff, the visionary stuff. I think I have had one great idea in my life, and I can't convince anyone else in the world that it is great, but I still stand by that idea. I would be happy to share it if you are interested because I am trying to get people to sign onto it." – Ethnography*

- *I'd like to think I have a high standard for creativity, but I am very open to creativity in all fields." – Ethnography*

- *"Publishing a cookbook is creative, making up your own recipe isn't." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"You need to change things, you have to engineer something new. Creativity engineers change in the way we work, operate, live and perceive things." – Ethnography*

Impact on the self: This stereotype, rather than portraying a skill set and niche identity like "the artist," sets a standard of achievement that only a handful of people can ever achieve in their lifetime. It creates a palpable feeling that creativity is an unattainable intellectual watermark for them — at least under their current circumstances.

The Originality Stereotype

"When the term originality was first coined, it meant newness and truth of observation — not the sense of a radical break with convention as we mean today." – Richard Sawyer, 2006

From the perspective of the "non-creative" identity, the "originality stereotype" has two core meanings. The first is that to qualify as creative an idea must be *wholly original*, meaning that it should have never before been conceived by another person. The second is that wholly original thoughts like these are only possible when thinking and acting far "outside the box" of convention. While this might seem extreme, they represent standards by which many participants judged their own creative attempts. When holding your own work up to this standard, it becomes easy to fall short. The "outside of the box" metaphor is often used to draw clean lines between themselves and others (creative people). While in the case of the "the artist," there is already a shared understanding of who does art and what art is, originality is not a person but a quality. As such, the quality is often personified as someone who is exceptionally capable of thinking and working "outside the box," unlike them. This finding was supported by

Adobe's results — *"when asked to define creativity, the majority of respondents (66%) said they associate creative thinking with 'thinking out of the box,' or 'the ability to come up with innovative ideas.'"*

- *"I have always defined myself as thinking very, very, very well inside the box. I'll push you to the edge of the box but I won't know how to step outside, until someone else does and then I will follow. I can replicate someone else's ideas but I can't come up with my own." — Follow-up Interview*
- *"Innovation has to be something that no one has ever seen before." – Ethnography*
- *"I am not creative because I work within relatively typical expectations, it doesn't push the boundaries to far out areas." – Ethnography*
- *"That's why I don't define myself as creative, because I like structure and put a hell of a lot of structure in my life." – Follow-up Interview*

The requirement that creativity achieve near absolute originality is a curious phenomenon and appeared to operate as an internal default setting for creative assessment. The default setting being that anything that they may have thought of, or created, has almost certainly been thought of by someone else already. In essence, this makes a "creative assessment" of their work almost irrelevant. Even when pressed about the fact that in reality no two people or situations or solutions can be the same and that, therefore, the idea must be unique at least in

part, the participants were often shocked by the prospect of having created

original works, or unwilling to accept this basic flaw in their logic.

- *"I do not consider myself creative because I do not create original ideas or those requiring imagination." – Ethnography*
- *"Did I have that thought first, I don't think so, other people have had those thoughts and I am just building on it and replicating it." – Follow-up Interview*
- *"Do I need to be the first person to have had the thought for it to count as being creative, I think the answer for me is YES! Otherwise it's not creative, it's just copying, and I can copy — I copy really well." – Follow-up Interview*

Impact on the self: The implication of this stereotype on each participant's identity seems to manifest in a very consistent self-narrative. Without the possibility of interpreting their work as original or creative, their work and their identity takes on a more logical or analytical character. They enact a structured and logical approach in their lives and generate expected ideas and logical solutions based on the situation and available tools. Solutions that they believe most other logical people, given the same inputs, would have produced. By framing themselves as only capable of logical outputs, the "originality stereotype" can often depress the perceived value and significance of their work, something that will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

- *"I seem to see problems and challenges more in terms of logistics and process that have expected solutions. The need is more focused on executing the more obvious solutions." – Ethnography*

- *"There are other people who have similar skills who could logically come up with similar ideas, so therefore I have a tendency to not consider my ideas to be creative." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"I am the kind of person who always likes to follow a certain pattern, things will work out if I do step A and then B, I am that kind of person and I always thought that people who do things like this they are not creative." – Follow-up Interview*

The Blank Slate Stereotype

From the perspective of the "non-creative" identity, the "blank slate stereotype" captures the perceived mystery of the creative person and process. The underlying idea behind this creativity stereotype is a rather simple assumption — that creative acts are essentially based on creating of *something from nothing*. Often this stereotype is paired with the stereotype of the artist as an explanation for the "artistic process." Often this mysterious talent raises anxiety and discomfort as the participant imagines having to create from nothing without the references and an accepted process they currently rely on. The "blank state stereotype" is of course also a myth; no person is a blank slate and when questioned about this in conversation some participants did acknowledge that creative people probably don't actually do this. However, that does not make the stereotype, or the anxiety they feel, any less real.

- *"I feel like creative people create these things from nothing." – Ethnography*

- *"I could never even comprehend how they got to that piece of art. Painting, that process of even coming up with that idea felt so foreign to me so I thought that I don't think that way so I am not creative" – Ethnography*

- *"I can't understand the process of how they go "from scratch" to that!" – Ethnography*

- *"I suppose improvements create something new, but it's not from nothing!" – Follow-up Interview*

- *"The idea that artist can create from nothing…that idea creates awestruck, like wow I wish I could do that." – Follow-up Interview*

Impact on the self: The impact of the "blank slate" stereotype is largely one of confidence. Believers of this stereotype often maintained high levels of confidence in work that focused solving well-defined problems, incremental improvement or the use of well-tested processes. However, this confidence did not translate to situations involving creative expression. The fact that this stereotype reinforces a myth that the creative process is tantamount to spontaneous magic, the idea of being creative often appeared to be a "gift" they simply did not receive. A point of view that helps to further illustrate Adobe's results that 65% of America believes that creativity is an innate trait, rather than a learned skill. This point of view can lead to the avoidance of activities that involve

idea generation, as we will explore later, and often frames their work in the more negative terminology of borrowing and copying, rather than making or creating.

Each of these stereotypes can make it very hard to enact a creative identity in social settings. Each stereotype, in its own way, helps to build a construct for creativity and creative people that is both highly exclusive and largely unattainable for those people who model their relationship with creativity after them. In the next chapter, we will examine more closely the social dynamics that reinforce a "non-creative" identity.

Glimpsing the Whole: Experiential Layers

It is important not to walk too far down the deconstructionist path, as has been the trend with creativity research, without capturing and glimpsing the whole of what has been discovered. The diagram below brings each of the experiential layers discussed in this section together to reinforce their interrelationship in constructing a "non-creative" identity.

Model 3: Personal, Social and Cultural Factors that Influence the Social Construction of a "Non-Creative" Identity

Personal

Inter-relational Sense of Self

Imagined Creative Potential

Social

Sensitivity to Group Membership

Relative(ly) "Non-Creative"

The Fear of Judgment

Lack of Creative Validation

Social Enactment of Identity

The Artist Stereotype
The Genius Stereotype
The Originality Stereotype
The Blank Slate Stereotype
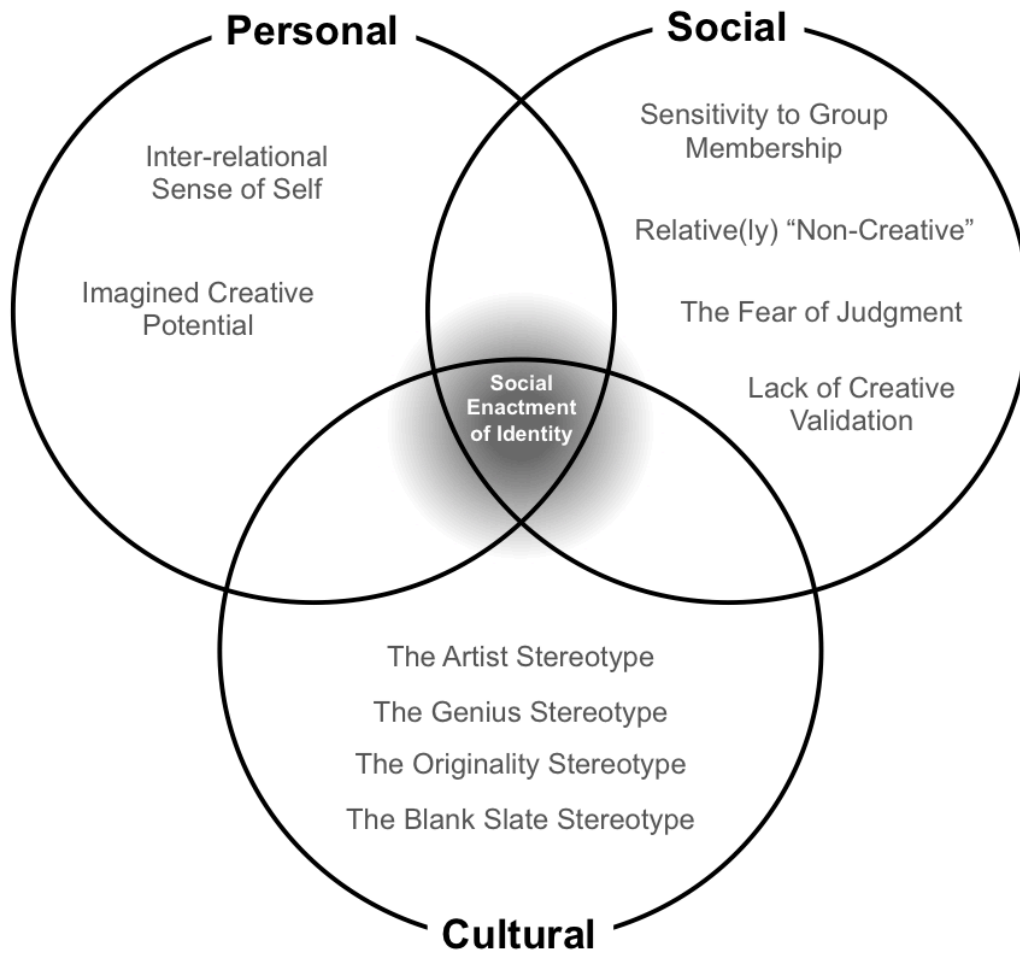
Cultural

THE SOCIAL ENACTMENT OF A "NON-CREATIVE" IDENTITY

Creative Identity as a Threat to Self

The intersection of the *Personal, Social* and *Cultural* layers of the "non-creative" identity help to illustrate a powerful insight into what can make the social construction of a creative identity so difficult for so many. The answer is in part found in how creativity stereotypes work over time to create models and ideas about creativity and creative people that are in many ways extreme. These dynamics function to amplify personal and social tendencies that allocate risks to creative behaviours and expressions.

To qualify as a "creative person," you must identify as an artist above all other professional identities, your work must consistently make a socially recognized impact on the world or your professional domain, and in doing so you must think far "outside of the box" and produce ideas from nothing, that have never been conceived of before.

While weaving each of the stereotypes together in this way might sound absurd, the point here is that from the perspective of the participants in this research, the idea of socially identifying themselves creative is no less absurd. The idea was so absurd in fact that many found even the act of imagining themselves as creative to be very difficult. This was repeatedly evidenced in the uncomfortable tone, laughter and shock displayed by participants when presented with an

alternative definition of creativity that could include them. It is worth noting that the absurdity of creative stereotypes does not drive "non-creative" identity alone, but rather feeds and informs their identity construction during social interactions, which over time defines who they are. One of the most harmful qualities of these stereotypes is simply the distance, or "gap," they create between creativity and the individual. It is in part this distance that manifests within social interaction and works to amplify the risk of being a "creative outsider." In this model, you are either in the box or really, really far outside of it.

- *"I am trying to think of why I, with the tools that I have and the skills that I have, still feel like I can't fathom being able to do that (be creative), why is that, that's ridiculous." – Follow-up Interview*

The intention is not to paint creative identity as something that people "choose" to reject based on the absurdity or extreme picture it presents; this would be false on a number of levels and would not address the underlying social mechanisms that shape identity, which have already been discussed. At no point did participants "choose" this identity over a creative one. Rather, it seems to be within the dynamics of social interactions where the participants' "interrelation sense of self" and "sensitivity to group membership" combust with the absurdity of creativity stereotypes to turn creative identity into a very real threat to their self-concept and to group membership. Therefore, enacting a creative identity is perceived as a threat to the established norms of any given situation or group.

This is the mechanism through which enacting a creative identity can become socially risky, if not dangerous.

- *"My friends will support artistic creativity, but no individual friend would support a wide spectrum of creativity. Friends are often interest-based — we are friends because we have things in common. A large creative push that changes me could threaten a lot of the small-medium friendships. Closest friends would survive but not necessarily unscathed." – Journal*

- *"If I pushed in one direction...the more one-interest friends, those friendships would be threatened if I were to go off in another direction, those friendships are fragile." – Journal*

- *"Being really far outside of the box would be scary for me." – Ethnography*

- *"Would I be afraid of people seeing me as crazy…maybe I do. I think in a way I pride myself on being relatively logical and you know having sound judgment and not doing really crazy things. People in my life reinforce that." – Ethnography*

- *"I wouldn't want them to think that I am lying or claiming to be something I am not…they might be internally laughing at me." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"A creative identity would strengthen some friendships, but hurt others." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"It's kind of insulting to say I am creative, I do have some genuinely creative friends who have taken risks and made sacrifices, it's almost insulting to them to say I am on the same level." – Follow-up Interview*

In the quotes above, it is easy to feel the perceived risk and social cost associated with enacting creative identity within social interactions and groups that do not themselves sanction a broad spectrum of creativity. In essence, there is a significant potential for loss in their "identity utility" by drawing connections between themselves and creativity, to use the language of Akerlof & Kranton.

The Social Death of Creative Potential

In previous sections, we have discussed some of the conceptual implications and underlying sociological mechanisms that cause a "non-creative" identity to emerge and be sustained over time. In this section, we will shift the focus to the behavioural and explore some the more consistently expressed behaviours that participants shared about their experience expressing themselves creatively in social settings. While we have no way of measuring the net effect that such behaviours have on an individual over time, this section simply aims to create a more tangible link between the behaviours associated with a "non-creative" identity and how those behaviours may affect their creative potential.

- *"You could say that I am holding myself back because I am not really realizing my potential in a lot of things." – Follow-up Interview*

Limited Creative Confidence

Confidence was an interesting subject matter in this research. If you were to evaluate the confidence demonstrated by the participants in this study, you would

have to conclude that it was in general very high. As such, there were no clear

patterns or correlations between introversion and "non-creative" identity and

many carried mid- to senior-level roles within their organizations and commanded

reasonable levels of respect and seniority. However, this dramatically changes

when discussing their comfort and confidence related to creative expression in a

group setting. When focused on moments where creativity might be required, the

previously registered confidence seemed to slip away. Often this was directly

linked to previously discussed sensitivities to judgment and their associated

negative social implications.

- *"I think lack of confidence leads to not thinking you are good enough or not being creative. I think (creative people) will try harder because you want to come up with something creative and really cool." – Ethnography*
- *I always thought of myself as a fairly confident person but it turns out that I make or don't make a lot of decisions based on fear of judgment from others." – Follow-up Interview*
- *"I don't know how much credit I am giving myself, because usually I think quite highly of myself. I don't have a problem with my ego when it comes to my brain. But in this particular case I really struggle giving myself credit for having creative thoughts." – Ethnography*

Undervaluing Expertise

Also associated with the display of limited "creative confidence" was the very

limited value placed on personal "talents" or "areas of expertise." While most had

developed, through years of professional experience and education, multiple areas of expertise, few felt comfortable acknowledging them or placing much value on them. Multiple conversations about both talents and expertise often resulted in the simple conclusion — *"I don't really have any."*

A closer look reveals that this is not a case of healthy humility, but rather a socially driven outcome of their high sensitivity to the judgment from others and their perceived role in the group. Participants, even in the privacy of this research, were hesitant to discuss any personal quality that might place their identity outside the group — expertise and talent appear to have a similar effect on creativity in this sense. To acknowledge having personal talents or areas of expertise created similar social anxieties related to overstating their personal value or significance. Doing so would be akin to placing themselves "above" others or the group in a socially uncomfortable way that again might lead to judgment or exclusion.

- *"I am not an expert in anything." – Ethnography*
- *"I might be undervaluing what I already have, which is more of the garden variety creativity." – Follow-up Interview*
- *"If you always think, 'I'm not good enough' then anything you say or think will not be good enough, even if other people say the same words, it's better than me, it's how I see it. – Follow-up Interview*

Undervaluing "Creative" Contributions

One of the more consistent self-narratives in this research has been the self-perception that they are only capable of solving logical problems with expected solutions. This perspective is somewhat concerning, as it is seems to cause deindividuation; "*we are given to associating the creative mind with persons regarded as rare and unique, like geniuses. But every individual is in his own way unique. Each one experiences life from a different angle than anybody else, and consequently has something distinctive to give others if he can turn his experiences into ideas and pass them on to others*" (Dewey, 1930, p.3)*.* In essence, each participant's distinct voice can be diminished by the belief that any moderately intelligent, logical person can create exactly what you have created.

This frame of reference was consistently connected to discussions about creativity stereotypes like "originality" or the ability to be "creative from nothing." The participant's creativity standards are set so high that their work on a daily basis has little hope of qualifying. The creative value of "incremental improvements" simply does not stand a chance. When they feel the problem is well defined and the available guidance is positive, it is hard to see how their work could be creative. This goes back to the fact that the solution needs to be something that the average or "norm" would not have come up with. This process of objective evaluation, based on a very high societal bar, makes it very hard for the participants to identify or relate creativity to their own work.

- *"I managed to help a client today by finding a solution to what was beginning to look like an unsolvable problem. Admittedly, it does feel good to come up with a viable solution that no one else had thought of, it is one of the best parts of the job. BUT I'm still not sure it's creative." – Journal*

- *"If the ideas aren't new or overly innovative then I don't see them as being creative…I see it more as just having the knowledge and skill to develop logical ideas." – Journal*

- *"If you are doing what you are programed to do you are not being creative, you are just a tool." – Journal*

- *"Rather than being a lack of confidence in me, it's a respect for what creativity is, if everyone is creative you are not being respectful to people who do great things." – Follow-up Interview*

As evidenced by the quotes above, and made clear throughout the research process, the valuation of work as creative or not creative is largely driven by their definition of creativity. Because of their stereotypical construct for creativity, they are left with no practical framework for valuing their daily life or work in creative terms. In essence, it becomes impossible to qualify what would, by alternative definition, be considered valuable and creative work. As a result, the value and confidence imbedded within that good work simply breaks up and disperses on the rocky shores of their creativity stereotypes.

Creative "Social-Loafing"

Traditionally the concept of "social loafing" can be defined as the tendency for individuals to expend less effort when working collectively than when working individually (S.J. Karau and K.D. Williams, 1993). This dynamic also seems to play out in group settings related to creativity. In fact, the social discomfort that a "non-creative" identity often feels in this setting seems to amplify this phenomenon. The most frequent example is of course participation in a brainstorm, but seems to manifest in similar ways amongst teams over longer time frames.

- *"I always just think someone else will come up with a more creative idea than me, so why bother." – Ethnography*
- *"There is vision embedded in solutions, but what I don't do enough is challenge the vision of the people above me, it doesn't occur to me, I'm a follower." – Ethnography*
- *"Most of the time someone has seen that situation before, someone will generally have the answer. I operate in an environment where there are a lot of guidelines, for accounting we have accounting guidelines, for audit we have audit guidelines, so you can revert to that guidance, you may have to adapt that to your situation and apply by analogy, but you still have the guidance there." – Follow-up Interview*

The phenomena can also be described as a tendency to "out-source" creative thinking within "creative" social interactions, to someone who is perceived to be

"more creative." In most cases, participants could easily reference individuals with whom they worked that might take on this role, making the option to "out-source" readily available. In some ways this also mirrors the dynamics of "groupthink" whereby individuals limit their criticism of others in order to create group cohesion or harmony (Hood, 2012). However, in this case the individual is more focused on how the group might judge their comment than they are on maintaining group cohesion. In addition, this kind of "creative social loafing" can extend to participation in problem definition or the desire to challenge predetermined constraints.

Choosing Constraints over Curiosity

Participants also cited a reluctance to either challenge constraints or "think outside of the box." As discussed earlier, "outside of the box" is a socially dangerous place based on its distance from the group norm.

- *"You give me constraints and I will work within them, I don't challenge constraints. There are people who ask why…I just say yes that's the problem and let's solve it." – Ethnography*
- *"It doesn't occur to me to challenge constraints." – Ethnography*

The preference to avoid challenging constraints or questioning the direction that has been set by others, or the framing of the problem they are trying to solve, seems to be tied to the "non-creative" role of following well-known processes and

working toward expected solutions. Efforts put toward such activities contain

minimal social complexity or potential for social judgment.

On a more basic level, these behaviours can be interpreted as a limited sense of

curiosity. Challenging constraints is fundamentally routed in the asking of

questions and the challenging of assumptions — without doing either it is likely

that you are developing habits that serve to limit your curiosity and creativity. This

can be brought to life by the simple example of a participant choosing not to ask

a critical question, despite their valuable insight. The outcome of their silence,

while unknown, can be easily conceptualized as a loss in both economic and

social terms. Scenarios like these illustrate only one way "non-creative" identity

can operate as a rate-limiting force on the creative potential of both the individual

and the organization.

The Delay of Creative Ambition

Everyone has dreams that they may or may not be actively pursuing, and many

participants in this study expressed similar dreams. Interestingly, many had, what

might be considered based on their own definitions, to have "very creative"

identities sitting on the shelf or waiting in the hall. Most had some significant

creative ambition, or alternative self, which was being reserved for future use.

Such ambitions included writing a novel, writing a script for a TV show,

advocating to change a particular government policy or pursuing the dream of

becoming a chef.

While it is hard to make strong correlations between creative identity and more significant changes like these, it is possible to imagine how a "non-creative" identity might work to subvert their efforts over time or enable participants to more easily abandon the idea. If the expression of "out of the box" ideas in a group setting can be considered risky, imagine what a "creative career" feels like.

- *"There must be costs to being more creative. I may not be able to calculate them but you feel them." – Journal*

Glimpsing the Whole: Enacting a "Non-Creative" Identity

The diagram below completes the experiential layers with the social risks and emotional/behavioural outcomes that together socially construct and reinforce a "non-creative" identity, as observed in this research. These outcomes help to illuminate the experience of a "non-creative" identity during social situations of a "creative kind," where creative identity is an expected or even required social role.

Model 4: The Social Enactment of a "Non-Creative" Identity
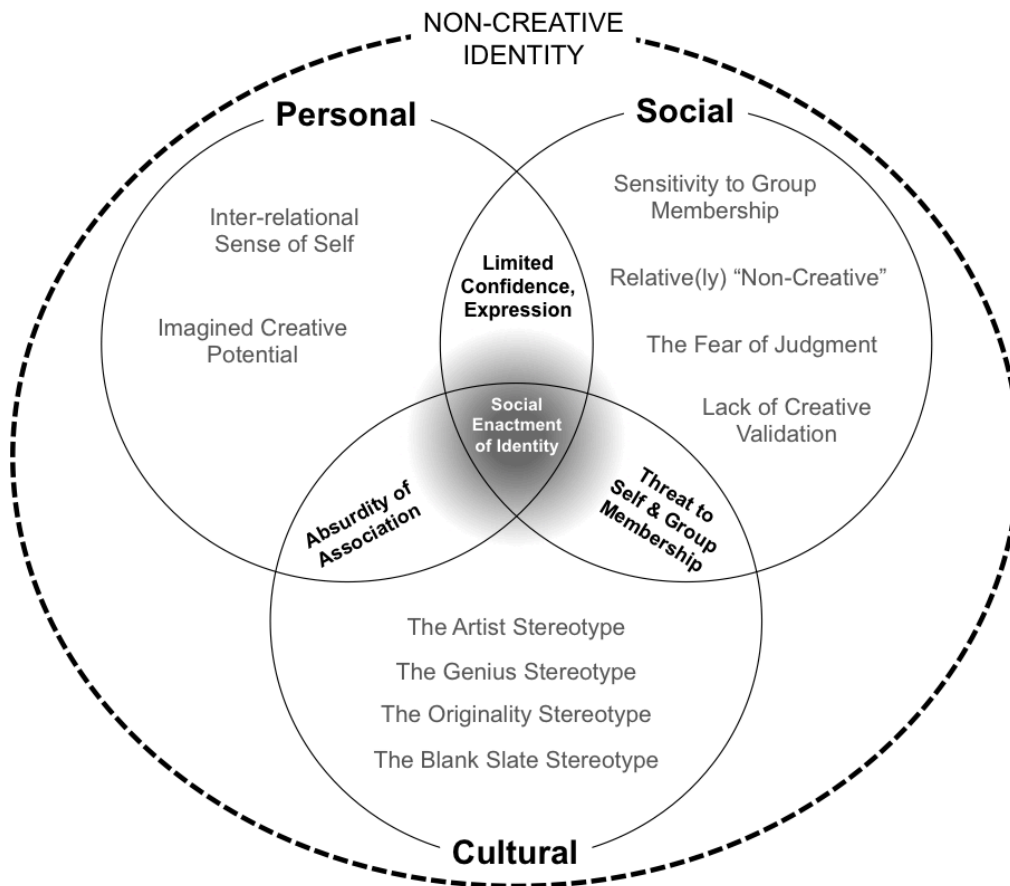
As a dynamic, interwoven system of experience, any number, or combination of these factors can combust in the moment and drive behaviour that results in social feedback supporting a person's "non-creative" identity. Without any meaningful change in a person's social context, such experiences will accumulate and build an ever more robust self-narrative based on a distant and uncomfortable relationship with creative thinking and doing.

A TALE OF TWO RELATIONSHIPS WITH CREATIVITY

The stereotypes and myths that are so deeply adopted by those who perceive themselves to be not creative are often discounted by more scientific approaches to understanding and defining creativity (Sawyer, 2006). However, even though such stereotypes about creativity are in fact not true (much like all stereotypes), this in no way diminishes their perceived truth to those who participated in this research. During our earlier review of the "Academic Genus" of creativity, three different classifications of creativity, based on scope, were introduced — these are listed again below. These differing classifications draw the boundaries around creativity in some meaningfully distinct ways, boundaries that are helpful in our attempts to interpret the underlying nature of each participant's distant relationship with creativity.

- **Big-C creativity:** To fall in this classification, creativity must result in a socially accredited and objectively valuable product, often related to works of genius. The appropriateness of the idea is judged at a societal level (Sawyer, 2006).
- **Little-c creativity:** To fall in this classification, creativity need not create value at the societal level; the personal act or interaction is enough. This would include all the normal activities that people engage in every day (Sawyer, 2006). The appropriateness of the idea in this case is determined at the personal or interpersonal level.

- **Mini-c creativity:** This classification of creativity represents only the internal, subjective and emotional experiences of creativity (Sternberg, 2009). Appropriateness at this level can only be determined by the individual.

These classifications highlight two important underlying dynamics about the non-creative relationship with creativity. Firstly, they highlight a shift from the focus on the "products" of creativity at the "Big-C" level toward the daily personal "process" and experience of creativity at the Little-c and Mini-c levels. Secondly, they highlight the source of judgment. At the "Big-C" level, judgment is served at the societal level, and the arbiters are external to the person and experience, and possibly even unknown to the creator. At the "Little-c" level, judgment is both a personal and social experience that varies by context; feedback or validation is imbedded in the experience. While at the "Mini-c" level, judgment is entirely an internal and personal experience, social integration or validation is not required — the self can validate on its own.

Enacting a "Product Oriented" Relationship with Creativity

Table 4: Product-Oriented Relationships with Creativity

Creative Identity	Nature of Relationship	Frame of Reference
I am "Not Creative"	Creativity is the **"Product"** of others and is judged externally	Creative Identity is framed by cultural stereotypes that are either inaccessible or unattainable. This amplifies their perceived deviance from the group norm and associated social risks.

A common denominator among participants' relationship with creativity was their narrow focus on its "products," artistic or otherwise. Descriptions of creativity stereotypes also contained a strong bias toward the "creative product." A focus on the product-oriented outcomes of creativity invokes a "Big-C" frame of reference and thus invites external judgment into the process to assign value. As such, creativity stereotypes through their evocation of a product-oriented relationship with creativity help to create a climate where creative works must be submitted for judgment and review. With this mental model in play within social interaction or even personal valuation, along with observed sensitivities to social judgment and group membership, it becomes easier to understand why the social enactment of creative identity is so often avoided. This is further reinforced by the participant's assumption that those around them share their mental model. While often untrue, this projection of their own relationship with creativity onto others completes the system.

- *"There are cultural norms that are linked with what I know as being creative, and a lot of things are linked to products, like visual arts, furniture design or a feature within a physical product." – Ethnography*

By attaching the assessment of what is and what is not creative to the external evaluation of products by "others," participants push the concept of creativity away from the self and the social interaction and out into a metaphorical "court system" for creativity. Given our understanding of how "absurd" and wildly unattainable creative validation is in this "court system," few feel comfortable with

the idea of submitting work for "review," let alone feeling confident about its

"acceptance." On the more extreme end of a product-oriented relationship

(embodied by some participants), classification as a creative person required that

they be constantly producing important creative products that meet society's

standards for creativity. If the stereotypes themselves were not restrictive

enough, the idea of having to meet their standards continuously surely closes

any remaining paths to a creative identity. While this was an extreme view, it was

clear that a firm belief in any of the aforementioned stereotypes seems to be

enough to bias a person toward a "product oriented" relationship with creativity.

Enacting a "Process Oriented" Relationship with Creativity

Table 5: Process-Oriented Relationships with Creativity

Creative Identity	Nature of Relationship	Frame of Reference
I am Creative	Creativity is a personal & social **"Process"** where I am free to interpret its value	Creative Identity is framed as the process or act of blending existing ideas/information to create value on a personal/interpersonal and daily level.

As part of this study, two in-depth "control" interviews were conducted with

people who identified themselves as creative, but who did not work in

stereotypically creative fields (engineering and project management). The

contrast between their relationship with and definitions of creativity helped to

further illustrate the fundamental differences between these two identities. Most

notably these interviews highlighted not a "product" oriented relationship driven

by stereotypes, but a much more personal "process" oriented relationship driven

by personal meaning. Not only had these two individuals not adopted any of the previously described stereotypes about creativity, they consciously rejected them in favour of a more relative concept. It is important to note that "process" is not in reference to any particular stepwise flow chart for how to be creative. Rather, this is a shift in the location of creativity and its valuation toward the "personal act" and away from "objective outcomes." No doubt everyone would describe a slightly different process if they were to try to deconstruct its logic.

- *"Creativity definitely goes beyond being an artist, or that ultimate creativity, the genius, because it's about solving problems too."* – In-depth Interview
- *"It's always relative, there is no absolute creativity."* – In-depth Interview
- *"I think creativity can be expressed in any domain technical or artistic, it's about creating, it's about coming up with ideas, new thoughts, anything."*

The internal consistency between these two conversations was surprising, despite a stark difference in age, profession, culture and gender. There appears to be a fundamental inclusivity to the attribution of creativity to the process of combination vs. attributing it to its products. Individuals seem to feel freer to enact a "creative process" in any given social situation without thinking about or fearing the quality of the outcome, which is in some ways irrelevant when viewed from this perspective — the creativity would have already happened. There is no need to know the outcome or the value of the outcome in advance.

- ▪ *"I am good at conceptualizing things and designing new things from scratch, you know seeing how things can fit together, seeing how things can work together, seeing how different parts can come together, that kind of thing."* – In-depth Interview

- ▪ *"The ability to combine seemingly unrelated ideas and to deliver an unexpected solution that adds value and delight, so there is definitely an element of surprise."* – In-depth Interview

In addition, they did not describe a sense of self that was wholly defined by creativity; rather, their relationship simply allowed for the acknowledgement of creative thinking and doing in their daily and professional lives. With this frame of reference, they are able to see creativity everywhere and in everyone. This inclusive view strips much of the social fear and risk from interactions with others. Like "non-creative" identities that projected their exclusive stereotype-driven model onto a group, "creative" identities appear to do the same with their perspective. Of course it is not likely true that everyone feels the way they do; however, the projection of a "process" orientation onto the group helps to create an artificially safe and creatively enhanced social environment. By comparison, the "non-creative," through their projection, essentially turns the group into a social minefield.

- ▪ *"I don't fully define myself by my sense of creativity, I am quite happy for other people to be creative."* – In-depth Interview

- ▪ *"The majority of people I know are quite creative, I am probably more creative than some but not by a lot, and there are certainly some that I consider to be far more creative than I."* – In-depth Interview

- ▪ *"There is definitely an element of risk taking. I am more risk taking than some of my peers because it is worth it to have that experience, sometimes I think there is not that much to lose."* – In-depth Interview

In retrospect, this orientation makes a great deal of sense. If participants base their relationship on the cultural stereotypes of creativity that define it as the work of genius or of artists, there is, as previously outlined, limited opportunity to hold themselves in the same company. However, if participants focus more on the everyday process of being creative (Little-c creativity), participants appear to be free to make an almost infinite number of connections between creativity and their daily lives. A similar finding to that of Mark A. Pachucki who concludes that, *"everyday creativity — given its ubiquity — is a critical arena for developing habits of creative thinking, for learning how to negotiate new ideas in the context of social interaction, and for developing one's creative identity and sense of efficacy.*" Rather than externalize the evaluation of creativity to "the courts" and vest that judgment in others, this orientation internalizes the valuation, setting the individual free to make their own personal judgments about what is creative and what is not creative. As such, "process oriented" relationships with creativity seem to be fundamentally more inclusive; they are driven and interpreted by one's own life, skills and activities. The objective valuation of "the courts" is irrelevant; in fact, "the courts" do not even exist.

Shifting from "Product" to "Process"

This up close and personal look at the "non-creative" identity and experience has exposed how a limited set of creativity stereotypes and the product-oriented relationships they produce, function as powerful limiting factors in the social construction of a creative identity. Acknowledging that "product" oriented, stereotype-based relationships with creativity have an individual and social cost is an important first step. However, it appears this must be accompanied by the development (at least in part) of a "process" oriented relationship with creativity before that individual feels safe enough to socially enact and start to develop a more creative identity.

- *"Maybe I should stop thinking of creativity in comparison to other people, but instead look at it in a way that is applied to my daily life, and simple things like that. It's a different way of understanding it." – Follow-up Interview*
- *"If you keep comparing yourself to someone else…am I good enough, good looking enough, rich enough — there will always be people better than you. But if you are just looking at yourself compared to you yesterday or the day before, and maybe I did something a little different than I did before, which actually helped me grow, maybe that could be considered creative too." – Follow-up Interview*

Glimpsing the Whole: "Creativity Culture" Revisited

The preceding exploration of creative and "non-creative" identity allows us to revisit the concept of "Creativity Culture" in order to better illustrate its underlying dynamics. In the more robust model of "Creativity Culture," presented below, the development of "non-creative" and creative identity is seen through the social enactment of either a "product" and "process" relationship with creativity. Each system functions as a positive feedback loop that reinforces its respective relationship with creativity and creative identity over time. The outcome of each system is usefully visualized by the distance or proximity it creates between the individual and a creative identity. Product-driven relationships serve to create significant distance between creativity and the individual. Process-driven relationships serve to create proximity and intimacy with a creative identity. Both relationships are driven by different cultural constructs for creativity and compete to define the inclusivity or exclusivity of a society's "Creativity Culture" and the distribution of "Creative" and "Non-Creative" identity within it.

These added layers of insight place added emphasis on the social enactment of our prevailing cultural constructs for creativity and the outcomes they generate as measured by the distribution of creative identity throughout a society.

Model 5: The Production of "Creativity Culture" via the Social Enactment of Creative and "Non-Creative" Identities

Creativity Culture

The prevailing cultural constructs for, and resulting distribution between creative and "non-creative" identity within any particular organization, sector or society

Non-Creative Identity

Creative Identity

Social Enactment of Relationship
Threat to Group Memb.
Limited Confidence
Fear of Judgment

+

Product Oriented Relationship
Stereotype Driven
External Eval.
Unattainable

Social Enactment of Relationship
Inclusive Participation
Contextual Eval.
Validation

+

Process Oriented Relationship
Personal Meaning
Everyday Act
Accessible

Positive feedback loops compete to define the inclusivity or exclusivity of a "Creativity Culture" and the distribution of "Creative" and "Non-Creative" identity

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES & CREATIVE AWAKENINGS

"Since being involved in this research, I have been asking myself every single

day, am I a person who is really not creative or do I just think I am not creative.

Because before I thought I really wasn't creative. Maybe there are ways you can

become a more creative person or believe you are. Maybe I am creative!? Before

I was in the box that said I was not creative and now I am shifting into a new

box." – Follow-up Interview

While the objective of this research was not to change participants' views on

either creativity or their creative identity – that is exactly what happened in a

number of cases. It is important to note that by change, there is no intention to

suggest that participants wholly shifted their identity and self-narrative from "non-

creative" to "creative"; rather, that a meaningful change was registered in that

direction. Further, the degree of that change varied by participant. In some

cases, participants started to see themselves and their work in a more creative

light, while others became more open to a closer, more personal relationship with

their own creativity.

It seems that despite having built a clear identity over their lives as not being a

creative person, this research has in its own way illustrated the malleability and

fundamentally social construction of our identities. The journey that participants

experienced during this research evolved over three phases that seem to have

caused new "creative" social interactions to emerge (outside of participation in

the research). During many of these social interactions their "non-creative"

identity was discussed, creating an opportunity for creative validation, or a

situation where an association with creativity could be more safely enacted and

experimented with. It was this social interaction, rather than the intellectual shifts

in perspective, that stuck and started to reshape the participants' self-narrative

and identity. However, without the earlier reflection and challenges to their

creativity constructs, those interactions would have likely never occurred.

Phase 1: Deep Self-Reflection

The in-depth nature of this research allowed participants the chance to better

understand the source of their relationship with creativity. Often reflection on the

subject had never really been done before; this was literally the first time that

their perspective and mental models on the subject of creativity had come into

question. While difficult for some at first, the extended time frame of this research

process (six to eight weeks in total) allowed the participants to explore why they

felt the way they did, and what might be influencing those feelings. It is fair to say

that the focused reflection that participants experienced during this process is

likely deeper and more rigorous than the more everyday conversations they have

with themselves and even most friends. Achieving this normal depth of reflection

seemed to be an essential first step toward their change in perspective.

Phase 2: Forced Discovery

The process of challenging and questioning their views on creativity allowed

them to see, for the first time, alternative perspectives, however difficult.

Specifically, the journaling process, which was focused on creative and "non-creative" influences in their daily lives, seemed to open them up not only to the idea but also the process of looking for and recognizing creativity in their daily lives. In many ways the exercise itself required that the participant shift their mindset away from the impossible standards of a "product" based relationship and toward a more personally relatable "process" relationship. In almost all cases, participants discovered previously unrecognized sources of creativity in their daily lives that effectively shrunk the distance between them and creativity. This forced shift in their perspective on creativity seemed to open the door (in some cases) to more open conversations with friends and colleagues that created the opportunity and stage for the participant to enact this new perspective and identity in social settings, thus beginning the process described in phase 3.

- *"My definition has changed a little bit, it used to be tied to people who are more fashionable or artists but now I apply it to more basic daily life. Being creative can be as simple as putting two things together or maybe trying something that I have never tried." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"I think I could consider broadening my definition and could see myself as being creative under a boarder definition. I think I could perceive myself as being more than I could before our discussions." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"My overall feeling about this whole process…it's interesting, it's a different way to think about work and how I perceive myself and has definitely made me think about creativity differently, where I see myself on*

that spectrum and where I see myself wanting to be. You are facing an interesting problem and I am thankful I was able to take part in this." – Follow-up Interview

Phase 3: Social Enactment

In line with the social constructionist perspective presented in this research, it was ultimately the enactment of these new perspectives within a social setting that seemed to start opening participants up to the possibility of having a relationship with creativity and a creative identity. In other words, the self was being renegotiated and then *"talked into being"* within a social setting (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000). Discussion with friends or family was often "eye-opening" and seemed to have the most impact when that person was someone who had previously been a comparative model for a "creative identity." By engaging with a "creative identity," they were again exposed to alternative points of view that helped them to reinterpret and renegotiate their identity. Given the tendency for creative identities to focus on "process" definitions, these interactions also helped to confirm the validity of more inclusive definitions of creativity. Many participants experienced unexpected "creative validations" from their friends who themselves had a process-oriented relationship with creativity that allowed them to more easily identify and articulate the creativity they saw in the participant's daily life.

- ▪ *"It sort of encouraged me to see that creativity is much more than just that [Art], so I guess that the external validation that what I currently do, which is to take things the way they are now and tweak them to be better, is*

also a form of creativity, so that external validation helped me change my perspective on what I consider creative." – Follow-up Interview

- *"I was thinking about this since we last talked. I kind of looked at myself during the process and exercise and I started thinking during the few weeks or month with the people I interacted with, and thought maybe I am creative, or maybe I can try to be creative, because maybe I can do better." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"My best friend (designer) gave me her opinion; I asked her if she ever thought I was creative…she said she thinks she is creative if she does something different. If that's how a person defines creativity then I would say yes I am creative…but I have always labeled myself as not creative." – Follow-up Interview*

- *"I think feeling creative does inspire more creativity, yah it encourages me to push the box or go towards the edge of the box more often." – Follow-up Interview*

5. DISCUSSION

ENACTING AN INCLUSIVE "CREATIVITY CULTURE"

"A revolution is a period in history where things you take for granted turn out to be untrue. Things you think are obvious turn out to be obscure and things that you think ought to happen, do not happen." – Sir Ken Robinson

Introduction

Throughout this study of the social construction of creativity and the "non-creative" identity, we have explored the origins and "form" of our biases and stereotypes about creativity and the social outcomes they produce. We have also examined the essential role these stereotypes play in shaping identity and distributing human and creative capital across our society and economy. Here we look to the future and imagine how we might apply this new framework and insight towards building a more inclusive "Creativity Culture," and in doing so increase creative participation and potential in a society.

ENACTMENT 1: Acknowledge the Personal and Societal Cost of our Current "Creativity Culture"

Moving towards a more productive and inclusive "Creativity Culture," will require educators, researchers and culture makers to acknowledge that the exclusionary cultural detritus that biases the development of a "non-creative" identity (not our

tools or processes), represents the most significant and fundamental barrier to our social and economic goals related to creativity.

Our discussions and definitions of creativity in the terms of its "products" and its stereotypes have a social and economic cost attached to them. As such, if we decide that we want different outputs as indicated by many leading academic, political and economic leaders, we need to provide different inputs. The models and insight offered by "Creativity Culture," the role of "product vs. process" relationships and the social enactment of a "non-creative identity can provide valuable strategic guidance. To ignore the problems and inefficiencies created by our current "Creativity Culture" is to continue to ignore the creative potential of more than half of our society in favour of amplifying the potential of those who are already personally engaged in this effort. However, this strategy has been in operation for over 60 years and its social outcomes are the ones we currently observe as inadequate. It appears that we can do better, if we first acknowledge the problem.

ENACTMENT 2: Focus on Social Benefit over Academic Debate

"There is no consensus on what creativity actually is — no tidy operational definition that would enable a line to be drawn objectively between a good idea/solution and a 'creative' one, or between a creative person and the rest of us." – Susan Greenfield, 2008

There are of course many different perspectives one can take in an attempt to understand creativity; most of them are useful and valid academic exercises that push our thinking and understanding forward. We are not likely to ever "solve" creativity any more than we are going to solve empathy, intelligence or ethics. These are capacities imbedded in the human experience and thrive on their diversity, dynamism and complexity. Ultimately, they defy singular definition and logic. Like an electron, they can be in two places at once.

While a particular perspective on creativity has been provided here, it is not presented in the context of being the "right" perspective. Rather it has been both an academic and qualitative attempt to separate the more inclusive and socially productive ideas about creativity from those that exclude large segments of society and limit creative potential. The objective is a social one, not an academic one. There are close comparisons to be made here with accepted barriers to corporate innovation. Many organizations fail to innovate due to a "burden of proof" within their culture. Essentially, risk is only taken when a team has proven the idea will be a success — which of course ensures nothing new is ever tried. Such policies are a top *"killer of creativity"* within organizations (Amabile, 1998). We should be careful not to kill our "Creativity Culture" by doing the same.

Moving forward will require clarity on the distinction between what are "valid" articulations of creativity (for which there are many) and what are the socially and economically optimal ideas for our culture to adopt. Based on this analysis, it is now possible to look at our current cultural "inputs" and resulting "Creativity

Culture" in a new light. Not to judge what is right and what is wrong, but to identify which approaches present an inherently more inclusive creativity future, should we desire one.

It is now possible to conceptualize why our current "Creativity Culture" is so narrow — the bar is simply set too high, and the social costs too risky for the individual. So while there are valid theories and perspectives that wish to preserve this "high bar" view of creativity (Big-C), it does not appear to be the most socially beneficial foundation for our society on a personal, interpersonal, cultural or economic scale. Under the management of these theories, it seems highly likely that creative potential will continue to be limited and inefficiently distributed. In comparison, the "process oriented" relationship described in this research seems to allow for creativity and creative identity to be more easily enacted in social settings — without which we experience losses in both economic and identity utility. This perspective is no less "valid" than Big-C theories, but through this research we can start to make a case that concepts that drive more inclusive "Creativity Cultures" are more likely to create more desirable social and economic outcomes. Can we start to develop a new social consensus in parallel with the continued academic debate?

ENACTMENT 3: Disrupt the Language of Creativity

"The wonderful point about creativity is that it cannot be contrived, because it is not a specific trait, set of beliefs, operationally defined skill or a corpus of knowledge. We have seen that the best we might be able to do is to set up

predisposing influences; the rest is up to the interaction in each case with the

individual brain, time and space coordinates." – Susan Greenfield, 2009

Moving forward with a plan to re-focus our "Creativity Culture" on more inclusive
ideas requires a pointed social critique of the status quo that effectively sparks
mainstream dialogue, while sending a symbolic signal to society regarding its
meaning. This moment can in part be achieved through the disruption of our
established definitions of creativity and is, in my opinion, the most logical and
effective place to start. Currently, leading English language dictionaries (see
table below) continue to reinforce both a "product relationship" with creativity and
a number of exclusionary stereotypes raised in this research, namely "the artist
stereotype" and "the originality stereotype." While seeking to revise these
definitions would no doubt require a great deal of consultation and debate, if a
credible discussion about a more inclusive relationship with creativity is to be
sparked, our language must reflect our intent.

- ▪ *"I have never really viewed myself as creative. I still find myself struggling*
  with it…it's pretty engrained in my head that creativity has to do with art.
  My definition is narrow, but if you broaden the definition you can see it in
  your everyday life." – Follow-up Interview

Leading English language dictionaries represent poignant and powerful leverage
points within our culture. As one of the participants in this research posed in his
journal, *"is the act of connecting logical thoughts in a non-linear fashion*

creative?" Searching for answers he turned to the dictionary, where his previous

stereotypical assumptions were confirmed. Ideally, his research should have

resulted in an unqualified *yes*, but the references available to him do not currently

provide this necessary "process perspective" or sense of inclusivity we need.

Table 6: Currently Available Definitions of "Creativity" and "Creative" in Leading English Language Dictionaries as of December 2012.

Source	Definition of *Creativity*	Definition of *Creative*
Google	The use of the imagination or **original ideas**, especially in the **production of an artistic work**.	▪ Relating to or involving the imagination or **original ideas**, esp. in the production of an **artistic work**: "creative writing." ▪ A person who is creative, esp. in a **professional context.**
Merriam Webster's Dictionary	The quality of being creative: the ability to create. ▪ Her intelligence and **artistic creativity.** ▪ The arts and crafts fair showed the remarkable creativity of local **artists and artisans.**	▪ Marked by the ability or **power to create**: given to creating <the creative impulse>. ▪ Having the quality of something **created rather than imitated**: imaginative <**the creative arts**>. ▪ Managed so as to get around legal or conventional limits <creative financing>; also: **deceptively arranged** so as to conceal or defraud.

Oxford Dictionary	The use of imagination or **original ideas** to create something; inventiveness.	▪ Relating to or involving the use of the imagination or **original ideas** to create **something**:
		   o Change unleashes people's creative energy
		   o Creative writing
		 ▪ Having good imagination or **original ideas**.
		 ▪ A person whose job involves creative work:
		   o A **creative team of designers.**

Cambridge Dictionary	Producing or using **original** and **unusual** ideas.	▪ Producing or using **original** and **unusual** ideas. ▪ **A creative person/artist/designer/programmer.** ▪ Creative talents/powers/abilities. ▪ Creative thinking.
Dictionary. com	The ability to **transcend traditional ideas**, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.; **originality, progressiveness**, or imagination.	▪ Having the quality or **power of creating**. ▪ Resulting from **originality** of thought, expression, etc.; imaginative: creative writing. ▪ Originative; productive (usually followed by of).
Urban Dictionary Most popular at time of writing	What this world is in need of.	▪ A **quality that most people don't have**. ▪ Being creative means you have the ability to **think up many different types of art.** ▪ Her painting is beautiful — she's so creative.

Unfortunately, creativity is not the only source of linguistic confusion. Our popular

definitions of both imagination and innovation are often conflated into definitions

of creativity. Below represent an initial attempt to draw some distinctions and

represent what appears to be a natural continuum from the ephemeral to the

tangible. The perspective presented here is that from a cultural and social

perspective, creativity is optimized when it can clearly hold the middle ground on

this linguistic continuum.

1. **Imagination (Mini-c)** is a <u>fundamental human faculty</u> by which we

    generate multiple/alternative associations and meanings to make sense

    of the world and our experiences of it.

2. **Creativity (Little-c)** is a <u>fundamentally human social process</u> that **applies** the imagination in the creation of contextually relevant connections or understandings that have personal or interpersonal value, significance or meaning.

3. **Innovation (Big-C)** is the <u>product of applied creativity</u> that successfully **captures** new value for a group or discipline that is collectively capable of evaluating its specialness.

Pursuing this disruptive strategy will require the spirit of the first two "enactments" outlined here, along with the support of a diverse coalition of thought leaders capable of creating both the consensus and the pressure necessary for change. Engaging each of these leaders on a personal level will be an essential first step. It is my hope the perspective and theory outlined here can establish common ground where diverse perspectives and theory can be combined under a common social objective. Ultimately, I have little interest in determining what the new definition is; instead, this should be the outcome of an open and collaborative process that seeks to achieve the stated objective using the most effective and inclusive language possible.

Should a coalition of thought leaders be insufficient, the public will need to be engaged and rallied around this simple idea and objective. The development of a simple manifesto and the circulation of a global petition may eventually create the necessary pressure and consensus.

ENACTMENT 4: Validate Creative Identity in Organizations and Educational Institutions

Creative identity, like all identities, is a social construction shaped by cultural norms, stereotypes, context and our own history. In this research we have explored the powerful role a creatively inclusive social interaction or group norm can have in extending creative identity to a greater percentage of our society. One of the most powerful mechanisms explored in this research is that of creative validation. Participants in this research demonstrated how even a few hours of focused reflection and questioning, followed by even tentative attempts at social enactment and engagement on the topic, can result in meaningful strides toward opening up "non-creative identities" to a new relationship with their own creativity.

If we are indeed a reflection of the people and the context that surround us, we must not only look to make change at the cultural level, but the personal and interpersonal as well. Initiatives that seek to validate creative identity within organizational cultures and educational institutions stand to make a significant impact in the short-term while supporting a broader cultural dialogue.

- *"Put me into a context where you have to think a certain way and you have the outcome and you get the feedback, and I think if you do that process and do some iteration of it I will personally start to change that perception." – Ethnography*

Educational Institutions

Our education system is in the midst of a creative revolution thanks to the breaking down of industrial era pedagogy and the clear economic value it once represented. Many, like Sir Ken Robinson, have become outspoken critiques of the status quo, and advocates for the re-introduction of creativity into our educational institutions. "*Creativity is as important now as literacy (…) but we are educating people out of their creative capacities*" (Robinson, 2007). Like the perspective arrived at through this research, Robinson hopes to extend the veil of creative identity to as many as possible, and conceptualizes our educational process rather than our "Creativity Culture" as the primary culprit — certainly both have their part to play. However, the focus on identity presented here offers some new hope for the reform Robinson is calling for.

While a wholesale change in our approach to education is in fact needed and already underway, it will take decades. The results from this research point to the availability of a more approachable, identity-driven strategy of "creative validation." A renewed focus on this powerful tool of identity construction could very well help the development of more resilient "creative identities" that are better able to survive even the most industrial of schools. Simply put, if teachers and teaching staff can internalize the value and power of creative validation, they can apply it, regardless of their context and curriculum. However, this would only create the desired outcome if teachers replicate the more inclusive "process-oriented relationship" described here. Teachers have an equal opportunity to

award creative validations based on stereotypically creative achievement, which would only serve to reinforce the culture we already have.

Organizations

Organizations and their management (like teachers) have an equally important opportunity to encourage the social development of "creative identity" via creative validation. Management can transform their organization, in much the same way teachers can transform their schools, if taught to recognize and validate creativity in all its forms. *"You have to nourish the human spirit by acknowledging peoples value and encouraging people when work gets difficult"* (Amabile, 2011). The adoption of a more inclusive "process oriented" model of creativity would provide managers with a much more diverse set of employee activity that could be creatively validated. Such an approach could not only have an impact on the individual's creative identity and their own ability to express themselves creatively, but would no doubt start a process of organizational transformation as well. *"Managers have the power to reenergize the work force and revitalize creative productivity"* (Amabile, 2011).

- *"I would view myself as more creative if people told me I was more creative" – Follow-up Interview*
- *"If others suggest they had a definition that was similar to "generating ideas to solve problem," if other people told me 'yah that's what I consider creative,' I think that could influence my definition of creativity and I could feel like that was creative." – Follow-up Interview*

Perhaps the most important lesson here is for organizations and management who are already considering "creative" organizational change; for example, the integration of the HCD (Human-Centered Design) process into product development and marketing activities. The lesson offered by the findings of this research relates to the approach one takes in initiating creative cultural change within an organization. One of the most referred to approaches in organization change theory is one first proposed by Kurt Lewin in 1947. He used the metaphor of melting a block of ice to explain how an organizational culture must first undertake a period of "unfreezing" before "changing" and then "refreezing" — hopefully in its intended new form. The strategy of "creative validations" could be effectively used in the unfreezing process for organizational change initiatives that have inherently "creative scaffolding" like HCD or Design Thinking. By first opening up more employees to their own creativity and helping to support the development of a more "creative identity" in the process, management's new ideas and organizational process are likely to have a better chance of sticking. In addition, unfreezing via "creative validation" need not be overt or even associated with a public desire to change. This allows such efforts to avoid the kinds of knee-jerk reactions many employees have when they first hear of management's intentions to change. As described in the opening section of this research "Questioning Creativity," had such strategies been employed in early Design Thinking initiatives, the movement may have avoided some of its failures and thus some of the criticism it now receives.

ENACTMENT 5: Establish "Creativity Culture" and the "Non-Creative" Identity as Key Social & Economic Indicators

The final recommendation presented in this research is to evolve the concept of "Creativity Culture" and its associated measurement of "creative" and "non-creative identity" into a robust national survey to track the distribution, size, intensity and evolution of our social relationship with creativity and the inclusiveness of creative identity. As previously described, this would ideally include statistically significant indicators for all major industries so that industry-specific "Creativity Cultures" could be assessed and strategic priorities uniquely developed. The value of this kind of indicator or barometer would be strategically invaluable. It would provide guide posts to both policy makers and corporate leaders and focus them on the work of supporting individual and collective creative potential rather than simply musing on the socio-economics of their region's "creative-classes." In comparison, a "Creativity Culture" indicator would provide specific data on the state of a sector, region or country's relationship with creativity that could then drive specific inclusive "creative identity" policy in those areas. Of course, such metrics could also be used at the organizational level. Such a metric could provide organization leaders hard information on their employees/divisions relative to the organization's innovativeness and economic success. Such a concept, backed up by its associated data, could help steer organizational cultures toward a more creative and productive future, in much the same way it could steer our society.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

It is important to acknowledge that successfully navigating the changes

suggested above present great challenges for those who choose to lead them

and to those expected to change their behaviour in some way. While our current

"Creativity Culture" has been presented as both a social and economic

inefficiency, there are many people, creative and "non-creative" alike, who

actively benefit from and will likely prefer to maintain the status quo. Resistance

to these inclusive ideas about creativity may come from any industry or

profession, even those who already operate within a creative domain.

For those who have built careers and identities by leveraging the stereotypes and

exclusivity of creativity and creative identity, a message focused on developing

everyone's creative identity and potential might be met with cynicism, or even

perceived as a threat. For example, a potential source of such resistance could

spring from one of the most stereotypically creative professional domains, the

advertising industry. In many advertising agencies, creative identity is overtly

assigned by the organization based on an employee's role. There are "the

creatives" who produce the product (often called "creative") and the "account

executives" who manage the process and the people. In "creative fields" like

these who have tied their definition of creativity so closely to their products,

decoupling and adopting a more inclusive "process relationship" might be even

more difficult than in industries that have no relationship to creativity at all. In this

context, we can imagine how fundamentally disruptive an inclusive "Creativity

Culture" might be. In the case of advertising, it could undermine an entire industry's organizational structure and business model. However necessary and valuable this change might be, for the advertising industry, it would not happen without a great deal of tension and resistance.

Similar resistance might be felt from other corporate cultures that believe they improve efficiency and create value through the clear division of "creative/strategic tasks" from those that are more analytical, routine or labour intensive. While the perspective presented here contends that this is a false division. It must first be acknowledged that even executives who desire a more innovative company culture are likely be unprepared for the implications of that change. Business leaders may be quick to cite the cost of organizational change and other cliché "prescriptions" for enhancing creativity, such as more down time, vacation time, supporting continuing education, and financing pilot projects. However, based on this research, it is unlikely that such "costly" strategies are necessary or effective in the absence of developing a culture that actively supports the development and enactment of creative identity. Without first putting inclusive creative constructs in play, creating "space" for creativity is just that, space.

The personal, organizational and cultural shifts described here are immeasurably complex. Pursuing their intentions will inevitably engender significant resistance from any social entity who is unwilling to change the status quo, or threatened by

the alternative. This research presents them with a simple question; *"in the long-run which path will be most costly, change or the status quo?"*

6. CONCLUSION

How might we develop a more inclusive "Creativity Culture" that supports the development of creative identity throughout a society, while cultivating the latent creative potential of its "non-creative" members? Further, what might that inclusive relationship and culture look like, how might we measure it, and how might we encourage its emergence?

The research presented here has made some critical progress on the thesis presented above. New insights into creativity and creative identity have been presented that together help conceptualize our "Creativity Culture" in new and productive ways. Further, insights into the social construction of a "non-creative identity" have raised "reasonable doubt" about the foundations of our current "Creativity Culture" and the social and economic outcomes it currently produces. Specifically, the development of a "non-creative identity" appears to lead to social outcomes that limit an individual's, and by extension an organization's and society's, creative potential.

"We are a self-articulating society" (Holstein, Gubrium, 2000) and there appears to be both opportunity and good reason to pursue new "articulations" that aim to improve the inclusivity of our "Creativity Culture" via strategies, like the ones outlined here, focused on engaging "non-creative" identities with creativity and

setting the cultural foundation for a more inclusive relationship. Such polices should be based on a "social benefit" perspective on creativity and avoid ideological debates that are instead more concerned with abstract and often irreconcilable notions of validity. Such debate would be a harmful distraction to an otherwise cogent strategy. Success in building more inclusive "Creativity Cultures" could lead to at least three important forms of human, social and economic progress.

1. At an interpersonal level, creative identity and expression will be more easily enacted across social categories and organizational settings.
2. Human creative capital will be both expanded and more efficiently distributed across our society and our economy.
3. A greater percentage of the population will have the language and models to value the creativity in their own work, regardless of their domain.

In closing, the complex social, environmental and economic challenges we are experiencing in the world today demand that humanity improve its own adaptive capacity. *"Our only hope for the future is to adopt a new conception of human ecology, one where we start to reconstitute our conception of the richness of human capacity"* (Robinson, 2007). A more inclusive "Creativity Culture" would almost certainly aid in those attempts, and while the change seems grand, this research has also hinted at its simplicity, and that we need only find ways to tip the system in favour of one "Creativity Culture" over another.

- *"I think I want to expand and open my mind to other things…life will be more interesting if I try to step outside of my comfort zone. It's easy to say and then hard to do but after this exercise I am ready to look at things differently and learn from more people and take part in things that I usually would not, be more creative, and do things differently." – Follow-up Interview*

This participant's transition from an ardent "non-creative" identity to the openness expressed above, in all but a few short weeks, should remind us that creativity and creative identity are not hardened genetic gifts, but social constructions that change with the circumstance and script. To call on the spirits of Churchill, Bourdieu and McLuhan, progress will demand that we first shape our "Creativity Culture," thereafter; it will shape us.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

This research has opened a number of new doors for research into both creativity and creativity identity. As a limited and relatively small qualitative study, there is much to be gained by complementary efforts to repeat, refine and validate the findings presented here. Further, it would be highly valuable to pursue similar questions in the context of larger sample sizes or more specific demographic segments, social or organizational settings.

For example, research into the use of creative validation as part of larger creative

organizational change initiatives would provide compelling insight into the role

creative identity and "non-creative" identity has in complex social transformations

like these. Such research could lead to more specific guidance for organizations

looking to pursue these initiatives and in doing so create considerable value.

Additionally, research in the image of "identity economics" that explores the

social categories of creative identity and its similarity to "identity utility" would

prove valuable.

While such studies would certainly uncover valuable new insights and

perspectives, the need for this scientific research does not supersede or preclude

the need for immediate action and experimentation. The previously described

"enactments" offer us all salient springboards from which we can implement

intentional action research and social innovations within our communities,

organizations, and educational institutions. Cultural change of course takes time,

but our need to capture and apply more of humanity's creative potential could not

be more pressing.

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7. APPENDIX

Appendix A: REB Approval
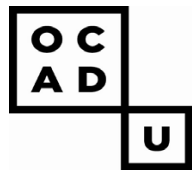
Research Ethics Board

October 1, 2012

Dear Martin Ryan,

RE: OCADU 69, "The Creativity Illusion"

The OCAD University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named submission. The protocol dated October 1, 2012 and the consent form dated October 1, 2012 are approved for use for the next 12 months. If the study is expected to continue beyond the expiry date (September 30, 2013) you are responsible for ensuring the study receives re-approval. Your final approval number is **2012-28.**

Before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required. It is your responsibility to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the OCAD U REB prior to the initiation of any research.

If, during the course of the research, there are any serious adverse events, changes in the approved protocol or consent form or any new information that must be considered with respect to the study, these should be brought to the immediate attention of the Board.

The REB must also be notified of the completion or termination of this study and a final report provided.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.
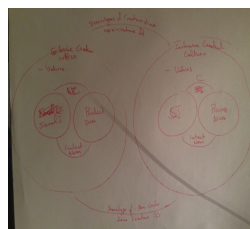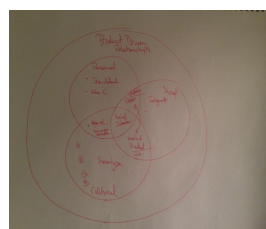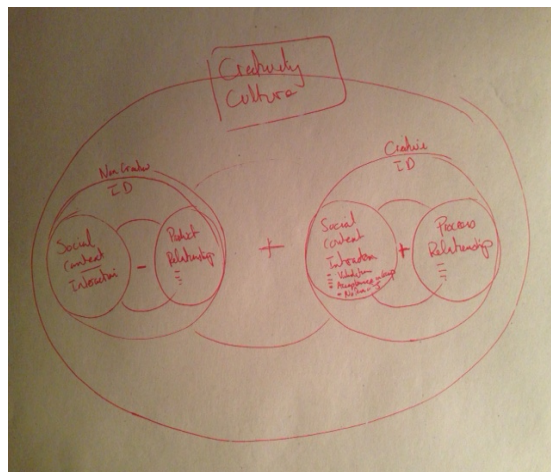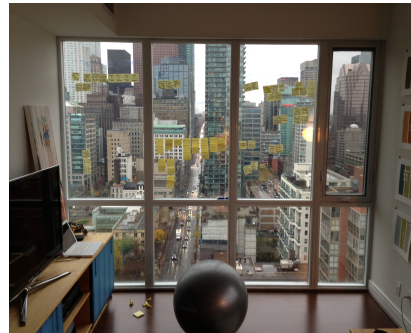
Yours sincerely,

Tony Kerr

Chair, OCAD U Research Ethics Board

OCAD U Research Ethics Board: rm 7520c, 205 Richmond Street W, Toronto, ON M5V 1V3
416.977.6000 x474

Appendix B: Systems & Concept Mapping Artifacts
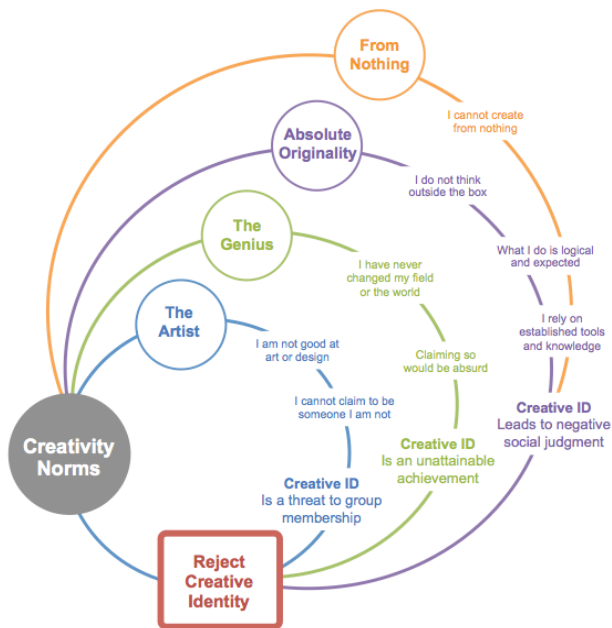
Appendix C: Ethnographic Homework

Thank you again for participating in my graduate studies research! In advance of our discussion, please take some time to complete the exercise below. The exercise involves thinking about four defining/meaningful moments/people in your life that have helped shape who you are today, and (if available) finding some images or objects that represent/symbolize them.

1. One object/image/story that symbolizes/represents a defining moment you experienced growing up that has shaped who you are today

2. One object/image/story that symbolizes/represents a defining moment you experienced in adulthood that has shaped who you are today

3. One object/image/story that symbolizes/represents a defining moment that has shaped who you are professionally

4. One object/image that symbolizes/represents who you still aspire to be

Please be ready to discuss each image/object/story, we will be exploring each in more detail. Thanks again, and I look forward to speaking with you!

Appendix D: Ethnographic Field Guide

The guide below was used as only a guide. Conversations followed their own logic that created varying degrees of emphasis between topics and also led to many conversation topics not captured here.

Introductions & Consent

Objective: To establish rapport with the participant, clarify the parameters of the discussion and obtain consent for the interview, audio recording and video capture. Participants will have the opportunity to opt out of the video.

Set-up

- Introductions, and thank them for finding the time to participate.

- Request signed consent form, clarify any outstanding questions.

- Introduce the purpose of the research: As my major research project for my graduate studies, *I am conducting research into cultural and individual differences in people's everyday approaches to problem solving.*

- My report will be aggregate in nature and your identity and personal information will be kept strictly confidential.

- Please share your thoughts candidly — be open and honest.

- There are no right or wrong answers; this is your story!

- To further protect your privacy, please try not to provide any additional identifiable information about your family, colleagues or friends such as full names, addresses or phone numbers.

Introductions

- Where are you from, originally? Why did you move?

- Cultural background?

- How would you describe your personality?

- Tell me about a typical day in your life here in Toronto.

- What do you love about the city? What do you wish you could change?

- What do you do for a living? What do you enjoy about it? What do you find frustrating?

- What other professional paths have you considered?

- What are some of your core values? Where did they come from? Parents? Experience?

- How would you describe your parents' parenting style?

- Do you consider yourself more of an introvert or an extrovert?

My Story

Objective: The objective of this section will be to encourage the participant to openly share stories about the moments in theirs lives that have defined who they have become today and who they aspire to be in the future. This will provide the foundation for later discussion focused on their relationship with creativity. Discussion will be structured around the homework assignment described above.

Homework Artifact #1: *Defining moment you experienced growing up*

- Tell me about why you chose this object/image?

- What does it symbolize about you at this age?

- How would you describe the impact this experience had on you?

- What other moments in your childhood helped to shape or define who you are today?

- Who had a significant impact on you at this age? Why?

- Who did you imagine you would become at this age? Are you still working toward this?

Homework Artifact #2: *Defining moment you experienced in adulthood*

- Tell me about why you chose this.

- What does it symbolize about who you have become?

- When you look back, how did you get here?

- What other parts of your life today play a significant role in shaping who you have become?

- Who in your life today has played a significant role in shaping who you have become? Why them?

- Tell me about some of the things you have learned about yourself along the way.

- What do you worry about on a daily basis? What do you fear?

- What core values does this object/image relate to?

- How have these fears shaped you?

Homework Artifact #3: *Defining moment that has shaped who you are professionally*

- Tell me about why you chose this.

- What does it symbolize about your professional identity?

- What aspects of what you do professionally have had the most influence on who you are today?

- What other parts of/people in your life today play a significant role in shaping who you have become?

- How does this connect with what you are good at? Natural talents?

- How does this connect with what you are not so good at? Weak areas?

- Why do you see your professional self as different from your non-professional self?

- What has your professional path taught you about who you are?

Homework Artifact #4: *Who you still aspire to be*

- Tell me about why you chose this.

- Why does this goal matter to you?

- What does it symbolize about who you aspire to become?

- What personal strengths or talents will you need to draw upon?

- What kinds of changes will this require?

- How might you go about making those changes?

- What barriers do you see on your way to becoming this kind of person?

- Who might help you get there? Why are they the right partner/support?

Positive Role Models

- Who has been a role model for you in your personal life? Why them?

    o How have they shaped who you are today?

- Who has been a role model in your professional life? Why them?

    o How have they shaped who you are today?

Negative Role Models

- Who has been a source or negative feedback and role modeling for you? Why?

- What did they teach you about what you didn't want to become? How?

Identity and Context

- What is the essence of who you are?

- When do you find that you act "out of character"?

- Why do you think these scenarios allow you to do this?

- Would you say that your "identity" can change based on the context (who you are with or where you are)?

- What does identity mean to you? How would you define it?

- What helps to define you based on what you are not?

- What groups would you say you belong to?

Problem-Solving Toolsets & Mindsets

Objective: To explore the toolsets and mindsets that the participants use at work and in their personal life to accomplish their goals and solve problems both big and small. This conversation is not in the context of creativity but that of solving problems and the perceived value that they create at work or in other spheres of their lives via their personal philosophies and approach.

Personal Talents

- What do you consider to be your talents? Professional? Personal?

- Where did these come from?

- How do you take advantage of them in daily life?

- How does intelligence come into play?

- How does skill come into play?

- What skills have you worked hard to develop?

- Where do you get to apply these talents?

Fields of Expertise

- In what domains do you have expertise?

- In what domains do you not have expertise but relate to your work?

- How do you perceive expertise as it relates to the ability to solve problems?

- How would you approach solving a problem in the absence of expertise?

Work Culture

- How do your personal talents connect to how you create value at work?

- How does your expertise connect to how you create value at work?

- What do you find most satisfying about your job? Dissatisfying?

- How would you describe your work's organizational culture?

- What are the culture's values?

- What skills are rewarded? What skills are not valued?

- How does the culture manifest in behaviour or social interactions?

- If you could create your own role, how would you redesign your job so that it fits you perfectly?

Problem Solving

- Tell me about a difficult problem you recently had to solve.

- Does this engage you intellectually?

- Does this engage you creatively?

- Does it vary in different contexts or problems?

Ability to Make Change

- On a scale of one to ten, how much influence does one individual have on the world today?

- How much influence do you have on the world? Your success? Your happiness?

- How about your ability to make change within the organization?

- How about your ability to make change in your personal life?

- Have you succeeded or failed at attempts to make change in the past? How have they affected you?

What is Creativity?

Objective: *The objective of this section will be to set some baseline perceptions and definitions of creativity. This will not be in relation to who they are as a person but how they define the creativity they see in the world and how they perceive its role in society.*

Definitions

- Let's talk about creativity for a bit.

- What first comes to mind when you think about "Creativity"?

- Help me understand how you would define it.

- Are there multiple definitions? What are some others?

- What are some of the stereotypes? Do you believe them?

    o   Explore Product vs. Process vs. Person?

Examples

- What are some examples of creativity? People/Products/Behaviour?

- What are some examples that you have personally witnessed?

- What about within your company? Explain.

- Particular individuals? Why them?

Value

- What is the value of creativity to society? Explain.

- How does it affect the economy?

- What would happen if Canada were to become more creative? How might that happen?

- How does it affect bigger social and environmental issues?

- Feeling toward the celebration of creativity in business and society these days?

- Is this personally relevant to you? Personal relevance?

My Relationship with Creativity

Objective: The objective of this section will be to explore in depth the participant's personal relationship with creativity and their self-perception that they are not creative. Judgment about their feeling toward not being creative will be avoided; instead, the discussion will focus on understand the underpinnings of their point of view.

Creative Identity

- You described in the screening survey that you do not believe you are creative. Why not? Help me understand this better.

- How did you come to this conclusion?

- In what way are you not creative?

Creative Moments & Experiences

- Are you more or less creative in different contexts or parts of your life?

- When do you feel most creative? Why then?

- What are the risks of expressing yourself more creatively?

Creative People in your Life

- What percentage of your social network would describe themselves as creative?

- Who is the most creative person that you know well? Why them?

- Have you seen them being creative? How did you feel? How did you participate?

- What is your relationship with them?

- What have you learned?

- What is reinforced that you are not creative?

Barriers to Creative Expression

- Are there barriers in your daily life that prevent you from being creative?

- Explore people, roles/responsibilities, home life, work, other activities, etc.?

- Do you have any fears about being creative?

- How is it encouraged/not encouraged within your office? Home?

- How might your company culture play a role?

Forced Creativity

- How comfortable are you when someone in the room says, "it's time to be creative."

- Have you ever been part of organizational programs to institute a more creative culture?

- How do you feel in the context of a brainstorm?

- How do these expectations make you feel?

- Are there better ways to engage you creatively than this? What are they?

Historical Perspective

- How did you form this self-perception? How long have you believed this?

- When do you first remember having this belief?

- How has it influenced important decisions in your life?

- How has it affected your career path?

- How has it influenced your roles outside the office?

- How do your feelings about creativity relate to you the artifacts you chose to represent yourself?

Creative Potential

- Do you have the potential to be creative? Why is that any different?

- How would you rate your creative potential? What does that even mean to you?

- What would it take to help you attain it? Why that?

Effect of Non-Creative Identity

- How has the fact that you don't believe you are creative shaped who you are today?

- What choice might you have made differently if you did believe you are creative?

- Do you feel like you have missed out on or passed up opportunities to be more creative or fulfill your creative potential?

Looking to the Future

- How does creativity factor into your ideas/plans about what/who you aspire to be?

- If not creativity, what will it take? Why that?

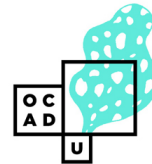- What are some of the best ways to engage you in a creative task?

Introduce Creativity Journal

- Review the process

- Answer questions

- Ask for consent

Thank you!

Appendix E: Reflective Creativity Journal

Participant Name:

Reflective Journal
OCAD Graduate Research

**Please contact Martin Ryan to arrange
pick up when complete (extensions are
allowed :)**

Instructions…

Over the course of the next week, I would like you to keep this journal as close at hand as possible. The intent is for you to capture reflections and in-the-moment experiences related to how your environment and the people you interact with, influence how you feel about yourself and your ability to express yourself creatively. Approximately 15 minutes a day is all that is required – please try not to leave this all to one day, if you need extra time, just let me know!

Please reflect on some of the themes and ideas about your relationship with creativity and its roles in your life that emerged in our conversation. Keeping these things in mind will help you see your environments and interactions from a new perspective, and help you capture your thoughts and feeling in the journal.

The journal focuses on five separate domains of daily experience; People & Social Interactions, Work & Company Culture, Home & Family Life, Extracurricular Activities and Physical Environments. For each domain I would like you to reflect on two different perspectives and set of influences:

1. **"Non-creative" influences on your experience and identity:** Please think about anything in this category that might create or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

2. **"Creative" influences on your experience and identity:** Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

Please feel free to capture thoughts, ideas or feelings in any way you see fit. You can tell a story, draw something, or paste a picture from somewhere else – it's entirely up to you. And please do not feel like you have to fill up each page! Simply try to be as detailed and clear as possible in your commentary!

Thought Starters…

If you find yourself needing some help to spark your thinking about any of the five categories, return to this page! It is far from a complete list of things that might matter (that is for you to define), but my hope is that it will help you reflect on different dimensions of your daily experience within each domain.

- **Feelings:** Internal/External Expectations, Degree/Feelings of Control, Felt Expertise or Lack of Expertise, Certainty vs. Uncertainty, Tone of Voice, Positivity, Negativity, Hopes, Freedom, Will Power

- **Processes:** Habits and Rituals, Structure, Tools, Hierarchy, Power, Words & Language, Rules of Thumb, Change, Complexity

- **Feedback:** Rewards, Judgments, Punishments, Conflict, Social Recognition/Inclusion, Social Rejection/Exclusion, Group Norms, Peer Pressure, Acceptance, Comfort, Pain

- **People:** Cultural/Professional Diversity, Working with Others, Management, Politics, Interactions with "Creative People"

- **Identity:** Stereotypes, Professional Identity, Role Models, Adversaries, Ego, Confidence, Values, History, Stories that you tell about yourself, Mindsets, Cultural Norms/Values, Roles

DOMAIN	**People & Social Interactions**	**"Non-creative"** influences on my experience and identity:

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

"Creative"
**influences on my
experience and identity**

People & Social Interactions

DOMAIN

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

DOMAIN	Work & Company Culture	"Non-creative" influences on my experience and identity:
	Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.	

"Creative"
influences on my
experience and identity

Work & Company Culture

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

DOMAIN

Home & Family Life

"Non-creative"
influences on my
experience and identity:

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

"Creative"
influences on my experience and identity

Home & Family Life

DOMAIN

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

DOMAIN

Physical Environments

"Non-creative"
**influences on my
experience and identity:**

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours,
feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

"Creative"
influences on my
experience and identity

Physical Environments

DOMAIN

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours,
feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">DOMAIN</td><td>**Extracurricular Activities**</td><td>**"Non-creative"** influences on my experience and identity:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.</td></tr>
</table>

"Creative"
influences on my
experience and identity

Extracurricular Activities

DOMAIN

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

DOMAIN

FREE SPACE

"Non-creative"
influences on my experience and identity:

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "non-creative" behaviours, feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

"Creative"
influences on my
experience and identity

FREE SPACE

DOMAIN

Please think about anything in this category that might influence or promote "creative" behaviours,
feedback, feelings or self-perceptions.

REVIEW & REFLECTION:

Please have a quick read through your journal entries and capture any patterns or insights you identify in the space below. Feel free to highlight words or phrases in your entries if you find this helpful.