
Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0b013e31828b2ccf

This is a non-final version of an article published in final form in Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatric, Volume 34(4), p 227–236 (2013)

Accessed from: http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1040541
Print journalism, particularly hard news, is a form of writing that is seldom thought of as a creative practice. This situation may result from the idea that cultural and social structures journalists work within are often seen as constraints on journalists’ professional practices. Despite this common understanding, if a rationalist approach to creativity is used, it can be demonstrated that the structures of the practice of journalism, and the knowledge of these structures, not only constrains but also enables journalists to produce their work. Using the systems model of creativity developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, this paper provides evidence that by investigating print journalism within a rationalist framework, print journalists of any genre can be seen to be producers of creative cultural texts.

Analysis of the literature demonstrates that by marrying theories and definitions from creativity research with literature from the domain of print journalism, creativity can be identified within the print journalism domain. Analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with print journalists in Australia and observation carried out in Australian newsrooms demonstrates that journalists are very aware of the devices used, and the requirements of the field, to produce texts in their professional practice that are novel and appropriate, or creative.

KEYWORDS constraints; creativity; Csikszentmihalyi; enablers; print journalism; systems model.

Introduction

With creativity a ‘buzzword’ in the cultural industries, and many university schools of journalism included in the same faculty as creative arts, it is timely to identify and discuss creative practices within the profession of print journalism. Since the cultural, creative or media industries play an important role in understanding the world (Hartley, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2008; Gardner et al., 2001; Harcup, 2004; Meadows, 1998; 1999; 2001; Sheridan Burns, 2002; Negus and Pickering, 2004; Tapsall and Varley, 2001; O'Shaughnessy, 1999; Hachten, 2005; Machin and Niblock, 2006; Rupar, 2010; Boyer and Hannerz, 2006; North, 2009), and given that journalists are part of the media, the way journalists produce, or create, their news stories, is an important proposition. This article applies theories and definitions from creativity research to confirm that creative activity can be found and explained within the domain of print journalism. Furthermore, by drawing on data collected in an ethnographic study of print journalists in Australia, the article will demonstrate that journalists
are very aware of what techniques to use to produce articles in their professional practice that are both novel and appropriate texts.

Western culture’s common understanding of creativity, an understanding that generally draws on the ideas propounded by the Romantic Movement of the eighteenth century (Sawyer, 2006; Watson, 2005), would preclude some forms of print journalism, such as hard news writing, as creative activities. The Romantic view, as described by Keith Sawyer, is that “creativity bubbles up from an irrational unconscious, and that rational deliberation interferes with the creative process” (2006, p. 15). In addition:

… Romantic thought, represented an assertion of the human right to break out of the order of nature and to exercise creative will. It constituted human beings as autonomous self-determining entities (Petrie, 1991, p. 2).

Similarly, as the German philosopher Immanuel Kant insisted, the locus of creativity for artists could also be found internally and the, “creation of art is not only independent of prior procedures or rules, but it is independent of all conditions other than spontaneous activity made possible through faculties in the creator’s consciousness” (Rothenberg and Hausman, 1996, p. 29). The claim that a creative producer must be free from constraints and structures in order to create, and that creative ideas appear from nowhere but the imagination of an individual, has also led to the conventional assumption of the association of the idea of creativity with solely artistic forms of cultural production (Sawyer, 2006).

Print journalism is not commonly seen as an ‘artistic’ profession as some see it as overwhelmingly constrained by rules and conventions, or structures, giving little licence for a journalist to exercise agency. That is, it is thought from this perspective that the existence of these structures leaves little room for print journalists to make ‘free’ creative choices. Since unfettered agency is presumed, from a Romantic point of view, to be a prerequisite of creative or artistic activity, it would be difficult then, from this perspective, for journalists to be seen as creative producers of media texts.

However, by putting in place a rational, research-based understanding of creativity, examining the professional practices of print journalists within social and cultural structures, and exploring how a journalist, as an active agent, interacts with the structures of print journalism to produce texts, evidence of creative activity in print journalism is not only a possible outcome but also a plausible one. Furthermore, rather than comparing different genres of journalism, by recognising that each genre has differing but related structures, it can be argued that a journalist, as an active agent, working in any genre of journalism can produce creative texts. The rational, research-based understanding that will be foundational to this argument has been arrived at after an extensive examination of the research literature on creativity (for summaries see Zolberg, 1990; Sternberg and Lubart, 2003; Negus and Pickering, 2004; Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2006; Hennessy and Amabile, 2010; Kaufman and Sternberg, 2010; Alexander, 2003). This understanding, derived from the literature, sees that:

… creativity is a productive activity whereby objects, processes and ideas are generated from antecedent conditions through the agency of someone, whose knowledge to do so comes from somewhere and the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued addition to the store of knowledge in at least one social setting (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1).
In addition to this foundational understanding, the larger research project this analysis comes from employed the systems model of creativity developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1990; 1997; 2003) as the basis of its investigation of the creative practices of print journalists in Australia. By examining the way a journalist operates within the social and cultural structures of the system of print journalism, it has been found that rather than the structures of journalism constraining their activity, these structures actually enable a journalist to produce their work. This argument also corresponds somewhat with the ideas put forward by sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984). Giddens coined the term *structuration* to describe the symbiotic relationship between structure, those things that determine action, and agency, an individual’s ability to actively choose or make decisions, and suggested a duality of structure existed. This notion proposed that structures are necessary for agents to actively make decisions but the actions of the agents also, at one and the same time, maintain and transform those structures. Giddens argued, according to Haralambos and Holborn, that:

Neither structure nor action can exist independently; both are intimately related. Social actions create structures, and it is through social actions that structures are produced and reproduced, so that they survive over time … structures make social action possible, and at the same time that social action creates those very structures (1995, p. 904).

The systems model of creativity developed by Csikszentmihalyi contends that creativity can be found in the interaction of a system of three elements: a domain of knowledge (the cultural structure of the system), a field (the social structure) and an individual. In the systems model, the domain consists of the rules, conventions, techniques, guides and procedures an individual must learn before a creative product is produced. In print journalism, this includes practical rules such as the style of writing, defamation laws, ethical guidelines, news values and ideological conventions such as the public’s right to know, the notion of the Fourth Estate, and the idea of the journalist as a political watchdog. The domain also includes all previous works (Sawyer, 2006, p. 125). An individual learns this domain knowledge and produces a novel variation, which is then presented to a field of experts “whose job involves passing judgement on performance in that domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 42). Without judgement, one has no way of knowing whether the novel variation is indeed novel. It is only against a pre-existing knowledge base that this judgement can be made. In journalism, the field of experts who hold the knowledge base of the domain as a necessary precursor to judgement includes, for example, other journalists, sub-editors, editors, media owners and the audience. The individual, as the other element in this multi-faceted system, brings their background and personal attributes to the system, learns the rules and procedures of the domain and the preferences of the field and produces a variation. If the field accepts this variation, it is then included in the domain for other individuals to learn and use in their own creative process, thus continuing the dynamic and interactive system. Csikszentmihalyi states each of the three elements in the system is important in the creative process and each of the elements “affects the others and is affected by them in turn” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 329).

<FIGURE 1 INSERTED HERE>

In examining the systems model, this article presents data from an ethnographic study that examined how print journalists in Australia interacted with social, cultural and individual influences in the production of their work. A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted
in 2007 and 2008 with journalists and editors who work in the print journalism industry in
Australia and three Australian newsrooms were observed in 2009 and 2010. Secondary data in
the form of interviews, books, speeches and other sources in the public domain were also
employed to add further depth to the data collection.

As part of this larger research project, the respondents were questioned about creativity in
print journalism with questions including, ‘do you believe that a journalist can be creative?’ and
‘how can a journalist be creative?’ This article discusses the answers from those particular
questions and ties the results to literature from creativity research, reflects on the respondents’
opinions about creativity in journalism and discusses what devices these journalists use as part of
their creative process.

Creativity in journalism

An analysis of the literature on journalism provided mixed messages concerning creativity in
journalism. It appears to be a common perception that the genres of print journalism such as
feature writing, opinion pieces and literary journalism provide an outlet for creativity (Maskell
and Perry, 1999; Schumacher et al., 1989; Ricketson, 2004; Niblock, 1996; Lichter et al., 1986;
Daugherty, 1999), but the hard news genre is regarded as formulaic and restrictive and is thus
seen as not being creative (Ricketson, 2004, p. 228). While a number of texts do call for
journalists to be creative (Conley and Lamble, 2006, p. xiv; Willis, 2003, p. 66; Tapsall and
Varley, 2001, p. 4; Sheridan Burns, 2001, p. 33), other texts argue that journalism’s structures
constrain journalist (Stocking and Gross, 1989; Henningham, 1989; Hirst and Patching, 2005).

Furthermore, Australian research into why university journalism students chose to study
journalism (Pearson, 1988; Grenby et al., 2009) found that one reason is because journalism is
perceived to be creative with 46.1% of the students questioned answering that journalism would
provide a creative outlet for them (Grenby et al., 2009). Qualitative comments from Grenby et
al.’s research included: “Journalism seems like a creative career”, “I feel it allows people to be
creative while also sharing important issues”, “I believe journalism would be a fun, creative job
and you would learn a lot from it”, “Fun, challenging, creative” (2009, p. 20). Alysen and
Oakham’s (1996) study into the high popularity of Australian tertiary journalism courses also
found a high number of their respondents wanted to be magazine journalists because they
believed it would give them the greatest opportunity for creativity. This perception of creativity
in magazines can be linked to previous arguments presented in this article that feature writing
has supposedly closer ties to artistic creativity, is therefore perceived as less constrained than
hard news and is thus seen as more creative. This myth that an individual must be free from
constraints and structures to be able to create and a creative product is completely original and
comes from nowhere but the imagination of the individual is, of course, tied to Romanticism. On
the contrary, research into creativity has clearly shown that, in line with a rationalist view,
creativity is always embedded in previous works, it is always the product of a system, rather than
solely attributable to an individual, and there are always structures to constrain and enable an
individual in their creative process. The idea of total freedom as a prerequisite to creativity is
problematic as all creative practice takes place within structures. As Janet Wolff argues:

All action, including creative and innovative action, arises in the complex conjunction of
numerous structural determinants and conditions. Any concept of creativity which denies this
is metaphysical and cannot be sustained (1981, p. 9).
It is therefore more appropriate to understand creativity as an ability to choose rather than an absence of constraint; that is, it is more appropriate to argue that an individual has conditional agency and chooses what actions to take within learned social and cultural structures. Evidence can be presented for this view.

Within the cohort from this research, most respondents included all genres of journalism, including hard news, as a creative endeavour, although a number of the interviewees indicated they believed feature writing, colour stories and personality stories allowed more creativity. As suggested above, this finding runs contrary to the common understanding of hard news where it is seen as being too constrained by the structures it exists within and thus, following the Romantic conception of creativity briefly discussed above, could not be nominated as creative. However, an examination of primary data from interviews with members of the field of print journalism, observation of newsrooms, and document analysis of secondary data, supported by evidence in the literature about journalism, indicates that it is common for journalists to consider themselves creative producers of text.

It is important to note that although the analysis in this article is focusing on how journalists, as the individual element of the systems model, describe their own creative process, in no way does this imply that the field and domain are of lesser significance or that the individual alone can generate creativity. Analysis of the data gathered clearly showed that, in line with the systems model, the field and the domain, and the individual’s interaction with both, have a significant role in the production of creative texts. With this caveat in mind, the following analysis, which ties the empirical evidence to the literature and the theoretical model presented above, concentrates on the devices the respondents talked about as being part of their creative process.

**Journalists on journalism**

The data analysis uncovered valuable evidence that demonstrated journalists’ views on creativity and which, importantly, gave an insight into their creative practices. When asked, the majority of the interviewees in this cohort emphatically agreed that journalists can be creative. In fact, most of them stated that a journalist must be creative in order to capture the audience and hold its attention to the end of a story. As J14 said, journalism is “about reporting the facts but you can make it enticing for your readers” (interview, 2007). However, it was interesting to note during the analysis how the respondents’ answers tied their experiences into both the domain and field thus providing evidence of the importance of each of the three elements in the systems model and showing how creative activity cannot result solely from an individual but is the product of a system.

Nevertheless, in this cohort, when asked if some forms of journalism were more creative than others, a number of the journalists affirmed this belief. In a similar set of views expressed in some academic texts on journalism (Maskell and Perry, 1999; Schumacher et al., 1989; Ricketson, 2004; Niblock, 1996; Lichter et al., 1986; Daugherty, 1999) and most popular views of journalism, such as those indicated by the interviewees in Alysen and Oakham’s (1996) research, some journalistic formats other than hard news writing, which in this case include reviews, travel stories and feature articles, were seen as an outlet for more creativity.

Feature writing where you can use sort of more flairy language … With that you can be a lot more creative in terms of using imagery or description or take a slightly left-field approach to a story (J8, interview, 2007).
This set of beliefs may be traced to a Romantic view of creativity where certain journalists have simply conflated creativity with artistic activity and, in line with these ideas, believe that feature writing has less structural constraint than hard news. However, it can also be seen from the research that learning the different structures for the different forms of journalism and employing them to write did lead to novel and appropriate texts.

Interestingly, several of the journalists originally attempted to assert that some forms of journalism, such as feature writing, were more creative but changed their mind during the answering process. It would seem that when a journalist is prompted to think about creativity, rather than depending on the common understanding alone, the act of contemplating what this means leads to a deeper awareness of creativity and the way it operates in different forms.

It depends on what kind of journalism you do, though. There are different, a straight up journalist I would say is, to say it’s uncreative is wrong – it’s creative in a different way. I think probably most of what you do in journalism is either fact-gathering or creating something into a piece of writing so even hard news has got a creative element to it (E7, interview, 2007).

On the other hand, there were also journalists who stated all journalism is a creative endeavour.

Creative in a sense of, not creative in the sense of inventing facts, but creative in the way that you do a story? Absolutely. There’s so many ways to differentiate a story from how it’s been tackled previously (J12, interview, 2007).

I think it applies to all kinds of journalism. You know, hard news has to follow a particular structure or formula but you’ve also got to be able to choose the material to slot into that formula and that’s your creative input (J15, interview, 2007).

J20, who works as a general reporter and writes within the hard news format, compared journalism to other forms of cultural production and provided evidence for the claim that a print journalist’s production process is very similar to other spheres of production:

It’s [journalism] a very creative process. It’s like a painter with a canvas – he has a certain range of colours, he has a certain theme, he has a certain space to work on. They’re all parameters, they’re all defined. But he will make, out of the material he has, a thing of beauty or interest or whatever. And journalism’s much the same – you have a defined amount of information … you try and get as much information from as many different angles as possible within the time allowed. So that’s a finite thing because come four o’clock so many people will have rung back, and you try and get the pros and cons on everything, even things you haven’t thought of, you try and get every possible angle of it and whoever’s rung back by four o’clock, that’s what you’re working with. You have a defined time because you have to file by six at the latest, really, these days and you’re working within a certain structural format (J20, interview, 2008).

As this journalist indicated, when a journalist learns, uses and interacts with the structures of journalism, that is, the rules, conventions, techniques, guides and procedures of the domain of journalism, these enable the production of a novel and appropriate text. In relation to this idea,
when asked the question ‘How can a journalist be creative?’; a theme that emerged from the data is that journalists are aware of what is necessary to enable their production and what devices to use within the production process to produce what the field expects. The respondents noted several different devices that can be used within the writing process to “slot into that formula” (J15, interview, 2007) and allow them to produce an article. These devices include symbolic systems, codes, conventions, work habits, knowledge of the members of the field and other elements identified in the systems model that are pertinent to constructing a story within the form of print journalism. As indicated by the respondents in this study, these include words and language, use of leads and angles, and story ideas in the production side of journalism, but respondents also aligned their replies to the field. As Webb, Schirato and Danaher explain: “Practitioners in the field of journalism have many possibilities to choose from (from which angle to write a story, what questions to ask in an interview), but they know their actions will be judged by the field, its standards and values” (2002, p. 184). In line with Webb et al.’s contention, E12 discussed her idea of how a journalist can be creative but she also noted how the audience, a key member of the field of journalism, in fact a key set of members of any field (Sawyer, 2006, pp. 126–133), provides a structure that journalists must take into account:

I’m sure if we had two people, say myself and the editor at [publication name deleted], writing on the same story it would be very, very different. I don’t think there is a right and a wrong in journalism, a correct way and an incorrect way. Well, I suppose there is an incorrect way but it’s all very open depending on your readers (E12, interview, 2008).

This connection to a set of readers and being aware of the effect those may have on the final product strengthens the claim that a journalist has conditional agency, that is, while there are structures, such as those of the field, that constrain journalists in their production, they also have choice in, for example, the way they use elements of the domain such as the use of certain words, the writing style, the angle and the lead they choose. Language is the fundamental tool of journalism. As Carlyon wrote, “they [words] are the currency of print journalism” (2005, p. 16). Respondents from this study noted that word use, both the words chosen (E1, E2, J4, J9, J14, J17) and the way words are used – including phrasing (J1), sentence structure (J2), the style of writing (E3, J2, J24), and how the information is shaped (E7) – can provide a source of novelty in a story. Sheridan Burns commented that, “deft use of language and grammatical devices is the way writers add depth and colour to their writing” (2002, p. 151). E14, for example, noted that the language used is vital in attracting an audience:

I think the language. We have such a wonderful language. We can be creative in the way we write with the language. In fact we must be or people aren’t going to read our copy (E14, interview, 2008).

A further decision made by journalists is around the choice about what information to use in the lead or first paragraph. Noted American editor Arthur Brisbane stated: “Never forget that if you don't hit a newspaper reader between the eyes with your first sentence, there is no need of writing a second one” (c.1900, quoted in Carlson, 1937, ch. 5). The lead “sets the tone” (Harcup, 2004, p. 110) for the rest of the story but is also crucial because an interesting lead encourages the reader to continue reading (Perry, 2005; McKane, 2006; Randall, 1996; Conley and Lamble, 2006), a point raised by E2:
The way you write your lead brings your reader into your story and then down through your story otherwise they only read the first two paragraphs (E2, interview, 2007).

A number of respondents (E2, J4, J9) in this research pointed out that a journalist can actively make choices, that is, act as agents, in choosing a lead:

I think that there are so many ways that you can lead with a story you have to be creative with what you lead with because some stories have so many different points and I think you have to use your creativity to make the point that you lead with seem like the most important one (J9, interview, 2008).

Furthermore, in the production process, and corresponding with the lead, is the choice of the angle, or perspective, a journalist pursues. While an editor typically has a vision as to how a publication should look, which Sheridan Burns links to the editor’s perception of the audience (2002, p. 111), and there are also arguments that a media owner has control over the content of a publication (McQuail, 2010; Turow, 1984), there are instances where journalists choose the angle:

To make something into a story, you’ve got to think of the angle as well. You’ve got to be able to see a massive annual report and go, ‘Actually that’s news!’ (E7, interview, 2007).

In this regard, observation of NR2 showed how senior members of the field often directed journalists on the angle for a story, with suggestions made by senior editorial staff such as the deputy editor, chief of staff and news editor. However, it was also observed that within that direction, the journalists could choose the words, phrasing and sentence structure:

Journalist talking to Cadet and 2nd Journalist about Valentine Day story – they gave her suggestions about who to call. Cadet talked about restaurants and their Valentine Day. Journalist taking angle that it is overrated (2010 – Ob. notes Day 2). (Following day) Deputy Editor is using his knowledge of pop culture, society to say what to include in a story. Uses personal anecdotes. Journalist has been told to put aside her personal feelings re. Valentine Day to write story (2010 – Ob. notes Day 3).

The angle this journalist had chosen did not suit the publication and the more experienced deputy editor made suggestions as to what the publication and senior staff expected. It is important here to note that if a journalist learns the preferences of the field and chooses what to lead with and what angle to take within what is expected of them by their publication, this does not mean there is no agency at play. Within the expectations these structures impose on a journalist, there is still room for choice especially if one considers that constraints of this type are enabling as well as constraining (Boden, 2004; Giddens, 1984; Wolff, 1993).

Related to the angle a journalist chooses, is the decision made about who to interview (J1, J11) and what questions to ask (E13, J11). J20, for example, as a general reporter with more than twenty years experience, typically does stories that have been allocated by the editors on his publication. However, he does have choice in who to interview and draws on his experience of the conventions of the domain, for example, ensuring there is an appropriate photo opportunity, and what the field, in this case his editors, want, to produce an article:
I’m given that assignment, there’s no brief on how to execute it and they have no idea how to execute it. So I just sort of walked around for ten minutes thinking about how to do it. I get a list of the [company name deleted] sites. I work out that photographically, and I think pictorially which a lot of reporters don’t, I’ve worked with photographers for so long I think picture-wise as well, there’s one in [place name deleted] that’s on the main street. There’s no use getting a centre on the fourth floor or something or in an office block or something – you can’t stake it out. So, I pick one on the main drag, not too far from the office, where we can sit and grab [interviewees deleted] as they leave because we’re never ever going to get any cooperation from the service itself. And that’s exactly what we did: we parked opposite it and every [interviewee deleted] that left we pounced on them (J20, interview, 2008).

A further outlet for novelty is in choosing how a story can be approached (E11, E15, J2, J7). Donald Murray, in his book *Writing to Deadline: The Journalist at Work* (2000), wrote that to see an old story in a new way is one way to make an article novel. This idea was borne out by observations from J24 and J16, with J16 stating that he worries sometimes about making recurring events fresh but finds the human element allows him to produce new stories:

… every year it’s going to be the same thing – you’re going to have a show feature to do, you’re going to have Anzac Day to cover, you’re going to have Australia Day to cover. But in the end, when you get there, there’s always a different slant. There’s always someone going to get an OAM or whatever that you can write about on Australia Day (J16, interview, 2008).

Sometimes, you can be assigned to what seems like a boring story, but if you look for an alternative angle, you can get a story that might be something that you might not expect … e.g., Airlines pulled out of local airport. Journo runs to tourism industry spokesperson and gets typical “moan and groan” story, but if journo thinks “out of the box” a bit and looks for the reverse angle, there’s a story to be written about residents under the flight path rejoicing because late night flights are going to stop (J24, interview, 2008).

The above examples show how a journalist makes decisive choices within the structures they work within but respondents also identified ideas for stories as an area where novelty can occur (E12, J1, J24). While members of the field, such as editors, deputy editors, chiefs-of-staff and news editors, play a role in story idea generation, journalists also produce their own story ideas. While the article generation process does differ between the newspaper and magazine genres, across the different publications and between the different types of journalist, a number of the interviewed journalists said they were encouraged by editors and other senior staff to generate their own article ideas. For example, J17 said: “I think most editors are always very happy to hear journalists come to them with ideas because it just means you’re that much more interested and invested” (interview, 2008). Within the magazine genre, editors often actively solicit ideas from a stable of writers. E14 (interview, 2008) said she relies on freelancers and invites experienced freelancers to submit story ideas. J20 suggested a way to get a story idea past the editor:

… there’s an old trick which you can always teach journalists, it’s an old trick but it works a charm – you hit any editor with three ideas; you have three ideas. You can easily come up to an editor and say, ‘You know the parking is chaos in Chippendale and it’s causing all this stress on the elderly’ or whatever story you want and they go, ‘No’. And you go, ‘Well, what about blah, blah?’ and they’ll say no to that. And by the time you get to the third one, if they
say no they look completely unreasonable … sooner or later they have to say yes. It’s very easy for an editor to dismiss one story idea, but if you’ve got a few of them they can’t dismiss them all and sooner or later they’ll pick one of the ideas you have (J20, interview, 2008).

In this case, it can be seen that a journalist’s knowledge of the “criteria of selection, the preferences of the field” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 47) can lead to the production of a creative text. E13 also provided an example of understanding the field when she stated that writing to an audience, and making it “enticing” for readers, is paramount in writing:

Well, if you write a dull story no-one will read it, they won’t bother. That’s the last part of the process is how to put it together. You have a whole lot of information, sometimes a lot of jargon and information that’s very difficult to get through and you’ve got to be able to regurgitate it in a form that’s going to be easy to understand and interesting to entice your reader to stay with you (E13, interview, 2008).

J10 (interview, 2008) told an anecdote that illustrated how important it was to learn the field’s preferences by using his agency to produce work that the field found acceptable but also satisfied his understanding of the domain. This journalist had previously worked at a newspaper in a Communist country where the idea of newsworthiness was different to that of his training as a Western journalist. His job was to train the publication’s journalists in how to recognise and write news and feature articles. The Government had stipulated that each newspaper in the country must have a panel of censors who looked at every news story before publication and J10 learned how to adapt his writing method to include what he considered important news elements: towards the end of the day, when the censors might have been “getting a little loose at proofreading” (interview, 2008), he included what he believed to be important facts further down in the story, thus getting the information out to the audience.

When J5 was asked about creativity in journalism, he drew on forty years of experience in the industry to explain how print journalism is different now compared to what it used to be:

There’s a lot of different stuff in journalism these days. I mean I look at some of the stuff that Nicholas Rothwell writes in The Australian about Aboriginal management, about Northern Territory matters and I would struggle to see anything like that being written twenty years ago, even ten years ago, anywhere in Australia other than once a year, some back page feature type of thing, and it’s covering news pages, acres of it, pages, just as an example that comes to mind of recent times. There’s more variety in newspapers now than there ever was (J5, interview, 2007).

J5’s comment demonstrates how media forms such as magazines and newspapers, but also television, music and other cultural forms, can alter over time into a product that may look, read or sound different to the earlier product. While changes may not be noticeable on a day-to-day basis, minute, incremental changes alter a sphere of production. This change, albeit incremental, would not be possible if there were no active introduction of novel features into the domain. A further example of this situation can be illustrated with an observation by J20 who talked about the difference in working for a publication in the 1980s compared to now:
There was a particular colour writing style on the [publication name deleted], which is not there now, but we used to think of the most, it didn’t matter what the story was, we would think of the most bizarre science fiction style lead that you could possible think of, tone it down a fraction and that was it: ‘They felt like two insects sitting on the balcony as the technology surrounded them’ (laughs) (J20, interview, 2008).

While learning the knowledge of the domain and the expectations of the field is crucial to a journalist’s work processes it is also evident from both J5 and J20’s comments that agency also has an effect on structure. In line with Giddens (1984), who argued that structures are necessary for agents to act and the actions of agents maintain and transform those structures, the evidence has shown that the relationship between structure and agency is symbiotic rather than oppositional. In this instance, journalists have learnt the rules, conventions, techniques, guides and procedures of the domain and the requirements of the field and produced work that is novel and acceptable, that is, work that is creative, and this work has gradually altered the structures that print journalists interact with.

Conclusion

Looking at journalism with a Romantic view of creativity precludes journalism from entering the realm of creative endeavour. However, by using a rationalist approach, and examining how a print journalist produces their work in interaction with social and cultural structures, it can be argued that a journalist is indeed a creative producer. Furthermore, writing in any journalism genre can produce creative texts and when a journalist understands what a creative text entails and what is needed to generate creative work they are more likely to produce good journalism (Sheridan Burns, 2001; 2002; Conley and Lamble, 2006; Randall, 1996; Gardner et al., 2001; Underwood, 1993). Information from the literature and data from the interviews and participant observation demonstrate that the journalists in this study are aware of devices to use to produce creative texts and that it is when a journalist understands these, as well as other rules and procedures of the domain, that novel and appropriate texts are produced, that is, creativity occurs.

Investigating creativity inside a Rationalist framework, and providing evidence that print journalism is indeed a creative profession, could possibly alter journalists’ own perspectives of their professional practices. Additionally, in journalism and other Communication disciplines, for example public relations, television and radio production, and online production, the expectations placed on cultural producers are increasing. Put simply, employers expect journalists to produce, or create, work efficiently. Understanding how to do this can only enhance a journalist’s work processes and make them a more valuable employee.

There is also evidence to suggest that an organisation’s effectiveness and survival is dependent on an employee’s creativity (Madjar et al., 2002; Amabile, 1996; Reiter-Palmon and Illies, 2004; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Farmer et al., 2003; Amabile et al., 2004; Mumford et al., 2002; Mumford and Simonton, 1997). Studies have shown that when creativity is encouraged in a workplace, there is a higher chance of organisational growth (Mumford et al., 2002). Therefore, discovering what creativity means in a journalistic context and learning how to encourage it can only enhance news organisations’ future prospects.

Notes
1. Interviewees were allocated a code to ensure anonymity. For example, journalists were given a number with the letter ‘J’ as a prefix (J1, J2, J3, etc.) and editors were allocated a number with the prefix ‘E’ (E1, E2, E3, etc.). The journalists and editors were from a wide range of Australian newspapers (24) and magazines (10) as well as freelance journalists (2). The journalism level interviewees consisted of journalists (18), cadet journalists (3) and a student journalist (1). Fourteen interviews were conducted with people from management positions (editor, deputy editor or owner) although twelve of these were originally journalists and answered questions from this perspective as well as from their management position. The cohort consisted of seventeen females and nineteen males ranging in age from twenty to sixty-two. The newspapers that respondents worked at included a mixture of national, metropolitan, regional, country, community and suburban newspapers published daily, weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly from a range of Australian publishers including Fairfax, News Limited, Fairfax Community Newspapers, Rural Press, APN News and Media, and independent publishers. Magazines that journalists worked at included weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, niche-market and mass-market from a number of different Australian publishers. Each newsroom observed was also allocated a non-identifiable code (NR1, NR2, and NR3). The three newsrooms included a regional tri-weekly newspaper, which was observed for one day a week for four weeks (NR1), a weekly metropolitan newspaper, observed for a full production week (five working days) (NR2), and a weekly community newspaper, which was observed for three production days over three weeks (NR3).

Any information used from secondary data is attributed as it is on the public record.

**Bibliography**


Fulton, Janet (2010) *Observation Notes NR2*


Meadows, Michael (1999) "Cultural studies and journalism", in: Terry Flew, Jason Sternberg and Cratis Hippocrates (Eds.), Media wars, Griffith University, Nathan: Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, pp. 43–51.


Authors

Dr Janet Fulton

Affiliation:
School of Design Communication and IT
Faculty of Science and Information Technology
University of Newcastle, Australia

Address:
ICT Building
University of Newcastle
University Drive
Callaghan NSW 2308
Australia

Phone
+61 2 4985 4537

Email
janet.fulton@newcastle.edu.au

Dr Phillip McIntyre

Affiliation:
School of Design Communication and IT
Faculty of Science and Information Technology
University of Newcastle, Australia

Address:
ICT Building
University of Newcastle
University Drive
Callaghan NSW 2308
Australia

Phone
+61 2 4985 4522

Fax
+61 2 4921 5896

Email
Phillip.McIntyre@newcastle.edu.au
Figure 1 – The systems model of creativity developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2003, p. 315).
Bioblurbs

Dr Janet Fulton teaches media and communication courses at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her recent research project was an ethnographic study investigating how social, cultural and individual influences affect how print journalists in Australia produce, or create, their work. Janet has also worked as a research assistant in the School of Design, Communication and Information Technology. Her research interests include communication, journalism, creativity and cultural production, social media and journalism, and the future of journalism.

Dr Phillip McIntyre teaches media production and media studies courses at the University of Newcastle, where he researches creativity and cultural production. He has worked in the music industry for the past thirty years as a music journalist, songwriter, musical director and manager, and has also produced audio and video recordings. More detail on Phillip McIntyre can be found online: http://www.texasradio.com.au/pages/meintyre_p.html#top.